

Romans 9:23 What Were We Made For?

by Ernest O'Neill

We were made to be like God and to share in His glory, and God allows evil to happen to preserve free will and to give people a chance to repent.

Scripture: Exodus 9:27

Topics: "Free Will", "Suffering Purpose"

Description

Ernest O'Neill delves into the challenging question of why God allows evil and suffering in the world, using Romans 9:22 to explore the concept of free will and God's patience with those who choose destruction. He emphasizes that God's ultimate plan is to give us the freedom to choose Him and share in His love, even if it means enduring hardships caused by others. O'Neill also highlights the purpose of enduring with patience, showing how God uses adversities to draw us closer to Him and transform us into His likeness.

Transcript

INTRODUCTION

1. Why did God let Hitler live? That's one of the questions that we all usually categorise under the general title "the problem of evil"! Another one is "Why does God let little innocent children die of dreadful diseases or persecutions or wars? What we mean is "how can such things happen if there is a Creator and He is good? Either there must be no Creator or He must be evil and want these things or He must not be powerful enough to prevent them!

2. Last week we studied a verse in Romans in the Bible that explains all of these difficulties we have with the existence of suffering and evil in our world: Romans 9:22.

(i) Does God cause evil? Did He create Hitler with an overwhelming desire to slaughter people by the millions? Does He send disease and persecution? Romans 9:22: "God has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath made for destruction"? You don't make something that opposes your will and then talk about enduring it with much patience!

(ii) What causes these things then? The "vessels of wrath" themselves-that's why they are described as "made", "having been fitted" or "having fitted themselves" for destruction. They exercise their free wills and do what they want!

(iii) Doesn't God want to stop them? Romans 9:22: Yes - "desiring to show His wrath and make known His power". God loves every little baby lost in the Holocaust far more than we do.

(iv) Isn't He able to? Yes - He has often demonstrated His power down through history: in Egypt in 1500 b.c. when Pharaoh was using the Jews as slave-labour He turned all the drinking water into blood, killed all their first-born children, and sent plagues of lice and flies onto the whole land. You know the damage caused by the power of nature in our own nation year after year.

(v) Why doesn't He then direct the powers of nature supernaturally to destroy a Hitler the moment He hurts the first person, murderers the first time they kill a person, or disease the first innocent person it kills?

3. Romans 9:22: For two reasons God holds back His power to intervene this way:

(i) To preserve free will. His whole plan for us is to give us these 70 years to decide for ourselves whether we want to become like Him and His Son and share the love and life of the Trinity family forever as relatives. Only if we are truly free, will we be able to share real love with Him. This means He has to keep His hands off us even when we exercise our free will against Him and against others, e.g. would you stop Hitler the first child He gassed or the first moment he thought of the S.S.? Once you choose this route you end free will and therefore the possibility of mature adult love. Isn't that why Patty Hearst has to go to prison for the bank robbery? Without preserving personal responsibility and accountability by allowing the consequences of our free will to work themselves out we have no hope of a free society and therefore no hope of the flowering of love and its accompanying values.

(ii) Secondly, Romans 9:22-in order to give even Hitler or Pharaoh a chance to repent: Exodus 9:27-30.

4. Today let's look at a third reason why God doesn't stop others hurting you financially by their dishonesty, frustrating your vocational plans by their prejudice and unfairness, making your life unhappy by their own cruelty and insensitivity: Romans 9:23.

WHAT WE WERE MADE FOR

1. This reason is connected NOT with the principle of free will or with the repentance of the vessels of wrath BUT with their victims, the vessels of mercy. Paradoxical though it may seem, one reason God endures with patience that person who is making your life miserable at home or destroying the enjoyment you used to have in your job is "FOR YOUR SAKE." A bit like the words Joseph used after his brothers had sold him into slavery and he had subsequently been the governor of all Egypt-they came to apologise and he said:

2. Genesis 50:20. "You meant evil for me, but God meant it for good" - God lets evil be done. He has a bigger plan for you than you know about. What is it? Romans 9:23: He has prepared you beforehand for glory. That is--every human being was created, put together, designed and made-- for glory! A kind of Democratic or Republican political convention with you up on the platform and God crowning with jewels and everybody chanting glory, glory what a wonderful and important person you are!

3. No, it's more real and more immediate than that: 2 Corinthians 3:18: "with unveiled face" - the glory of God is God as He really is in His absolute beauty, absolute truth, absolute love, and at the moment such a sight would blind us-we could not bear such undiluted beauty BUT we have been made by Him to be able to look at Him with unveiled face and as we see into the very essence and inner nature of Our Great and Mighty and Precious God, we are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another.

John says in his letter: "we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is"! We were prepared beforehand for glory-we were prepared beforehand to be like God-as joyfully free as Him, as graciously loving as Him, as perceptively wise as Him, as limitlessly powerful as Him.

ENDURING WITH PATIENCE

1. Are we like that now? No, we're petty, small-minded, selfish, narrow in our vision, limited in our hopes, often frustrated, resentful when we should encourage, cowardly when we should be daring-much like the Israelites in slavery in Egypt, groaning and preoccupied with our burdens of rent or mortgage, instalments and taxes, medical and doctor bills, and like them in another way-preparing to remain in our own limited little lives however miserable they might be. Exodus 16:1-3: We feel that at least we can face what we have to face with the ability we have and we know where we are-what we must fear in a wilderness-an environment outside our control filled with unknown danger with which we're not sure we can cope.

2. How did God get them there? Only by enduring with patience, Pharaoh and the Egyptians, vessels of mercy: If God had destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptians, the Israelites would never had ended up in the wilderness-and they'd never have seen God's glory! Exodus 16:6-7, 13-15: the glory of God is the manifestation of the reality or nature of God in a visible, tangible thing or event which can't be denied. God prepared the Israelites and all of us to share His nature but we can only do that if we find ourselves in situations and trials and vicissitudes and circumstances that are too big for our own nature-impossible to face with only our natural abilities: Romans 9:22-23.

3. God uses the adversities caused by others' rebellion to drive us in desperation to Himself. When are you closest to God? When your loved one dies! Suddenly you are in a world that you can't control and that you do not know! When you discover you have cancer! When you lose your job! When a relationship is broken! When you lose all your money! We insist on regarding these times as unpleasant interludes in an otherwise clear, blue sky of security and limited development-why?-when we know from experience that these are the moments when we cleave to God alone as Our Dear Father and find some of His own Loving, forbearing Spirit coming into us?

CONCLUSION

1. I Corinthians 10:13. This is another reason why God allows evil to continue to continue and to affect us-it drives us to a power and a life that is greater than our own . We were never meant to live by our own limited life force. If we do, we will die our own limited death.

2. Philippians 3:8-11. Let us begin to greet it as pure joy when we are sent into various trials. We know God will make real to us the riches of His glory and we ourselves will be changed from glory to glory into His likeness by receiving the life of His Spirit.

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