

Deliverance in Disaster

Romans 15:04d

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

There is a place of peace and rest that you can enter this morning. It's a place where you can stand and have peace of mind whatever events befall you. So, let's share this morning the truth that God has for us so that you'll be able to enter that place. In the study of Romans that we've followed for so many years, at times we come to a verse that is so deep and has so much meaning that you really have to stay with it for a few weeks and that's the kind of a verse we're on at the moment. And so I'd like to point you to it, even though you probably know it off by heart now, it's Romans 15:4, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope."

And so, that simply states that the words that have been written in this book over a period of about 2000 years, were not written just by ordinary men, who didn't know you, but they were in fact written by somebody who knew you and you get that if you like to look at it in II Peter 1:20. "First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

And so that's what you have in this book. You have God, the infinite Creator who made you and who knew the kind of life that you would be facing today, he arranged -- incredible though it is -- he arranged to inspire certain men like Moses, and Isaiah and Peter, using their willing minds and their willing hands, he inspired them to write words in this book that are exactly for you and your situation today. That's amazing. So that's why somebody has said, "This is really a love letter from the Creator to you personally." This is, loved ones. This is a book that is beyond ordinary books. This book has a temporal meaning that applies to the history of the time and it is an eternal meaning, which comes home to your own heart directly from your Creator.

So I'd ask you to just consider this verse, "For whatever was written in former times was written for your instruction, that by the encouragement and steadfastness of the scriptures you yourself might have hope today." And to consider that especially, in the light of God delivering you from disasters -- disasters being events or circumstances that are too big for you yourself to handle. That God delivers you from that kind of thing.

The first fact you and I have to face in this old America is that disasters are a necessity. Sometimes, I think we old Europeans who are always fighting wars with each other, enter into that more readily, than those of us in America -- that disasters are a necessity. Disasters have to happen in this present world. Disasters have to happen in your life. Now it will help you immensely if you see that that's the case. I don't blame you, thinking it's not the case, because all of us are brought up with the idea that we have inalienable rights, and that one of the rights is to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

So we from our childhood develop the idea that our lives should include an absolutely beautiful idyllic childhood with perfect loving parents and kindly brothers and sisters who do nothing but encourage us all the day. And that not a discouraging word is heard throughout our childhood life. Then that we'll go into a school on a cloud of strawberry brightness and the teacher will welcome us

there and will encourage us and upbuild us throughout our childhood days. And everybody in our classroom will just help us to have a wonderful educational experience.

Then at the end of our school life, we will enter into a magnificent career that is just perfect for us where all our professional colleagues want only our happiness and our success. Then we will marry the most beautiful girl or the most perfect guy in the world and that we'll have absolutely perfect children, who won't cry at all and won't give us any trouble. Then that we will waft ourselves to sleep someday, and just sleep into the other world in the sunset of our days.

You must admit we are inclined to be brought up to think that; to think that life should go flawlessly. And the tragedy is that any deviation from that ideal creates terrible inner shocks in us. It does, you know it does. It creates inner shock. You half think maybe it's reasonable, but most of you react against it and most of you think this ought not to be. This shouldn't be. I'm meant to have a flawless happy life. And so, we gradually begin to believe, and this is the tragedy, we gradually begin to believe that our life is one of the odd exceptions that is a second-class anti-climax, and we begin to regard our life as living one disappointment level down from what we believed it should be. And really, loved ones, it's that attitude of ours towards disasters that makes us so incapable of dealing with disasters.

Now, in actual fact, that's all a lie. Disasters are actually essential. They are built into the very fabric of our world. You actually were made in Jesus for disasters. You've actually heard that at times, haven't you? That man is made for adversity. You have actually heard that. But we are so overwhelmed and brainwashed by this other lie, that we keep on thinking -- no, no, any disaster that comes along is an unpleasant "blip or blotch" on the radar screen of history and it should not occur and because it has occurred it lets me know that, my life is a second class experience. No, not so.

Well, you may say, "Why? Why did we get that lie?" Because in our own interesting way the American Constitution is right. Deep down way back, if you go far enough back, we have inalienable rights, we are made for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. So in a strange way that is true -- but why have we this misunderstanding that you talk of? Oh, because we believe a lie. We believe a lie that the power of evil Satan inculcated in our forefathers from the very beginning of the world. That's it. You see at the very beginning of the world, he leveled a lie directly at all of us.

I'll show you where it is. It's at the beginning of Genesis, in Genesis 3:4 "But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die'" That's the lie. And ever since that lie was inculcated in us, we were all brought up to believe that. And we were all brought up to believe that life should absolutely be perfect and that there is nothing that should occur in our lives that we cannot handle by our own ability and power and it all stems from that lie.

Here is how it came about. God said to us, "Look, there is a tree of life. That's me and my life and my friendship for you. I know where all the oil is and where all the coal is, I know why I've put you here on earth; I know what I've put you here to do. Now, if you live in trust in me and stay close to me, I'll tell you that. I'll show you how to unlock all the treasures in the universe; I'll show you how to live your life. You trust me, and your life will have order and peace and destiny in it. And you'll have a sense of identity. But if you don't trust me and you decide to resolve right and wrong for yourself, you establish your own knowledge of good and evil, you decide what is good for you and what is evil and you decide to live by your own wits and your own cleverness and you decide to do what you want to do in this world, rather than what I want you to do.

Then you lose touch with me and you lose a sense of your identity and you lose a sense of your direction in your place in this universe. But, more than that, I am so determined that you will not sink into a life of deception, where you think that you are living close to me and you are not at all, where you think you're living in trust of me and you are living in trust of yourself, because I put you in charge of this world. If you lose touch with me, the world itself will lose touch with me. And I've arranged it that way, because I want your environment to remind you constantly that you're not living in trust of me and so I'll tell you certain things will happen, if you lose touch with me in this natural world, which I have designed." And I'll show you what those things are, loved ones.

They are in Genesis and God lists some of them very clearly. Genesis 3:16 and it starts with you ladies and with bearing children. It's Genesis 3:16, "To the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." Before you would have had some pain, but now the pain will increase, because of your lack of trust in me and your sense of insecurity and that pain will be a signal to you, this is not the way it was meant to be. "And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree, of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you."

The ground was planned by me to bring up crops in a beautiful way without any weeds or without any nettles, but now, "cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return." And God said, "The whole world will suffer from your own fall out of my fellowship, the whole fallen world will experience disintegration. There will be earthquakes and tornadoes. This is all to be a sign to you that things are not the way they were meant to be. In other words, there will be disasters that will continue to work in your world as messages from me, that all is not right."

Satan said, "Not so. You will not die -- don't believe it. These things won't happen." And from that time on, Satan has spread a deceptive healthy minded philosophy that tries to encourage us all to think "there is nothing wrong, there's been no fall, we haven't offended our God." This is the way he made the world kind of blotchy and kind of messy, but we by our own power I am glad to say, can make it perfect and so you will not die. There won't be disasters in your life and if they are, they are things that you should not have to bear. They are just proof that God didn't do a good job. And so there is a healthy minded philosophy that refuses to believe in the reality of the fall and continues to try to brainwash you and me to believe that life will go on flawlessly and beautifully and any disaster that occurs in our life is unfair and should not be and will soon pass.

And God on the other side is saying, "My children, you have failed to trust me and because of that I allowed the whole natural world to be subjected to futility and frustration, so that you would know that you are not right with me. I am allowing disasters to occur in this world to drive you back to me and to bring you to a place where you depend upon me again." That's why disasters occur. And loved ones, that's why disasters are a necessity. And our dear Father says that lovingly to you this morning, he says to you, "Look, I've arranged for things to happen in your life, that are too big for you to handle yourself, because, don't you see, reality is that you can't handle things yourself."

"Don't you see that? Reality is that I could give you some little task as I do. I give you some

little things that you can do. I give you some little piano notes to play, I'll give some little guitar to play, I'll give you some poetry that you can remember, and I'll give you a little job that gives you a little satisfaction. But don't you realize that at any moment I can drop on you just a little thing that will destroy you absolutely. You in fact can't do anything. You don't even know how to stay on the earth when you are upside down in Australia. It is just me that holds you on there from the bottom."

In fact you remember if you look at the New York Times, for years he says, you've thought it was gravity that pulled you down. Now you realize that there is another force coming up all the time that makes a leaf fall more gently than a hammer. And of course we, great scientists, are just catching up with that.

But the Father says, "Look I have arranged all this and I have arranged events to come into your life to remind you that reality is that you are a creature, I am the creator. I am the creator. You are not the creator. I am the creator. I am the one that holds this earth in position. I am the one that arranges the Milky Way. I am the one that holds the air at the right pressures, so that you don't implode or explode. I am the one that does that. Now, I want you to realize that and so, my children, constantly in your life there will be disasters. Do you know what the disaster is? 'Dis' is apart; blow apart in Latin and 'aster' is a star, Astro. There will be blowing apart of the stars; the stars which the pagans think are the things that govern our lives. At times there'll be events in your life that blow everything apart, and the reason is that I want you to see that finally you are dependent upon me and if you come to me, I will deliver you in those disasters. Nay, more than that, I am bound to deliver you in the disasters, because that's why I allowed the disasters to occur. I allow the disasters to occur, not so that you'll suffer, not so that you'll just see your creatureliness, but so that you will experience my power and so that you'll trust me. That's the whole purpose of the disasters: to bring you into that trusting relationship to me again."

So brothers and sisters, can you see actually that God has to deliver you from the disasters? It's amazing. God has to deliver you from the disasters. He doesn't have an option as far as his own nature is concerned. The whole reason for the disasters is so that he can deliver you. He is just waiting for you to turn to him. There is no question of whether he'll deliver you or not, the only question is, whether you'll turn to him and trust him to deliver you.

There are so many instances if you look at the dear lady in I King 17:8 because I think a lot of us feel, oh he'll deliver the big guys. He will deliver the important people but what about me? No, he is looking at your little disaster. I Kings 17:8 loved ones and it's a dear story. "Then the word of the Lord came to him, 'Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you.' So he arose" this was Elijah, "and went to Zarephath; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, 'Bring me a little water in a vessel that I may drink.' And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, 'Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.' And she said, -- and you see this is the situation that you and I often get into -- 'As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a cruse; and now, I am gathering a couple of sticks, that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son that we may eat it, and die.'"

That's what I mean by disaster, you see; those moments that you come to in your own dear life where you cannot see any way through and where you cannot see any answer but to die. We have to see

everything falling apart. That's a disaster. "And Elijah said to her, 'Fear not; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord the God of Israel, 'The jar of meal shall not be spent, and the cruse of oil shall not fail, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth.'" God said I'll make this oil and this grain last until the famine ends. "And she went and did as Elijah said; and she, and he, and her household ate for many days. The jar of meal was not spent, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord which he spoke by Elijah."

"For whatever was written in former days was written for your instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures you might have hope." God will do that for you. God will deliver you. God will deliver you, you can be in as extreme a situation as that woman where all you're thinking is, I can do nothing but die there is nothing for me left. You can be in that situation and your God will deliver you. That's why he allowed you to come into that situation -- so that he could deliver you.

He is only waiting for one thing and that you find in Psalms 91:15. "When he calls to me; I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will rescue him and honor him." Now you just put your name in there. When Paul calls to me; I will answer Paul; I will be with Paul in trouble, I will rescue him and honor him. When Marty calls to me, I will answer Marty; I will be with Marty in trouble, I will rescue him and honor him. When Joan calls to me, I will answer Joan; I will be with Joan in trouble, I will rescue her and honor her. That's it. God will deliver you. He is committed to deliver.

That's why he allows the thing to come into your life. That's why the disaster is there -- so that you will find once more that this thing is too big for you. You actually know that this works. You know this works, because you know that the times that you have been closest to God and the times that you have had greatest peace of mind have been those times when you had to throw up your own hands and give up everything and cast yourself upon the mercies of God. And you know that those have been the greatest times in your life -- far greater than all the other times when you've been able to handle life yourselves by your own power. Loved ones, God delivers those of us who call upon him. Now how does he do it? Well I think I have learned a wee bit about that that I can share with you and you can see it in the story of Joseph in Genesis 37.

You may remember how that disaster began for Joseph in Genesis 37. And you remember Joseph and his brothers had left their father and were far from their own home and Joseph met this man. Genesis 37:17, "And the man said, 'They have gone away,' (the brothers), "for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.' So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. They saw him afar off, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him. They said to one another, 'Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild beast has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams.' But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, 'Let us not take his life.' And Reuben said to them, 'Shed no blood; cast him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand upon him' -- that he might rescue him out of their hand, to restore him to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; and they took him and cast him into a pit. The pit was empty, there was no water in it."

"Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. Then Judah said to his brothers, 'What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us

sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.' And his brothers heeded him. Then Midianite traders passed by; and they drew Joseph up and lifted him up out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver; and they took Joseph to Egypt." And that was the beginning you remember of a long series of disasters where he was sold as a slave to the Egyptians.

And then at the very end of his life you remember, turn to the very end of the book of Genesis, Genesis 50:15. "When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, -- by this time you remember Joseph had become the Governor of Egypt, 'It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil which we did to him.' So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, 'Your father gave this command before he died, 'Say to Joseph, Forgive, I pray you,'-- they were afraid -- 'the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.' And now, we pray you; forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him, and said, 'Behold, we are your servants.' But Joseph said them, 'Fear not, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today."

That's the way God will work with you if there is some disaster that has befallen you or some event or series of situations that have come into your life that are too big for you to handle. Don't demand that God will do it instantly. I think that's where we miss it. We pray to God and we ask him to deliver us and then we expect it to come tomorrow. That's not the way God works.

Now let me encourage your hearts. I am not coming with that old stuff, "Oh yes, somehow by sheer luck it'll work out right." No, it's just that God doesn't work that silly magician-like way and swoop down from the clouds, lift you up, and take you away. He doesn't work that way because he is so great and magnificent that he has built this whole thing into his providence for you. He has built it all in. You remember the instance of the carpet weaver that is weaving that beautiful Persian carpet and then he goes away for lunch, comes back after the apprentice has been working on it, and there the apprentice has put up a big blue thread right through the middle of the red and the carpet weaver doesn't rip it out. He weaves it into the pattern so cleverly and so skillfully that you would never know there had been an error at all.

That's the way God's providence works in your life. In Christ's death he has crucified the world. He has destroyed the abilities of the principalities and powers to blow your life apart. He has destroyed their power and he is able to come in and weave the disaster into your life so that it doesn't bring about the evil that Satan had planned for you. But God works the whole thing around so that your life does not differ in one iota from the original dream that God had. God works your whole life together so that the disaster fits right in and you are able to look back and see -- what disaster? No disaster. God never closes a door unless he has a better one to open before you. The Father works your life gradually so that all disaster is worked out of it. Loved ones, the Father does it. I give you my word, I testify from my own experience. The Lord will answer you if you call upon him and he will deliver you from disasters and he will bring your life into the fullness of his plan for you. He works all things according to the counsel of his will, trust him. Trust him.

Don't be like a little child who finds that you're suddenly down a dirty little lane instead of this beautiful clean main road that you were traveling. And you suddenly find you are down a dirty little lane and you suddenly start screaming and are worried and anxious, "I am losing my way, I am losing my way." Now look up and say, "Father, it probably wasn't your ideal will for me to be down here but

I am confident that your love is still the same towards me and you are going to bring me through this and out of it and I am going to be better because of it." Loved ones, that's it.

And for any of you who say, "Brother, the old people used to tell me that kind of fairy story; 'it'll be hard at the time but it will be better later on.'" No loved ones, it isn't a fairy story, it's wonderful; it's a wonderful truth that there are no disasters for God in your life. There are things that Satan brings into your life that God has already planned to deliver you from and he has already planned to use to make you more like himself and to make your life fuller and better. I dare to stand up here and say I know what I am talking about on this one. I know what I am talking about. It's true -- God does deliver us. So cry onto the Lord; he will hear your voice and he will answer you. He's in the business of delivering you from disasters.

Let us pray.

Dear Father, I pray for my brothers and sisters this morning, especially those who might be in the middle of a disaster and can't see anything but darkness and gloom. Lord, I pray for them now but they may believe your word not mine -- but they may believe your word that when he calls to me I will answer him, I will be with him in trouble, I will rescue him and deliver him. Father I pray that you will now be able to hear the cry of some little one here this morning as he or she cries out to you and asks you to deliver them. Lord, I know that you are already there, you are already lifting them, even the very fact that they are beginning to cry out is a sign that you are right around them. Your arms are underneath them and you are going to deliver them right out of that disaster. And you are going to make their life better than it would otherwise be.

So Father we thank you, that we can commit our way unto the Lord and trust in him and you will act because you are the same God who delivered the widow in Zarephath and who delivered Joseph in Egypt. Whatever was written in former times has been written for our encouragement today. Thank you, Lord. Now the grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God be with you now and evermore. Amen.