

## God's Law Exposes a Lack of Trust

Romans 7:5

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

If you read the New York Times on about Tuesday morning of this week, you would have seen an article by the inventor Buckminster Fuller and he pointed out an amazing fact that in the midst of all our lack of energy resources at this moment, if you take into consideration the solar energy that we are able to capture, not the solar energy that is found in the seas but the solar energy that is found just on the earth here and on the land, the dry land on the earth, if you take into consideration that solar energy that we are able to capture and use in the year 2000 A.D., allowing for the explosion of population that will have taken place by then, there is 7 million times the amount of energy that we need to use each day, available, really.

There is 7 million times more solar energy than we will need to use as a tremendously expanded people on the earth in the year 2000. It just brings home to you really that there is plenty of everything in our world if we would only use the stuff the right way but of course, as with all other gifts that have been given to us by whoever made this whole place, we really have used it in a wrong way. For instance, the worst way to use solar energy is to use the fossil fuels first that it produces and of course that's what we have spent our time doing, draining the earth of any coal resources that it had or any oil resources. But it is interesting brothers and sisters to see that our Creator is really an extravagantly kind Father to us and that there is plenty of energy and plenty of everything in our world if we would only use it as he guides us.

Of course, what we have shared often here in the theater is that he has provided for the internal world of our own personalities just as fully and generously. And that when you and I run out of patience and when we run out of hope or courage or the mind is no longer able to concentrate or we run out of comfort and strength that the Father is able to give us those things through the power of his uncreated life. It is possible therefore to live life of real peace and real ease. It is God's will that we should do that. It isn't God's will that we should live in strain and that we should live not having enough hope or not having enough confidence or being pursued by inferiority complexes. It is the Father's will that we should live in absolute complete joy and peace.

It was interesting, I went to Belfast, to my home to visit my brother who is a policeman and we walked down roads that we used to play cowboys and Indians on as children and he had civvies and I wondered why he was walking like this down the street. And then he took the coat off and had the browning 9 mm underneath and a shoulder holster. So it was kind of scary at times. But one of the things that we did was, as we all do when we go back to the family home was look at old photographs. And so we looked at old photographs and he had seen my mom when she died and I had not and he said, "You know she was exactly like this photograph", and he pointed to a picture of my mom when she was 30 and I remember her before God dealt with her over the disease and the sickness, the old strain on the face and the wrinkles and the worry and it is interesting that when all the strain goes out of your body, you're young again.

Loved ones, that's the Father's will for us. The Father's will is for us to live in continual peace, continuously free from strain. It is not the Father's will that we get the old wrinkles or we get the old frowns or we get the old strained look in our eyes. It is the Father's will that we live in continual trust that he is going to provide not only all the solar energy we need but he is going to

provide all the internal strength we need for our minds and our emotions and our spirit. Really, it is his will that we should live that way. Of course, many of us don't, you know that. Many of us listen to what I have shared so far this morning and we say, "Yeah, yeah we believe it must be like that if he had enough wisdom to take care of the furthest galaxy, he undoubtedly has made provision for what I need today," and we believe it in our head but we don't really live that way in our hearts. We don't really live in easy trust that God will give us whatever we need each moment.

Now part of the problem is that we kind of bluff ourselves that we do. We kind of get together in a theater like this and we say, "Yeah, that's it. We agree with you. We believe those things. We believe that he is a God of the whole universe. We believe that he loves us. We believe that he'll give us whatever we need," and we kind of psyche ourselves into it mentally and at last for probably an hour today and then Monday morning hits and it's not so easy to live in that.

Now, dear ones, God is anxious for us to know whether we are really trusting him or not and that's really why he gave us the law. He gave us the law so that as we react to the law, we would be able to see have we really the right relationship of ease and trust in our Creator that we are meant to have.

So that's the whole purpose of the law. It's not to beat us over the head. It's not so that we'll try to obey it so as to please God. It's in order to show us, "Look, if you were living in easy, peaceful trust in me then this is the kind of life you'd live. You wouldn't steal, wouldn't commit adultery, you wouldn't bear false witness against your neighbor." And so the law is given to us to expose to us any way in which we don't trust the Father. Many of us need it because our distrust is not too obvious. I think many of us say, "Oh yeah, we trust God. We trust him." And it's only the law that kind of proves whether we trust him or not.

An instance of it would be this, you've heard about my miserable little dog, that size you know, so I can put him on the chair. I was going to bring him this morning, but I didn't know that I could trust him. I can put him on the chair, his name is Choux, French cabbage, my wife chose it, blame her. So, Choux, and I can say, "Choux, will you jump?" And he's quite happy that he trust me completely until that moment when I say, "jump", and he has to jump into my arms and then he really has to check whether he trusts me or not and that's one of the effects of the law.

When God says to you, "Don't covet, don't keep walking by Dayton's window and coveting that fur coat," or "Don't keep walking past the car showroom and coveting that 74." Then it really asks you to check out, "Well, do I trust him to give me whatever I need without coveting?" That's one way in which the law checks out your trust.

I think there's another way, I spent one afternoon playing with Choux at home. Great, just up and down the room, you know chasing each other. He enjoyed it tremendously and in every way, he seemed to be completely submissive to my will and to obey me completely and utterly. While he was doing really what he wanted to do and then I said to him, "Choux, sit", and the moment I exercise the command over him, I found out how submissive he was to me and it's a wee bit that way with the Father. We can say, "Lord, we trust you implicitly. We have a heart of absolute trust and there is no rebellion in us at all," until God whips some command on us and then that command exposes either the distrust in us or it exposes the rebellion against his will in us.

It's a wee bit like it with worry. You say to yourself, "Oh I trust that God is working all things in my life according to the counsel of his will. Yes, I trust that." Do you say that that's true? "Yes, well I have experienced it. That's the way I live. I trust that God is in complete control of

my life." And then the job falls through and God's law comes to your heart, "Do not be anxious about anything," and then you find within you a panic stricken kind of reflex reaction that you cannot control and before you know it, you're wondering, "What'll I do about the job? Where will I get a job?" With the state of the economy as it is how...." And the old law, God is coming in and says, "Do not be anxious, do not be anxious," and it kind of exposes to us that we trust God until something happens that we didn't expect. And then we see that we only trusted him while things appeared to be going the way we wanted. Or you know we're trusting him and we're freed from worry and we say, "Yeah, we are not anxious for anything. By prayer and supplication we let their request be made known onto God."

Then, suddenly a situation crops up at home where the whole home seems to be falling apart or where our exams don't turn out the way we wanted them to and then the law of God comes in and says, "Trust God because he works all things according to the counsel of his will." And we say, "Yeah, well I really do trust him, I do trust him", but we find within us that there is something inside that says, "Yeah, I trust him but is he going to work it out the way I want him to?" And we begin to find that is a bit like the little dog. It's not simply that we don't trust him but along with a wee bit of distrust, there is what the Bible talks about in this verse that we're studying today, there is a passion of sin.

'Pathemata' is the Greek and its translated 'sinful passions' in our RSV but its actually the passions of our sin are aroused by the law and we begin to find that it's not simply that we don't trust him but there's a passion that goes along with that that says, "Well, we trust him but is he going to work it out the way we want." And there seems to be a desire inside us that is strongly opposed to the possibility that God may work things in a way that is different to our wishes. So loved ones, the law exposes to us not only our distrust but exposes to us also a more sinister kind of thing that is actually just strong self-will.

I think you can see it again if you look at one of the laws that God has given in Exodus 20:15, it's one really that you know well without looking up. Exodus 20:15, "You shall not steal." And we see ourselves that obviously if we're trusting him for everything that we need, who needs to steal? If the Father is our dear Father and he won't leave us without anything, well, we don't need to steal anyway, and so we say, "Yeah, yeah I trust the Father."

Then the law begins to bear in upon you about fiddling the income tax returns and the Holy Spirit begins to apply the law to you in terms of stealing God's tithe from him because you don't give a tithe to him of your money. And the law begins to bear in upon you about stealing God's fellowship time from him because you don't pray to him each day. And the law begins to bear in upon you about stealing people's reputation from them through criticizing them.

You know what happens. The law seems to lay bare a passion that you never knew was there. There seem to rise up within you, a great self-justifying rationalizing attitude that says, "Oh, this is ridiculous. You don't apply the law in that kind of particular way. Stealing is just going in and stealing something that doesn't belong to you." And you begin to be aware that there is with your distrust of God, there is a passion that rises up against God and says, "You have no right to require these things from me".

Loved ones, that's what the Bible means when it says in that verse that we're studying today that the passions of our sins are aroused by God's law. Maybe you'd look at it, it's Romans 7:5 and you remember we're talking about the value of the law to us today. Romans 7:5, "While we were living in

the flesh," and living in the flesh is just living as if there's no God, thinking that you're responsible for everything yourself "our sinful passions," and actually the Greek scholars will recognize that it's 'Pathemata tonhamarton' and it means the passions of our sins "aroused by the law, were at working in our members to bear fruit for death." And that's really what happens.

You think you're trusting God until his law comes in upon you in some way that crosses your own will and then you really begin to realize for the first time, "Maybe I don't trust him completely." Maybe that's where some of the strain comes in my life and then something deeper happens because you begin to find that there's something in you that rises up and says, "Oh but I do trust him, just not in these particulars." And you begin to realize that there is with that distrust, a real desire to have things go your way. It's not something that you don't trust God but you don't trust him because you trust yourself too much. You don't trust him because you want to be sure that things will go the way you want. You begin to find that there is within you not a great distrust alone but there is a great resistance to God's will for your life.

Dear ones, that's why the law is a dear friend because we need to see those things, because it's those unconscious distrusts in you, it's those unconscious little rebellious attitudes in me that are causing the strain in our lives. Believe me, there are a thousand little ways in which you are not trusting the Father completely with your life and it's the good purpose of God's law to expose those little places to you so that more and more you come free of distrust, more and more you'll come free of resistance to his will for your life. And you'll begin to come into a place of absolute peace and absolute trust, where there's a real freedom from strain in your life.

Brothers and sisters it is possible, it really is. It's possible to live free from the worry and annoying anxiety. It's possible to live free from the resentment and the grudges and the critical spirit. It's possible to live free brothers from the driving ambition that knots up our stomach with worry and anxiety about the future. It's possible to live in absolute trust sisters, about the future and about whom we'll be with and about how we'll spend our last days. It's possible to live in absolute peace and trust and the real purpose of the law for those of us who want really to trust the Creator as our Father is to expose those little moments of distrust and those little moments of rebellion and reaction against God to us. It is really possible to come into that.

So when God zeroes in on you with one of his commandments and you find that it's becoming a little heavy to bear and it's not quite so easy not to commit adultery or it's not quite so easy to look on to a woman without lusting after her in your heart. Or it's not quite so easy to avoid bearing false witness against your neighbor by gossip and criticism. Then look in there and ask the Holy Spirit, "Where am I not trusting my Father?" Because you can be sure of it that if you're trusting your Creator as your loving Father with all your heart, you'll have no trouble with the commandments.

The commandments are only troublesome to us when we're not trusting him completely. So you know the little dog, I call to him and he does jump into my arms because he has done it again and again and I have never let him fall so he knows, so the command is easy to obey and so it is with us.

So loved ones, it really just came home to me again, while I was away these two weeks it is really just true that in every situation however difficult the obstacles may be, it is possible to live in absolute trust and free from strain because we've a dear Father. He loves you with all his heart and there isn't courage that you need that he will not give you. There isn't patience that you need that he will not give you freely through His Holy Spirit. Loved ones, would you just welcome those times when God's law seems to cross you. All he is doing is showing you how to enter into greater trust.

That's really true. Let's all remain about 30 or 20 all our lives we're done with the old strain and the wrinkles and just peace. That's what the world wants to see, you see. Let's pray.

Dear Father, we thank you that you have made us a family. So we thank you that it's just good to be back with each other. But we thank you Father too that we do not depend on the family for our peace. We thank you our Father that it is you, a dear God who makes the sun rise every morning, who turns the earth round in regular orbits, who has filled the whole place with more energy than we can ever use.

Dear Lord, we thank you that you're also our dear Father who knows each one of us in this theater by name and wants us to stop worrying about whether we're going to fall off the world or not. Wants us to stop worrying about things that we cannot change and who wants us to start trusting you so that you can begin to give us all the things we need through your Holy Spirit. Father, we thank you that you're such a God and such a dear Father to us. Amen.