

## Seeking the Lord

Sunday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1993

### Jeremiah 29:13-14

*And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.*

Years ago, we had a preacher's school in our church. We had 14 or 15 young men who came each Saturday and spent the day studying the Word and listening as I tried to teach them the Word and something about preaching the gospel. Several of them now are pastors in different churches over the country. I asked an English teacher from one of the High Schools, if she would come on Saturday for an hour and teach these men a course in English.

She came the first Saturday to begin the English course for the young preachers. She told me that before she left home, her daughter knew what a difficult time she had just trying to teach High School children in English. Most of the students didn't even want to learn and were very rebellious with discipline problems. She said, "Mother, how is it going to feel to teach somebody English that wants to learn it?" The mother said, "I think I'm really going to enjoy teaching the men who have the desire to learn."

I'm asking you this morning, as I preach to you and try to teach you what is written in the Word of God on this subject that I will be using in a few moments, I'm asking you, "Do you really want to know, do you really want to learn about God?" That is my subject today: "Seeking the Lord."

I wish I had about 30 or 40 people out there (even one person, it doesn't really matter how many), who would really sit down, and take a Bible and listen with a willingness to learn, and to find something out about God, and about His Word, and about our relationship with Him. Is there anyone really interested in "Seeking the Lord?"

These young men in the preacher's school were seeking to improve their English and improve their understanding, and were trying to improve their gifts and delivery that they might be effective preachers. They were interested in what I had to say and what the other teachers had to say. They wanted to learn.

This is this thing of seeking the Lord; I want to know the Lord. Let me read you this text: Jeremiah 29:13, my subject is: "Seeking the Lord." Listen, "*And you shall seek Me and*

*find Me.*” Now, that’s a good promise isn’t it? *“You will seek Me and find Me,”* God says that!

When? *“You will seek Me and find Me, when you shall search for me, with all your heart.”* It’s not a fad, hobby or a passing fancy. When you really get interested, *“And seek Me with all your heart, you will find Me.”* That’s right! He said, *“I will be found of you; I will be found of you saith the Lord and I will turn away your captivity.”* We are in captivity to fallen-bound wills, natures, hearts and all manners of things.

Let me tell you this; if all you want is a religion of ceremony, you can find that easily. There is a lot of it around in our country. There’s plenty of ceremony, form and ritualism, if that is what you want. Some of you may be satisfied to fulfill some duties on Christmas, Easter, Lent and Sunday morning. Some of you may fulfill your Christian duties, motions, forms, and ceremonies and bow your head when you are told to do it. Some of you may say the Apostle’s Creed when somebody says it, and some of you may say the Lord’s Prayer when somebody says pray it. Most of you will go home and forget about it for another six days. You can find plenty of that kind of religion. It is popular today if that is what you are looking for. You are welcome to it and there is plenty of it.

If you want a religion of good works, if that is what you are satisfied with and that is what you want, you’ll be able to find a whole lot of preachers that will hire themselves out to help you do your best and to do your good deeds, so that you can buy God’s favor. There are plenty of those. They will tell you that if you pay your tithes and come to church and do certain deeds, God will look with favor on you. You will find plenty of preachers who will preach you right on in to heaven when you die. There are just “caboodles” of them. That’s fine, if that is what you want. If you want a religion of rules and laws and regulations, you can find plenty of that.

You’re going to find people who will tell you how to dress. They will tell you the right dress, the right day, and the right duty. They will tell you where to eat, what to eat and when to eat. They will tell you where to go, with whom to go and how to go. They will fix your life up, regiment it, order it and put down the laws and rules for everything for you to say, do and act. They say, “We can just all be alike and go to the happy hunting ground someday.” If that is what you want, you can find it. There are just lots of them out there to take you into their organization. There are many of them, if you can pay the dues. They think they can get you to heaven by their rules and regulations.

If you want a religion of emotion, whoopee emotionalism, entertainment, excitement, and demonstration of the flesh, let me tell you my friends, there is plenty of that out there now, especially in this day. What goes on in television in the name of God is

foolishness! There is frolicking, unbridled flesh, screaming, yelling, and people falling down on the floor and rolling; it is embarrassing! It is embarrassing to people who don't even confess religion. It is just plain embarrassing!

I will tell you some of the most embarrassing things that I know is to watch on the television screens, some of these wild and woolly, fleshly, and emotional demonstrations in the name of the Holy, Almighty God who said, *"Be still and know that I am God."*

*"The Lord is in His Holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him. Come my children and I will teach you the fear of the Lord."* Solomon said, *"When you stand before God, let your Words be few; God is in the heaven and you are upon the earth. If you make a vow, defer not to pay it."* I tell you; there is so much about Him being Holy and Reverent. Then, people claim to worship God with all this wild foolishness.

I watched a preacher the other day on television (this preacher is also a famous politician); he closed his eyes and started to pray. He started telling about the different people in the different parts of the world that he could see. He would say, "Here's one over here named Fred, and he has a pain in the back of his neck, and God is healing him." He said, "I'm thinking of a person who is driving a certain kind of car and is living in a certain place, whose middle name is Allan and he has back trouble; I see him and God is healing him."

Let me tell you something, only God is omniscient and omnipresent. Our Lord said to Nathaniel, *"Before Phillip called you, I saw you under the fig tree."* Now, the Lord Jesus can do that. He saw Nathaniel, but brother, you can't do that. You can't see beyond your finger. You don't know what is going on around the other side of that wall. If you are telling me you do, you are lying to me. You are putting on a charade and a show. You are an embarrassment! You don't have omniscience and you don't have omnipresence. It is embarrassing that anyone would act that way in front of God Almighty and ask people with intelligence to support them.

Now, if you are looking for that kind of religion, the world is full of it. I'm trying to warn you; *"These are blind people leading blind people and they are all going to fall into the ditch."* Even the apostles didn't put on demonstrations like that. They didn't see somebody in the next county that had a certain ailment. The apostles had gifts to heal men who were in their presence, but they didn't heal by long distance. This is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. If this is what you are looking for, may God have mercy!

Listen, you must have a heart's desire to know God, the living God, the living God of heaven and earth, the God of the Bible, and the God and Father of Christ Jesus. If you have a desire to believe God and fellowship with a true and living God, He said, *"I'll be found of you, but you are going to seek Me. You are going to seek Me with all of your heart and I will be found of you."*

I see that in several scriptures. In Isaiah 55, it says, *"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found. Call on Him while He may be near. Let the wicked forsake his way."* Let him forsake his way of works, his way of law, his way of legalism, and his way of emotionalism. This is our way. This form of ceremony, tradition and wild religion, this is man's way. This is not God's way. You have to forsake your way, but this seems to be the thing to do. *"Let a man forsake his way and the unrighteous man, his thoughts."*

When Naaman came to the prophet of God with leprosy, the prophet of God told him what to do. He told him what God said, saying to him, *"Go dip in the river Jordan and you will be clean."* Naaman's reply was, "Now wait a minute, I thought that He would come out to me, like these preachers do today. He thought he would call on his God and that He would say some words and that He would lay His hands on me and I would be healed. That's what I thought! One of the men with him said, "That's what you think, but why don't you do what the prophet says to do. Why don't you forsake your way and your thoughts and just listen." *"Let him forsake his way and his thoughts and let him turn to the Lord."* Let him come to God, He will have mercy and He will pardon.

Listen to Acts 17:27: *"Men should seek the Lord, if happily they may feel after Him and find Him."* He's not far from any of us. *"In Him we live and move and have our being."* Would you know God? Would you know the living God? Would you really believe and walk with and fellowship with the living God? Would you have God's presence and peace and rest in your heart, so that you won't have to go down to a building to worship God? You can worship God where you are.

You don't have to have a cheerleader to whip you up with music and organ playing to get you happy and waving your arms. You can bow before God and worship Him anywhere. You can worship Him while you are washing dishes, while you are working on the car, while you are cutting the grass, while you are at the lake fishing, while you are meditating upon your bed. You can walk with God. That is to know the living God.

What is it to seek the Lord? Let me give you four things: *"You will seek Me and find Me."* Now, what is this business of seeking the Lord?

First of all, I faced this one time when I was 24 years old. I had been through preacher's school. I knew some theology, but I didn't know God. I knew some promotional means, but I didn't know God. To seek the Lord is to admit by birth, by nature, and by human wisdom, I do not know God.

That's the place to start. I have to admit that what I have is not of God. It's not my way and it's not my thoughts, tradition and things handed down to me from someone. It's not real and it's not genuine. I really don't know God. Prayer is not spontaneous and faith is not there. A man will not seek what he thinks he has. He may not have it but if he thinks he has it he will not seek it. A man will not seek what he thinks he has.

Christ said to the woman at the well, *"If you knew the gift of God; if you knew who was speaking, you would ask Me and I would give you living water."* Now, I'm not being crude, and I'm not being insulting; I'm just stating a fact. It is a fact that most people suspect, but will not admit. People today really do not know God. People in the world, and people in religion, *"Have a form of godliness, but they deny the power."* *"They are ever learning and never coming to knowledge of the truth."*

*"Our Lord was in this world and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, (Israel) and they received Him not."* That's the first thing; just throw up your hands. All right, I don't know God. I have religion, and I have a profession. I've been down the isle 12 times and it has taken no effect. I have been baptized two or three times. I've been sprinkled and immersed. I've rededicated a dozen times. My heart is still like the troubled sea. I have no peace, and no rest. I don't walk with God. I'd like to know Him. That is the first thing, to admit it.

All right, here is the second thing: It is to really desire to know Him in your heart. He said, *"You'll seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart."* Do you still want to know God? Paul did! He said, *"O that I may win Christ and be found in Him."* Wouldn't it be tragic to preach, sing in a choir, teach Sunday school, go to church every Sunday, and wind up standing before God and hearing Him say, *"I never knew you?"*

Paul said, *"O that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection."* These were men of whom God spoke great and mighty things. David said, *"O as the heart panteth for the water brook, so panteth my soul after Thee, the living God."* When shall I come before God? The apostle Paul in Philippians 3 said, *"O that I may win Christ and be found in Him, that I may know God, that I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead."*

Over in the Book of John, Chapter Two, there were some people who came to our Lord. He said this; *“You seek Me because of the miracles. You follow Me because you saw the miracles.”* He didn’t reveal Himself to them because the only reason they came to Him was because of the miracles. Another group came and He didn’t reveal Himself to them because, He said, *“Now, you seek Me because of the loaves and fishes.”* I will tell you, if you can seek Him seriously with all your heart, you will be found of Him.

First thing is to admit. I’ve got religion; I’m like Saul of Tarsus. I’ve got religion, but I don’t know God, but I want to know God.

Pass me not oh gentle Saviour  
Hear my humble cry.  
While on others thou art calling  
Do not pass me by.

Let me at a throne of mercy  
Find a sweet relief,  
Kneeling there in deep contrition  
God help my unbelief.

Here is the third thing: What is it to seek the Lord? It is to be willing to be accepted of God on His terms. Suppose a young man was guilty of a crime. He knows it, the Lawyer knows it, and the judge knows it. Everyone in the whole courtroom knows it and he is guilty. He stands before the judge and the judge looks at him and says, “Young man, do you want to go to jail?” “No sir, I don’t.” “Well, young man, here are my terms. If you will follow my terms you will stay out of jail. Now, here are my terms. You are going to have a 10:00 curfew every night for two years, 200 hours of community service. I want you to report to your parole officer every Wednesday at 12:00, noon. Those are my terms; will you accept them?” Oh, I tell you, he would grab hold of that in a minute wouldn’t he? “Yes sir, to stay out of jail, to stay out of confinement, I’ll be glad to accept your terms.” He has no choice! It’s either the terms of the judge or it is prison.

Put yourself before God. You are guilty and I am guilty. We are guilty sinners, isn’t that true? *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”* There is no difference between the Jew and Gentile; all have sinned. *“Everyone has turned to their own way;”* isn’t that true?” Well, God owes us nothing. It’s like the judge; he didn’t owe him mercy. He could have sentenced him to prison. He didn’t owe him compassion, mercy and grace. God doesn’t owe us mercy and grace. We deserve to be condemned and to perish; that’s right!

Here are God's terms. The Lord of heaven and earth, because He is merciful, will show mercy. Moses asked Him, "*God show me your mercy.*" He said, "*I will be merciful unto whom I will be merciful. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious. I will make all my goodness pass before you.*" That is "*My goodness!*" God is going to show mercy and God is going to be gracious like that earthly judge, (the young man found mercy in my sight). That is what Abraham and Moses talked about. Oh, if I could find grace in Thy sight!

God is going to have a people. God is going to save a people. Heaven is going to be populated. It is going to be populated by people like Christ. Who are they; I do not know? I do know that they are people who come to God on His terms. He's a just and Holy God. He provides a way of salvation according to His wisdom, according to His purpose, and according to His grace. Almighty God provided a way of salvation that will honor His law, satisfy His justice, and enable Him to be just and justifier.

I'll tell you how He did it. He sent Jesus Christ into this world to be numbered with the guilty and to be numbered with the transgressors. There I stand, like that young man, guilty before God. He's guilty before his judge and I am guilty before mine. Jesus Christ came into this world and took my place, guilt, sentence, curse, and condemnation and took my place. By His obedience and by His death, He delivered me from condemnation. Christ Jesus came to earth, lived for me, died for me, was buried and rose for me and ascended into heaven where He is at the right-hand of God, interceding for me. That is what the scripture says, "*I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me. In the fullness of time God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were born under the law.*"

Paul summed it up in Acts 13:38 (listen to this; this is God's way and God's terms), "*Men and brethren*" (this is apostle Paul speaking to the people of Israel, the religious people of His day). He says, "*Now men and brethren, be it known unto you that through this man, (Jesus Christ, the God-man, the Substitute, the Redeemer the Christ), through this man, (through His death and through His obedience), is preached to you the forgiveness of sins.*"\_There's no condemnation in Christ. We're justified by the grace of God in Christ. "*By Him, all that believe are justified from all things from which you cannot be justified by the law of Moses.*" By the deeds of the law, by the works of the day, you cannot be justified before God. There is only one way of acceptance and it is in the God-man Mediator. That is God's way. Christ is God's way.

Christ says, "*I am the way. No man comes to the Father but by Me. There's none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.*" Jesus Christ is God's way. "*Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid.*"

I was reading the paper one time. It was, I believe, Dear Abby. This was a letter that some dear person had written. This person, writing in to Dear Abby, said, "I heard a preacher say that the only way for a person to go to heaven is by believing on Jesus Christ." She said, "If that's the only way to heaven then I refuse to go there." Well, that's sad, but let me tell you this, Christ is God's way and that is God's terms. He says, "*Repent and believe the gospel.*" The scripture says, "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on Him.*" That's God's way.

To seek the Lord is to seek Him. I have to admit that by nature I don't know Him. It's to seek Him with all my heart. It is to be willing to come on His terms. He lays down the terms, not me or the church or you. To seek the Lord is to be willing to be saved on His terms. The scripture says, "*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.*"

Lord, in my hands no price I bring,  
Simply to the cross of Christ I cling.  
Could my tears forever flow?  
Could my zeal no respite know?  
These for sin could never atone,  
Christ must save and Christ alone.

That is what the scripture says; it is Christ! Why would you want another way when God says this is My way? Why would you want to seek another way when God says, all the way through the Word, this is My way?

Fourthly, now listen, this is the last statement: To seek the Lord is to be willing to part with everything and every one that stands between you and Him. Abraham could not stay in an idolatrous land, in an idolatrous family and walk with God. God said, "*Get thee out.*" Moses could not remain in the riches and fleshly climate of Egypt and walk with God. "*By faith, Moses refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's daughter.*" He couldn't do it. Paul could not remain among the Pharisees and the religious circle that denied the personal work of Christ, and walk with God. The rich young ruler faced this fact that he could not have plenty and be satisfied with having plenty, while others around him had nothing and call himself a disciple of Christ.

I am not telling you whom you can associate with or what you can own or not own or what company you can keep or can't keep. I am simply saying that the Spirit of God in you will make you willing. You want Christ and God's fellowship so badly, that you are



willing to part with anything and anyone in anyway of life that hinders you from walking with God.

Darkness cannot fellowship with light; you are willing to walk with the Lord.

Where does one seek the Lord and this kind of knowledge with God? Well, He's not down in front of a church. I would seek Him in His Word, study the Word. I would seek Him in His Word Incarnate, in His Son. *"Christ has come and given us an understanding that we may know God."* I would seek Him among His people and among those people who know Him. I'll tell you this; I would find somebody who is preaching the gospel. I would listen to his sermon.

God has raised up prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. He's not raising up entertainers but preachers of the Word to teach us the way to God. That's what the Eunuch said to Phillip, *"Of whom does the prophets speak, of Himself or some other man?" Phillip began at that scripture and preached to him, Jesus."*

Let's pray this prayer: "Lord, lead me to seek Thee, seeking Thee to find Thee, finding Thee to love Thee, and loving Thee to walk with Thee."