

Romans 9:28 Our Present Respite

by Ernest O'Neill

We are living in a present respite from God's total judgement, which will end at physical death, and we must accept the new personality available to us in Jesus to avoid eternal judgement.

Scripture: Numbers 32:13

Topics: "Spiritual Rebirth", "Faith Surrender"

Description

Ernest O'Neill preaches about the significant division of history into BC and AD, highlighting the transformation from a selfish, carnal nature to a new, unselfish, spiritual nature through Jesus' death and resurrection. He emphasizes the choice we have to accept God's remade version of ourselves by faith or continue living in selfishness inherited from our ancestors. O'Neill discusses the consequences of rejecting God's offer of a new life and the importance of surrendering our old selfish ways to experience true rebirth in God's image.

Transcript

INTRODUCTION

1. Have you ever thought how significant it is that history is divided into BC and AD? Those of us who think of Jesus as just another human being explain it as simply the result of Western civilisation dominating the development of our present civilised world, but those of us who hold that Jesus is the only-begotten or superhuman Son of the Creator of the world see it as unbelievably appropriate.
2. Because we believe that in a real way the development of mankind was running down just as the years were-so that as, in our retroactive dating, history plunged from 4000 to 3000 to 6 BC, man's basic selfishness was so diminishing mankind's powers that the old selfish race was running down. Then that whole selfish strain was put to death, utterly destroyed in a supra-temporal, supra-spatial spiritual miracle in Jesus' death, and a new strain of humanity was introduced in Him as He rose from the dead. So now there are two kinds of humanity in the world-a before- Christ, carnal egotistic strain and an after-Christ unselfish, spiritual strain
3. This truth of an old carnal nature strain ending and a new spiritual nature strain being born is described by Paul in some words in I Corinthians 15:45-49. This does not mean that everyone born before Jesus' death was selfish and everyone born after Jesus' death has been unselfish-the historical facts make that abundantly clear. What it does mean is that Our Creator saw this selfish perversion of our nature

introduced and transmitted by our forefathers, foresaw with His infinite computer-like foresight how it would dictate our individual lives, and destroyed and remade each one of us in a pre-creation death of Jesus that was then manifested in space-time in 29 AD in Palestine.

4. In other words, there is a remade, unselfish, God-dependent version of each one of us sitting on the shelves of God's repair shop, and we have the choice of accepting that new version of ourselves from Him by faith or of continuing to live this selfish perverted life that we have inherited from our human predecessors.

5. It is the vague, shadowy awareness of this in mankind's memory that prompts us to try to reproduce God's inimitable miracle by ourselves. That's the God-challenging motive that lies behind not only Hitler's attempt to produce the perfect Aryan specimen of humanity or Mao's attempt to produce the perfect Chinaman, but also behind Ponce de Leon's search for the fountain of eternal youth and the present fascination of genetic engineers with the possibility of combining certain advantageous genes in a test-tube.

6. On the other hand, those who do respect Jesus' death as something more than an internal political or religious assassination persist in underestimating it as some kind of crude placating of an angry God by the sacrificial death of His son instead of the complete destruction of our old carnal nature and our rebirth and recreation in God's image through our submission to the Spirit of Jesus' Resurrection. Yet all God's dealings with us are aimed at a bringing us into this realisation. So we saw last week it is not enough to have a vague mental acceptance of Jesus' death as some kind of payment for our sins but God judges us according to our willingness to surrender our old selfish life to this death and our willingness to take off the shelf of His repair shop the new personality that He can recreate here in space-time.

7. Yet this judgement that God is exercising upon you now day-by-day is tempered until you end this life with mercy: because the whole purpose of God's judging your response to what He has done to you in Jesus is to bring it to your notice and get you to accept its consequences for your life. If you don't do that, you will die forever in your selfishness whatever miracle God has made available to you in Jesus.

ISRAEL

1. That justice mingled with mercy is what today's verse is about: Romans 9:28. At Mount Sinai God showed His people the kind of life and the power to live that life that He had made available in the lamb slain from before the foundation of the world but they made the golden calf, worshipped themselves, and exercised their own lusts. This they did again when he showed them the land of Canaan and the rest that was available there. Here's how God's Himself revealed it to Moses: Numbers 32:13. This happened repeatedly in the history of the Jews. God had to judge His people harshly to make it clear that they were choosing their own selfish nature and rejecting the new one He had available for them, but at the same time He held back the full destruction of another universal flood to give them a chance to respond to His Son's miracle.

2. So again when Israel began to worship counterfeit gods and powers of the people around them, God judged them by allowing the Assyrians to defeat them and deport the best of the nation, but He held back total judgement to permit their children to have an opportunity of responding to the cosmic miracle of Calvary. In fact, throughout their history until His Son's death was actualised in 29 AD, God gave the Israelites judgement together with some respite from total destruction.

OUR PRESENT RESPITE

1. The same is happening in your life today except that your present respite from total judgement will end at physical death-then there will no longer be a respite, but God's total judgement will descend upon you.
2. But meanwhile our continued present existence is possibly only because we all experience numerous benefits of Jesus' cosmic death in our day-to-day lives. If we actually received what was absolutely due to us we would be dead; instead we receive God's kindly mixture of judgement tempered by mercy.
3. How? What instances are there of this in our daily lives? One of the most obvious is found in the fact that we would all answer this next question the same way. Can you think of a moment in your life-whether in a car while travelling or in some disaster when you don't know what saved you from death? We all answer "yes" -either when we were young or old-sometime in our lives we have known a moment or moments when we were not in control of the situation and we could as easily have been killed as not. Our selfishness and lack of love for others repeatedly result in personal carelessness and recklessness which would naturally lead to fatal consequences but that God has built into the natural laws of the universe certain mercy fail-safes, the benefits of Jesus' death, that prevent our sinful selfishness receiving the total judgement it deserves.
4. Yet, at the same time, God allows enough judgement to come through to us in broken limbs, sicknesses, and confusions and disruptions to force us to see that we are not what we were meant to be, and that we are living by the dictates of our perverted, selfish natures rather than by the liberty of our Calvary-recreated personalities.
5. So it is with all the consequences that follow from our dependence on people's opinions and favourable circumstances and possession of things rather than God-the headaches and ulcers that follow our worries and anxieties, the overdrafts and debts that follow the covetousness and greed, the loneliness and isolation that follow the ruthless ambition and loveless jealousy-we would long ago be dead if God allowed His righteous judgement to work itself out upon us as we deserve.

CONCLUSION

1. But, as the life of the world goes on, God's mercy less and less counteracts the increasing power of self. Typical is the increasing resistance of bacteria to antibiotics we are able by God's grace to create: so that the world is fast reaching a time when God cannot withhold full judgement any longer.
2. This is paralleled precisely in our own individual lives: as we persist in rejecting the new personality available to us in Jesus, mercy increasingly ceases to draw us towards God, and judgement increasingly becomes God's only alternative until at death our present respite ends.

Romans 2:4: Today is the day of salvation!

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