

Rich in Mercy

Ephesians 2: 4.

Notes of a Lecture.

G. V. Wigram.

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"God, who is rich in mercy" — rich in mercy. We have in the latter part of Ephesians 1 and beginning of Ephesians 2 God's expression of His *grace* and *mercy*. The former contains the expression of His grace, and goes on to show, as the result of it, the expression which is in measure in contrast with it. The close of chap. 1 presents to us the person of the Son of man sitting in heaven — the glorified Man. Wonderful to think there are those who are connected with Him; that there should be a people given to Him! In verse 18, the wealth of God's inheritance in the saints is spoken of; almighty power is displayed in separating a people who believe in Himself in a marvellous way. In verse 20 to end, we have the man Christ Jesus sitting in heaven. He is looked at in chap. 1 as the servant of God, who can say, "*My God*." The term Christ, or the Anointed, always applied to Him as man. God finds His infinite delight in this perfect servant, and in His service rendered. No other resting-place could be found in which God could express His delight; and He brings Him up into His own eternal glory, places Him at His right hand, and draws the comparison between Him and every other power, marking His superiority. He is the only perfect servant God ever had. He was *obedient unto death*, even the death of the cross. God has set Him in a place by Himself. Both there and hereafter, no power is like His. *All* is put under Him. God has assigned to Him a place of peculiar dignity and power; has made Him the Head of the Church. One thought in my mind has been, that as children of God, as followers of Christ, we are not exercised about Him, occupied with Him, as we should be, about the *glories* of *His person*. If we could read each, we should. We have not adequate thoughts of the glories belonging to the Lord Jesus. I believe the thoughts saints have of Him in this day are very limited. They are not brought up to the mark in the present day. What is wanted is *a fuller apprehension of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ*. He is truly Man in the midst of all the eternal and divine glory of God; and there is everything in Him proper to the place that is given to Him as the just recompence of the reward for the service He has rendered. When God acted as Creator, and finished the work of creation, He rested, and man was called to rest with Him. Satan came in, death came in, and the counsel of God came forth, "the seed of the woman," etc. God's Champion against Satan took the place of a servant; went thoroughly through the whole work; measured everything; was Himself the test of all. He went to the cross, and gave up the ghost, and God raised Him, and placed Him at His right hand as the object of His delight. God found His rest in Him. He has triumphed gloriously over every enemy. He has won the victory — He who had a right to judge the quick and the dead — by His humiliation and service. We ought to be familiar with that Lord who has thus brought us to and with Himself in divine glory. We have in Him that which *holds* our souls, and draws our hearts. Amazing subject — Man in divine glory: He who was the object of heaven's worship became the perfect servant, and having accomplished the work, all is put into His hands.

In connection with His being Head of the Church we get mercy introduced; we are called to turn from Him in His solitariness, to look from where those who form the assembly are brought; we have to turn from heaven and its brightness to earth and hell's darkness. (Eph. 2.) You cannot draw a single characteristic of what you were save from these verses (1-3); all the good there is in yourselves as descendants of the first Adam is recorded there: *dead* in condition, and the walk according to the road

that the world is travelling. The world is a system made up for man to be happy in, out of God's presence. (Gen. 4.) Man sought, when sin and death came in, to amuse himself and wile away his time. This system has gone on ever since (world means a system) in different forms and phases. Look at this world, or system; you never find God or Christ in it; *it is not for Him*. If you put Christ on it, you cannot say it all looks of a piece. Nothing can be built on this earth and not get tainted by the root on which it is built. Do any doubt if this is true of themselves? that each of us is born belonging to a system that has nothing to do with God? I look at the Lord Jesus Christ as in Phil. 2. I see two marks: He was the free Son of God, and He never had a will. If I look at myself, was I free? No; I was the slave of lusts and passions. Was I will-less, like Him? No. What would you think even of a babe without a will? I remember my own babe when only three hours old. I said to the nurse, "Ah! that child has a will;" and before a week passed she could but own it too; even the movement of its little hand bespoke it. Christ had no will. Can anyone question for a moment whether you have a will? Don't you say, I like and I dislike? Did Christ say so? He said, "As my Father will, or will not." "Lo, I come to do Thy will." Even if it led Him to the cross, to bear the curse, only one will ruled Him — His Father's. Have you got a will that is so thoroughly curbed that you never have your own will? Are you never hasty with a servant? quick with your child? or impertinent to your father or mother?

Verse 3 takes up the Jews. If anyone wants a good character let it be gleaned from verses 1-3 ; every stone there that looks bright you may take for yourself. Saul of Tarsus had nothing in himself to deserve any blessing. God's thought was to deal with the Son of His love. Will my Son go down and motet Satan, and take the curse upon Him — die on the cross? Yes; He is the perfect, obedient one. Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honour. Then in these verses we get the contrast in man; all the evil of nature, the world, and Satan is brought out. What can God do? He acts in His free grace towards the Son of His love, and *mercy* comes out, which is a different principle from grace. *Grace* is free gift. God took notice of the *merits* of His Son; *mercy* rather takes notice of demerit. Man deserves — what? I can only say of myself, I deserve to be left alone. Put there is an antagonistical principle in God to that; He is rich *in mercy*. He does not look for any good in the creature; He bestows His love freely. The Lord Jesus had watched Saul of Tarsus, and could see not a single good thing in him; but God is rich in mercy. It is very wonderful how slow the heart is to give God the whole glory that He set His love on us. Whenever any creature has to do with God, God must begin. People get occupied with their efforts, striving and doing; all right in its place, but it is only as the result of what God has been doing. How can a dead man begin in life? We must take care not to confound quiet silent, workings of the conscience with being part of the old nature; it is a part of the new nature. It is not God letting men off, but He makes him who believes, one in life with the Lord Jesus Christ. If I have tasted God's mercy, what then? I am in life with the Lord Jesus Christ, quickened, raised, and seated with Him at God's right hand; I am a member in particular of His body. He has stooped low to where man was, and lifted him up into fellowship of life with the risen, glorified man, Christ Jesus.

It was the subject of mercy I wished to speak of. To my own soul it is very simple, when we see whence it comes from. It is an attribute of God Himself. There are two things about Satan in direct contrast to God. God cannot lie; Satan has been a liar from the beginning. God delights in creating; Satan in pulling everything to pieces: he has pleasure in destroying. If we take the question of mercy, whence came it? Who but God can look in upon the universe, and pick up things He finds in a state that He hates and abhors? What is the measure of His delight? He has raised Him, and set Him at His own right hand, and you in Him — "you," He says, "who have identified yourself with my arch-enemy, Satan; you who have everything about you I hate and abhor." Who could speak thus but He? Could Satan? No. *Man*? No; none but God Himself, and He only. It is a proposal that is utterly impossible to any but Himself; but He made the Perfect One sin, who knew no sin. Mercy is an attribute of God

Himself, part of the character of God which showed out when sin came into the world. In Romans 9: 14 we find it clearly and guardedly stated; verge 16 guards it: blessing "is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth." Man says, "I will, I run, and so I get blessing." No; that is not the way; *mercy* is the root, after mercy follows will, then the running, then the doing His commandments.

In Exodus 33 two things are brought out. We get first the occasion on which mercy is shown, and then the root — mercy. God takes Israel out of Egypt, God comes down to deliver them, their troubles increase, and what are they occupied with? Not with God's purpose of delivering, but with the increase of their toil. God brings them out of Egypt, the people turn their back on God while Moses is in the mount. The jewels, the earrings of the women, are put into a furnace, and out comes a calf. Could they more distinctly renounce Jehovah? It was only a few days after they came out of Egypt, and had seen God's delivering power for them. We cannot conceive anything worse than this, to say to God, "We have done with you." (Ex. 33: 2-9.) "The ground of my dealings with Israel shall be a thorough known ground." I own this word is to me one of the strongest expressions of God's prerogative, to do as He pleases. "They may dance before their calf, and put me aside; but I am God, who have a right to do as I please. *I will.*" People may call it His sovereignty. Its absoluteness, people say, does not put me on this ground with God. But stop a bit! Do you know God when you say you don't like to be put on His character? If Satan could say *I will*, there is an end to everything — he is a liar and a destroyer. What an awful thing to have to depend on the absoluteness of a being who likes destruction! If, instead of a liar and murderer, it is God who says *I will*, it is enough. Do you know Him? Then you are not afraid to trust Him. The angels themselves thoroughly understand there is no fountain of goodness, mercy, or compassion save in God Himself. Would you like to direct God as to your daily path? to direct Him how to bless you? Would any created intelligence have proposed to God the way whereby He can bless? Would you desire to direct Him as to the ordering the circumstances of your path? or do you doubt the perfection of His goodness? that He is the only one who has a right to say, *I will*? "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." "Though Israel my people danced before the calf they made, and set me aside, I will bring them back, because I have a heart for them. I will stoop down to them." The motive was from inside His own bosom. Is God to be the only being who is never to please Himself? He has a right to do as He will.

People often speak as though God had no character. He chooses to take the lead, and it is for us to be dropping into the wake of God's thoughts and plans, and, to leave everything with Him, to Him, and to Him alone; this is the path of blessing. Moses got hold of it. It is not only a declaration made to Moses, but a principle laid down on which He acts, and a principle on which Israel, as a nation, will be brought back another day. In Exodus 34 we find a yearning, pitifulness, patience in looking at that which He means to accomplish; Exodus 33 brings out the condition they were in; chap. 34, the character of God. "In me is their help." Our character as Christians will not get its proper development unless this character of God, as God of mercy, is before us. What is the proof I am not deceived? I can look right up into the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, and say, Thou dost not look as if Thou hadst a will to curse me — the Father has put Thee there as the Saviour of the lost. I say, I am ruined in myself. I cannot look at the Lord Jesus Christ on the throne, and let a shadow of question remain on my mind as to my safety. He is my safety, if I am a lost one. The God of mercy and compassion will never reject me; but God cannot allow the soul to rest on anything but God Himself. The Lord Jesus is on the throne, picking up poor sinners. His character is the same today; it is nothing altered

If we knew each other intimately, and had been in company with Paul or these Ephesian Christians, what a contrast should we find between ourselves and them! They were clean out of the world. Christ who had gone up to heaven had carried their hearts away. What a difference between

them and Christians now! People will say the world is altered. Is Christ altered? Is the Holy Ghost altered? If faith were simple in the soul that is brought to Him, we should be truer Nazarites. There would be a savour of God, of Christ, of heaven, of eternity, as we walked through the world, not talking about it, but as those whose hearts Christ had carried away with Him. If you set me beside those Ephesian Christians you would be constrained to say, "Bound up in the same bundle of life with them; but where is the power, the heavenly-mindedness?" They thought of nothing from morning to night but the Father's pleasure in heaven. Nothing will work it in us like grasping this principle in which God took us up at first. All of *our own* washed out, all that is connected with us. When I go to glory I shall leave all my circumstances behind. We want to *be Nazarites*, as those who know His love. May we each say, Let us be *out* and *out* for Him. If we would be living for God and for Christ, we must let this truth into our souls. God is the only source, the Lord Jesus Christ the only channel, and the Holy Ghost the only power. Let us seek more subjection to this blessed truth, to the joy of our hearts, and the praise of His grace.