

FINDING GOD

by

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CHAPTER TWELVE

THE GOSPEL (2)

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor” (Luke 4:18).

I WANT TO CONTINUE THE SUBJECT talked about in the preceding chapter. We don't want to get over that word Gospel too soon. It is too precious. And I don't know but it would be well to preach the same thing over and over again, until you believe it. I heard of a minister who preached the same sermon three times, and some of the brethren went to him and told him he had better preach another sermon, and he said when his congregation believed that one, he would preach another sermon, but he didn't propose to do so until they did.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel.”

Now, the question is, whom shall the Gospel be preached to? There is a certain class of people who seem to think the Gospel is very good for drunkards, and thieves, and vagabonds; there are so many of these self-righteous Pharisees today, who are drawing their filthy rags of self-righteousness around them, and thinking the Bible is only for a certain class.

If I understand the Bible correctly, the Gospel is for all. We read in the last chapter of Mark, that almost the last words of the Son of God uttered on this earth, were these to His disciples: **“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”** When we come to the Gospel, there is no distinction; rich and poor must be served alike; learned and unlearned; all have to come into the kingdom of God one way, and that is by believing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

These words were uttered after Christ had tasted death for every man. Gethsemane now was behind Him; Calvary, with all its horrors, was past; He was just ready to go Home to take His seat at the right hand of the Father; He was just giving the disciples His parting message. In other words, He was giving them His commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. **“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”**

I can just imagine all that little band of disciples who stood around Him, those unlearned men of Galilee, those fishermen who had been associated with Him for three years.

I can imagine the tears trickling down their cheeks as He talked of leaving them; and one of them thought that the Lord didn't really mean that they should preach the Gospel to every creature—for He preached to the Gentiles. It seemed as if the Jews wanted to keep the Gospel in Palestine; but, by the grace of God, it would flow out; it would go to all the world, because he had given orders that the Gospel should be preached to every creature. And now we find the messengers going to the four corners of the earth, to proclaim the glad tidings of the Gospel of Christ.

But I can imagine that Peter said: "Lord, you don't really mean that we shall preach the Gospel to those men who murdered You, to those men who took Your life?" "Yes," said the Lord; "go and preach the Gospel to those Jerusalem sinners." I can imagine Him saying: "Go and hunt up that man that put the crown of cruel thorns upon My brow, and preach the Gospel to him. Tell him he shall have a crown in My kingdom, without a thorn in it. He may sit upon My throne, if he will accept salvation as a gift. Go hunt up that man that spat in My face, and preach the Gospel to him, and offer him salvation, and tell him he can be saved, if he is only cleansed by the blood I have shed at Calvary. Go to the man that thrust the spear into My side and tell him there is a way. Tell him there is nothing but love in My heart for him. Go preach the Gospel to every creature."

And after He had gone up on high, we find the Holy Ghost came down the tenth day; and then they began to preach. And now see Peter, standing there on the day of Pentecost, and preaching the Gospel of God to sinners. John Bunyan says: "If a Jerusalem sinner can be saved, there is hope for us all." Do you think God is mocking? Do you think God is preaching to you, and then not giving you the power to take it? The Gospel is preached to every creature; and do you think He is not willing that every creature on the face of the earth should be saved?

I like to proclaim the Gospel, because it is to be proclaimed to all. When I see a poor drunkard, when I see a thief, when I see a prisoner in yonder prison, it is a grand, glorious thing to go and proclaim to him the glad tidings, because I know he can be saved. There is not one that has gone so far or fallen so low but that he can be saved; because every one of God's proclamations are headed "**whosoever**." That takes in all; nobody is left out. Somebody said he had rather have "**whosoever**," than his own name, because he would be afraid it was some other man who might have had his name.

This was well brought out recently in a prison.

The chaplain said to me, "I want to tell you a scene that occurred here some time ago. Our commissioners went to the governor of the state and got him to give his consent to pardon five men for good behavior. The governor said the record was to be kept in secret; the men were to know nothing about, and at the end of six months the men were brought out, the roll was called, and the president of the commission board came up and spoke to them; then putting his hands in his pocket he drew out the paper and said to those 1,100 convicts, 'I hold in my hand pardons for five men.' I never witnessed anything like it. Every man held his breath, and it was as silent as death. Then the commissioners went on to tell how they got these pardons; how it was that the governor had given them, and the chaplain said the suspense was so great that he spoke to the commissioner and told him to first read the names of those pardoned, before he spoke further.

The first reading was, 'Reuben Johnson will come out and get his pardon.' He held out the paper, but no one came. He looked all around, expecting to see a man spring to his feet at once; still no one arose, and he turned to the officer of the prison, and said: 'Are all the convicts here?' 'Yes,' was the reply. "Then, Reuben; Johnson will come and get his pardon.'

"The real Reuben Johnson was all this time looking around to see where Reuben was; and the chaplain beckoned to him, and he turned and looked around and behind him, thinking some other man must be meant. A second time he beckoned to Reuben, and called to him, and a second time the man looked around to see where Reuben was, until at last the chaplain said to him, 'You are the man, Reuben'; and he got up out of his seat and sank back again, thinking it could not be true. He had been there for nineteen years, having been placed there for life, and when he came up and took his pardon, he could hardly believe his eyes, and he went back to his seat and wept like a child; and then, when the convicts were marching back to their cells, Reuben had been so long in the habit of falling into line, and taking the lockstep with the rest, that he fell into his place, and the chaplain had to say, 'Reuben, come out, you are a free man.'"

That is the way men make out their pardon—for good behavior; but the Gospel of Jesus Christ is offered to all who have sinned, and are not worthy. All a man has got to prove now is that he is not worthy, and I will show him that Christ died for him. Christ died for us all while we were yet in sin.

While we were in London, Mr. Spurgeon one day took Mr. Sankey and me to his orphan asylum; and he was telling about them—that some of them had aunts, and some cousins, and that every boy had some friend who took an interest in him, and came to see him giving him a little pocket money.

One day, he said, while he stood there, a little boy came up to him and said, "Mr. Spurgeon, let me speak to you," and the boy sat down between Mr. Spurgeon and the elder who was with the clergyman, and said, "Mr. Spurgeon, suppose your father and mother were dead, and you didn't have any cousins, or aunts, or uncles, or friends to come to give you pocket money, and give you presents, don't you think you would feel bad—because that's me?" Said Mr. Spurgeon, "The minute he asked that, I put my hand right down into my pocket and took out some money." "Because that's me!" And so with the Gospel; we must say to those who have sinned, the Gospel is offered to them.

One night a man tried to tell me that he had made many mistakes, but had committed no sins. They were all mistakes, instead of sins. Better call things by their right names. We have all sinned. There is no righteousness; and there is no man who has walked the streets who has not broken the law of God. Therefore, everyone needs a Saviour; and there is no chance of your being saved, no hope of man being saved, unless he will admit first that he has sinned and is lost. Of course, if a man has not sinned he won't need a Saviour; but it is just because he has sinned that he needs the Gospel. The Gospel is the very best tidings that could come to us. Christ comes to bless us.

In Glasgow, they were telling me of a scene that occurred when Dr. Arnott was preaching there.

A woman was in great distress about her rent. She could not pay it, and so he took some money and went around to the door and knocked. He listened, and thought he heard the footsteps of someone inside; and so he knocked louder. No one came, and he knocked still louder; but after waiting some time he went away disappointed. A few days afterward, he met this lady on the streets of Glasgow, and told her that he heard she had been in great distress and he went around to help her; and the woman threw up both hands and said, 'Why, doctor, that was not you, was it? I was in the house all the time, and I thought it was the landlord coming around to get the rent; and I kept the door bolted.'

Christ comes to bless. He doesn't come to demand; He doesn't come to ask you to do something that you cannot do. He comes to bless you. When He began His Sermon on the Mount, what did He say? "Blessed! blessed! blessed!" When He got ready to go back to Heaven, He raised His hands over that little company and breathed upon them blessings. And so He wants to bless you; to help you; He offers to be your salvation; He offers to pay all the debt you owe. You owe God a debt you cannot pay. Can you forget this? You have broken the law of God. What are you going to do with the sins you have committed?

What is your hope? Why, there is no hope, unless the Lord Jesus Christ blots out your sins with His own body, unless Christ pays the penalty. If Christ settles the claim, the claim is settled for all time. And that is the doctrine of the Bible, the glorious doctrine of substitution. Christ paid the penalty; Christ died in our stead.

There was a man converted in Europe several years ago, and he liked the Gospel so well, he thought he would like to publish it. Well, he started out to publish it, and great crowds came to hear him out of curiosity, just as a great many go to church out of curiosity, to hear the singing, or something of that kind. Well, they came to hear him. The man wasn't much of a speaker, so next night there were not many there, and the third night the man didn't get a hearer. But he was anxious to publish the Gospel, so he got some great placards and posted them all over the town, stating that if there was any man in that town that was in debt, he was to come to his office, between certain hours on a certain day, with the proof of the indebtedness, and he would pay the debt.

Well, of course it went all over the town; but the people didn't believe him. One man said to his neighbor, "John, do you believe this man will pay our debts?" "Oh, of course not; that is a great sell; that is a hoax." The day came, and instead of there being a great rush, nobody came. It is a great wonder that there isn't a great rush of men into the kingdom of God to have their debts paid, when a man can be saved for nothing.

About ten o'clock there was a man walking in front of the office; he looked this way and that to see if there was anybody looking; by and by he was satisfied no one saw him, and he slipped in, and said "I saw a notice around town if anyone would call here at a certain hour you would pay his debt. Is there any truth in it?"

"Yes," said the man, "it is quite true. Did you bring around the necessary papers?"

"Yes." And after the man had paid the debt he said, "Sit down, I want to talk to you."

And he kept him there until twelve o'clock. Before twelve o'clock there were two more who came in and had their debts paid. At twelve o'clock he let them all out; on their way out they found some other men standing around the door, and they said, "Well, was it true he was willing to pay your debts?" "Yes," they said, "it was quite true; he paid our debts." "Oh, if that is so, we are going in to get our debts paid." And they went in; but it was too late. The man said if they had called within a certain hour he would have paid their debts.

To every one of you who is a bankrupt sinner—and you never saw a sinner in the world but that he was a bankrupt sinner—Christ comes and says, "I will pay the debt." And that is just what He wants to do. Bear in mind that the Son of God came into the world to save sinners, and He has the power to forgive sin. He has not only got the power, but He is willing to save, and He is anxious to save; and so if you will accept Christ's offer you can be cleansed of all sin.

Now the question comes, "Who will accept Him?" But I can imagine a man will say, "Well, I don't think a man can be saved so easily. I don't believe in these sudden conversions. I don't believe a man can be saved at once." What is it God has? Is it a gift? Now we read in Romans 6, it is a gift: "**The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**" Now if a man is saved, there must be one minute when he does not have the gift, and there must be another minute when he has it. And that is what it is represented in the Bible. It is a gift.

"Well," someone says, "haven't I got to feel some-thing before I can be saved? How much have I got to give up?" "Give up your sins!" No, you have never to give them up, for if you just take Christ they will go of themselves. They will all flee away in the dim past. But you can't do it of yourself. I tried for a long time to give up my sins myself, and I couldn't do it. But the moment I took Christ He snapped the cords; and I have been rejoicing these twenty years. And the way to be saved is not to delay, but to come and take—t-a-k-e, take.

When I was in Glasgow, a lady said to me: "You use that word take very frequently. Is there anything of that kind in the Bible? I can't find it. I think you must have manufactured that word."

Why, in the Bible it says: "**The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.**" And if God says "**let him take,**" He will supply him. If that boy will take Christ, who can stop him? All Hell and all earth cannot stop him. If need be, God would send ten thousand legions of angels to help him on his way up. I tell you, if you are not saved it is because you won't. You will not come unto Him that you might have life. The door hangs on that hinge. If a man says, "I will rise and come to Him," he won't wait.

When the prodigal came home, it wasn't when he got home that the change took place. It was away, away off in that foreign country when he said, "**I will arise and go to my father.**" I think with men the turning point will be when they say, "I will come; for I want to."

If you want to go to Heaven, the first thing is to make up your mind to go.

If I want to go to Chicago, the first thing I do is to make up my mind to go. And if you are willing to go to Christ, there is no power on earth can keep you away. Now, these men who say, "We can't come," should just be honest and put in the right word and say, "We won't come."

At one time my sister had trouble with her little boy, and his father said, "Why, Sammy, you must go now and ask your mother's forgiveness." The little fellow said he wouldn't. Father says, "You must. If you don't go and ask your mother's forgiveness I shall have to undress you and put you to bed."

He was a bright, nervous little fellow, never still a moment; and the father thought, he will have such a dread of being undressed and put to bed. But the little fellow wouldn't give in; so he undressed him and put him to bed. The father went to his business, and when he came home at noon he said to his wife, "Has Sammy asked your forgiveness?" "No," she said, "he hasn't."

So the father went to him and said, "Why, Sammy, why don't you ask your mother's forgiveness?" The little fellow shook his head, "Won't do it." "But, Sammy, you have to." "Couldn't."

The father went down to his office, and stayed all the afternoon; and when he came home he asked his wife, "Has Sammy asked your forgiveness?" "No; I took something up to him and tried to have him eat, but he wouldn't." So the father went up to see him, and said: "Now, Sammy, just ask your mother's forgiveness, and you may be dressed and come down to supper with us." "Couldn't do it." The father coaxed, but the little fellow "couldn't do it." That was all they could get out of him. You know very well he could, but he didn't want to. Now the hardest thing a man has to do is to become a Christian—and it is the easiest. That may seem a contradiction, but it isn't. The hard point is because he doesn't want to. The hardest thing for a man is to give up his will.

That night they retired; and they thought surely early in the morning he will be up ready to ask his mother's forgiveness. The father went to him—that was Friday morning—to see if he was ready to ask his mother's forgiveness; but he "couldn't."

The father and mother felt so bad about it, they couldn't eat; they thought it was to darken their whole lives. Perhaps that boy thought that father and mother didn't love him. Just what many sinners think, because God won't let them have their own way. The father went to his business; and when he came home he said to his wife, "Has Sammy asked your forgiveness?" "No." So he went to the little fellow and said, "Now, Sammy, are you not going to ask your mother's forgiveness?" "Can't." And that was all they could get out of him.

The father couldn't eat any dinner. It was like death in the house. It seemed as if the boy was going to conquer his father and mother. Instead of his little will being broken, it looked very much as if he was going to break theirs. Late Friday afternoon, "Mother, Mother, forgive me," said Sammy, and as the little fellow said "me," he sprang to his feet, and said: "I have said it! Now dress me and take me down to see Father.

He will be so glad to know I have said it.” And she took him down, and when the little fellow came in he said, “I’ve said it, I’ve said it!”

It is so easy to say, “I will arise and go to my God.” It is the most reasonable thing you can do. Isn’t it an unreasonable thing to hold out? Come right to God just this very hour. **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”**

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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