

Romans 9:21 Accepting God's Judgement

by Ernest O'Neill

Our life is not predetermined by fate or heredity, but by our response to God's will, and our responsibility is to determine what we're made of and live for God's purpose.

Scripture: Jeremiah 18:5

Topics: "Gods Sovereignty", "Moral Response"

Description

Ernest O'Neill discusses the importance of accepting God's judgment in connection with Romans 9:21, highlighting the misconception of fate and psychological determinism that hinders us from understanding God's purpose for our lives. The right interpretation of being molded by God, as a potter molds clay, emphasizes the crucial role of our moral response in fulfilling God's plans for us, as seen in Jeremiah 18:5-12. Our attitude towards our vocation should focus on desiring to be like our Father-Creator, allowing God to mold us according to His purpose and will, as revealed in Romans 8:28-29 and Genesis 1:26.

Transcript

INTRODUCTION

1. Let's discuss this morning the subject "Accepting God's Judgement" in connection with this next verse that we're studying in Romans 9:21.
2. Now, do you realise that most of us here have the same negative response to this verse? We have-and the reason is that even we Westerners have allowed our minds to be prejudiced and darkened by the same great lie that has virtually paralysed the Eastern hemisphere. What is it?
3. It was encapsulated in a little Spanish song about 15 years ago: "Que sera, sera; whatever will be will be, the future's not ours to see; que sera, sera". It's the Eastern belief in fate-that our lives are governed by impersonal forces that dictate our future whatever we ourselves may do or want to do. Its expression here was in psychological determinism-the theory that what you are today is not simply influenced but utterly determined by your heredity and environment so that free will is utterly impossible. Now that psychology itself is moving to a more existential attitude, this passive acceptance of fate is expressed in our present preoccupation with the stars-astrology and horoscopes-and the most precious attribute that Our Creator has given us-free will-is being again stolen from us by our preoccupation with what sign we were born under or when the computer thinks we should marry.

4. So, when we come to this verse, we are so brainwashed with the idea that our lives are somehow predetermined by fate or our heredity or our environment that we immediately assume that this is just the same rather depressing truth that we are like clay in a potter's hand-just an inanimate, rather sticky substance that has no will that it can exercise but lies passively in the potter's hands so that what we become is absolutely and solely due to the Creator's will and has nothing to do with our response to His actions.

5. This, of course, is heretical misunderstanding of the truth stated in this verse-and actually that's why we feel rather depressed when we interpret it this way-because God's remaining image in our conscience still senses that this is not right and does not correspond to reality.

RIGHT INTERPRETATION

1. What is the right interpretation? Well, Paul knew that once he mentioned the idea of God as a potter, every Jew would turn his mind back to the great prophet that originally used this parable: Jeremiah 18:1-4. Then, as no parable is meant to be applicable in every detail and can normally be used to communicate only one main truth, Jeremiah expressed the interpretation that God Himself gave of the vision: Jeremiah 18:5-12.

2. In other words, just as a potter is limited in what he can make of the clay by its response to his hands, so God is limited in what He can make of Israel-and of you and me-by our response to His moulding. A lump of clay may appear to have a perfectly smooth consistency but as the potter works it, some particle or softness spoils the vessel being moulded and the potter has to rework it into something else. So, in Jeremiah 18:7,9, God states clearly that any plans that He has for Israel or for your life and mine are utterly dependent on our moral response.

3. Indeed, you might say that God has contingent plans for our lives-contingent upon how we respond to His will that we should become like Him and His Son, so that His moulding of us for certain purposes is utterly determined by our own response to Him as Our Father; like any potter, our Creator looks at the piece of clay, sees into the very heart of its substance, perceives what we really are, and, in the light of that, begins to mould us by revelation, experience and circumstances into vessels for beauty or for menial use.

OUR ATTITUDE TO OUR VOCATION

1. What attitude does Our Creator want us to take to what we do with our lives here on earth? It's simple-read the verse again: Romans 9:21. Forget it! Why? Because that's God's business-He will mould you into the vessel He wants according to what He sees in you, but that's His responsibility, not yours!

2. What is our responsibility then in finding our place here on earth? Determine what you're made of! That is what will govern what God can make of you. Like a potter, He looks into the very heart of your substance, He tests you by kneading you like dough with His fingers to see how you respond, and then He begins to fit you for your place in His world in the light of what you really are.

3. He is looking for one quality above everything else. Are you really, deep down in your real self, living for the overall purpose for which He created you? There is finally only one question you need to answer in order to find your vocation: do you want, more than anything else, to be like your Father-Creator-like His Son, Jesus? That's what God is testing you to find out: Romans 8:28-29. That's why God made you:

Genesis 1:26. First and foremost so that you would choose to become like Him so that we could all live together in love and peace. That's what you have to determine: who are you? What do you want--really want--out of life? Depending on that, your Creator will then begin to mould you into the purpose He has for you.

4. The nearest I can see in our ordinary human relationships is our response to our first girlfriend or boyfriend. Suddenly our Mums saw this scruffy, droopy little guy begin, of all things, to comb his hair. He actually combed his hair, and we ourselves know that most of our waking moments were preoccupied with being the kind of person our boyfriend or girlfriend liked-that's the only kind of attitude that is finally relevant, appropriate and realistic in our lives. What is your ruling passion? What makes you tick? What do you want more than anything else? God put you here to become like Himself. Is that what makes you tick?

5. Or do you answer: my car-that's what I think of most; getting enough money- that's what I most want. When the chips are down and I feel God's fingers kneading me through difficult circumstances to find out what my substance really is---what I find most is a desire to come out on top myself, whatever happens to anything or anybody else! Depending on how you answer this question and how far or how close you are to having your ruling passion-or pleasing God, doing His will, becoming like Him--your vocation will be either a complete enigma to you throughout your life, will be a poor second best that the potter is forced to devise, or will be the perfect unfolding of God's ideal plan for your life.

FINDING YOUR VOCATION

1. If we've settled that, how do we find our vocation? You don't: Romans 9:21. God does that! You don't fret and worry and try to work out in anxious nights and interviewing days what you should be doing. You don't get distracted by society's or peers' or parents' views of what is a noble vocation and what is an ignoble vocation, what is a beautiful purpose and what is a menial purpose for life, what people will praise and admire and what people will ignore and despise, what man thinks is suited to your abilities and what is unsuited to your abilities.

2. You rest in God's plain assurance that He will mould you through your present experiences and abilities and opportunities into what he has planned for your life here on earth, and more important, for your life in the real world that begins after this one ends.

3. But what do I do? Meditate, draw social security until I get revelation? God's word is plain: Ecclesiastes: 9:10. Live in the present, not the future, not the past-don't try to figure out your future or your vocation-that's God's business: you do now, with all your heart, what lies to your hand-what needs to be done, what fits most naturally your interests and abilities-and as you do that and obey God's other directions for a full life, He is moulding you for the purpose He has for you.

CONCLUSION

Thus, who cares whether one is a door-keeper in the house of the Lord or the leader of the angel choir, whether one is a mighty staff in God's hand or a little insignificant nail-as long as one is doing what we were made for-there lies perfect, perfect peace!

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