

Ephesians

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Preacher: Delves, Stanley (1897-1978)

- [0 : 00] This sermon was preached by Pastor S. Delves on Sunday morning, June 9, 1974, at Vysfold Chapel, Glowborough.
- Epistle to the Ephesians, the second chapter, the fourth and fifth verses. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace ye are saved.
- I feel sure that the Lord has given me this text to bring before you today. Because it came to me early this morning with unusual power and effect upon my spirit.
- For I have been in a great extremity of mine with regard to the services today. But this morning, this word came upon my mind.
- And it seemed to expand to my view and act upon my spirit in an unusual way. And it is wonderful, my friends, how passages of scripture like this, that we are so very familiar with, may sometimes open up to our understanding in such a way that we feel really amazed at the fullness and depth and richness and beauty that there is in these scriptures.
- [2 : 06] And that's how I felt this morning. And I do hope that this word will convey some measure of blessing to your heart, as the Lord may help me to expound it.
- The apostle had been in the first part of this chapter describing the state of those who had been called by the grace of God and loved with this great love before time.
- And if you ponder over the first three verses of this chapter, it's like pondering over the dead sea. For it describes the utter death and desolation that all men universally are in, in their fallen state.
- And then you come to this. But God. And it seems as though it brings us from the sea of the corruption and death of sin into the ocean of God's mercy and love and grace.
- And later on in this epistle, the apostle speaks of being filled with all the fullness of God. Now it did seem to me that all the fullness of God is in these verses.
- [3 : 38] I felt they were amongst the most precious, the most profound, the most enriching of all the texts in the Bible.
- They express the very fullness of God. For what is the fullness of God but the fullness of his mercy and the fullness of his love.
- And the fullness of his grace. These constitute the very fullness of God. And what greater favor could there be to us than that we should be filled with this fullness.
- Now let no one feel that there is anything in their hearts or their condition that stands in the way of this blessing. Or what more can we desire than to bring our understanding to be enlightened in such truths as these and our hearts to be enriched with such blessings as these.
- and in order to be enriched with these spiritual blessings they do need to be understood they need to be believed faith must needs mix with them and they do need to convey to us to some degree the riches of the truth itself.

[5 : 13] Now without dwelling any longer on introduction there are first these three truths on which we may as the Lord help us ponder and meditate and pray.

There is first the richness of his mercy God is rich in mercy. There is secondly the greatness of his love his great love wherewith he loved us.

There is thirdly the power of his saving grace by grace he are saved. So you have the richness of his mercy the greatness of his love and the power of his grace.

And then in the second part of the subject you have the operation of this mercy and love and grace in the heart by the Holy Spirit that is to quicken together with Christ.

For in that quickening operation of the Holy Spirit which is of course another name for the new birth you have God's mercy God's love and his grace.

[6 : 36] Let us then ponder over this and I wish you could feel as I did this morning when that lovely verse came into my mind with this text I stand amazed and wondered when or why this ocean rose that wasp salvation down to men his rebels and his foes.

My brethren there is an ocean of mercy an ocean of love and an ocean of grace in this text oh that we could bring our empty hearts like empty vessels to be filled from such an ocean of love and mercy.

mercy now first about God who is rich in mercy rich in mercy as though we are to understand that mercy constitute with love and grace the true riches of God at least they constitute the true riches of God in the sense that sinners can be enriched from them.

There seemed to me first of all to take a glance at the meaning of the words before we attempt to penetrate into the fullness a little this expression rich in mercy and it seems to me to suggest first that mercy in itself is the most valuable virtue or perfection or quality I know not what words to use but there are subtle words to use that mercy is an enriching quality in itself there is something so very valuable about God's mercy because speaking after the manner of men with regard to that which is rich and enriching quality is much more than quantity what is not rich in the nature of it no matter how much anyone may possess can never enrich them unless there is a richness in the quality

I might express it I think very simply indeed in this way it wouldn't matter very much what quantity of stones anyone might heap together to themselves they wouldn't be enriched they wouldn't be enriched because there is no valuable quality in the stones to enrich them but suppose those stones can be turned into diamonds and then they would be very rich because there would be a richness in the quality richness in quality matters much more than degree of quantity it's whether the thing itself is valuable now my friends God is rich in mercy because mercy is such a valuable such a precious perfection or quality in itself mercy but it isn't only that

[10 : 21] God is not only rich in mercy because mercy is so valuable at least especially from our point of view perhaps the first feeling we have of the richness that there is in God is when we are brought to feel how precious to us is his mercy because mercy is especially valuable to sinners one might speak of the wisdom of God and he is profound in that or the power of God and he is almighty in that or the eternity of God and he is eternal in that or the knowledge of God and that is past finding out but what would all this be to sinners what would it all be to sinners what sinners need above everything is mercy and especially forgiving mercy and because God is rich in that quality or perfection it means so much to such as without God's mercy could have no hope in him at all mercy is a valuable blessing invaluable whoever has God's mercy in their hearts as a treasure but whoever lives and dies ignorant of God's mercy lives and dies in sin no matter what else they have well God is rich in mercy as I feel first because of the value of mercy but then again

God is rich in mercy because of the degree and extent of his mercy so oh I made a distinction just now between value and quantity there may be a quantity without value there may be value without quantity but God is rich in mercy both ways his mercy is so great so vast so comprehensive he is rich in mercy in the degree in the degree of God's mercy it is an ocean of fullness of which every drop of that ocean is invaluable in its nature and I can't think of putting it any other way than that it is an ocean of value and every drop of it has value to us and it may be remarked how often this is made a matter of a plea by such as feel so much to need it

I mean take the psalmist in the 51st psalm have mercy upon me oh God according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions Lord my transgressions are such that it needs a multitude of mercy to meet my case to forgive all my sin to blot out all my transgressions my sins of thought and imagination and motive and heart and feeling and work all my attitude and informação and ■■■■■ to die and and your and and and and very you and can please don't hear?

I can tell to to there you have been a I can God is rich in the degree of his mercy and then take another consideration but God is rich in mercy in this that it is so continuous speaking on the human level a person may be rich at one time and then poor at another if they are improvident they may expend their wealth or adversity may come and they may lose it a man may be rich at one period of his life and then poor at another but now God is rich in mercy always never richer than he is never poor he is rich unto all them that call upon him that call upon him in truth he is rich in mercy because his mercy endureth forever from that deep fountain streams have been flowing into poor sinners hearts all down through the ages and I believe a flowing still but still the fountain o'erflows our woes to redress still more he bestows and grace upon grace

God is rich in mercy in the sense that his mercy endureth forever but God is rich in mercy and rich in mercy too in this way that being rich in mercy he delighteth in the richness of his mercy and to show mercy to sinners I don't believe in my own mind nothing in this scripture cause upon me to believe it that God delighteth in the death and condemnation of the ungodly but that is absolutely just and necessary that if men live and die in sin they should be condemned for sin provokes the wrath of God and attracts inevitably his judgment there is no escaping it but I don't read in the scriptures that God is rich in wrath and I read it but I do read in the scripture where there is effect that he delighteth not in the death of the sinner but he does delight in mercy here is a good word for you to listen to who is the God like unto thee that passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage he retaineth not his anger forever because he delighteth in mercy you think of that when we humbly and prayerfully beg of God to show his mercy to us we beg of him to do what it is in his very heart to do nothing will draw the mercy out of God's heart more than a sinner's plea because he delighteth in mercy to condemn the ungodly glorifies his justice honors his law

[18:31] I don't feel it delights his heart the judge of all the earth will do right there is no question about that and no one must rest their thoughts that God is so rich in mercy that he will never condemn sin in sinners but God delighteth in mercy because it is his very nature he is rich in mercy in the sense that he delights to be merciful to sinners I must come later if I am able of course to speak of the manifestation of God's mercy and his great love in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and the proclamation of it in the gospel and the communication of it through the word by the Holy Spirit but just now

I dwell on this first consideration that God is rich in mercy in himself and that is the next point but God who is rich in mercy he is rich in mercy because of his infinite and glorious being now God can never be poor in anything never because of his infinite being whatever is in God with God whatever pertains to God must in the nature of things be infinite because he is an infinite God and therefore his mercy is infinite mercy because it is the mercy of an infinite God he is rich in mercy because he is merciful infinitely merciful in himself this is a good point for us to believe and to ponder over because nothing can in any way alter the unchanging unalterable nature of God nothing no prayer can alter his nature and even the merit and sacrifice and atonement of the Lord

Jesus Christ never could in any way alter God's nature the precious blood of Jesus Christ never made God merciful but it made a way in which God could be merciful I love those two lines of that hymn we sang just now how beautifully these hymns often express things that I feel difficult to get into words it was Jesus my friend when he hung on the tree to open the channel of mercy for me that is exactly true the fullness of mercy is in God but there were difficulties in the way of his showing mercy and especially there was the difficulty of the law that condemned sin and sinners and of his just character with regard to that law these were great matters but our dear

Redeemer dealt with them all when he poured out his precious soul unto death and shed his precious blood that paid the debt that honoured the law that satisfied God's justice that opened the way for God's mercy God's mercy has been flowing flowing flowing from that great heart of his through that sacred channel of the Saviour's precious blood flowing flowing and it's flowing still and he is as rich in mercy as ever now for the few minutes left to me this morning let's dwell on the mercy of God in itself and of course first your mind will consider the mercy of God in regard to the forgiveness of sin

God is rich in mercy to forgive and to forgive first all the past sinfulness of such as are brought to repentance and to the acknowledging of the truth and to believe in Jesus Christ God's blessed son now to all such God is rich in mercy to forgive did they walk according to the course of this world filled with the spirit of it were they controlled by the prince of the power of the air that is the devil did the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience work in them did they have their conversation or manner of life in times past in the lusts of the flesh carnal sinful lusts were their lives entirely given up to the fulfilling of the desires of the flesh and of the mind were they by nature fallen nature children of wrath even as others but

[25 : 01] God's rich mercy forgave it all forgave it all whether it was a matter of years as it has been with some or not so long but with regard to all that sinful condition of the former state God who is rich in mercy forgave it all but it isn't only that God is rich in mercy to forgive all the sinfulness that has been in us ever since we were brought to repentance and first felt or felt to believe in the mercy the forgiving mercy of God how has it been with us since now by the grace of God we have not walked according to the course of this world I hope since then

I hope that our conversation has not been to fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind it is certain that such are not now children of wrath even if they were once pardoning mercy has dealt with all that condition in them in the past but what the need of mercy since then oh how great that need has been in us and how constant when you think of all the sinfulness that has been forgiven in our unregenerate careless days and then of what in some sense may seem to us to be even more distressing since the Lord showed us first his mercy the sinfulness since then but still this text writes on it all son thy sins are forgiven

God is rich in mercy to his children and then God is rich in mercy in this sense that his mercy is so healing to our spirit mercy must not be as I've often said confined and limited to the point of forgiveness of sin mercy has embozoned in it the sweetness of compassion now the Lord is rich in that mercy which is so compassionate and therefore often spoken of in the scriptures being tender tender mercy through the tender mercy of our God so on that when one is wounded in spirit there is nothing like the balm of

God's tender mercy a sense of his compassion and understanding is very healing and when you get the two features of mercy together forgiving and healing pardoning the sin and healing the wound and then consider that God is very rich in this it is wonderful it is really wonderful and not only is God rich in the mercy that is both pardoning and healing but very blessedly restoring he restoreth my soul it is sad there should be a need for that but there is on many accounts for one thing we need restoring because it is very difficult for us to maintain a continual close and tender communion in our walk with God

I have no doubt that there are some of the Lord's people and they are to be envied in that who do more or less constantly walk near the Lord to sit down under his shadow with great delight seems to characterize their spiritual life but I suppose even such do sometimes fall into a distant state of heart and mind and lose that sweet and tender and holy communion with their Lord but some of us have a great deal of trouble about this the tendency to backslide from this gracious walking with God we feel we lose the peace the communion the comfort the joy when our

[30 : 33] God is rich in mercy to deal with this condition and our difficulties and our helplessness in it for when we wander mercy finds us brings us back and when we feel far from the Lord in the sense of being in such a hard state and unfeeling as though our heart was simply not capable of such a holy thing as communion with the Lord well then his mercy comes and softens our spirit draws us again to his dear feet and we find that restoring mercy is rich mercy for when we are wounded by sin and scarcely a prayer can repeat the mercy that heals us again is mercy exceedingly sweet now my friends

God is very rich in this exceedingly sweet mercy very rich it is so deep in his nature it is so full it is so unchangeable my soul through many changes goes his mercy and his love no changes no so what can I say to you this morning here is one who feels God's mercy as much as anyone desiring to exalt it and set it forth it is as I said when I began it is like an ocean infinite shoreless pathomless we can only bring our empty hearts and our needy cases and perhaps our wounded consciences to this

God who is rich in mercy gracious God enrich my heart with that mercy that is so rich so free so full so precious Amen now let us close with hymn 914 beneath the sacred throne of God I saw a river rise the streams were feast and parking rise descending from the sky angelic minds cannot explore this deep and fathom sea tis void of bottom ring o'ershore and lost in deity 914 sea roans rock will res enter pond be seen me from the sofas

And in eyes and eyes and eyes lift me of love of see grace for your love Praise God.

Praise God. Praise God. Thank God we are That sacred body Of Jesus, The streets of the day of the day, the merry-go-lter-day, the streets of the night and day.

[36 : 21] O Lord, do bless thy word to our hearts today. And though thou knowest the difficulty of thy servant in preaching such blessed and holy things as these, that may not that hinder the blessing, may our hearts healingly and believingly receive the word.

And may thy holy name be glorified thereby in us. O God, thou art rich in mercy, enrich us with it.

Thy love is so great, fill us with it. Thy grace is so powerful, work effectually, graciously in our hearts.

And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the communion and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, abide with us all.

Amen. Amen. Amen.