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"BUT GOD, WHO IS RICH---"

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS
NUMBER 14
EPHESIANS 2:4-5

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EPHESIANS 2:4-5 "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"

For the last several studies we have taken a close look at ourselves the way we looked before we met Christ. The picture looked something like this--

The grace of God found us spiritually dead--Verse 1.

The grace of God found us under Satan's control--Verse 2.

The grace of God found us under the control of the old sin nature--Verse 3.

So it appears that we almost had three strikes against us before we ever got started. But before forming such an opinion, we are confronted with this next verse which says, "But God, who is rich in mercy."

This little conjunction "but" is a conjunction of contrast. This "but God" refers to God the Father, and it takes us back to chapter one and eternity past when God did something about man's condition. In eternity past God knew all we would ever need and he made provision for every single one of those needs. God provided for us in time, and he also provided for us in eternity. We must remember that we have a relationship with God, who is perfect in all his dealings with man.

EPHESIANS 2:4 "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us," Once we become believers we move into such a relationship with God that God's provision for us and attitude toward us never changes. God has provided a framework whereby he can give us all we need and that is grace.

Please notice these words say, "But God, who is RICH." You can't measure the wealth of God. Some men have more wealth than they can count but it is nothing compared to the wealth of God. It says, "God who IS" and that "is" means he always has been rich, he is rich now, and he will always be rich. This is a present, active, indicative of the word "eimi" and it refers to the absolute status quo concerning God. God has always been rich, has always been perfect, has always been happy, has always been right and loving and just. Now God wants to share all this with us if we will only let him do it. And God has the capacity to share this wealth with us. He is omniscient, he is omnipresent, and he is omnipotent. God never changes. Please remember that the riches of God come from his person. So many times we are superficial and we evaluate men on the basis of their education, or their culture, or their wealth or their position in society. But God's scale of values always starts with a person. When we deal with God, what kind of a person are we dealing with?

This scripture says, "But God, who keeps on being rich."

Now many of us evaluate happiness on the basis of circumstances. If we are well, then we are happy, but if we are sick, then we are sad. If we are successful and victorious, then we are happy, but if we fail then we are sad. Now this is what we call "living by circumstances." But if Bible doctrine comes first in our lives, if we live according to the laws of God's teaching, then the details of life become secondary. Now if the details of life are first, if they are of major

importance, then they can ruin everything else in life. Circumstances change, but God never changes. Now if circumstances don't control your life, but Bible doctrine does control your life, then you can be happy at any time. But anyone who is a slave to circumstances will be unhappy.

Now some will probably say, if God is so rich why doesn't he make everybody rich? Now listen to this carefully. It wouldn't strain God one bit to give every person in the world one hundred million dollars. This is no problem with God at all. He could do this and have countless billions left over. Now just suppose God were to give you one hundred million dollars--what would you do? Where would you go? What details of your life would you change? Probably you say, "Now since God can do this and I need money so badly, why do you suppose God doesn't do this for me?"

For a moment let's go back to the essence of God. We know that God loves us with a perfect love. So it can't be the lack of love that keeps God from giving each of us one hundred million each. Now some of you can't understand why God won't give you one hundred million, especially since you know that he can. You say, "Why doesn't he do it? I sure need that money."

Now it may be that you may be thinking something like this. You say, "I know why God doesn't give me one hundred million. I've been such a miserable Christian. I haven't been as faithful as I should have been." Now let me urge you don't get into that frame of thinking, and don't become one of those who thinks that God can be bribed. Remember, God blesses you on the basis of who and what he is and never on the basis of who and what you are.

Look for a moment at the Apostle Paul. He was just about as faithful as any human being could be, yet how much did he have when he died? Well, I'll tell you. Not a dime! Possibly I should say not a denarius. Yet we know that God loved Paul with a maximum love.

Look at eternity

Throughout all eternity, forever and ever and ever God is going to give each of you the equivalent of one hundred million dollars every day in blessings. If you can tell me how many days there are in eternity, then I will tell you how many hundreds of millions God is going to give you and still never even dip into his boundless resources.

REVELATION 21:4 "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." God means that he will do that for every believer. God can show you his love in only one way. No more tears, no more sorrow. There will be no regrets in eternity. Nothing but perfect happiness. The reason God can do this is that his resources are limitless. And while we are on this earth, here in time, he can show us his love in the midst of trouble and suffering.

"But God, who is rich in mercy," and remember, this refers to this life. It is true in eternity, but here he is referring to this life. Right now, right here in this present life, we live under the amazing riches of his grace and mercy. This says that God is rich "in the sphere of mercy." Mercy is grace in action. Mercy is the action.

Grace is the principle. If we live until tomorrow then that's mercy. Now remember the principle. God deals with us in one way and that way is grace and the action by which he does it is mercy. God's discipline even arises from his grace. He never gives us what we deserve. He gives us according to his mercy and grace.

When we violate divine laws, then we hurt ourselves. We don't ever destroy God's laws or God's purposes. We hurt ourselves and we often bring on self induced misery by our mental attitude sins. Often we blame God for the things we do to ourselves. (You recall Satan said to Jesus, "Jump off and God will take care of you." But Jesus said "NO".)

God deals with us in grace and if he dealt with us in any other way he would have to change his essence. He would have to change his character. Look again at the essence of God. He is sovereign, righteous, just, loving, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal life, immutability and veracity. Just suppose that these essence qualities no longer apply to God and suppose that his character changes. We would have to read this verse this way. "But God, who was rich in the apostolic age when Paul lived and gave Paul his abundant blessings, is now no longer rich. His resources have long ago been exhausted and therefore he has nothing more to dispense just now." Now that is the way many of us actually read this verse.

Many of us are willing to let grace into our lives but we have one room reserved for legalism so we say to grace, "You can come in all the rooms of my mind, but this is the one room I reserve for my little legalistic gods. You can't come in this room."

"For his great love wherewith he loved us"

This verb "Loved us" is an aorist, active, indicative and it means at a point of time in eternity past he loved us, and that point of time has been picked up and has been extended into eternity. His love is everlasting. His love has continued without being diminished or without being diluted in any way.

EPHESIANS 2:5 "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)" Please notice that these great riches of God applied to us "When we were dead in sins." We were spiritually dead. We were born that way. Now it is quite easy for us to think about loving someone who loves us. But to love someone who doesn't love us, someone who is spiritually dead and repulsive is quite another thing.

But Christ was born without an old sin nature and never committed a sin and was able to go to the cross for our sins and still love us when we were spiritually dead.

The word translated "quickened" means "made us alive." This word to make alive is "sunzoepoieo" and means "to make alive with." To make us alive with Christ. He is going to demonstrate that amazing love by making us alive with Christ. In other words he is saying to us, "I love you with a maximum love and I am going to show it by making you alive in Christ." Christ is alive, seated at the right hand of God. Now the thing he is referring to here is not resurrection, but positional truth. The whole point of Christianity is that we have a perfect relationship.