

What Is it to Seek the Lord?

Sunday, January 29TH, 1989

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.”

TV-343a

Our subject today is: “WHAT IS IT TO SEEK THE LORD?” What does it mean to seek the Lord? In Jeremiah Chapter 29: verse 13-14, the Scripture says, *“And ye shall seek Me and find Me when you shall search for Me with all your heart. I will be found of you, saith the Lord and I will turn away your captivity.”*

In another passage of Scripture taken from Isaiah 55:6 declares, *“Seek ye the Lord while He may be found. Call ye upon Him while He is near.”*

Is it not true that what people really want, they will diligently seek? Is that not true? For example: If a person really wants wealth, if He really wants an education, if He really wants a political office, then he will seek that thing diligently. He will give his time, his effort and study to accomplishing that goal, if he really wants it.

Secondly: When people are taken up with good health, they seek it and they go to a doctor on a regular basis and get a checkup. They read books about good health. They diet and exercise. They do all of these things trying to get good health and a healthy body, if they really want it.

Some people want the love and companionship of another person. If a man wishes to marry a young lady, he will pursue that person until he has won her favor. He will send candy; he will send flowers and go by to see her. In other words, he will seek her hand in marriage.

What I am saying is this, what we truly want in this world, we will go after it. We go after it with all of our hearts, strength, and effort if we really want it.

This is also true in the spiritual realm. If a person really desires to know the Living God, he will desire to know the true and Living God in true faith. If he really wants to know God and desires to enjoy His presence, He will desire His mercy and His grace and the riches of His love. If a person really desires to find the favor of God and the fellowship of God and forgiveness of sins, then, that person will seek the Lord.

Just like in any other area of life. If you want something, badly enough you will go after it. You will give your time and effort of attaining that goal. I'm saying that it is true in this matter of knowing God if a person really wants to know God. Just as he seeks other things, he will seek the Lord.

I will have people to come and hear me on Sunday morning. At the end of the service, they will manifest some interest. They will say, "Boy, that was a good message; I really got a blessing out of that." Some will say, "I'm really troubled about my soul and want to know God." I say, "I hope you will come again."

Then, on Sunday night, they are not in the service. Wednesday night they are not there. The next Sunday they are not there. Does that person really want to know God? You say, "No preacher." If he went about other things that way he would never attain any goal. That is exactly right. If you want something badly enough you give your time, your effort, and your strength to finding that thing.

Do you remember the woman in the Bible who had the issue of blood for 12 years? This woman was sick for 12 long years. She wasted everything she had on false physicians. She had gone to this quack, that quack and some other quack doctor and none of them were able to help her.

Finally, she heard about the Lord Jesus Christ. Even in her sickly, weakened, frail, dying condition she came crawling to Him on her hands and knees. She pushed her way through the crowd. She said, "*If I can but touch His clothes, I will be made whole.*" She wanted Christ and healing more than anything in this world.

Look at blind Bartimaeus. When our Lord Jesus Christ walked out of the city of Jericho, He asked, "What's the commotion?" Someone said, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." He began to cry, "*Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me.*" This man is blind, sitting in darkness and poverty, he's destitute, and the only one who can help him is the Son of God. He began to cry out and the people told him to be quiet. They said, "He has no time for you. He's not interested in you; just be quiet." He cried out the more. He would not be denied. He must have Christ. Do you see what I am saying?

This wealthy Ethiopian Eunuch was in charge of the queen's entire treasury, but he wanted to know God. This is not in the days of airplanes and automobiles. He took a chariot and rode all the way across the desert to get to Jerusalem to find out something about God.

He found nothing out there. He discovered nothing and he learned nothing. On his way back to Ethiopia, he was reading the Word of God. He was reading the Book of Isaiah and God sent him a preacher. I will tell you this; he was a determined man on a difficult journey. There is the key.

Cornelius, Lydia, the thief on the cross, and the woman who washed His feet are illustrations of people who must have mercy, who must have the grace of God and they sought Him until they found Him.

Did not our Lord say, *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these other things will be added to you. Seek ye the Lord while He may be found. Call on Him while He is near.”* He said, *“You seek Me and find Me and when you search for Me with all your heart and I will be found of you when you search for me with all your heart. I’ll turn away your captivity; I will make you whole.”*

I’m going to ask two or three questions in my message today on this subject: “WHAT IS IT TO SEEK THE LORD?” When the Scripture says unto us, seek the Lord, what is it to seek the Lord? What prompts a person and what is involved in this seeking of the Lord? I will tell you four things. I’m just as confident of this and I’m going to give it to you in the plainest terms, the plainest language that any of you can understand. WHAT IS IT TO SEEK THE LORD?

1). It begins right here. To seek the Lord is to discover that by nature, birth and, human wisdom that I do not know the Lord. That is where a man starts. I do not know the Lord and I do not have the Lord.

You see; a man doesn’t seek what he already has. That would be foolish wouldn’t it? A man seeks what he wants, needs, desires and what he does not have. I’m saying, seeking the Lord and where it begins and where it has to begin, is to discover that I do not have the Lord and I do not know the Lord.

I discovered one day by the Word of God, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, and the preaching of the gospel that I did not know the Lord. You say, “I thought you were raised religious.” I was, but I didn’t know the Lord. I had a god, a false god. I had religion.

I made a profession of faith and I even went to preacher’s school. I pastored a church three years before I ever heard the gospel, before I ever knew the Living God. Oh, I had a god just like the majority of religious people today have a god. I had a form, a

tradition, a doctrine. I had a god, a denomination. I didn't know the Living and True God.

The Word of God tells us, *"Your sins have separated you and your God."* When Adam fell in the Garden of Eden, all men died in Adam. They died spiritually and were separated from God. Our sins separated us from God. No man by nature knows God. That is what the Scripture says, *"No man knoweth the Father but the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal Him. No man hath seen God at any time."* No sir!

"The invisible God dwells in a light to which no man can approach." If you begin here, this is where you must begin. Put your religion at the door. Put your traditions at the door and leave them at the door. Come and know that by nature we do not know God. By nature and by birth, we do not have God. *"Our sins have separated us from God."*

God is infinitely high and Holy, immaculately Holy. We are sinful creatures. That sin is the great gulf between Almighty God and us. We do not know God. He must be revealed to us.

What is it to seek the Lord? It is to first establish and face this: we by nature do not know God. *"Canst thou by searching find God? Well, it is higher than the heavens, what can you know? It is deeper than hell, what can you know? It is broader than the sea,"* God has said.

2). What is it to seek the Lord? It is to really desire sincerely to know Him, to know the Living God, to be satisfied with nothing short of fellowship with God Almighty, that has to be established.

We're not just seeking religion or just seeking an experience. We're not just seeking an emotional feeling, or just seeking the approval of a crowd, a preacher, family, or people. We want to know God!

This is what the Apostle Paul said, *"O that I may win Christ and be found in Him. O that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection."* I'm not seeking the benefits; I want the Benefactor. I'm not seeking the gifts; that is not what I want. I want the Giver. I'm not seeking the kingdom of God; I'm seeking the King Himself. If I have the King Himself, than I am in the kingdom of God.

Just like David said, *"As the thirsty deer panteth for the water brooks so panteth my soul after Thee, the true and living God."* Our Lord in that great High Priestly prayer said,

“This is eternal life that they might know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

My friends; salvation and eternal life are not having the right doctrine. A man can be doctrinally sound and dead. It is not having the right morality. The Pharisees were experts in this regard. It's not just having the right ceremony on the right day or the right church; salvation is in a right relationship with the Lord God in Christ Jesus our Redeemer. This is the truth!

WHAT IS IT TO SEEK THE LORD? Well, it is to start out right and discover that by nature, by birth and by sin, I do not know the Lord. I don't know God. It is like the blind man to whom the Lord had given him sight. He said, *“Well, who is He that I might believe on Him?”* Saul of Tarsus said, on the way to Damascus; *“Who art Thou Lord, Who are You?”*

It is to admit that by nature I do not know Him. It is to really desire to know Him. I must have Christ. I must know Him. Lord, I will never be satisfied until you reveal Yourself to me.” Or like Jacob of old, “I will not let You go until You bless me with the knowledge of Yourself.” That's true, my friend.

3). WHAT IS IT TO SEEK THE LORD? Now, watch this carefully, it is to be willing. That is such a big word, willing. He said in; Isaiah 1:19; *“If you will be willing and obedient, you will eat the good of the land.” Thy people shall be willing in the day of His power”* (Psalm 110:3). To seek the Lord is to be willing to seek Him and be accepted on His terms. Come on now, only on His terms.

I hear these preachers and religious people dictating the terms. I'm telling you this, God owes us nothing but judgment and wrath. That is just so. God owes us nothing but judgment and wrath. *“The wages of sin is death.”* We have fully earned it.

He doesn't owe us mercy. You see, if He owed it then it wouldn't be mercy. God's not obligated to the creature. God doesn't need the creature. He said, *“If I needed anything I wouldn't ask you.”*

We have sinned: we have challenged God's right to reign. We did it in the Garden of Eden and we did it again at Calvary's cross. We rejected His sovereignty and His Son. Our hands are dripping with the blood of God Almighty whom we crucified. We are in trouble. If I come to God, I have to come on His terms.

I know churches and preachers all over this world are establishing their own terms. That is not to be. We come on God's terms and to truly seek the Lord is to be willing to seek Him on His terms. You have to come to Him on His terms, to be accepted on His terms.

What are His terms? Well, they are *"Repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ."* Those are God's terms. Paul said that in Acts 20 when he summed up his ministry. He said, *"I have gone everywhere preaching repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ."*

What is repentance toward God? Repentance toward God has to do with the heart. It's not so much the hand. Repentance is not taking on a sour expression or folding your hands piously or walking like a sissy or something like that. That is not real repentance when you try to act religious and talk religious. Repentance has to do with the heart, the attitude more than the actions and the thoughts.

"God resisteth the proud and gives grace to the humble." Here is the language of repentance; I am a sinner. *"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All we like sheep have gone astray; we've turned everyone to his own way."* I have no righteousness. I have no goodness in my flesh. *"In my flesh dwelleth no good thing."*

God is Holy and God is Just to condemn me. David established that in his prayer of repentance in Psalm 51. He said, *"I've sinned against thee. My sins are ever before me."* You are Just and Holy to condemn me and You are Just to damn me. *"If Thou O Lord shouldest mark iniquity, who would stand? But, there is forgiveness with Thee."*

In my hands, no price I bring. Come on down sinner. To seek the Lord is to be willing to seek Him and be accepted of Him on His terms. His terms are genuine repentance. Christ said, *"Except you repent, you will perish."* In my hands, no price I bring.

This saving faith is a heart work also. It has to do with seeing Christ. Notice that Paul said, *"Repentance toward God"* we have sinned against God. Faith is toward our Lord Jesus Christ. This faith sees in Christ all that God is, all that God requires and all that redemption demands. *"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 that we might receive the adoption of sons"* (the righteousness of God in Him).

"Christ has suffered for sin, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God." God has set Him forth, as the propitiation for sin, as the mercyseat, and a covering for sin that He might be Just and Justifier. *"In Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the*

Godhead bodily and we are complete in Him.” He of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

Yes, faith leaves all my tradition at the door and looks to Christ. Yes, faith leaves all my righteousness at the door and embraces the righteousness of Christ. Yes, faith leaves all my thoughts, (and we do a lot of that), *“Our thoughts are not His thoughts.”* True repentance leaves our thoughts at the door and embraces Christ as our wisdom. My ways and my thoughts come to God only in Christ.

There’s a great old hymn. I don’t remember the author. It expresses this business of repentance and faith in God’s terms. They don’t change and they are the same. Repentance toward God with a genuine heart repentance, a genuine change of attitude, mind, and thoughts are genuine humility in the dust before the throne of a Holy God. Lord, do with me what you will.

Read with me...

I’ll go to Jesus though my sins
Hath like a mountain rose,
And I’ll know His courts, I’ll enter in
Whatever may oppose.

And prostrate I will lie before His throne
And there my guilt confess,
I’ll tell Him, I’m a wretch undone
Without His Sovereign grace.

I can but perish if I go
But I am resolved to try,
For if I stay away
I must forever die.

I’ll tell Him. He knows it already, but I will tell Him I found it out. *“I’m a wretch undone without His Sovereign grace.”*

Have you ever been lost? I don’t think a man can ever be found who has never been lost. Have you ever been a sinner? Christ died for sinners. You wouldn’t be one of those ungodly people for whom Christ died for, would you? I will tell you this, to seek the Lord is to seek Him on His terms.

His terms have ever been and are now and will ever be *“Repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ.”* Never a proud sinner ever entered the kingdom of God, because God always humbles him. That is just so!

I don't care if he is a preacher or a deacon, elder or whatever he is. God always breaks the proud sinner and he breaks the proud asses' colt and puts a saddle on him and the King rides him, even without a bridle.

4). WHAT IS IT TO SEEK THE LORD? It is to know we need Him. It is to desire Him above all things. It is to come on His terms and fourthly, it is to be willing to part with all that stands between me and full fellowship with Him.

A lot of folks run into problems here. To really seek the Lord is to be willing to part with anything or anyone. It is to be willing to part with anyone, any job, any vocation, any circle, or any tradition that stands between me and full fellowship with Him. I'm telling you the truth now.

Listen to what He said, *“If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me. He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. He that putteth his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God. If any man draw back My soul has no pleasure in him.”*

These are clear declarations from the lips of the Son of God. In other words, what I'm saying is this: it's not what I'm saying, it is what God Almighty has always said, *“Christ Jesus will be Lord of all, or He will not be Lord at all.”*

To know Christ is not to have a religion on the side. I'm troubled about my generation. They seem to have the idea that religion is a sideline. It is something that you take care of on Sunday or you take care of on special holy holidays or something you let your preacher or your church pay them to take care for you.

“You don't ever mix your religion with your social life or your political life,” they tell me. Hold on here now; just wait a minute! They say, “Salvation might be religion but that is not to know God.” To know God is to walk with God. To know God is to love Him and His Word. To know God is to be identified 100% with His gospel and with His people.

Abraham believed God and he had to leave home. He had to come out of idolatry. He had to leave his circle of friends. *“Abraham believed God and sojourned on this earth looking for a city.”* He never did own a piece of land.

Abraham believed God and withheld not his only son when God demanded that he sacrifice him. Abraham believed God's Word that, *"He was able to do all that He promised and it was imputed to him for righteousness."*

He believed God. He didn't just talk like it, he believed God. He didn't just profess it, he lived it. *"This was not written for Abraham's sake alone but for ours also to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on the Son of God."*

WHAT IS IT TO SEEK THE LORD? It is to discover by nature, birth, and religious tradition that I do not know Him and never have. Second, it is to really want to know Him. This is not a doctrine to argue, but to know Him. To know Him is to seek Him on His terms. It is to be made willing by the Spirit of God to turn from my idols, whatever they may be, to serve the Living God.

Now, here is the second and final question: How do true seekers seek the Lord? How do they seek Him? That is what it is to seek Him, but how do they? Well, the Scripture says that they seek Him. *"You'll seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart."*

Then, they seek Him sincerely with all their heart. It is not with a divided heart, but with all your heart. They seek Him continually. That is what the Scripture says in First Chronicles 16: *"They seek His face continually."*

They seek Him in His Word. *"To the law and to the prophets, should not a people seek their God? If they speak not according to the Word of God it is because there is no light in them."*

Don't seek God in the clouds. Don't seek God in a feeling. Seek God in the Word. That is where He is revealed. They seek Him while He may be found. That is now. *"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found."*

My last point is: They seek Him with a single purpose. *"There is one thing that I have desired and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."*