

## Jesus Meets Our Needs

Romans 4:15

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Would you open the Bible please at Romans 4:13-15 and you could see there the verses we have been studying these two Sundays, last Sunday and this Sunday. Romans 4:13-15, "The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world, did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression."

Have you ever told a lie and then you're caught out in it and you know that the immediate reaction of our old human nature is to try to prove that we had a very, very good reason for telling that lie. And we're convinced in our own mind that, "Okay, it may be wrong. On the highest level of morality it may be wrong, but I had really a very good reason for telling it." And the whole response of the human nature is, "Okay, let's explain to them why we told that lie." And it's just us, you know.

We just immediately want to justify ourselves. We miss an assignment, we know it's through our laziness and indolence, or because we went to a party, or because we didn't bother with doing the work, but when the lecturer catches us, the old human nature wants to justify, and rationalize, and excuse. And that's the attitude we often have to the Creator.

We know we're really very insecure in this spinning world and it's really because we have no idea of who the Creator is or what his attitude to us is. But our own tendency is always to justify ourselves. Instead of getting in touch with him and finding out what he's like and what he thinks of us, our own tendency is to establish our self-righteousness in some way. And the normal way we do it is we try to become the kinds of people that he could not possibly reject. We just try to become those people that he couldn't possibly reject. We're so good and we abide by so many laws, and we are so self-righteous, and we have so many good reasons for the things we do. And really brothers and sisters, a lot of us get into the confusion in our own minds because instead of ever dealing with the Creator we're always trying to persuade ourselves and everybody else, that we really are very righteous people and there's no reason on earth why a Creator who is at all fair would possibly reject us or make us feel insecure.

Now you know that last Sunday we saw that that isn't the way to get secure with your Creator, or to get right with your Creator, that righteousness is being right with God. It isn't establishing your own morality. It is getting right with God in the way he wants you to get right with him. And that, we saw last Sunday, was through trust. You start trusting your Creator. You start treating him as though he is your own loving Father and as if he's concerned about every hair of your head as he is about the Milky Way and you just start trusting your God and start trusting him as your Father. And you remember what we said, 'that faith' or 'that trust', God regards as righteousness. And he looks maybe upon your morality; maybe it's not good, but he looks on your trust of him, and he knows that sooner or later if you keep trusting him, you're going to become the kinds of people that he will be proud of. And so he makes you right with himself, and he treats your faith as if it were righteousness. In other words, he makes you right with himself through you trusting him.

You remember that last Sunday we talked about what you trust. You trust his promises. God, the Creator who has never broken his word down through centuries, gives certain promises to us men and women. And if we trust those promises God makes us right with himself. Trusting the promises means not only saying, "Oh yeah, I trust. I trust that that [indicates the end of the stage] side of the stage will not fall down when I step on it. But will I step on it? No, but I trust it. Yeah, I trust it absolutely, but I'm not going to try it." But trusting is really doing that, and trusting is really stepping out on what you know he has promised he'll do for you.

And I think a lot of us, you see, would get free from a great deal of striving and straining, and trying to prove ourselves to our Creator, and trying to justify ourselves to him by being good, if we would trust his promises, and we would sort of lay back and just sort of breathe at last, and just accept that what he has promised is actually going to come through.

Now, you know, those promises are very plain. Romans 5:9, is one of those promises, "Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood," by Jesus' blood, "Much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God." And God has given us that promise. And you can either keep trying to prove yourself to your husbands, and your wives, or you can try to keep justifying yourselves to your parents, or you can keep trying to prove to yourself that you're really a very good person in spite of the kind of life you live, or you can trust that you're justified by the blood of Jesus, that God actually has nothing against you at this moment, and he has certainly reconciled to you as far as he is concerned, because Jesus has died to pay the debt that you owed to God's law of justice. And the moment you trust that promise, that moment there just comes a great sense of rightness with God. And then God is able to give you his Spirit which produces a dynamic, a moral dynamic in your life. But you see, it is trusting the promises of God.

Or there's another one there in Romans 3:24-26, "They are justified by his grace as a gift." You don't need to justify yourself by trying hard, or proving that you're good, but as a gift, "Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus." And that just explains that you should die because you're not good and that Jesus has died in your place and so God is justified in forgiving you and God is willing to forgive you.

And loved ones, for those of us who are going around the campuses with a chip on our shoulder, always trying to prove ourselves to somebody, always trying to strive, and strain, and justify ourselves in other people's eyes, and rationalize away our wrongs, what God is saying is, "Look, would you stop all that charade? Would you stop playing around? I know what you are and despite that I love you and I've forgiven you because of my Son Jesus. Would you stop pretending that you're not a sinner and start telling me the things that you've done wrong and let's get them out of your life?" And that's the Father's attitude loved ones.

You see, Calvary is really the Father holding his hand up to guard his face from the effects of our sin and you can see the marks on his hands and the marks of Jesus' hands. And Calvary is his other hand reaching out and saying, "Come on, I want you. I want you." But it's him that wants us. And trusting God is a method by which God establishes our rightness with himself and so we need to just trust God.

We see of course, that if you begin to trust his promises in all areas of life, it saves you from

works of law. Works of law are doing what everybody is telling you, you ought to do to please somebody else or to get some result.

So I mean for years I was like that woman, you remember, that had the hemorrhage. I mean, you can look at it if you'd like to. It's Mark 5:25-29 and this works, you see, in every part of life. If you trust God his promises are made real to you but only if you trust him. His promises don't become real to people who are trying by works of law to prove themselves, or justify themselves, or get certain results, but those who trust him. Mark 5:25, and there was a woman in the crowd, you remember, "And there was a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians," that's you physicians, "And had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse."

Now I had often been in that situation and I think some of you have been. "She had heard the reports about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, 'If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well.' And immediately the hemorrhage ceased; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease." Now, I would certainly like that in my own physical life and I was trying to do all the things that I could read that I should do to keep this sickness away. And then at last I trusted what the Psalmist said, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases." And I saw that that was a promise that God had given me, that he would heal my disease. And I stopped striving and straining and obeying all the things that I was trying to obey to get rid of the sickness, and I trusted God, and the promise was made real. But you see brothers and sisters, the promises of God are made real to people who are right with God through faith not to people who are striving and straining all the time.

Now that's, you see, what the verses say that we looked up today, and maybe you'd just look at it again now that we've said that. It's Romans 4:13, "The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world, did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith." And that's what God is saying. And then you see in Verse 14 he says, "If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs," if it's to be the Jews who are obeying all the works of the law and who are not exercising the faith and trust that Abraham their father had then, "Faith is null and the promise is void." You can't inherit and come into the reality of the promises of God through works of law 'and' through faith. It's either through one or the other.

And then the question comes, "Okay, what's the big deal with the law? What is the purpose of the law? Why did God give us the law at all if it's through faith that the promises are made real?" And do you see in the next verse what God says the Lord does, "For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression." So the purpose of the law is to bring wrath and where there is no law there is no transgression.

Now does that mean that the law was bad? We'll come back to that verse in a moment, but does that mean the law is bad? Does that mean we should ignore the law, that we should defy the law, that we should cut the law apart and say, "That's the Old Testament dispensation? You don't bother with the law now we're living by faith and trust in God"? Well, that is not what God's word says. Romans 7:12, "So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good." No, God's word doesn't say the law is bad.

How then does the law bring wrath? Well, this way: the law says, "I'm going to describe to you the life of a man who trusts God implicitly. A man who trusts God implicitly will have no other God

before God the Father of Jesus. A man who loves God implicitly will not commit adultery. A man who trusts God completely will never steal. A man who trusts God completely will not covet anything that is his neighbors. A man who trusts God completely will not bear false witness against his neighbor." In other words, the law reveals to us what the life of a man who trusts God is like so that we come to the law and we see, "Ah, I have that kind of life so I know I trust God," or, "I have not that kind of life so I know I don't trust God."

But the purpose of the law is to bring to our consciousness the fact of whether we're trusting God or not trusting God. That is its purpose, brothers and sisters. It is not to make us right with God. It is not that we may try to obey the law in every little issue and therefore please God. The law is there to examine our lives in absolute detail to bring home to us whether we're trusting God or not. Otherwise, you see what we would do: you know us human beings, we say, "You make yourself right with God by trusting him." We say, "Oh yeah, I'm trusting God. Trusting God? Yeah, inside of my heart I'm trusting him like mad. Really I am. It may not look like it, but I'm trusting God. Yeah, trust God that's what we do. Trust in the Lord and don't despair." And we just wander around in generalities and vagueness and we say, "Are you a Christian?" "Yeah, yeah, I trust God." We wouldn't know whether we trusted God or not.

Now, God has given us law to describe the life of a man who trusts him completely. But that law is not something that we should strive to obey. But it is a diagnostic tool that will set before us plainly whether we're trusting God or not and that will, in fact, drive us back to God.

Now you can see that if you look at Romans 7:7. "What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin." That is, I should not have recognized it. Sin is 'not trusting God.' Let's get away from that deal that sin is drinking too much alcohol, or sin is swearing. That is a sin but, deep down the attitude that is sin is a lack of trust in God. Now what Paul is saying is, "I should not have recognized sin within me. I should not have been able to see that I'm not trusting God if it hadn't been for the law. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.' I'd have gone on coveting and I wouldn't have been trusting God but I'd have made coveting the norm for my race." And that was the situation with us men and women.

We had gotten so far away from trusting God or depending on him that we had made the norm what a 'distrusting' man would have in his own life. But it was only when the law came that we saw this was a life that does not trust God. In Verse 8, "But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness." In other words, the lack of trust that I had in God brought all kinds of covetousness out in my life. The law showed me that that was covetousness, showed me that therefore I wasn't trusting God. "Apart from the law sin lies dead." And brothers and sisters, we could live a life trusting only ourselves and depending only on ourselves and we would never know it if it weren't for the law. "Apart from the law sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revised and I died." And so it is, a brother and sister who does not respect his conscience or does not respect the law, whatever it is, a Hindu law, or an Islamic law, or the law of God, that person would be very, very happy, you know.

Some people say, "Oh the way I know that I'm Christian is that I'm content, and quiet, and satisfied." And remember what John Wesley said, "So was a cow chewing grass in the field." And so it is, you see, with a non-Christian, with a person who doesn't know any law and doesn't bother with the law. That person is really very happy and he doesn't know that he's not trusting his God and will never know until he eventually meets him face-to-face on the last day. But the purpose of the

law is to expose our lack of trust in God to us. It exposes sin to us which is a lack of trust in God.

And you see what the verse says that we're studying this morning in Romans 4:15b, "But where there is no law there is no transgression." And that's true, if there were no law we would never know we weren't trusting God. We would never know we weren't pleasing him. And though there is no law nobody knows they're doing wrong. And above all sin, distrust in God, rebellion against God lies hidden and unrecognized.

But it's still there and it's still going to destroy you at the last day because it's that lack of trust in God that prevents him giving you supernatural, eternal, uncreated life. And without that trust he cannot give you that life. And without that life you will die at the end of this life and go into outer darkness. And you see, you never know any of that unless there's a law.

My wife said that she's glad that we got a dog because it takes the illustrations away from her. I'm sure she's miserably embarrassed, yeah she is. So, we've a little dog, a little Yorkshire. I've told you about him. And he's that size, [with his hands shows about 6 inches (15 cm) high] a miserable little soul. And at the beginning -- I think he's six months old -- we've had him I think about a month now. And at the beginning my wife would call him and he would go trotting over to her. And it seemed, boy, he was really very obedient: he'd go just when she called him. And I would call him once or twice and sometimes he would come and sometimes he wouldn't, but I thought, "Well, that isn't important. I mean, she gives him the food that's why." And then it began to come home to me, "but he has a little miserable rebellious will that really we're just allowing to develop and lie there." And so I began to try to teach him obedience, and I got the lead, and said, "Choux," -- that's his name, it's a wild name. Choux, it's French for cabbage and it's what a lover -- yeah. (Gentlemen, don't marry an Irish lady.) When a French boyfriend loves his girlfriend he says, "Mon Choux je t'aime." "My cabbage I love you."

We call him Choux, and I would pull the old lead and say, "Choux!" And he would stand there and wouldn't move. And you could see the rebellion in his eyes. And I'd call him again and he wouldn't move.

And loved ones, really the old independence and rebellion was there but it never came out until I began to give him some commandments. And it was lying there all the time. And I think many of us do this with old Spock's [Star Trek character] help. I think many of us do this with our children, we let the old rebellion and independence lie there and we never really bring it out, or expose it by ever telling them to do anything. And it was only when commandments began to come that I began to see that the little animal wasn't obedient at all. He was doing what suited him. He just went to the person that he wanted to go to at that time.

Now, do you see that's the purpose of the law? When Jesus says to us, "Don't commit adultery," and we commit adultery either with our physical bodies or by looking onto a woman to lust after her, then Jesus is exposing to us that, "There, you are not trusting me for your sexual life. You're not trusting me. You're not trusting that I will give you whatever satisfaction you need in that part of your life. You're grabbing for it on your own because basically, you don't trust that I and my Father know that side of your life, and will fulfill it for you in just the degree that will be right." That's the importance of the law you see.

God comes along and says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." We find ourselves committing adultery

either in our minds, or in our bodies. What are we to do? We're to go to God and trust him more. Do you see that? Not we're to go and by sheer will power try to obey the law, but we're to allow the law to drive us back to God, to expose before us our lack of trust in him. The law says, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." We find ourselves bearing false witness; we find ourselves talking about our neighbors, gossiping about them, criticizing them. What God wants to show us is, "Listen, you're not trusting God for your own status or your own reputation. That's why you're spending all this time running down everybody else to bring yourself up, bearing false witness against your neighbors, criticizing them in order to show how good you are, because you're not trusting me that I will establish your status, I will establish your reputation. You're not trusting me to give you a reputation and status that is right for you." And again and again, you see, faith is to make us right with God. And the purpose of the law is to expose our lack of faith and to drive us to trusting God more -- not to drive us to trying to obey that law for its own sake, but to drive us back to God, to trust him so much that that law will never be able to expose any lack of trust in it again.

So it is with stealing. "Thou shalt not steal." And if you find yourself stealing, it is God saying to you, "Look, you don't trust me to give you all you need," or, "You disagree with me about what your needs are. That's why you're stealing. That's why you're stealing other people's reputation. That's why you're stealing little things, because deep down in yourself you don't trust me to give you all that you need.

"That's why you covet. You're coveting what other people have, because you're not trusting my promise that I will supply every need of yours from my riches and glory in Christ Jesus." But do you see brothers and sisters, the response that the Father expects is a greater trust in him.

Now you see the great danger. The great danger is when we come to spiritual laws that we will not see them in the same light. And so the Father has been teaching some of us in the evenings that you are to witness [to others], not in your emotions and not just with your brilliant intellect, but you're to witness in your spirit. And Jesus has taught us certain laws of the spiritual life. Now, if you find yourself suddenly witnessing in your emotions, God does not expect you to say, "I'm going to get hold and obey this law. I'm going to obey it. I'm going to witness in my spirit and not in my emotions." No, the spiritual law is to drive you into a deeper relationship with Jesus to trust him more, so that there will come a time when you will be able to witness 'in your spirit' without any difficulty.

Spiritual law, you remember, is that you love your neighbors, you love your dear ones in the dormitories or in the classrooms, and you love them as yourself. You love them with an unselfish love; you love them for Jesus' sake. And you find yourself not able to love them with that love. Then God doesn't want you to try to get hold of your emotions and say, "I must love them the right way; I must love them the right way." Do you see you're coming back under the law when you do that?

What Jesus wants you to say is, "Lord Jesus, there must be some way in which I am not trusting you completely in relationship to my friends. Now, I want to trust you completely. Will you give me revelation through the Holy Spirit so that I can trust you more completely, so that I'll be able to love my friends with the love that you want me to love them?"

But brothers and sisters, do you see that the law, then, is a dear friend? The law is a dear friend to all of us who are children of God. That's why the Bible so often talks about loving God's law and meditating in it day and night. Brothers and sisters I'll tell you I love God's law even when

it has shown me completely that I'm not like him at all. That is precious. That is God's diagnostic tool going to work and showing that you are not trusting the Father deeply enough. Ask the Holy Spirit for revelation.

But do you see the purpose of faith is to make us right with God. The purpose of the law is to expose our lack of faith. The answer to the law is a greater exercise of faith and trust, and from that will flow a natural obedience. But that's the way God wants us to be.

And the important thing is really -- I know this is heresy -- but the important thing is not the drinking or all the other things that we're not supposed to do, or even the drugs. That is not the important thing. The important thing is that those things reflect an utter lack of trust in your God, an utter distrust of your Father in heaven, and therefore a great illogicality. If he supplied all that we see around us, and you still won't trust him for this little part of your life, then there is a great lack of reason in your life, as well as a lack of real faith. But that is the purpose of the law.

So I'd say to you this morning, do you find that the law convicts you somewhere in your life? Do you sense somewhere this morning where you're not obeying the law? Well now, that's God showing you that you don't trust him enough. And if you ask the Holy Spirit, he can nail that down to a particular in your life, and you can enter into a greater release and freedom through the revelation that the law gives you. So could we begin to look upon it as a dear friend?

I can't get this business where Christians say, "Oh, I'm free from the law, it doesn't matter what I do." It seems to me the law is a dear friend to tell us when we're not trusting our Father. And we're expected to love it and respect it and respond to it with trust, not with that old gritted teeth and the old will power, but really just with the trust of our Father. And you can trust him, really. He will keep his promises with you. He won't destroy his own nature just to let you down, really. He loves his own nature and he wants to remain consistent and he'll keep his promises with you.

I don't know what your need is. Some of you may be sick this morning, or some of you may have a relationship at home that is just pitiful and miserable, and tearing apart. Do you see that God wants you to trust him about that? To start trusting him and acting on the basis of that trust.

If you want me to tie it down, at home it usually means that you've stopped getting your sleeves up and getting into the thing and trying to put your dad right, your mum right, the brother right, the sister right, your dorm mate right, everybody else right. And you start trusting God saying, "Father, I trust you to bring about a change in them, and I'm just going to love them." And with the old examinations it means you stop trying to worry the consequences into A's instead of B minus. You stop trying to worry the consequences and the results of the exam into the right category, and you begin to say, "Father, I trust you with this and I'm going to do my best but I trust you with the results."

But trusting the Father is retreating from that front line and letting him take over the front line and you begin trusting and living in that. And it's really a good way to fly, you know, it's really the only way to go. It really is, and it's the Father's plan. The Father doesn't plan for us all to be walking around in strain and worry, striving and straining. That wasn't his plan for us, you see. Filling the psych wards, and running out of all kinds of drugs in order to get ourselves relaxed. That isn't the Father's will. The sun doesn't strain too much, from what we can see, to

get up in the morning -- probably because we're turning and it's not getting up -- but the Father's world goes naturally.

"Look at the flowers of the field, they toil not neither do they reap. Yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Now God expects us to trust him as our loving Father and then to do things, not to get money, but because he's told us to do them. So it doesn't result, you see, in a world that's irresponsible, because we still do the things, but we do them because he's told us, not in order to get the things we need. Really it's his plan for us.

I do pray that -- because, I know it's easy to listen to this stuff each Sunday and really what you need is revelation. I really feel for you because I can't talk to you individually and I'd love to. But really loved ones, it's for you, individually. The Father can work this kind of life in you if you start trusting him and stop just trusting your great self all the time. The Father will make it real for you. Honestly, he will. Whatever the old strain is, or the old difficulty, the Father can work it, if you begin to trust him.

If you're sitting there with an intellectual mess, I was in that same state brothers and sisters. You can trust him, you can stand back from the intellectual mess and say, "Father, I'm not going to stop thinking, but I am going to trust that your truth is deeper than I can see with my finite mind. And I'm going to move out on the steps that you've shown me, and then I believe that insight will come from that trust." And it will.

You know, if I can help you in any way, would you feel free to come down? A few of us stay around afterwards down here, and really just come down and we can talk or pray if it helps, really. But really enter into it, don't just sit there.

Let us pray. Father, we thank you that from all that we can see with our own eyes you do manage mighty movements of planets and galaxies, and you do take care of things that are far too big for us. Yet Father, by some deception we have again and again thought that only we can run our own lives and only we can sort out these business problems, or these school problems. Father, we believe you are able to do that. We would declare now our Father, that we're willing to trust you.

Lord, we don't know all the ins and outs of becoming a Christian, or getting rid of our sins, but we believe the first step is to begin to trust in what you have said, that we are justified by the blood of Jesus, and that you have nothing against us, and that you are reconciled to us. And if we would only trust your promise you will give us your Spirit of life to transform our own moral lives. So Father, we would tell you this morning that we intend to trust you from this day forward, and we intend to make it evident in our lives that we are trusting you.

Father, if we're involved with the tranquilizers or some kind of drugs to keep the emotions quiet, Lord, we're ready to take a step there. We're ready to begin trusting you to fill us with the peace of Jesus and we're prepared to throw away those things. We are prepared to begin to walk as we believe for your glory. Amen.