

Those Who Seek the Lord

Sunday, September 3rd, 1989

Isaiah 55:6

Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

Last week I brought you a message from First Peter Chapter Four in which the apostle said, *“The end of all things is at hand, therefore, be serious, be sober and call on God.”* I’m following that message with the one today, entitled: “Those Who Seek The Lord” (those who seriously call, do call on God).

I want you to turn with me to Jeremiah Chapter 29: verse 13-14. If you are not following along in the Bible, jot the verses down and read them later. Jeremiah says this in quoting our Lord, he says; *“And you shall seek Me and find Me when you search for Me (or call upon Me) with all your heart. I will be found of you saith the Lord, and I will turn away your captivity.”*

I know this is true. I ask it in the form of a question, but the answer is yes and you know it is yes. Is this not true that what people really, really want, they seek? Now, is that not true? You know it is true. If a person wants wealth, he seeks it. If a person wants an education, he’ll leave no stone unturned to go to school. If a person wants a political office, he will seek it. He will campaign; he will put out all kinds of cards and advertisements. He will seek it diligently. He will give time, study and effort to obtain it. What a man wants, he seeks.

Some of you are on a health kick. You diet, you go to the doctor, you read books, and you exercise. Why are you doing all of that? You want good health and you are giving plenty of time in getting it.

If a person wants love and companionship of another, he will woo that person and he will win that person’s favor. He will do all within his power to gain the affection of that person because that is who he wants and seeks. What we really, really want in this world, we go after it. We go after it with all our hearts, with all our minds and with all our strength. Isn’t that true? You know it is true and I do too.

I am saying this, “If a person really desires to know the living God and if you really do and are serious about this thing in knowing the living God in true faith you will seek the Lord just as you seek these other things.” If you are serious, you will want to enjoy His presence and you will want the riches of His grace, and you will want the riches of His favor. Mary found favor with the Lord. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Do

you really want His favor and His forgiveness and want His mercy. Do you really? I'm saying that if you do, you will seek it.

You will seek the Lord just as you seek these other things. The woman with the issue of blood did. She was dying, and had been with this disease for 12 years. She had been hemorrhaging for 12 years and she heard about Christ. You talk about somebody wanting something; this woman wanted His power. She wanted His grace and she wanted to be healed. She literally crawled on her hands and knees and said, *"If I can but touch the hem of His garment, I will be made whole."* She was made whole and sought the Lord.

Do you remember blind Bartimaeus by the wayside crying out? He said, *"Jesus, Thy Son of David, have mercy on me."* This man was blind. He was sitting in poverty, dirt, filth and darkness. He was sitting there hopeless, helpless and sightless. Right out there was one who could make him see and make him whole. Do you think that he wanted Him? Do you think that he really wanted Him?

The Ethiopian Eunuch journeyed all the way from Ethiopia to Jerusalem in a carriage. I don't know how far it was, but I do know it was a long way. He wanted to know God. He read the Scriptures and wanted to know God. He was seeking the true and living God. God sent him a preacher.

Cornelius was seeking the Lord. Lydia, the business woman and the woman who washed His feet and even the thief on the cross were seeking the Lord. They were seriously seeking the Lord. They wanted to know God. That is what our Lord is saying, *"If you seek Me you will find Me. When you search for Me with all your heart, I will be found of you. When you seek Me with all your heart, I will turn away your captivity."*

The woman with the issue of blood was healed just like that! Bartimaeus was healed just like that! All of these people truly sought the Lord. Our Master said, *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (seek ye first, with all your heart) and all these things will be added to you."*

I have two questions: The body of this message contains two questions. I'm going to ask and answer two questions. I think they are very good questions. I think they are worthy of taking note.

The first question is this: What is it to seek the Lord?

The second question is this: How do we seek the Lord?

Let's see if I can deal with both of those questions. What is it to seek the Lord and how do true seekers seek the Lord?

What is it to seek the Lord? First of all it is to discover that by birth, nature and human wisdom, I do not know God. In other words, when a Scripture says seek the Lord, what prompts a man to seek the Lord is that he knows that he doesn't have the Lord. He may have religion, but he doesn't have knowledge of the true God.

I had religion once, but I did not know God. I went to preacher's school. I was raised in a church. I even pastored a church for a short time, but I did not know the true and living God. I was like Saul of Tarsus. You might ask; "How can a man be deeply religious and not know God?" Saul of Tarsus didn't know God. He didn't know Christ. Nicodemus didn't know God. Cornelius didn't know God.

You see, these were religious, devout men but they didn't know God. First of all, to seek the Lord is to discover by nature that I do not have God. By birth, I do not have God. I do not know God. A man does not seek what he already has. The Scripture says, "*Your sins have separated you and your God.*" The Scripture says, "*God dwells in a light to which no man can approach.*"

The first thing about seeking the Lord is to discover that I do not have Him and I do not know Him. I may have religion and I may have morality. I may have the form, tradition, ceremony and all the customs, but I do not have the living God.

What is it to seek the Lord? The answer is that you have to really desire to know Him. You will be unwilling to be satisfied with a substitute or anything else other than the living God. I must have the living God. I can be satisfied with nothing short of Him. I have to have fellowship with Him. This is what Paul was saying in Philippians Three, "*O that I may win Christ and be found in Him. O that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection.*" That is what I am talking about.

I'm not talking about the benefits; it is the Benefactor that we are seeking. It is not the gifts. We aren't satisfied with the gift; we want the Giver. If we have the Giver, we will have the gifts.

It is not the kingdom. I'm not seeking the kingdom; I am seeking the King. Our Lord said, "*You shall seek Me and will find Me when you search for Me.*" That is what I am talking about. David said, "*As a hungry, thirsty deer panteth for the water brooks, so*

panteth my soul for the living God.” Our Lord said in John 17:3, “This is eternal life that they might know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

You see, my friends, salvation is not in the right doctrine. That is not salvation. That is not peace and that is not rest. It is not in the right morality. It is not in the right ceremony and it is not in the right church. Salvation is in a right relationship with the living God through Christ Jesus. Do you see what I am saying? It is *“Christ in you that is the hope of glory.”*

Paul said, *“When it pleased God who separated me from my mother’s womb to reveal His Son in me.”* The living God, the Son of God, the Redeemer, is not a myth or historical character. He is not someone out of a book or even a far off, mysterious, unknown quantity. He is my Lord! Do you see what I am saying?

What is it to seek the Lord? It is to discover that religion is not in knowing the Lord. Morality is not in knowing the Lord. Knowing God is not having the right church. Having a theological system is not in knowing God. It is to realize that by nature, I do not have God. I don’t know God and it is to really desire to know Him. You need to really, really, desire to know Him.

What is it to seek the Lord? The answer is to be willing to seek Him and be accepted of Him and fellowship with Him, on His terms. Are you listening? It has to be on His terms. You see, I can invent a god and I can lay down the terms of reconciliation. I can invent a saviour and I can invent a benefactor or mediator. We can lay down or I can lay down through emotionalism, a sentiment or terms of fellowship. I can say, “My God does this and My God does that.” The living God, the Almighty and Eternal living God is *“The one who dwells in a light to which no man can approach.”* He is a God that is separate from sinners.

That Holy God owes us nothing. He owes us judgment and wrath for our sins. God is not obligated to us. We are the sinners. We are the ones that have offended Him. We are the ones that are cast out. We have to be willing to come to Him on His terms and be accepted on His terms. We have to fellowship with Him on His terms. Do you see what I am saying, *“That He may be just and justifier?”*

If I come to God, I want to know the living and true God or do I want to know a false god? I can invent one or find one that someone else has already invented and try to improve on Him. If I am going as a sinner, to come to the living God and really want to know Him and desire to know Him, then I have to find out from the Word of God His terms on which He will accept a sinner. I have to find out the terms on which He will

receive a sinner, the terms on which He will embrace a sinner, the terms on which He will open the kingdom of God to a sinner.

He has laid down these terms in Acts 20:28. Paul declared them, he said; “I have declared unto you from house to house (two things) repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Those are God’s terms. You have to have repentance toward God and faith towards Jesus Christ.

What is repentance? Repentance has to do with the heart, attitude and thoughts. “*God resisteth the proud. He gives grace to the humble.*” I face this in repentance; I am a sinner. “*All have sinned and come short of God’s glory.*” I have no righteousness or goodness in this flesh. God is Holy and just to condemn me. “*If Thou Lord shouldest mark iniquity who shall stand? But, there is forgiveness with Thee.*” So, “In my hands no price I bring.” I come looking to Christ. I come grieving over my sins, mourning over my sins, weeping over my sins and confessing my sins. I come empty handed. I come with a real sorrow for sin. I come seeking mercy, repenting of my evil thoughts against God. I am willing to be saved on God’s terms.

What is Faith in Jesus Christ? It has to do with seeing in Him (in Christ), all that God is, all that He requires and all that redemption demands. It is seeing in Christ and seeing in me nothing but sin and unworthiness. It is seeing in Christ, all that I need. “*In the fullness of the time God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law. Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. God sent Him forth to be propitiation through faith in His blood. In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and you are complete in Him. He of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.*”

Those are all of God’s terms, repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ. Are you willing to come to Him on those terms? I will tell you this, repentance and faith leaves all of my religious traditions at the door. Repentance and faith leaves all of my self-righteous rags at the door. Repentance and faith leaves all my thoughts and ways at the door and I come to God only in Christ, on His terms.

The songwriter put it this way:

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

And prostrate I'll lie before His throne
And there my sin confess
I'll tell Him I'm a wretch undone
Without His Sovereign Grace.

I can but perish if I go
But I'm resolved to try
For if I stay away I know
I shall forever die.

That is seeking the Lord. What is it to seek the Lord? It is to realize by nature, birth or whatever traditions, customs, or religion, I don't have Him and I don't know Him. It is to really want to know the living God. It is a willingness to come to God strictly on His terms laid down in His Word through the merits of Christ and through the righteousness of Christ. It is through the blood sacrifice of Christ, the repenting of sin, and even the repenting of my thoughts, and looking to Christ that I come to God.

What is it to seek the Lord? Now listen to me, this is tough on a lot of people. You have to be willing to part with everything and everybody that stands between a full fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, like I said a moment ago; if a man really wants something, he seeks it. There are people who have given up home and country to seek a fortune in another land. There are people who burn the midnight oil for 12 years to be a doctor. There are men and women who have done all these things. They want wealth, they want health, they want prosperity and they want degrees. They give of themselves and they part company with everything. They give up sports, entertainment, food and everything to attain this goal. They say, "I must have this thing that I want."

Well, our Lord said; "*You seek Me, you find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*" How badly do you want Christ? How badly do you want eternal life? How badly do you want to know the living God?

Well, some preachers will tell you just to walk the aisle, shake his hand and they tell them they will see them in the glory land. There's more to it than that. Listen to Christ, "*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and 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.*" That is what He says. "*He that saveth his life, shall lose it.*"

A rich young ruler stood before Him. He loved his money, he loved his palaces, and he loved his wealth. He said, *“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”* He said, *“You go sell and get rid of these things and give them to the poor and you come and follow me. He went away sorrowful for he had many riches.”*

“If any man draw back, My soul has no pleasure in Him.” What I am saying and I just know that it is so, is to really, truthfully, with your heart seek the living God and eternal life is to be willing to part with all that stands between you and Him and a full relationship with Him.

You see, He will be Lord of all or He is not going to be Lord at all. That is just so. To know Him, is not just to have religion on the side, it is to walk with God. Everybody has religion on the side. Everybody has religion. Everybody that I run into profess something. They have a side line religion. They will go on Easter or Christmas or maybe on Sunday once in a while.

Abraham believed God and he left his home. Abraham believed God and he sojourned in the wilderness living in tents with Isaac and Jacob while looking for a city. Abraham believed God and withheld not his only son. Abraham believed God and sent Ishmael and Hager out into the wilderness. Abraham believed God and gave Lot the choice land. Abraham believed God and died in faith.

“He believed that God was able to do all that He promised and it was imputed to him for righteousness. That wasn’t written for his sake alone. It was written for us also to whom it shall be imputed if we can believe on Him who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead.” That’s just so!

I think that if anybody knows anything about God’s Word and the character of the living God knows that what I’m saying is so. A god that will play second fiddle to anybody is no God. A god who will take your 10% and your leavings is no god at all. A god, who will suffer men and women to hang on to him with one finger while they give themselves totally to the world, is no god at all. You can’t serve two masters. A man cannot have two lords. He will either love the one and cling to the one or hate the other. He will despise one and cling to the other. There is no way.

What I’m telling you is the truth. What is it to seek the Lord? It is to discover, then, by nature, by religion, by tradition, by the ways of the world I don’t know the living God. I don’t know the true Lord Jesus Christ. Men and women do not know the Christ of the Bible; they do not know Him. It is to desire to know Him, the living God. It is a desire to know Him, whatever the cost.

It is willing to be accepted on His terms. Somebody said, "I'll trust the Lord, but I'm not going to do thus and so." Who are you talking to? Who are you bargaining with? You don't lay down the terms of acceptance, He does. We don't accept Him. He accepts us in the beloved. *"He made us accepted in the beloved."* We are going to be saved on God's terms and God's terms are repentance, true genuine repentance. *"Except you repent; you'll perish."* You have to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is to be willing to part with anything and everything and anybody and everybody that stands between you and a full fellowship with the Son of God, Jesus Christ. That's just so!

You are not going to take Jesus and put Him up on a shelf with all your other gods. You are not going to take Jesus and put Him upon a shelf and give Him His time, His talent, and His tithe and this silly stuff. You are not just going to give Him a little bit of time to Him every once in a while.

He is going to be Lord and He is going to reign over your home, your life, your job and everything you have. He is the Lord. You might say, "Well, I'm not willing to do that." Well, then you aren't seeking the Lord. He says, *"You'll seek Me, you'll find Me when you search for Me with all your heart."* He says, *"I'll be found of you and I will turn away your captivity."*

You don't know what real freedom is until you are free to serve Christ. A man doesn't know what freedom is until he is a bondservant of Jesus Christ. *"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. If you know the truth, the truth shall set you free."*

They seek Him continually. That is what the writer of First Chronicles dealt with. He said, *"Those who seek the Lord, seek Him continually."* How do men seek the Lord? Simply, they seek Him! That is what I have been saying. They seek Him sincerely with the heart. It is a heart matter.

A friend of mine is a pastor in Africa. He's a missionary in Africa on the Ivory Coast. A man came to see him on Tuesday and wanted to talk to him about the gospel. He was out of the country. That man stayed there, sitting on his doorstep every day. He stayed Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. My friend finally drove up and there he sat waiting, and waiting and waiting. That is just an example of a serious person. I'll tell you this, if a person would come by to see us and we weren't there in five minutes, they would be gone. You'll probably say, "Well, I didn't want to see him anyway." They seek Him continually. You can't hurt their feelings either.

They seek Him in His Word. That is where you find Him is in His Word. It is not every opinion that is flying around. Every mother's son is an expert on the Bible. Did you know that? You can get 10,000 opinions out of every ten thousand people. You make sure and go to the Word, that is where you seek the Lord.

Another thing is *"They seek Him while He may be found."* Tomorrow is a fatal, fatal excuse. Felix, the Roman Magistrate who Paul was preaching to, said: *"Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."* *"Boast not thyself of tomorrow."*

I will tell you this; those who seek Him, seek Him with a single purpose. *"One thing have I desired of the Lord and that will I seek after that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my life."*