

Have You Got It?

by Ernest O'Neill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting God for our acceptance and worth, rather than relying on ourselves or moralism.

Scripture: Exodus 20:1, Proverbs 14:5, Matthew 5:48, Matthew 6:25, Ephesians 4:29, Philippians 4:7

Topics: "God's Grace", "Superhuman Life"

Description

Ernest O'Neill uses the analogy of a math teacher giving calculators to students to illustrate how God's laws were given to show the need for superhuman life, not just human effort. He emphasizes that moralism, trying to meet high standards without relying on God's grace, leads to complaints and unattainable goals. O'Neill challenges listeners to examine their speech and attitudes towards others, highlighting that living off superhuman life brings peace and a desire to defend and build up others. He contrasts living off human life, which leads to coveting and dependence on worldly possessions, with living off superhuman life, which brings contentment and trust in God's provision.

Transcript

Imagine a math teacher placing calculators on her desk and telling the class she wanted them to begin using them. After a few days she finds half the class use them but half do not. So the next day, she gives them thirty square roots to work out in 15 minutes, reckoning that this will force them to use the calculators. Lo and behold, after 15 minutes she finds 10 students still trying to work out the answers without using the calculators. When she points out to them the time is up, they begin complaining that the standard she sets is too high and they cannot possibly live up to it. She then reminds them that the whole point of giving them a challenge that could be met only by using a calculator was to force them to use a calculator. She knew they wouldn't be able to do the square roots without one!

Purpose of God's Laws

This is why the Creator of the universe communicated "laws of behaviour" to one of us on Mount Sinai about 3400 years ago. They were laws of "superhuman life" i.e. they describe the behaviour of people who live off superhuman life. They are "calculations" that can be done only if you use calculators! Their whole purpose is to force you to use calculators. Their whole purpose is to force you to use superhuman life or to show you that you haven't got it. We human beings have done exactly what the students in the math class did--we have committed ourselves to trying to reproduce the standards described in the laws of superhuman life--without the superhuman life! This is moralism and results in people who complain that

the standards are too high and cannot be reached. Yet this moralism is what most of our religions, including pseudo-Christianity, are involved in.

Talking About Others

Are you living off superhuman life or just ordinary human life? It's vital to know because one is a poor second-best and results in a kind of lame-dog life. And it is possible for you to know. For instance, do you find yourself blaming another person for something you really are responsible for? Or do you find yourself carried by the conversational flow into overstating another person's shortcomings? Would you be embarrassed to save face-to-face what you have said behind the person's back? Do you criticize in another a flaw in your own character? Do you gossip about another in such a way that they seem now less competent or admirable? All of these behaviour patterns involve "bearing false witness against your neighbour" BUT it is the very absence of this habit that is a symptom of eternal supernatural life. Why?

Defending Others

Because supernatural life creates a real sense of peace about your own status and worth. The Spirit of the Creator and His own peace flow into you so that you melt into Him: the result is you have no doubt about your own acceptance by Him. But you know this is simply because of His gracious love of you, so you sense that same loving acceptance towards others. You find yourself wanting to protect and build them up in others' eyes. But, if you don't trust your Creator's loving attitude towards you, then you are concerned about what others think of you. You want to impress them with your own value or, if you can't do that, get them to side with you against someone else. Thus you fall into mildly tearing others down in order to build yourself up. So, you can tell whether you are living off human or superhuman life by the way you talk about other people!

Be Moral or Believe?

But don't fall into moralism. Don't be like the students in the math class. Don't determine now that you will avoid gossip and critical talk. They themselves are not the problem--the problem is your lack of superhuman life--this is sin. It means, whatever your mental beliefs may be, you are not really trusting God for your acceptance and worth. You're trusting other people. His superhuman life begins to flow through you when you begin to treat Him as the one whose opinion alone matters and when you start to look up to Him to see what He thinks of you. Trusting God is an inner attitude of your heart that affects the way you live.

Wanting Things

It's the same with coveting. It's mentioned too in Exodus 20 as one of the laws of superhuman life--one of the ways superhuman life expresses itself in life here on earth. If you believe that the Creator really does know when a sparrow dies and that He has counted every hair on your head--and if you also believe that He does love you and want the best for you--then you will be utterly content with the possessions you have at this moment. You'll feel that your present state is absolutely right for you--if it weren't, He would change it. So it won't stir anything in you if you see someone else better off than you. You won't care if you never have a car or a stereo or a new coat: what your Father-Creator has given you contents you.

But, if you live with only human life, then you depend on this world of jobs and money to get what you need. Moreover, your opinion of what you need is always being formed by what other people have. The

result is you find yourself wishing at times that you had something you haven't. Occasionally, you find yourself dwelling on a husband or a wife or a job or a life-style and then you realize you are coveting these things. You are preoccupied with getting them and feel some resentment at not having them. Don't fall into moralism. Don't resolve not to covet. Look honestly at whom you trust for the things you need in this life. Is it your Creator or is it yourself or your abilities? Do you really think your Maker loves you or cares about you? Does HE really want the best for your life? And are you prepared to accept as best what He judges to be best?

So it's possible--if you're honest--to gradually begin to deal with the central issue in life--do you believe in God or in yourself?

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