

## *Rich in Mercy*

The longer I stay in a path with the spirit of God the more I recognize that this is truly a heart matter. It's really good to see people here that I haven't seen in several years, some longer than that. I saw a friend of mine from up in the New England area and I had tears in my eyes. The Lord truly is doing a great work.

The expression and manifestation of that work has little or nothing to do with the process by which the work is accomplished. It says that I reckon that the difficulties of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed because although we go through trials and although we face difficulties, they are not God's difficulties. Difficulties would be a very inadequate way of talking about impossibilities. We had a meeting here yesterday morning and somebody said, My difficulties are not God's difficulties. I thought, Well, my impossibilities aren't God's difficulties either. When we walk with the spirit of God, there are things that are being created in us that are so undefinable by natural thought and capacity to speak. It's actually the continued formation of a new creation that just began when we were born again, and it gave us an opportunity by affiliation to be joined to the work that God has intended from the beginning.

There's a verse, Genesis 2:1, that has a parallel scripture in Ephesians, and it says, Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the hosts of them. That was the end of the sixth day: the heavens and the earth were completed, the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth were finished in that creation, there was natural substance that was made out of the intent of God. It was the beginning of the intent of God in terms of what was manifested. The purpose that it was made natural and manifest was so that it would be redeemed.

Ephesians elaborates on the first verse of the second chapter of Genesis when it says that in the fullness of the dispensation of time that the intention of God is to bring all things both in heaven and in earth into Christ. The purpose was to redeem it, that it be brought forward from just being a natural creation, a natural, physical representation of the capacity of God, to begin to beat with the heart of God and not to be renegade from that rhythm. The renegade-ness was evidenced by man by not being able to keep one commandment, the renegade-ness of the ongoing-ness of the expression of that natural creation where it was said that it repented God that he had

made man, for man's heart was turned always to evil. Down through time, through the prophetic to where Isaiah said, Line by line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, that they may be taken and captured and fall backward. Even at the progressive unveiling of God's purpose, man had a resistance to that. The children of Israel, benefiting by being brought out with the strong arm of God, being called his son and delivered mightily, fell by unbelief in the wilderness and were destroyed.

So, God's intention has rarely been served. We've come now to a proximity that is the culmination of all things in this age, and there's a desire that goes forward from God for there to be those who would bring themselves into co-laboring, collaboration, who by yielding themselves, by voluntarily presenting themselves to the ongoing work of God, come to the full expression of his intent from the beginning. We know that our participation, my participation, has been made possible because I've been born again. When I was dead in trespasses and sins, he quickened me, and there was a life that was birthed in me that was exceeding the natural limitations of the creation by which I had my first birth and that the life that was engendered by that new birth is not Adam. We've all had our beginnings in Adam. We've all had our beginnings in that natural creation that was completed in six days. But, because God's intent was not finished in just bringing forth a natural expression of his capacity to create things that are seen out of what did not already exist, that was just a mere, inadequate, preliminary testimony to the capacity of a God who is creative. There is no way, based on what God is, and there is no basis in which the expression of who he is and how he does that he could leave something dangling in incapacity to save itself without bringing salvation out of himself.

The testimony that we have is that he selected a nation that wasn't even a nation; it was barely a family. They were divided. They sold their younger brother into slavery, and yet he had a beginning. Knowing that that was there, knowing that that would take place, he chose a Syrian and called him out of Ur of the Chaldees to bring forth a family that would birth a nation that would bring forth Messiah. The intentionality of God culminating individually to manifest the expression of his purpose that was anchored in before he said let there be light, the grace of God came and was made manifest to us. He's our savior, Jesus, but his intention and the expression of him living his life was not unto himself. His expression of his life was to live unto the purpose of God, that we might be co-heirs together with him of the purpose of God.

And so, I was born again and you were born again, and we were brought into a new creation that has no definition by natural law. It has no way of being defined or described by that which is of the earth. Jesus clearly referenced this when he spoke to the multitudes and said, I am from above; you are from beneath. He wasn't taunting them. He wasn't mocking them. He wasn't trying to be high-minded or to be in anyway diminishing their status. He was saying, I, as the man Jesus, living in the life that is Christ, have come to demonstrate to you that if you will subject yourself willingly to the ongoing administration of God's purpose through the Holy Spirit by faith, that you can live, and you can walk, and you can be even where I am right now. The reason that I have come and the reason that I'm going to go is that where I am right now, there you can be also. He obviously wasn't defining that by geography that we would all go over and take a walk on the paths that he walked – Caesarea, and Bethany – or that we would go and see the place where there was a temple, or maybe see this place that they suppose was his tomb.

Paul took this advancement from that positioning and from that context of natural history and a physical man, and he said, Henceforth know we him no longer according to the flesh. Was there a man Jesus? Yes. Did he walk on this planet? Yes. Was he tempted at all points as are we? Yes. Was he without sin? Yes. Did he lay his life down continually before his father so that he could come to the full expression of God's intent? Yes, he did. Did he die willingly on a cross and bleed out for our remission so that we have a standing before God that is based on another man's righteousness? Yes, he did. But that is not today's gospel. It is not dis-included from the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is still a part; it still functions. God is still birthing babies. God is still baptizing people in the Holy Spirit. He is still responding through the spirit that if they will step out in faith they can prophesy, they can speak in heavenly languages, they can be edified through things that they speak that they don't even know what they are saying just because they are giving themselves to be exercised by faith in yielding themselves to the working of the spirit of God.

However, I've got to say that we have come to this place because there is more ahead of us than behind us. There is that which remains to be fulfilled that is yet prophetic. There is that which Jesus said he was leaving to us to fulfill, to complete. Yet, the church is mostly mired in the historic aspect of Jesus saving them, not engaging in themselves through the work of the spirit to become the saviors, that they through our mercy might be joined to the mercy of God. That the dispensation of the work of the spirit would so fill up

what is God's design for me and for you as individual members of the body of Christ, that there would be as it were cream to rise to the top of this vessel, that is his body, and that it could be gathered and become substantive enough to be a testimony to the intent that God had before he said, Let there be light.

This is something that is testimony to what we have been hearing for forty years. The thing that makes the message that we have been hearing for forty years different than the messages that preceded it (as far as my awareness is) is not that there is a five-fold ministry – that was released by the spirit through the Latter Reign Move of God and was not unique to this Move – but what has been unique to this Move is what we would say is Death to Self. If we cannot be freed from the dominion of our self-seeking, if we cannot be motivated by a desire and a compassion for the need of others in spite of our own weakness, if we are still looking to become strong in order to bring forth evidence of the work of God, we are not being saved by his life. Christ, the new creature.

Maturity in this new creation is not strength. Maturity in this new creation is the measure of dependency you have upon the king. I am thankful for the picture that we have of our older brother: three times for an hour, supplicating, petitioning, begging, if you please, the father that he have the dependency, that what would be made manifest when he hung on the cross would not be him being obedient to the father. But, in that obedience he would be so separated from his own interests of completing the course that it was no longer him pursuing his completion, but it was him being able to be an expression of the capacity of God to reach through his offering and set aside the sins of the world. For truly, one of the clearest pictures of what happened on that tree two thousand years ago, outside the city on a hill called Golgotha, was that it was God in Christ reconciling the world. This was not Christ reconciling the world to his father although we could look at it and see that the effect looked like that, but this was somebody that had come to such a complete dependency that the strength would not be of him but that in his weakness the strength of God would be made perfect. God would finally have a way through that which was physical to touch that which needed to be redeemed.

Once again, we have a testimony that is yet to be made so that prophecy can be fulfilled. Certainly, we know that there is a big, obvious prophecy that has not been fulfilled, and it's in the fifty-fourth verse of the fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians where it says, Then shall it be fulfilled that which is written.

Clearly, those verses were written after Jesus had ascended, and clearly, the fulfillment of a prophecy isn't God telling what he is going to do. The whole intent of the prophecy was that man would rise to accomplish as the result of the inspiration of God. All of those things that were prophetic of Messiah were not what God would do, but that he was going to raise up a man who was so yielded to the purpose of the spirit of God that he would be the expression of doing it. By man came sin and death, and by man, therefore, needed to come the resurrection of the dead.

It clearly says in Romans 8, in the 18<sup>th</sup> verse, that there is an expectation of this creation waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God so that they can be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God. This that is the gospel cannot be universally received by the natural creation until there is a visible manifestation of its full working. That's what it says. They are waiting, but they are in bondage in spite of their waiting. They don't know what they are waiting for, but in spite of their waiting, in spite of their inability to affect their own condition, this cannot be accomplished until there is that which is a manifestation so that they can by our mercy have mercy, so they can have faith in what is manifested. This creation is locked up. This creation is in a bondage that it cannot escape, and no amount of preaching evangelistic messages is going to get it done. The evidence of evangelism in the church is minimal, quite frankly. Somebody said last week, I think quoting A. W. Tozer, if my memory serves, I think if the work of the Holy Spirit were removed as an influence in the church, 85% of what the church is would still remain and not notice the difference. There is a testimony to the grace of God that has yet not been made manifest.

I think I'm quoting Timothy when I say this, and I'm going to approximate that quote. It says, The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live justly, soberly in this present world, looking for the glorious appearing of our lord and savior Jesus Christ. One part of this message that has been, in my view, unique to this move of the spirit is that the glorious appearing of our lord and our savior is going to be his life in his body. Whether or not he physically returns to this planet is according to God's design, but I think there's a strong case that the fulfillment of all things can happen without his physical return as long as the life that he demonstrated – not just while he was here prior to his death on the cross – but the life that was not seen for forty days while he was here after the cross is then demonstrated, that there are those born in sin and shapen in iniquity that can be made by the power of

God through faith to demonstrate the same life that was not seen when he was here in a glorified body.

You can say, How do you know? Well, it's more than just conjecture. It's not even algebra; it's just simple math. We have the story of Emmaus and the two disciples that did not recognize him. It was within 40 days of him showing Thomas the holes in hands, in his feet, in his side, and they didn't see those. I don't know if the body that he had at that time didn't bring forth a manifestation of those wounds, but I guess they thought it was normal that somebody would walk with them and expound the scriptures, beginning at Moses and the prophets, and end up detailing a life that was Redeemer and not know that it could only be him that could know all these things. But it says their eyes were holden, that their eyes were shielded, that their eyes were shrouded, that there was a covering on what they could see even though it was standing and walking with them. This wasn't just a ten-minute saunter down a dusty trail. This was a trip of about three hours according to the furlongs represented in the story. This was quite a dissertation and they recognized how their hearts were overjoyed and excited and motivated within them. How our hearts burned within us as he spoke, but even in spite of that, we didn't see that it was him. They only recognized him when he was not there.

God has given unto us the opportunity of being so engaged with the going forward-ness of the gospel that we would have by participation the experience of a life that is free of self, free of our interests, free of even becoming a savior, free of the philosophy of scripture, free of the knowledge of our calling. Just place ourselves in absolute before our father and say, Be it according to me according to thy will, O God.

I do have a few things I would like to consider this morning. We've been from Genesis to Ephesians. In the second chapter of Ephesians, I want to pick it up where my participation in this wonderment that is a new creation that is labeled Christ is. Paul labeled these things for us. Paul said, If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Clearly, that new creation is not Adam. Clearly, that new creation is Christ. Clearly, the difference between the old creation and the new creation is hope because in Adam there is none. In Christ is the only place there's hope, and that is if we follow on to know him even as we are known, to finish the course not just begin it. My participation starts here in the second chapter of Ephesians, the first verse. And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the

power of the air, and the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience, among whom we also had our conversation and our way of living in times past in the desires of our own flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others. But you hath he quickened, you has he brought out of a dead existence into a living hope. This is where it picks up on the basis of having been born again and quickened by the spirit of God from death to life, and this is where it starts to get overwhelming to me.

I might take a minute to talk about the word that is the root of “overwhelmed”. You just take the “over” out and the root word is “whelm”. It’s an Old English word and the root of out of which springs the word “baptism” – not the Greek work “baptizo” – but the sense of being overwhelmed. To be whelmed is to be put under. So, we start in baptisms, according to Hebrews 6:2, and the first baptism that we’re aware of is the baptism of John, where we are immersed in water for the remission of sins or the testimony that our sins have been remitted. We know that the next baptism that made that word to be a plural – the doctrine of baptisms – is the baptism of the spirit. This is where the deviation already begins to take place in the self that is embedded in our existence, in our history, and in our comfort level to express ourselves. When you’re lowered into water, if whoever lowered you didn’t bring you up, you’re gone. You’ve been immersed into an environment that will end your life physically. Then, not learning that principle, not learning the laying down of our life in trust to be raised by another, we somehow thinking that getting wet and coming up with a smile on our face and everybody saying, Praise the Lord! is the point. We know this to be true because then when we are put into the spirit, when we are immersed in the spirit and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we think that this is for our benefit. Let me tell you, the work of the Holy Spirit is as adversarial to natural life as water would be. The purpose of God going forward is that we would lay our life down, not because it is being taken away by us being held under water but because we lay it down in order to stay current with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not here to give us gifts so that we can be great in the church. The Holy Spirit is not here to give us revelation so that we can be enlightened Christians.

If we didn’t know this by our own experience, can we take the testimony of Paul? He was certainly the most enlightened man that put pen to paper. Certainly, he was the most distinct in his description of the purpose of God in Christ and the working of the spirit of God in Christ and the purpose of God for Christ, and he said, I no longer glory in the abundance of revelation that

is given unto me because I found that when I gloried in those things I was puffed up, and I thought more of myself than I ought to. However, because of the abundance of revelation, there has been a thorn that God by grace has given me and by mercy didn't remove when I wanted it taken away.

Therefore, I've learned that it is not expedient to glory in the abundance of revelation given unto me. I am a child of God. I will receive insight into the kingdom of God if I stay subject to the Holy Spirit. This abundance of revelation can lead me off. I can somehow think that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is for me to become great and for me to become strong, as opposed to the continuation of being subject to an environment that is designed to overwhelm me, to separate me from my own strength, and my own capacity, and my own will, and my own way, to instruct me how to die while living.

The sacrifices that God has an interest in aren't the ones that died; that's been fulfilled. All of the lambs, all of the rams, all of the goats, all of the bullocks, all of the everything – the turtledoves that died – has been fulfilled. There was a bloodbath twice in Israel's history. Once was when David returned the ark to the city; there was blood flowing in the gutters. The other was at the dedication of Solomon's temple. There were thousands of animals that died that day. Just organizing that to be accomplished was quite an engineering feat.

There's been a sacrifice that has been made by a two-legged lamb and it's made once and it was effective for all time, for all sin, for all men, forever, and need not to be made again. In that he died for all, the testimony is that we may live unto God because of that death. There is now therefore no more sacrifice for sin. We have the opportunity and the benefit of that sacrifice. We have the benefit of his faithfulness to forgive and to cleanse when we confess, but there need to be no further death in order to solve the sin difficulty. However, there needs to be the laying down of our life if we are going to be free of sin. As long as self-interest beats in my breast, as long as self-desire to be something – even to be accepted, even to be known, even to be heard – as long as that's something of benefit to John, it precludes me from being a savior. It's not until my life is held in ransom that I see the result of the travail of my soul.

Paul said some pretty amazing things. Jesus said some hard things, too. Jesus said, Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood... And we say, Maybe, we'll go to a different church tomorrow. But Paul said some difficult things, too. I'm not claiming that I have a complete perspective on these things, but I'm gaining some insight into something that was completely



obscure to me and that I knew I didn't know. One of those things was when he said was, Concerning my brethren according to the flesh, I would willingly be accursed from Christ if they would thereby be saved. Of all men that we have record of, nobody knew what the life of Christ is and the purpose of Christ and the working of that life and the intent of that life and the full expression of that life better than Paul. No one. Yet he said, I would be willingly accursed from the life of Christ if that would mean they're saved. Sorry. I not only don't understand that conceptually, but I find that the working of the spirit in my life is to join me more completely to Christ, that I would know him and the power of his resurrection by laying my life down on a daily basis. The power of his resurrection being known, being made, participating with his suffering. His suffering wasn't being scourged and hung on a tree. His suffering was that he recognized that his calling and his ability to please the father would not be accomplished by his own initiative. To be assigned a task to please your father who your whole disposition is given toward and recognize that you have no ability to do that out of yourself. By the time he was thirty and he began to preach, he said, Of myself I cannot accomplish my own purpose. Within hours of being an acceptable sacrifice for the sins of the world, he said, Not my will. This can't be pulled out of my resource. This can't be pulled out of me marshalling my resources and pointing them at a particular goal in order that that goal would be accomplished. It won't happen out of my dedication, my consecration. This can only be accomplished by the power of God.

But God, who is rich in mercy... I want to just speak briefly about this word "mercy". Maybe to do so, as I see it, I first need to talk about grace. If we were to check with Brother Strong in his lexicon of the Greek as it applies to scriptural principles, we see that in many places his interpretation and definition of the Greek word as used in scripture is colored by his doctrine. What he perceived things to be somehow colored his application of the Greek word. But the Greek word, as used by the Greeks – not as used in scripture – but the raw, natural word, pulled from the Greek by Paul, selected to describe something spiritual, the word to the Greeks meant full of beauty, full of ease, that it was graceful. It's like if you had two dancers and one was beginning her discipline and kind of elbows and knees were the most evident thing about her dancing ability, and then you see somebody that was about to walk onto the stage at the Met as a prima ballerina and dance just amazingly difficult things that looked so easy and so fluid. The one was grace, and the other was not so much grace.

Therefore, we see the things that are by grace are by the power of God. The things that are not just difficult but impossible through the capacity of God brought to bear are easily accomplished. Just a limited testimony was when he made the worlds. Making a natural creation is not testing the capacity of God's omnipotence. That was accomplished easily. He continued to testify to it when he messed with natural law and the Hebrew nation walked across on dry land, and the same dry land flooded and drowned the Egyptian army. He rained manna that sustained a nation for forty years out of thin air, provided a rock that followed them, spewing water in the midst of a desert where there was none, multiplied loaves and fishes. All the things that we would consider miraculous are just an easy outworking of the capacity that it took to bring a natural creation that is this universe out of what didn't already exist. But do you know that one thing that wasn't created by his word in those six days? That it didn't say, And God said... and God saw... and it was good? Do you know what was created in those six days that didn't source in that? Man. The natural man Adam was not created by the word of God. The natural man Adam was formed from the dust of the earth by the hand of God, and the form had breathed into it an existence that was animated but was not alive before God. That's where Ephesians 2:1 – You who were dead in trespasses and sins hath he quickened – comes in. He brought out of an existence that is naturally perceived as life a spiritual life that isn't even known or perceived by what is nature.

What does it mean that it isn't known by nature? Well, he created all things, and he came to his own and his own received him not. Not only did they not receive him, but they killed him. Are the things of God understood by the natural mind or not? This thing is something that has to be derived by beginning through the spirit and the continued effect of that same spirit. I cannot come to the full dimension of what I was born again to become apart from the work of the spirit. This is an ongoing creative work. This is actually what is referred to by the Apostle John as the word being made flesh. That's the same process that you and I are engaged in. In another place, Paul said it this way, As you have received him, so walk ye in him. Based on what you've received? No. By receiving, by continuing to receive. We can't walk on the energy of yesterday's manna in righteousness; we can't walk in the developmental process of Christ based on what we know. We can only continue to walk toward salvation by what is called the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Both of those things are active. Do we have history with those things? Yes. But do we have an ongoing context of those things for continuity?

If you take anything away from what I am saying today, it's that we have an open door that God himself has opened and made available access for us to a kingdom that is not of this world and operates on authority that is not limited by nature. It says that no man can shut this door. Jesus said what the door was. Did he not? I am the door; by me if any man enter in... You've entered into Christ if you are born again, and that door is open, and it cannot be shut. One of the guarantees of it not being shut is because God through omniscience does not begin something that he knows that he will be obstructed from completing. Jesus gave a parable and he said, What man is not considered foolish if he does not sit down and consider the cost of construction before he starts? Certainly, if there was an exhortation that would apply to a parable that was given to the multitudes, God would exceed the limitations of that application. If God has begun in you by birthing you by his spirit, his intention is to bring you forward to the completion of that salvation so that you are clothed upon with a glorified body and there's a manifestation to this world that will set them free from being excluded from the glorious liberty of the children of God.

I have a personal thought – it may yet be amended – but I just don't think that the purpose of God being limited to just the glorious liberty of the children of God needs only to be extended to the unsaved world. If I can't receive the liberty of the ongoing work of God in my own life, I will need to be encouraged by a manifestation of some having completed this because it isn't enough just to be born again. That's being a child of God, but the glorious liberty of the children of God is to be set free to grow up to full stature, to finish the purpose for which God began this and to complete the prophetic statements that are yet unfulfilled. So, grace, the power of God, the capacity of God to do what would otherwise be impossible. And that brings me to mercy.

Mercy is the unmerited favor of God. Mercy is the compassion of God that looks at a situation that cannot solve itself and says, I will move. This began to work in Jesus, and it says that he would come into a village, and he would have compassion upon them and heal them all, and cast out all the devils. He was moved by the need of those who were unable to provide for themselves. I'll say this, that probably right now there is not a more functional aspect of what God is and how God moves in my life than mercy. If it were not for the mercy of God, I would be swept away. If it were not for the mercy of God, I would have no connective tissue to a daily righteousness because, in my view, mercy is what allows righteousness to be imputed for faith. I don't want to trade forever on an imputed righteousness that makes

up the difference for my inadequacy, but I am so thankful that it functions today because the inadequacy that I have isn't a lack of strength. The inadequacy that I have is a lack of dependency. When we come to that weakness, when we are separated from the confidence of our own capacity and we become fully dependent, then we'll be sustained by a greater measure of the grace of God than we've known. There doesn't need to be greater grace. There needs to be greater dependency so that grace can have a fuller effect. The grace of God is more than sufficient. My participation of that has had fits and starts and limitations, based on a need for growth in my dependency.

But God, who is rich in mercy – and here's the resource of which mercy is funded. So, mercy is like me drawing down on someone else's bank account. The resource of mercy has to be funded by something. There has to be a bottom line to all of this, and this verse tells what it is. God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us. Because of the intensity, the fire, the consuming intent of God toward man, there had to be that which would take man from his death and sin, trespasses, weldedness to carnality and what is seen and what is self-oriented and enable God to deal with man in order to bring him and draw him out of that condition in order to be able to work with man. That ingredient is mercy. And that mercy is fueled by one thing, and that's the great love of God.

I have tasted of his grace because of his mercy, and I am partaking of his mercy because of his love. To know the love of God is only possible by being like it. To receive the benefit of the love of God can be based on need, but to know the love of God is to have the love of God. That's why John said, If you tell me that you love God who you cannot see but don't love your brother who you can see, I know that you don't understand how things work because it would be impossible for you to know the love of God without loving what God loves. For me to be joined to the love of God as it exists in God, not as it's distributed through mercy and grace, but to actually be joined to God himself...

Remember what our reward is? Remember what the intent of God is for us? The promise of God to Abraham was, I am your exceedingly great reward. When you finish the course that I have called you to begin and you haven't known even the geographical steps never mind the destination, I'm going to tell you what it is and it's not going to let you understand it completely, but it is going to give you some kind of words that represent something you don't understand, and I am going to give you myself. That's to know the love of God – by being joined to him. The intention of God is, as Paul said so

comprehensively, beyond what eye can see, beyond what can enter into the thought of man or the heart of man that which God has for those that are actually joined to him.

That in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his power – his capacity – in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. How? Because we would be the expression of that life that lays itself down, not considering its own outcome, but confident that if it aligns itself with the will and purpose of God that God will pick up and finish his purpose on the backside of that. That's where completion is. Completion is the other side of laying our life down. Laying our life down is not the completion. It's the raising by God of what is laid down that is the fulfillment.

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