

Orhue Enoma: Does God Repent? (21/9/19)

Scripture Reading: Genesis 6:5-7

Introduction:

With the busyness of life often comes forgetfulness of our heritage. Orhue is from Nigeria, but it isn't until he is immersed in some of the Nigerian culture that he remembers that he is in fact of Nigerian heritage. We are very privileged to live here in Australia, with all its economic and social opportunities. But with that privilege comes responsibility.

Great privileges come with great responsibilities!

When Orhue goes home to see his family at the end of each year he receives a warm reception.

Luke 4:14-30 - But Jesus, the Messiah, didn't get the same reception that we often do at a homecoming.

When Jesus arrived at the synagogue in Nazareth, as it was His custom on a Sabbath, He was asked to speak.

When he had found the scroll of Isaiah, He stood to read a prophecy with which they were familiar. However, what they didn't see coming, was that Jesus, unlike others, didn't apply this passage to the Gentiles - but to them! How audacious!!

They were so mad with Him that they tried to throw Him off a cliff.

Is this response far from us? We often think it is. But is it really?

Revelation 3:14-17 - The reality is that this is our prophetic predicament.

There is a specific reason that this particular symbolism is being employed. But before we get to that. Did you notice the uncanny similarity between the diagnostic description in verse 17 and the messianic prophecy Jesus quoted in Luke 4?

Why does Jesus say that He will spew them out of His mouth?

- Illustration: Imagine going to a vegetarian restaurant and making an order for some delicious meal on the menu. But when you receive your meal the tofu just doesn't quite look right to you. Putting your suspicions aside, you continue to eat your meal. Then, 2 hours later, you find yourself leaning over the toilet spewing it out. Would you regret eating that meal?
Is it possible that, in a similar way, God experiences regrets?

Genesis 6:5-7 - Twice, in this passage, it says that God 'repented' making man. That is quite a troubling statement, when you stop and think about it.

What does 'repent' mean?

Perhaps the most accurate translation of the Hebrew word is the word 'regret.'

So, does God experience regret?

Perhaps the most relevant modern example of the regret is accidentally hitting the 'reply all' button on a formal email. This happened to Orhue just this year when he was submitting personal documents to the University and he accidentally sent it to all of the students as well. Oops!

Regret:

We live in a culture that tells us to live life without regrets. We would agree with this sentiment (when applied correctly). But what exactly does it mean for the Christian to live a life without regrets?

What is regret?

There are two elements that make up regret: Agency and imagination.

- Agency - ability to make independent choices
- Imagination - ability to picture the result of alternate choices

In any given situation, the more agency and imagination, the more regret is experienced.

- Illustration: Imagine you have an important interview that could change the course of your life. Upon arriving at the airport to catch your flight across the country for the interview, you realise that you have missed your flight by 2 minutes. Do you think your degree of regret will be less, or more acute, given the fact that you missed it by such a small margin? Probably more, because you will likely be able to imagine several alternate choices that, had you chosen differently, would have allowed you to arrive on time.

Another reason that the regret in this situation would be so great is that we often regret things that we care about.

1 Samuel 15:1-9,11 - Is regret all bad?

Saul didn't quite follow God's explicit instruction. Then, when reviewing the results of the situation, God expresses regret.

As though He needed to clarify, God makes it clear that His regret is different than ours.

1 Samuel 15:29 - "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He *is* not a man, that He should relent."

See the following verses to see that God's repentance isn't so much a change of mind - as ours is:

- Malachi 3:6
- Numbers 23:19
- Ezekiel 24:14
- James 1:17

God's regret, in this given situation, is not so much about making Saul King, but in the choices that Saul made as the King of Israel.

"God's repentance is not like man's repentance. "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for He is not a man, that He should repent." Man's repentance implies a change of mind. God's repentance implies a change of circumstances and relations. Man may change his relation to God by complying with the conditions upon which he may be brought into the divine favor, or he may, by his own action, place himself outside the favoring condition; but the Lord is the same "yesterday, and today, and forever." Hebrews 13:8. Saul's disobedience changed his relation to God; but the conditions of acceptance with God were unaltered—God's requirements were still the same, for with Him there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James 1:17." Ellen White, Patriarchs and Prophets, pg 630

Samuel's sorrow:

Saul's bad choices caused the prophet Samuel to cry all night. He, the one whom God had given the gift of foresight (as a prophet), saw the implications of Saul's choices before they happened, and this caused him to weep.

Is it possible that God wept with Samuel?

Matthew 23:37-39; Luke 19:41-44 - In these two parallel passages, Jesus is expressing a sense of remorse. Why? Because, as you tell from the language used, He loved them! He had sorrow because of a change of circumstances and relationship - making Him remorseful because of where they had gone.

What are the implications?

- God expresses sorrow when we choose to do life our way instead of His way.
- God expresses sorrow when we ignore the messages of warning and comfort from His prophets (this is especially pertinent to God's end time church who claims to have the prophetic message).
- God expresses sorrow when we persistently choose to watch thins on the internet that we know very well He doesn't approve of.
- God expresses sorrow when we persistently hold onto that pet sin in spite of the spiritual and physical consequences.
- God expresses sorrow when we spend more time on Facebook than we do on focussing our faces in His holy book.

Revelation 3:18 - In the previous verses (quoted earlier in the sermon), God has given the diagnosis, now He gives the remedy.

One of the remedies, the one that we will focus on today, is eye salve for their blind eyes. Is this simply talking about ophthalmology? Or is there an illusion to a spiritual disease that needs a healing balm?

In all of the verses that we have referenced today there is a very real sense in which God has sent a message of insight beforehand.

God's regret is often founded in our lack or regard the insights He gives us.

Just as we experience regret for things that we care about, God's regret is a testimony that His regard for us is in fact supreme.

Conclusion:

Let us not only live life with regrets. Let us also live life without giving God regrets.