

SERMON

PREACHED BY MR L S B HYDE

AT

'SALEM' CHAPEL, CARSHALTON

Text
Ephesians 2, verses 4 - 6

Thursday evening
16th June 1977

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ~~when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.~~

There are some important doctrines discovered to us in these words that we have read to you as a text this evening. If we are to rejoice in experience then that experience must be of the doctrine that is set before us in the word of God. Experience must be an experience of doctrine; it cannot be experience of anything else. Lots of people speak about experience, but when you weigh it up, or when you listen to it, what is the doctrine in the experience? We may therefore ask ourselves, when we begin to talk about our experience, as to what is the doctrine that we set forth when we attempt to speak of this or that experience. If we are to benefit our brethren, if there is to be a speaking one to another of the things of God, if there is to be a speaking of that which we have handled and tasted of what the word of God says, that which we have handled and tasted of the word of God - that is the word of truth, that is the doctrine. Now, can we investigate our own experience and set forth what doctrine it is that we have experienced?

After those few remarks we will look at the text itself. 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.' In these words there is a great and glorious doctrine, a doctrine

concerning the Lord God Himself, the Lord God Who is rich in mercy. Can we speak of an experience this evening which will open up the doctrine here before us? 'God who is rich in mercy.' Have we come to something in our lives whereby we can say: "Yes, I know that; I have experienced that; I know that God is rich in mercy"?

We find in the preceding verses some points which may lead our consideration of this point: 'And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' Now, that is the sad condition in which we once were; and if anyone thinks differently, then do consider this word of truth, and let God be true and every man a liar. We may say, or some of you may say: "Well, I have been preserved from going into the profane world." That may be so, and you have reason to give thanks unto God if that is so; but will you be free from that which is written here: 'Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world.' According to the maxims of this world, according to the spirit of this world. Don't you find yourself in compliance with the general trend of things in this world? Even if you didn't go to excess, yet nevertheless. if God has opened your eyes must you not say that there was a walking according to the course of this world? What is walking according to the course of this world? Well, walking according to the course of this world is putting myself first, and others, they must come afterwards. It isn't easy for us to do anything else but put ourselves first. Even now, when some of us may be able to testify that we are called by grace, it isn't easy to put ourselves in any other place but first, is it?

There is a remarkable Scripture in the Epistle to the Romans, in the 15th chapter: 'We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.' Now, if we look back unto those days when we walked according to the course of this world, even if we were philanthropically inclined how much of it could be said to be entirely free from not pleasing ourselves? There is much satisfaction to be derived, you know, from philanthropy if we have the mind so to do; but it is a very different matter indeed for us to follow that which the Scripture enjoins: Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. If you examine things and watch things, you know, there will be people, and may be you have seen it in yourself, who say when they are thanked for doing things: "I don't want anybody to know about this." But does your heart go with the words you say? Now, we shall need much grace in order that we may be delivered from the course of this present world. O, there are very, very few people who really wish to remain absolutely anonymous; but it is good when it is so. We take that as a point that may be brought to bear upon these words: 'Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.' The Apostle Paul says, and he knew because he had been through it: 'Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh;' and so on.

But we must not spend time on leading up to the subject, because there are much riches in the subject if only the Spirit of God would give us understanding of them. Nevertheless it is necessary to lay this background because it is by this background that you will be able to bear your testimony and experience this doctrine - 'God who is rich

in mercy.' God who is rich in mercy. Have you ever considered, if the Lord has set His love upon you and turned your eyes another way to Jesus and His blood, as to why it is that these mercies were shown? You would have to say this evening that it is because God is rich in mercy. It needed mercy to a depth which it is impossible for you to calculate in order to save your soul from going down into the pit. 'But God, who is rich in mercy.' How deep, or how great, are the riches of the mercy of God? Well, they are to be considered in the light of eternity, because God, when He chose a people, He chose them in eternity, and therefore, knowing what they would be, He was well acquainted with the great mercy that would be required of Him in order that the church might be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. We remember the words in Romans 11, where we read: 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?'

'But God, who is rich in mercy.' God, Who is rich in mercy in setting His love upon any person at all. We should ever regard the importance of this doctrine, that salvation may be said to depend upon the riches of God's mercy. We are made conscious of this. The blind men by the wayside were evidently made conscious of this. This is what I mean when I ask you whether you have experienced the doctrine here before us - 'But God, who is rich in mercy.' You will remember that those men by the wayside, when they heard that the Lord Jesus was coming that way, they said: 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon us.' Now therefore they believed that the Lord Jesus had mercy, and the Lord Jesus was the Eternal God. 'But God, who is rich in mercy.' They believed He had that mercy which would relieve them of that which so troubled them. We follow this through, and we find that the Lord Jesus Christ stood still. That is worthy of our attention. The Lord Jesus

stood still. Just think of it. But God, Who is rich in mercy, in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, He stood still. You know there were those at that time among the crowd who told the men to be quiet. It may be that somebody has told you to be quiet if you have been crying out for mercy in the same powerful and feeling terms that these blind men did, who said: 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon us.' But what did they want? They wanted their eyes opened. First of all they had the witness and experience of this doctrine of mercy.

We need many things ourselves. Maybe we have come into a situation where we have been in sickness. Now, what have we prayed for? I say: What have we prayed for? Have we prayed to be healed, or have we in the first place had the experience of this doctrine: But God, Who is rich in mercy? So therefore we have prayed: O God, have mercy upon me; have mercy upon me.

We come to another well-known character in the Scripture, the Syro-Phenician woman. Now she wasn't sick herself, but she had a poor daughter that was in trouble and that was sick. How did she come to the Lord? Well, she sought the Lord that He would have mercy upon her daughter. As you read some of the accounts it is very clear that if the Lord had mercy upon her daughter He would have mercy upon her. Perhaps you have had that experience of the greatness of this doctrine: But God, Who is rich in mercy. It has caused you to cry for mercy, believing that God is rich in mercy. The Apostle Paul, in the days before he was called by grace, was in great need of mercy. So were we before we were called by grace, if we have been called by grace. We haven't got to have a black record outwardly, although some do, in order to need the Lord's mercy. It is what God shows to us of that which is within.

Our staggering faith gives way to doubt;
Our courage yields to fear;
Shocked at the sight, we straight cry out,
"Can ever God dwell here?"

If you have felt the force of those lines then surely it will bring you face to face with this doctrine. Do you believe it? 'But God, who is rich in mercy.' I need to believe it, I must believe it, because if I don't believe it I can't be saved. It isn't an ordinary mercy that I want, it is that mercy which is rich.

'But God, who is rich in mercy.' Now, this brings us to consider that it is rich in its nature. Everything which comes from God is rich in its nature, because God Himself in His very nature is riches in the greatest fulness. 'Who is rich in mercy.' We now get a glimpse of God in His very nature of mercy; it demonstrates what God is. We turn back to the 34th chapter of Exodus. There we read that which only the Lord Himself proclaimed. There was Moses, taught of God; he had an experience of God. We find that the Lord descended in a cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the Name of the Lord. I have often thought how wonderful this is, it was the Lord that proclaimed the Name of the Lord. 'And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.'

'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.' Now this brings us into another doctrine - 'for his great love wherewith he loved us.' In the First Epistle of John we read: 'We love him because He first loved us.' There can be no knowledge of doctrine acceptably until we are born again of the Spirit. Now, it will be an evidence that you are born again of the Spirit if you have some little indication of the glorious doctrine and truth here: 'For his great love wherewith he loved us.' It is very important for us to know that the Lord loves us. I feel somewhat disquieted at times when I sometimes meet people who are at a point regarding this, as to whether the Lord loves them. I sometimes think that this is a matter that ought

to be brought to a head. You know, it is dangerous ground that you are on if you are at a point regarding this consideration, as to whether God loves you. What do you say? Perhaps I can hear some of you saying: "Well now, I don't see how He can." Why don't you think He can? "My sins are so great; the deceitfulness of my heart is so dreadful." Does this ^{prevent} ~~forbid~~ the Lord loving you? Here is a revelation for you to consider - great love. 'For his great love wherewith he loved us.'

The Lord's love is known in many respects. If we love the Lord we should ever bear this in mind, that God's love is eternal. Our love has a beginning. It is a great mystery which we cannot explain, to think of the Lord having no beginning and no ending, but so it is. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love.' Therefore it had no beginning. We cannot love with an everlasting love, for that is going backwards into eternity. Our love will continue into eternity to come, but the Lord loves us with an everlasting love. Now, this is demonstrated in that the church, being defiled, the church being lost in the ruins of the fall, needed that whereby they might be saved, whereby they might be prepared to dwell with Christ in heaven. What was needful? Well, redemption was needful.

'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.' Now, we will look at this doctrine of redemption and endeavour to trace in it this great love wherewith He loved us. Closely allied to redemption, indeed, going along with it, is God's election. God's election is the result of His great love, and His redemption is the result of His great love. Now, have we such an experience as that? Do we believe it in the general truth? Do we see the church of God as being loved with a great love, in that the Father should choose the church, in that the Son should redeem the church? It is good for us to consider the doctrine, as it were, in the abstract, but that will do us no good really. It is when you and I come into the experience of the doctrine.

Again we would like to look at this point: 'for his great love wherewith he loved us.' How often the words of the hymn-writer are applicable!

What was there in me that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Tis even so, Father, we ever must sing,
Because it seemed good in thy sight.

Great love was that love of the Father to choose a people out of the millions and millions that would live upon this earth and die in their sins. Is it not a remarkable evidence of God's great love? We would look at it and ask you whether you have had the experience of God's great love in respect of the Father's election. You may say: "Well, how do I know that I am chosen of God?" Perhaps we may pass over a point or two to come to another evidence of God's great love in that He sends forth His Spirit in the appointed time to regenerate your soul. There may be people who are troubled about the doctrine of election and as to how they may know that they are chosen of God. I once heard one of our able ministers of Jesus Christ describe this situation. He pictures a wretched and ragged beggar walking along a road, and very few people would even look at him, let alone approach unto him. We find this poor, wretched character going on, and eventually, along his track he looks and sees a beautiful mansion. There is something which attracts him to this mansion, and so he wends his way, with some trepidation, even for a beggar. He wends his way toward the house, and as he gets nearer so he sees on it some letters, some reading. He wonders what this reading is. Eventually, getting near enough to read it, he is able to discover what the words are. If I remember rightly these are the words: Whoso cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out. Now, you see, the man was in need, the man was wretched. From this illustration we assume that he felt he was wretched. Dare he approach then unto what we might refer to as an immaculate mansion? Well, there was something that drew him to that mansion. Despite all the man's wretchedness he was irresistibly

drawn. We now discover that he was irresistibly drawn by the Father's love. Turning to Jeremiah 31 we read: 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.' Compare that with John 6, where we find this: 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.' So we have those words written on the door of this mansion: Whoso cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. So the man knocks. Is he not invited to knock? May he not knock? Will there be any that shall say to him that he should not knock? 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' We have this word, I say we have this word: Whoso cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out. The man knocks and the door is opened. He is admitted, and as he goes into the hall, as it were, and the door closes, he turns his eyes and he catches sight of what is written on the inside of the door. This is what he sees: Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Now, that is the way we discover election. We do not say: "Well, if only I knew I was elected then I could begin to seek, but because I am not sure, what is the use of my seeking?" Your seeking at the point of regeneration indicates that you are chosen of God. It is as you go through the door, which is Christ, that you will have this great blessing of election sealed upon your spirit.

'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.' We now refer to our first point, or shall we say our second point, which is redemption. This is an evidence of the great love of God the Father. 'God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' He gave His only begotten Son. What love is here! 'God, who is rich in mercy.' Is it not an evidence of the riches of God's mercy, in the Father that He gave His only begotten Son, and that that beloved

Son should come to redeem His people. We look at this more particularly in respect of the second Person in the Trinity. 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.' We sometimes consider that there is a point of prophecy in the sixth chapter of Isaiah. We have the experience of Isaiah described when feeling his own sin, and one of the seraphims flew unto him, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar, and laid it upon his mouth and touched his lips. Then he said: 'Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.' Now we come to this point. 'Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.' 'Behold my servant;' we read elsewhere. I feel that we can consider this as referring to the council of God in eternity past, before the world was made, gathering together, and the Father saying 'Whom shall I send;' the Trinity saying: 'Who will go for us;' and the Lord Jesus saying: 'Here am I, send me.' Can we behold in those words - 'God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us?'

O, the love of the Lord Jesus Christ to His people, to save His people, to suffer for His people, to redeem His people! Now, He came to redeem His people from under the law. We were born under the law, and therefore we continue under the law; but the Lord Jesus came to redeem His people from under the law. We can regard this in relation to His life, as He lived upon earth. He fulfilled the law and made it honourable, and in so doing He redeemed His people from under the law. That is: He paid back, (that is the meaning of redemption) He paid back that which they had failed to pay. But at what a cost! I say: Have you considered the great cost? First of all we consider the great love wherewith He loved us being demonstrated in that He came into this world at all. We read in John's gospel, first chapter: 'He came unto his own, and His own received him not.' What a bitter pill! Have you

had an experience of it in your own family circle? Perhaps some of you may have done. You have come unto your own and your own received you not. How painful an experience it is! When the Lord Jesus came upon this earth He came unto a people whom He loved with an everlasting love. Now, do you know your heart to this extent? When Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners the hardness of those sinners' hearts was such that they said: I am not interested. I am not interested. Now, if you know your heart as it really is, you will have to look at redemption and you will see a shocking situation. Here is a Man displaying His great love, and here are you saying: I am not interested. Mr Hart brings this point forward when he says:

And why, dear Saviour, tell me why,
Thou thus wouldst suffer, bleed, and die;
What mighty motive could thee move?
The motive's plain; 'twas all for love.

For love of whom? Of sinners base,
A hardened herd, a rebel race;
That mocked and trampled on thy blood
And wantoned with the wounds of God.

When rocks and mountains rent with dread;
And gaping graves gave up their dead;
When the fair sun withdrew his light,
And hid his face, to shun the sight.

Then stood the wretch of human race,
And raised his head and showed his face,
Gazed unconcerned when nature failed,
And scoffed, & sneered, & cursed, & railed. 153

If you can go along with Mr Hart you will certainly know a little about the great love wherewith He loved us. 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.'

Harder than rocks and mountains are,
More dull than dirt and earth by far,
Man viewed unmoved thy blood's rich stream,
Nor ever dreamed it flowed for him.

Now, can you remember the days when your soul was just like that? Unconcerned, unconcerned. You may have sat under the ministry all year; you may have heard the truth preached, but unconcerned, unconcerned. If God had never sought us out, we should never have sought God. 'Great

love wherewith he loved us.'

Such was the race of sinful men,
That gained that great salvation then;
Such, and such only, still we see;
Such they were all; and such are we.

Standing in this place, having a knowledge of the desperate situation of our deceitful and wicked hearts, will bring us very forcibly to consider these precious words: 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.'

Now this is demonstrated when the Lord Jesus came upon this earth; He came upon this earth holy, absolutely holy. And what was the environment into which He came? Unholiness in depth. He was holy, undefiled, separate from sinners; He was surrounded with defilement in depth. He was surrounded by wicked sinners. We may well say: Why did He come? Look at it in the light of these precious words: 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.' He came and He lived in this world, and He suffered in this world; suffered from all kinds, suffered from wicked men, profane men, suffered from professing men like the Phatisees, the scribes and the Sadducees, and then suffered from those for whom He died. Certainly it was suffering when Peter said: 'This shall not be unto Thee; and the Lord said: Get thee behind me, Satan, thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. That was suffering. Does your soul suffer like that sometimes, when men speak to the detriment of God's glory by saying such or similar things?

'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.' We shall follow the scene to the Passover, prior to the Lord's suffering. It was great love that caused the Lord to eat that Passover, and during that Passover to have the painful experience of knowing that there was one there that was to betray Him. Then we pass on to consider His experiences in the garden of Gethsemane. Now, how

do you look at that? How do you look at the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane's garden?

Gethsemane, the olive press!
(And why so called, let Christians guess;)
Fit name! fit place! where vengeance strove,
And griped and grappled hard with love.

'Twas here the Lord of life appeared,
And sighed, & groaned, & prayed, & feared;
Bore all incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, and none to spare. 153

Beloved friends, take another look at that scene in the garden of Gethsemane and see if you can trace out these four letters: L - O - V - E. Love, love, inscribed upon it all.

'He set his face steadfastly toward Jerusalem.' Now He knew what was going to happen at Jerusalem, but what drew Him on? It was everlasting love to His own people. 'While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' Have you been thankful for that Scripture, that Christ died for the ungodly? The ungodly. Christ came to die for those people. 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.' O, the experiences that He passed through, after Gethsemane's garden, when He was taken by wicked hands! Wicked hands led Him to the Judgment Hall, led Him backwards and forwards in the city; and yet at that time there was one of His disciples that denied Him. That disciple never thought he would. Perhaps some of you do not think it is possible that you could ever deny your Lord and Master. Well, if it should come, remember that the Lord Jesus Christ, 'having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.' In the midst of this bitter suffering He turned and looked upon Peter. Now, a look can convey a lot. There wasn't a word spoken at that time, but what an effect it had upon Peter! 'And Jesus turned and looked upon Peter.' The One that was suffering in his place and in his stead, the One that Peter had denied. Yet the Lord's love extended to him under those painful and shocking conditions, for the Lord looked upon Peter. Subsequently, after the

resurrection, we find the Lord saying unto Peter: Lovest thou Me? lovest thou Me? lovest thou me? "Remember the great love wherewith I loved you, laying down My life, willingly and readily laying down My life." 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.'

So we must follow the scene to the cross, to Calvary. 'Twas all for love. O, that the power of the Spirit may descend upon us this evening that we may see this as the greatness of the love of God! I have at times pondered upon those remarkable words in our Hymnbook:

I stood amazed, and wondered when,
Or why, this ocean rose,
That wafts salvation down to men,

And then it goes on:

His traitors and his foes.

We are bound to include ourselves in that line, aren't we? If we are taught of God we must. How this amplifies and enlarges this great love! Perhaps it was just love before, but now are you compelled to speak of His great love wherewith He loved us?

On the cross, you see, we find some important words said, and they express love. We think of one: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' If you have denied your Lord and Master, then have you had the experience of God's great love, the doctrine of God's great love, when you heard these words sounding in your soul: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'? You know, there are so many sins, so many sins are committed. I feel that we don't know what we do. We have no idea of what we are doing. O the ignorance! How little do we realize the cost to our Saviour in our sins of the day, as we add to the bulk. 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.'

Then there were those great words: 'It is finished.' It is finished. Now the Lord, you see, didn't give up until it was finished, finished. All the types and shadows of the ceremonial law were finished, for sin

was put away. But the Lord was not to leave His disciples without some solid and clear proof that all was settled, that God was pacified, that the law was satisfied. We have this, at the resurrection morn: 'He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.'

Now justification is a glorious doctrine. Have you had the experience of that? The Lord Jesus Christ was raised again. You have thought upon the resurrection, but have you thought about it in this way, that He was raised for your justification, to show you how God could be just and the Justifier of the ungodly, and that He may present you faultless? This is what justification really means, that He may present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. We must not fail to observe these words: with exceeding joy. 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.' There was exceeding joy when the Lord Jesus rose from the dead and showed Himself unto His disciples.

We shall have to leave another point of this verse, which is the love of the Trinity in sending forth the Spirit of God to take of the things of Jesus and to show them unto us.

Now, have we got that evidence of this great doctrine in our own soul's experience? 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.' It is an evidence of God's great love if He has granted to you His Spirit. 'When he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself.' Then we have those precious words in the 14th of John. 'And I will pray the Father.' Do you feel inadequate to pray unto the Father for great blessings, for the Spirit of God? Listen to these most precious words: 'But I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;' notice here the great love wherewith He hath loved us: 'Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him:

but ye know him.' Can we say this: But ye know Him? O, let us be faithful to God, let us honour God in that which He has done for us! 'But ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.'

I trust that the prayer presented in our opening hymn may have been answered in the discourse this evening. It was, as you may well remember:

Show me some token, Lord, for good,
Some token of thy special love;
Show me that I am born of God,
And that my treasure is above.

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It is certainly discoverable to us in the words of our text: 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.'

Amen.
