

Romans 9:15 God's Mercy

by Ernest O'Neill

God's mercy is dictated by His nature, and we can receive it by identifying with Christ in His death and being recreated in His image.

Scripture: Job 40:6

Topics: "Gods Mercy", "Predestination"

Description

Ernest O'Neill discusses the concept of questioning God and the importance of understanding His mercy, emphasizing the difference between legitimate questioning from a believing heart seeking understanding and prideful skepticism challenging God's decisions. O'Neill highlights that God, as the Creator, sets the standards and has the right to determine our eternal destiny, emphasizing the need to align ourselves with His nature to receive His mercy and compassion. The sermon addresses misconceptions about predestination and emphasizes the necessity of identifying with Jesus' death to become like Him and receive God's mercy.

Transcript

INTRODUCTION

1. Let's talk about "God's Mercy" in connection with the next verse in our study of Romans. Romans 9:15
2. Have you ever questioned God? When something didn't go the way you wanted it to or when someone died in circumstances that were difficult to understand? Last week, you remember, we tried to discuss that question: "Can you believe in God and yet question Him?"
3. And you remember we answered: "Yes -- if you were coming to God and asking Him to help you understand something that He was doing, you could legitimately question God." We quoted Jesus and His calling us friends instead of servants and His implying to Nicodemus that He ought to understand the new birth. We said that we believed in God because of the existence and order and design in the world and our own personalities and consciences, God's dealings with the Jews, and, most of all, because of Jesus' life and death and Resurrection -- NOT because we had dissected God's great mind and approved of every detail. Therefore we could come to Him as people who honestly treated and trusted Him as God and ask Him to explain why He had given us the face we have or the abilities we have or the jobs we have.

4. This is legitimate questioning - it's not a doubter trying to catch God out or trying to find a weakness or a loop-hole or trying to strengthen his faith: it's simply one who firmly believes God is Our Creator and the Father of Jesus Christ because we have begun to deal with Him according to Jesus' description of Him and have found Him responding to us personally as Jesus said He would -- and now we are coming to Our Father as trusting children and asking Him to help us see our vocations and our lives through His eyes as HE does.

5. But we said that one could not believe in God and question Him the way the person did in Romans 9:14 because this was not the questioning of a believing creature approaching His Creator. This was the questioning of a proud sceptic, putting himself not only equal with God but above Him and asking Him "Do you think what you did was just?" The implication is: let's examine what you did by some absolute standard and see if it really was just and fair and right!

GOD IS GOD

1. The dumb thing about this kind of approach is that once you know that there is a God and what He is like, He is that absolute standard against which you measure everything else. Now if you come to Him and you say "Let's check to see if what you did was fair, He would answer, "All right, check with whom or with what?" Then if you say, "Check with the accepted standards of balanced humanists," God has every right to answer: "Then you must really believe that their standard of conduct is the absolute against which everything else should be checked, so they are your god - NOT me.

2. This is really Paul's answer in this verse to the non-committal, ever-seeking, never-to-be-tied down sceptic who challenges God's decisions. He says, "God's the One who sets the standards and has the right to set the standards. Far from just pre-designing Jacob and Esau for certain vocations, God has the right to settle even what the conditions of our eternal destiny will be: Romans 9:15.

3. It's interesting that Paul's aggressiveness is so different from our soft-stepping, men-pleasing technique. We tend to say: God determined that Jacob, even though he was the younger son, would inherit his father's patriarchal leadership of Israel instead of Esau. Then, if we sensed someone wondering about the fairness of this, we would tend to try to explain it or justify God's choice BUT Paul brings a fresh breeze of balance and sanity when he refuses to back off at all but actually goes further and says: "Listen, if the Father of Jesus Christ is God, then He has not only the right to send us all to earth to do specific jobs but He has the right to decide the kind of people He will permit to live with Him forever."

4. This, as you see, is dead right -- you don't elect God, you can't throw Him out at the next election, He is not subject to Nielsen ratings, His position is not dependent on the democratic process, or whether we like Him or not. Many loved ones in the world today are nervous, insecure wrecks because they don't see this. If there is a God, then He is dependent only on Himself, He will do whatever He wants--and at last we have a blessed fixed point in the midst of all the change and relativity we see around us: Job 40:6-14. In other words, it is important for us who have just lived through the authority questioning 1960's to see that the Supreme Being, without whose creation we would not exist, has the right and the might to determine how the world will be run -- and He will do this whether we agree or not. So our only valid attitude as creatures is to find out what He is like and what He has determined about our life after death.

MISINTERPRETATIONS

1. John Calvin was a great theologian who shared many great truths about Our God, but he also created one of the worst misconceptions of God's way of determining who among us will live with Him forever in love and joy. He said God predestines some of us from before we're born to go to heaven and others of us to go to Hell - irrespective of what we ourselves do or choose in our life on earth. This is one of the worst misinterpretations of this verse, Romans 9:15: double predestination!

2. Of course, it runs counter to every statement by God in the Bible that implies that we have free will to decide our own eternal destiny: John 3:16; if God be God; choose ye this day; Jesus wept; Mark 8:34: the whole implication is that man is free to choose.

3. The normal interpretation of the verse is: "I will decide the KIND of people to whom I will show mercy and the kind on whom I will have compassion": NOT the individuals but the type of attitude or person or character, and this has produced myriad interpretations-- as many as there are philosophers and religions:

(i) The Muslims say God will show mercy to those who follow certain rituals in their worship: pray towards Mecca; the Church-goers- those who attend church regularly.

(ii) The Buddhists - those who negate themselves; the TM'ers - those who enter passivity, the social activists: those who enter activity; the occult: those who co-operate with evil spirits.

(iii) The Humanists- those who live by the golden rule; the charismatics - those who speak in tongues, the fundamentalists - those who believe right.

GOD'S NATURE

1. But the heart of the verse is - God can only be what He is - and He can only do what it's His nature to do. He is true all the way through to His nature. He is a unity - He can't do or be other than He is: Exodus 3:14. Look at the tenses of the verbs: "I WILL HAVE MERCY on whom I HAVE MERCY" - I can't act contrary to my nature - at this moment I have mercy on certain people and I have to express that mercy to them. The gods the Hindus portray act in a fickle and contradictory way BUT God is bound by His own nature. This stress on God acting according to His nature is even emphasised by the movement of the total verse: it's a movement inward - first ,the outward act of showing mercy, then the inward heart attitude that begets that mercy - the compassion. So this is the key to determining the kind of people Our God will receive as His own children and friends forever - it will be dictated by His nature.

2. What is His nature? Leviticus 20:26. So God will have mercy and compassion on holy people. That's why He said at Jesus' baptism: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased." God will have mercy on His Son and all who are like Him. But most of us would say we're not like Him. He is patient, we are impatient; kind, unkind; pure, impure; loving, unloving; unselfish, selfish; thoughtful, thoughtless. How can we become like Him ?

3. Only one way: Romans 6:5: we must be willing to identify ourselves with Him in His death to popularity, reputation, success, peer-pressure, His own wishes and rights -- to everything but God's will for our lives, and then we will be recreated, resurrected here in this body and life in Jesus' image.

4. There is a bath of clean water called Jesus' death in which you can immerse yourself -- and God has mercy on all who leap into that bath of cleanness.

CONCLUSION

I. That's why Isaiah 57:15.

2. And Romans 9:15 is true this morning. You know the little phrase "Have a happy day" face? Turn it upside down and you'll see the mouth and the eyes drooping - a sad face. It's the same with God. You will be able to see nothing but His face filled with wrath toward you until you truly repent and leap by faith into Jesus. Then you will see God's face of love as He really is!

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