

FINDING GOD

by

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CHAPTER NINE

“WHAT SEEK YE?”

I HAVE FOR MY SUBJECT a question, a command and an invitation. In John 1:38 it is related that Christ turned to two of John the Baptist’s disciples, about four o’clock in the afternoon, who were following Him, and said to them: “**What seek ye?**” The first words that fell from the lips of the Son of God, as He commenced His ministry—that is John’s account of it—were: “**What seek ye?**”

There were all classes of people following Christ while He was upon earth. There were some that went to see Him just out of morbid curiosity—they had no other motive. There were some who went for the fishes and the loaves. There was another class that followed Him that they might get mere temporal relief; that they might get some friend healed. Then there was another class that followed Him that they might entangle Him in some conversation; they were constantly putting difficult questions to Him in hopes that they might get Him to say something against the Law of Moses that they might condemn Him and put Him to death. There were some that went just to see, and others that went to be seen. Here and there were some that followed Him for just what He was to them, and they always got a blessing.

Now I contend that all the men and women are seeking something. The question that I want to press home upon you is, “**What seek ye?**” Why do you go to a meeting? I venture to say if an audience could be sifted to find out how many go for a blessing, it would be found to be a very small number; there would be vacant seats enough; there would be no trouble about room for the people who wanted to attend.

Although hundreds of years have rolled away since Christ put that question to those disciples, human nature has not changed. You will find the same classes now. There are some who attend just out of curiosity—just merely to see and to be seen. Some attend because a mother, or a wife, or a little child has persuaded them, and they go just to please him.

One man in Philadelphia got up at the young converts’ meeting and said he did not come to hear the preaching or the singing. He said that a friend of his got there one night at the opening of the depot building, and he said he thought it was a remarkable scene to see 11,000 chairs all vacant. He said he would like to see 11,000 chairs in one building. So he went up late in the afternoon. He was the first one there, and the moment the doors were open he rushed in to see the empty chairs. That was what brought him there. Pretty high motive, wasn’t it? He was a drinking man.

The text that night was, **‘Where art thou?’** and he saw something else before the meeting was over. He saw himself a poor, blind, miserable, wretched sinner. I hope someone will get his eyes opened, and if you do you may get something—something worth more than all this world to you.

When we were in London a man was going by Agricultural Hall; it was raining pretty hard, and he dropped in just to get out of the rain; the Word reached him where he stood, and he was convicted and converted.

It is astonishing what motives bring a class of people together. You know and God knows your motive. Is it merely curiosity? To gratify some friends? **“What seek ye?”**

I can imagine some of you saying, “I do not go to hear someone preach. I go to hear the singing. I am very fond of music, but I don’t like sermons; I just hate them.” Well, I am glad you go for that motive, and I am thankful there is Gospel enough in some of the hymns to save you. So if you do not go for any higher motive than to see or be seen, or hear the singing, we are glad you go. But if you just change the motive and say, “I want a blessing. I want God to bless me. I want Him above everything else,” that will be the happiest day you ever spend on earth.

Now, let us take the question home. **“What seek ye?”** Do you want to have Jesus Christ? If you do, you can find Him. You do not have to go down to bring Him up. He is here.

I want to tell you another thing: It is a command for you to seek Him, and I want to lay that command right across every man’s path. **“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”** What man puts first, God puts last; or reversed, what God puts first man puts last.

If I should ask why you do not seek the kingdom of God, you would give me this answer, “Well, I have a good many other things to attend to. My business has to be looked after; times are hard; times have been hard for the last five years; and don’t you know, Mr. Moody, a man is worse than infidel if he doesn’t provide for his family?”

So he is; no doubt about that, but then here is a command. God never makes any mistakes. He does not command us to do something that He does not give the power to do. If He commands all men now everywhere to repent, He means it. If He commands me to seek first the kingdom of God, I am to seek it first; I am to do that above everything else.

I am one of those that firmly believe that a man is just as good a businessman in whom the kingdom of God is set up, as a man that goes on serving the world, living for the world. I believe a man is not fit to live—is not qualified for business—until he has obeyed God. I believe God turns the ways of the wicked upside down, and hedges up their way. Someone will say, “I have seen some of the wickedest men in this country get very rich.” So have I. But then a man may get very rich and not be very prosperous after all. All is not gold that glitters. A man may have great wealth and not have contentment. A man may have great wealth and not have peace of mind. A man may have great wealth and be a stranger to rest.

If I wanted to find a skeleton, I would go up here on your fine avenues, into some of those palaces there. You do not have to go down into your brothels and dark dens of iniquity, and your wretched homes, made dark by sin. You will find them there, I admit; but you will find them also in the homes of the fashionable and in the palaces of the wealthy, there is hardly a family in the city that has not a skeleton in it. I believe that the reason that there is so much darkness and misery in this world is because men and women go contrary to what God tells them. About the last thing a man thinks of seeking is the kingdom of God. If you talk with a great many they will say they must attend to their business. They will tell you that when they get settled in life and have time, then they will attend to their souls' interests.

Now, when we start out in life, it is better that we start right. When God tells me to run, I am to run. When He tells me to walk, I am to walk. If He tell me to believe, I am to believe. If He tells me to seek first the kingdom of God, I must do it. No man or woman is justified in ignoring the command to seek the kingdom of God. If you do, you trample one of God's commands under your feet. Some people think they never break a commandment. We have something besides the Decalogue. This commandment is just as binding as the commandment, "**Thou shalt not steal.**" It is a command from God, "**Seek ye first the kingdom of God.**"

Man says, "I will not do it. I will seek for pleasure I will seek for wealth. I will seek for honor. I will seek for fame. I will seek for everything else before I will seek the kingdom of God." Is not that true? Don't we see that all around us? They are just living in disobedience. You know if you have a child that disobeys you, you will not want that child to prosper. You do not want your child to prosper in disobedience. But when a child is obedient, then you love to see the child prosper. Now, as long as we live in disobedience to God, how can we expect to prosper? I do not believe we would have had these hard times if it had not been for sin and iniquity. Look at the money that is spent for drink. The money that is spent for tobacco! That is ruining men—ruining their constitutions.

We live in a land flowing with milk and honey. God has blessed this nation; yet men complain of hard times. I tell you there is nothing so extravagant as sin. If a man would seek the kingdom of God first you would not be troubled much about the things of this world. You would not be troubled about your clothing and about what you would eat. That is about all we need. You may have the wealth of this world, but you can't take a penny away with you. You hear it said that a man died worth millions. The fact is when he dies he is not worth anything. The wealth that a man may have then is not of this world. Lay up treasures in Heaven, not down here. You may have millions here and enter eternity a beggar if you have not become rich toward God.

I remember, a number of years ago, I was working out in the field. It was before I left home, and I was a little wild in those days. A man told me something I did not understand; it was a mystery. We were hoeing corn, and I noticed he was weeping. Says I, "What is the trouble?" and he went on and told me. It sounded strange then. I did not understand it. He said when he left home to make his fortune it was a beautiful morning when he left his mother's door, and she gave him this text of Scripture: "**Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**" He said he paid no attention to it. He said there were no railroads in those days, and he had to walk.

He walked from town to town, and the first Sunday he was away he went into a little country church, and the minister got up and preached from the text, **“Seek ye first the kingdom of God.”** He said to himself, “That is my mother’s text. I wonder if that man knows me.” He thought he was preaching it for him. But he said to himself that he was not going to seek the kingdom of God yet; that he was going to get rich, and when he got rich and was settled down in life he was going to attend to his soul’s interest—just exactly what God told him not to do. He said the sermon made a deep impression upon him, but that he had made up his mind that he would not seek God then.

He could not get any work in that town, and he went to another, and another, and at last he got some work, and he went to church in the town, and he hadn’t been going there a great while before he heard a sermon from the text: **“Seek ye first the; kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”** He thought God was calling him, and the sermon and the text made a deep impression on his mind; but he calmly and deliberately said: “I will not seek the kingdom of God now, I will wait until I get rich.”

He said he finally got through working in that town and he went to another, and another, and at last he got work in another town. He said he went to church—he went because his mother had taught him; he said he didn’t feel easy when he stayed away; he said he did not go to get any blessing; just went because he; had been educated to go. What was his surprise, he said, when the minister got up in the pulpit and preached from the text, **“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”**

He said he thought surely God was calling him; and he said the Spirit strove mightily with him; but he just fought Him—made up his mind that he would not become a Christian until he had become settled in life; and he said that all the sermons he heard since made no more of an impression on him than on that stone, and he struck it with a hoe. It seemed to him as if the Spirit of God had left him.

But I could not talk to him. I was a stranger to Christ. But later I went off to Boston, and was converted; almost the first man that came into my mind was that neighbor, and I made up my mind when I went home I would talk with him and tell him about the Saviour. When I got home I made inquiries, and my mother said, “Why, didn’t I write you about him?”

“Write me what?”

“He has gone to the insane asylum, and if any of the neighbors go up to see him, he will point his finger at him and will say, ‘Young man, seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.’”

Reason had reeled and tottered from its throne, but the text was still there. God had sent that arrow down into his soul. Long years had rolled away and he could not draw it out of his soul.

The next time I went home they told me he was up on his farm, that he was idiotic.

I went up to his house and found him in a rocking chair; he was rocking backward and forward, and as I spoke to him, he gave me that idiotic look—that vacant look; I called him by name, and said, “Don’t you know me?”

He pointed his finger at me and said, “Young man, ‘seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.’” He did not know me—mind all gone, but the text was still there. A little while later he died. He lies slumbering in the cemetery where my father is buried; and when I go to visit that cemetery, as I go by that grave, it seems as if I can hear that text coming up from that grave, **“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”**

You and I cannot afford to disobey God. We cannot afford to calmly and coolly and deliberately say, “I will not obey.” Look around you. Men are snatched away suddenly, and they just pass into eternity. Remember that accident only recently—that night train passing on with great rapidity, and in a moment they passed into eternity.

If you sleep tonight without seeking the kingdom of God, you are disobeying God. It is a command from God Almighty to every soul. We have no right to defer it; no right to say that we will seek the kingdom of God tomorrow. Tomorrow does not belong to us. Today—now—is the day of salvation.

You will find in Isaiah 55: **“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.”**

It is not to seek feeling. It is not to seek a sentiment, or some dogma, or some creed, but it is to seek the Lord Himself. **“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.”** That is the exhortation. God exhorts you to seek Him while He may be found.

Someone may ask, “How seek Him?” Seek Him with your heart, not with your head. The trouble with a great many is they seek him with their head, and they never find Him. It is not a new head, but a new heart, we want. What do you mean by seeking God with your heart? I will tell you: when a man goes into a thing with his heart you can soon tell it. He will be in earnest. Go into the gold regions, and you will find that the miners down in the mines have their hearts there. They are terribly in earnest. Go learn a lesson from the world. See how men seek for wealth! We want men to seek their souls’ salvation as they seek for wealth. There is one thing that the Lord hates, and that is half-heartedness No man ever found God with half a heart.

I said to a man some time ago, “I will tell you when you will be converted. I can tell you the day and the hour.”

“Well, I would like to know. I didn’t know that you were a prophet.”

“Well,” says I, “I am not a prophet, but when you search for God with all your heart you will find Him, and not before.” If God is worth having He is worth seeking for with all our hearts, and when men seek Him with all their hearts they find Him.

I read a story some time ago of a vessel being wrecked at sea, and there were not enough lifeboats for all on board the vessel; some men were swimming around in the water trying to get into lifeboats, and one man with a great effort swam to a boat and reached out his right hand.

They said they did not dare to take any more in. They begged him to let go but he would not. You know how a drowning man will grasp at a straw. A man took a sword and cut off the man's hand, and the man swam up a second time and he laid hold of that boat with his left hand, and they cut off the left hand; and with both hands cut off he swam up to that boat again and seized it with his teeth. It touched their hearts. They could not cut off his head so they drew him into the boat. He saved his life because he was in earnest. If it is the right hand, off with it; if it is the right eye, out with it. The kingdom of God is worth more than all the world. May God wake us up, and show us the importance of seeking the kingdom of God with all our hearts.

Now I want to ask you one question: Do you believe that the Lord can be found now? Do you believe that a sinner, a man that has been at enmity with God for twenty years, can find the Lord precious to his soul? Do you believe that?

If men will seek Him with all their hearts they can find Him now. Do you believe that? Do you believe you can get eternal life and live with God forever by just seeking for it? You profess to believe it, but you do not believe it. If you did you would seek for it. If the Lord God should send Gabriel down here to say to you that you might have any one thing you asked for, I venture to say there would be only one cry—"Eternal life!" Everything else would fly into the dim past. You would not ask for money.

If there were only one thing to ask for, you would ask for eternal life. It is a great thing to live forever There is not anything to be compared with eternal life. Now, if eternal life can be found by asking for it, would you not advise every man, woman, and child to seek the kingdom of God? Seek ye the Lord! He has been seeking for you these many years. See Him with your heart, and you will find Him.

~ end of chapter 9 ~

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