

AM I SOUGHT OUT? NO. 525

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 23, 1863,
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*“You shall be called, Sought out.”
Isaiah 62:12.*

THE first meaning of our text is very clear. Here is a prophecy, that as Jerusalem, having been despoiled of her beauty by her enemies, was for a long time forsaken and worthy to be called, “A city which no man seeks after,” so, in a brighter day, her glory shall return, she shall be an attraction to all lands, and the joy of the whole earth. Multitudes of willing pilgrims shall seek her out that they may behold her beauty. She shall be a city greatly set by, and greatly sought out by those who love the hallowed spots where the mighty deeds of the Lord were wrought and the arm of JEHOVAH made bare.

The text, doubtless, has a similar reference to the church of God. During many centuries the church of Christ was hidden—a thing obscure, despised, unknown, abhorred. She concealed herself in the catacombs. Her followers were the poorest and most illiterate of men, proscribed by cruel laws and hunted by ferocious foes. Although the royal bride of Christ, and destined to be the ruler of nations, she made no figure in the world’s eye. She was but a little stone cut out of the mountain without hands.

But the day is already come in which multitudes seek the church of Christ. Behold, they fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows! They ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward. As time rolls on, and the millennial kingdom of Christ comes nearer and nearer, the church of God shall be more and more sought out, and from the ancient east, and the far-off west they shall come, multitudes beyond all count, saying, “Tell us where is the city of the Lord, the people of His love?”

Though this, doubtless, is the primary meaning, I nevertheless believe that we may, without violence to the text, use it in another manner. In a fuller and more spiritual sense, the church of God may well be called, “Sought out,” and the like title may truthfully be applied to every single member of that dearly-loved and dearly-purchased family. All the children of God may take for their name and distinction, the words, “Sought out.”

Without indulging in a longer preface, let us at once proceed to map out the plan of our present meditation. We intend to talk a little while upon *the natural condition implied*, and then upon *the surpassing grace revealed*. Our third point will be *the distinguishing title justified*, and finally, *the special duty suggested*.

I. First, THE NATURAL CONDITION IMPLIED IN THE TITLE, “SOUGHT OUT.”

If the church of God, my brethren, has been “*sought out*,” then, it is clear enough that *originally it was lost*—lost like that woman’s piece of silver which she valued so much that she lit her candle, and swept her house, and searched diligently until she found it. The tremendous fact of man’s utter ruin is the underlying cause of the necessity for grace to seek out its object. If the fall had not been so complete in its ruin, there had been no need to seek us, for we should have sought the Lord. This, however, is the gloomy truth—that we have altogether become abominable and all flesh has perverted its way.

Of this fact, there can be no doubt, for you and I, who have been saved by grace, know right well that *we were lost*—hopelessly and forever lost—had not Jesus sought us out. Many of the chosen seed are allowed to indulge in sin until they are lost even to the presence of virtue and morality—lost to the hopes of the most earnest friends and the most affectionate entreaties of anxious relatives.

Lost, we all were in our federal head, by imputation of his sin. Lost, effectually by infusion of his corrupt nature. Lost, afterwards, actually, by our practice. Lost, manifestly, by an accumulation of evil

habits, and the growing force of depraved appetites. We have, by nature, departed far from God and like the prodigal, have gone into a far country. We are comparable to that poor wretch who was possessed with a legion of devils, whom fetters could not bind, nor chains restrain. He who said that, by nature man is half brute and half devil, was not far from the truth.

O my brethren, shall we ever know in this life how lost we were by nature? Until we can comprehend what “the wrath of God” means, by gazing steadfastly into the pit of hell—until we can understand the purity of God amid the perfection of heaven, and so can measure the awful distance between our depraved condition and the perfect holiness of JEHOVAH, we shall not know how lost we were. But we know enough to make us shudder.

Oh, when we saw, or thought we saw, the desperate evil of sin, then we cried out, “Lost! Lost! Lost!” with greater bitterness than he who sorrows for his only son, even for his first-born. Oh, the horrors of that terribly truthful discovery which showed us *ourselves*. We felt in our conscience that we were lost to everything which could commend us to God, or could attract His regard. We knew that in ourselves there were no means of restoration to purity and happiness.

We were utterly and entirely lost and as I said before, some of us lost with a vengeance, for our outward life had become a foul development of the filthy fountains within. Aliens, enemies, rebels, traitors—what shall we say more—no name is too vile for us. Had we been left to lie among the broken potsherds as worthless refuse, or had we been swept away with every unclean and loathsome thing, this had been our just desert. God could not have been too severe, even if the lowest pit of hell had been our portion.

And then, my brethren, we were so lost that *we did not seek the Lord*. Natural men have superficial and passing thoughts of seeking God, but they have no true hunger and thirst after Him. Now and then, a pang of conscience, a sickly wish after something better crosses the unrenewed mind, but as the smoke out of the chimney is blown away by the wind, so these hasty emotions are gone and forgotten. As the dew which trembles at early morn upon the hedgerow evaporates in the heat of the sun, so the best desires which unregenerate men can know are soon melted away when once the sun of the world’s temptation rises upon us.

My brethren, we who know the Lord know that we had no serious effectual thoughts of seeking after God until He sought after us. We were wandering sheep, well skilled in straying, but without the will to return. When the Spirit of God came upon us, He found nothing in our hearts ready to work with Him, but everything running in the opposite direction. Every imagination of the thought of our heart was only evil, and that continually. Those who repent and seek the Lord before His grace draws them to Himself must be of a different race from us, for we were far off, and loved the distance too well to dream of returning.

To descend still lower, my brethren—as we had no thought of coming to God—*so we never would have willed to return*. Left to ourselves, like the lost sheep, we would have wandered farther and farther, feeding upon yonder mountain of vanity, or skipping in the green valleys of sin. But back to God, to Christ, to heaven, we never could or would have come. As well might water labor to ascend like fire, as for fallen humanity to long after God. Wolves and tigers do not without a miracle renounce their feasts of blood, nor will man refuse his natural food of sin.

If there is any true desire in the human heart towards God and His Christ, it must have been implanted there by a divine power. God Himself in His bounty must have placed it there, for from the soil of nature it never could have come—at least, so we have found it in our own case, for to this day, though we are saved, we find that the natural motions of our heart are all *from* God—none of them *to* God. And though we are His children exalted above measure by His great grace, yet still the evil heart of unbelief *departs from* the living God, and never does it come toward Him.

O carnal mind, you desperately evil thing, you are not reconciled to God, nor indeed can you be! O God, Giver of every good and perfect gift, had You left us until our nature had spontaneously desired

renewal and our hearts had panted after Your salvation, You would have left us forever, for we should have chosen the downward path, and the lusts of the world we should have gone!

The text, I think, implies all this, for God never works unnecessary wonders, and if we could have come to Him, or should have come to Him without His seeking us, doubtless He would have left us to that free will of which some boast so much. Brethren, we were lost, lost without a wish to return, and without a possibility of ever having such a wish.

Nay, I must go further—our lost estate is shown yet more clearly in the fact that, so far from seeking God, *we did not desire Him to seek us*. Till He first inspired the wish to be found, we resisted His seekings. So far from asking Him to visit us with His salvation, when He did come, we took up arms against our gracious friend. Well do I remember those early strivings of the Spirit with my youthful heart which I choked one after the other with a resolute determination. Well can I recollect those strong wrestlings, when it seemed as if the Spirit of God would separate me from my sins and I *must* lay hold on Christ, and yet, determined still to abide in sin and self-righteousness, I stood out against the Lord and would not have “that man” to reign over me.

Ah! how long did Jesus stand and knock at our door, so long that He might well cry, as He does in the Canticles, “My head is wet with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.” We would not let Him in—instead of rising to open, we sought to fasten every bolt, and to send every bar home, and we turned the horrible key of our self-will in the wards of the lock, with a, “Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of your ways.”

Ah, my brethren, if He sought us out, it was not because we had a will towards Him, or because we were persistent in prayer. Our will was His great opponent. We were desperately set on mischief, and if we had not been sought out by sovereign grace, saved we never should have been.

*“Twas Thy love, O God, that knew us,
Earth’s foundations long before:
That same love to Jesus drew us,
By its sweet constraining power,
And will keep us
Safely, now and evermore.”*

To complete the story of this, our natural condition, I must add *that our being sought out, considering our condition, was one of the greatest wonders ever known or heard of*. I have heard this expressed in words occasionally. When a man has come to join the church, he has said to me, “If anyone had told me six months ago that I should make a profession of being a follower of Christ, I would have knocked him down. If anyone had said to me, ‘You will repent of your sins, and seek and find a Savior,’ I should have laughed him to scorn. ‘I am no such fool,’ I should have said, as to become one of your sanctimonious hypocritical Methodists—such a thing can never be.”

And yet the thing did occur, and that soul which was once like the demoniac, full of devils, comes to sit clothed and in its right mind at the feet of the Savior, rejoicing in His power to save. In every one of us, if we have not put it into just such words, the grace which sought us has been quite as illustrious. What reason can you find why God should love you? How can you show any reason why He should follow you in all your wanderings, why He should stand out against you in all your determinations of self-destruction? Why was that He should track your devious footsteps, and never leave you until the predestinated moment came? How was it that then He grappled with you and overcame, and made you willingly bow your neck to His joyous yoke? You can tell no reason. You can only clap your hands in admiration, and lift up your heart in wonder and bless and praise the Lord that your name is, “Sought out.”—

*“Twas all of Thy grace we were brought to obey,
While thousands were suffer’d to go
The road which by nature we chose as our way,*

Which leads to the region of woe.”

Thus much then, concerning our natural condition. You who know it, and have felt it, need not my words to teach you, but it is well for you to look often to the hole of the pit where you were drawn, and the rock whence you were hewn. A sight of your first state will humble you and fill your heart with praise to the God of grace who has made you to differ.

II. Secondly, we have in the text SURPASSING GRACE REVEALED.

This grace lies in several particulars. First, *that they were sought out at all*. It is very wonderful grace on the part of God that He should plan a way of salvation, that He should prepare a great marriage supper, and issue the invitation to all men to come and feast thereat. The Gospel which says to men, “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely,” is a most gracious Gospel, but there is something more gracious than this generous summons.

One would have supposed that after the invitation had been freely given, and the preparation for the feast had been generously made, that the Lord would leave men to come or not as they willed. It is grace enough, surely, for God to provide meat for the hungry. Let them come and eat, and if they will not, let them starve. To prepare ointment for the wounded, is not that enough? If the sick will not accept the medicine, then let them perish for their ingratitude in rejecting the healing gift.

Ah, but God’s ways are not as our ways. Your bounty and mine would never dream of going any further. We never force our charity on unwilling recipients. We do not follow after diseased men, and beg and pray them to be made whole. Not we. We think our bounty large enough if we give to him that asks of us, but to seek after pensioners—this, we never did, and probably never shall do.

But hear, O earth and be astonished you heavens! After the general proclamation of the Gospel has been made and man has rejected it, after Christ has been offered to men, and they have refused Him, God’s love does not stop there, but determined to glorify His love, He then comes to seek out those who will not seek Him. “If,” says He, “you will not turn at My rebuke, if My invitation is trodden under foot—I will do more than this—I will come out in the splendor of My grace and the magnificence of My power, and I will deal with that will of yours and overcome it. I will touch that stubborn nature of yours and make you yield. ‘A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.’ ‘You shall call Me, my Father, and shall not turn away from Me.’” It is a marvel of marvels, that sinful man fleeing from his Maker, rejecting his Creator’s invitation, refusing to be blessed with the blessedness of God, is nevertheless with unparalleled perseverance and unexampled love sought out and made captive by Almighty love.

But this grace appears even more conspicuous if you consider *the persons sought out*. That any should be sought out is matchless grace, but that *we* should be sought, is grace beyond degree. My brother, my sister, I do not know what may have been your particular condition, but this I do know—you will feel that there was ten times more reason that you should have been *left out* than that you should have been included in the purpose of grace.

Often have I thought that I was the odd man. If in the muster roll of eternal life there must be one left out, I should myself have made the selection of my own person as the one most worthy to have been disregarded. Why me, Lord? Why me?—

*“Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
And enter where there’s room.
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”*

Does not the same thought arise in your mind? Is not your soul stirred with a holy and grateful wonder that *you* should have been sought out? And when, my brethren, I think of some in this place—some who once were in the harlots’ company—but who are sought out. Some of you who once were plunged in drunkenness, how shall I sufficiently praise the Lord for you? Many of you on the Sabbath

day never listened to the preached Word, but sought your own pleasure, and followed your own business—but *you* are sought out. Many a tongue that sung the hymn just now once cursed and blasphemed God. Glory be to the grace which sought you out.

Yes, though such were some of us, “We are washed, we are sanctified, we are cleansed.” And is not this a marvel that such as we are should have been sought out? If He had sought kings and princes, we might have found a reason, but to seek us poor, obscure working men, illiterate, without ability—this is sovereign grace indeed! That He should seek the good, the moral, the excellent, we should not marvel at, but to seek *us*, the depraved, the wicked, the abandoned—how shall we glorify His name!

Tell it in hell and let devils howl, publish it in heaven and let angels sing. Chant it, you blood-washed ones, before the eternal throne. He has chosen the base things of this world and the things that are not to bring to nought the things that are. This is a wonder of wonders, that we, even we, should bear the name of “Sought out”.

Nor must I fail to bring to your recollection that the surpassing grace of God is seen very clearly in that *we were sought OUT*. The word “out,” conveys a mass of meaning. We were not only sought, but sought *out*. Men go and *seek* for a thing which is lost upon the floor of the house, but in such a case, there is only seeking, not seeking *out*. The loss is more perplexing, and the search more persevering when a thing is sought *out*. We were mingled with the mire. We were as when some precious piece of gold falls into the sewer, and men have to gather out and carefully inspect a heap of abominable filth, to turn it over, and over, and over, and continue to stir and rake, and search among the heap until the thing is found.

Or, to use another figure, we were lost in a labyrinth. We wandered hither and thither, and when ministering mercy came after us, it did not find us at the first coming. It had to go to the right hand and to the left, and search here and there, and everywhere, to seek us out, for we were so desperately lost, and had got into such a strange position, that it did not seem possible that ever grace could come to us. And yet we were sought *out*! No gloom could hide us, no filthiness could conceal us—we were found. Glory be to divine grace, God the Holy Spirit found us!

The lives of some of God’s people, if they could be written, would make you marvel. The romance of divine grace is infinitely more interesting than the romance of imagination. We have known persons who have run into the arms of Christ while they were intending to run down to hell. Some who no more dreamed of being saved than of being made princes—who strolled into the house of God from curiosity—and the minister’s finger, or the glance of his eye arrested them, and they felt the power of the life divine. Some who were rushing to the river to take away their own lives, but some text spoke to their conscience, and arrested their guilty feet.

Strange and marvelous are the ways which God has used to find His own. He would shake a whole nation with His strong right hand to find His own elect. He would shake all nations, and bring the whole world to unparalleled confusion before He would suffer one of the blood-bought pearls of His crown to be lost among the ruins of the fall. He must and will seek them out, as the shepherd seeks out his sheep in the cloudy and dark day, bringing some of them down from the steep summit, others from the caverns among the crags, some from the river’s brink, others from the flood itself—all must be brought into one place, where they shall form one fold, under one Shepherd.

One second will suffice to hint, dear brethren, that the grace of God is illustrious in *the divine agent by whom we are sought out*. The text, taken in its connection, tells us that we were sought out divinely. Saved souls are sought out by God Himself, and omnipotence is strained, omniscience is fully exercised—every attribute of God is put to its sternest labor to seek out lost souls. The most tremendous effort of divine strength we know is the regeneration of man. To bring Christ from the dead made God’s name to be right honorable for mighty power—but to raise His people from their graves is equally a work of stupendous power and grace.

Do you ever wonder, Christian, who it was that came to seek you? It was not the minister. He might have sought you year after year, and never have found you. Your tearful mother, with her many prayers,

would have missed you. Your anxious father, with his yearning heart of compassion, would never have discovered you. Those providences, which like great nets were seeking to entangle you, would all have been broken by your strong rushes after evil. Who was it sought you out? None other than Himself. The Great Shepherd could not trust His under-shepherds. He must Himself come, and oh! if it had not been for those eyes of omniscience, He never would have seen you—He never would have read your history and known your case—if it had not been for those arms of omnipotence, He never could have grasped you. He never could have thrown you on His shoulders and brought you home rejoicing. You were divinely sought.

There is as much the impress of the finger of God upon a sought-out soul, as there is upon a newly-created world. You may see God's finger in the green meadow studded with yellow flowers, in the flowing rills and towering mountains, and in the bright lamps of heaven at eventide, but you shall see the whole hand of God most clearly when a new-born soul is led to seek after the Lord's salvation. You shall be called, "The people sought out." And this shall be the wonder of it—that you were sought out in a divine fashion—

*“Love strong as death, nay, stronger,
Love mightier than the grave.
Broad as earth and longer
Than ocean's widest wave—
This is the love that sought us,
This is the love that bought us,
This is the love that brought us,
To gladdest day from saddest night,
From deepest shame to glory bright,
From depths of death to life's fair height.”*

Then, dear brethren, to close this part, remember that the glory of it is that *we were sought out effectually*. We are a people not sought out and then missed at the last. Almightyness and wisdom combined will make no failures. *I* may seek some of you in vain, as, alas, I have done. I may preach and preach again, as I do today and yet perhaps, you will all miss the net. But when my Master comes out to fish for souls, the net will soon be full—there is no failure in His case.

All of us, dear brethren, who have been brought into union with Christ, know that we were brought because it was effectual grace that came to us. There is a grace which may be resisted, there are common strivings of the Spirit, against which a man may contend successfully, but when the Spirit puts out the fullness of His divine energy, with the intention to work a sure work, it can never be frustrated. In each of our cases, there has been a divine intention, omnipotent, to constrain us to be saved, and that intention has been followed up by a divine action, which it was impossible for us to have effectually resisted. Which, in fact, we did not and could not resist, because it charmed us into a complete subjection, and we yielded at once to its sway.

This has taken place in every single heart, and this is the glory of the name, "sought out"—that we were not half sought out, we were not feebly and unsuccessfully sought, but we were effectually and completely sought out, and that is the reason why we are today heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

III. Let us notice, in the third place, THE DISTINGUISHING TITLE JUSTIFIED. We are a people sought out. How were we sought out? Let us justify the name.

Brethren, we are sought out, first of all, in *the eternal purposes and the work of Christ*. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven was the commencement, the first overt act of seeking our souls. All that bloody pilgrimage of His, when hands and feet were bleeding, all that dreadful suffering of His upon the cross, was a seeking out of His people. Like some great pearl diver, the Lord Jesus Christ stood upon the glorious cliffs of heaven and plunged deep into the floods of sorrow and sin that He might seek out the lost pearls. Virtually, our Lord did save all His people there and then. "He came to seek and to save that which was lost," and He did save, by His death, all His chosen. Though not actually, they were

virtually every one of them saved in that very hour when He bowed His head and said, “It is finished.” At that moment, they were in His hands, they were united to His person in the divine decree. At that moment, they stood in Him—

*“Not as they stood in Adam’s fall,
When sin and sorrow covered all.
But as they’ll stand another day,
Fairer than sun’s meridian ray.”*

“He has saved us” first, “and called us” afterwards, “with a holy calling.”

This seeking out, as far as we know it, began *with gracious words of mercy*. In the case of some, these were heard very early. A godly mother told us the truth with weeping, a holy father set us a good example. We were sought out by that little Bible we were taught to read, and that hymnbook which was put into our hands. We were sought out when we were taken to the House of God. The minister preached the Gospel freely to all. He described our character and affectionately bade us come to Jesus. We were sought out while the preacher called the Sabbath-breaker, while he called the hard-hearted, the hypocrite, the formalist, the abandoned, the profane. While he called each of these, according to our case, we felt that he was calling us, and we thought the eyes of Jesus were looking on us, and His voice was bidding us repent and live.

Sometimes, we were especially sought out under the ministry when the preacher was led to describe our case, painting it in glowing colors. We thought somebody had told him, he seemed to know us so well, to have read us through and through, and we went home to our chamber, moved, at least for a season, with a desire after God—for we had been sought out.

Nor did the Lord leave us only to the kind invitations of the ministry. *Afflictions sought us out*. The fever hunted us to the cross. When the cholera came, it carried a great whip in its hand to flog us to the Savior. We had serious losses, a decaying business—all which should have weaned us from the world. Our friends sickened—from their graves we heard the voice of invitation, “Come unto Christ and live.” We were disappointed in some of our fondest hopes, and our heart, torn for the time, yearned after a higher life, and a deeper satisfaction. Affliction after affliction, and tribulation after tribulation were the means which God used for seeking us out.

And then came *visitations*, mysterious visitations. It was in the night season when all was still, we sat up in our bed and solemn thoughts passed through us. The preacher’s words, which we had heard years ago, came back fresh as when we heard them for the first time. Old texts of Scripture, the recollection of a mother’s tears—all these came upon us.

Or it was in the midst of business, and we did not know how it was, but suddenly, a deep calm came over us. We felt as if an unseen hand was drawing us to pray. We resisted the divine impulse, but we knew that it had been there. It came again and again, and often as we walked the streets, we seemed attended by another soul than our own. It appeared to us, as if at times, we were two men in one, and that new and better man wrestled with us like the angel with Jacob, and at last divine grace overcame us, and brought us to repentance and humble faith.

But after all, dear friends, these visitations, these providences, these preachings, and so on, would all have been nothing, if it had not been for the appointed time when *the Holy Spirit* came and sought us out. Can I ever forget that moment when the preacher’s finger pointed to me, and he said, “Young man, believe in Jesus Christ, believe in Jesus Christ *now*.” It was not his voice alone that spoke to me, but the voice from the mysterious throne said, “Believe *now*.”

And believe I did. I found no will to refuse. The thing I could not do before, the thing I did not understand till that moment, I both understood and did. I did believe in Jesus, and the burden rolled from off my bowed shoulders, and the spirit was emancipated and free. O may that time come to you who have never yet been sought out. May the Spirit of God so touch you that you cannot resist Him—so effectually move you, that you *must* yield subjection to the cross of Christ. In your cases, as well as

mine, beloved in the Lord Jesus, you will be led to see that it was the effectual power of God the Holy Spirit that really did bring you to Christ, so that the title is fully justified, “*Sought out.*”

There may be some persons who come to Christ of themselves, I do not believe there are, and I am not one of them. There may be some who keep to Christ by the power of their free will—I believe there is a whole denomination who profess to do so—but I can only say their experience is the very reverse of what I have felt. I believe that those of whom we read in Christian biography, and in Scripture, owed their salvation to free, rich, and sovereign grace, so that the religion of these persons who come to Christ of their own free will is of modern invention, and I would not give a snap of the finger for the grace that springs from self, or another snap of my finger for the conversion which is the result of free will.

May the Lord give us to be born *from above*, and if we have not a religion which is not wrought in us by the Spirit of God, the sooner we get rid of it the better. For then, perhaps, we shall go to Him who can give us the true bread of heaven that we may not be found empty at the last.

IV. Now, I have dispatched these three matters, and I come to the practical part of the subject, and may I have your earnest attention? There is A SPECIAL DUTY INCUMBENT UPON THOSE WHO WEAR THE TITLE, “SOUGHT OUT.”

My brethren, if it be really so that you are such debtors to divine seeking, ought you not to spend your whole lifetime in seeking others out? If you owe everything to divine grace, and nothing to self, are you not under solemn obligation to be the Lord’s forever, and ought you not—not by proxy, but personally and individually, everyone of you—to seek out the rest of the Lord’s people, that they like you may bear the title of a people sought out?

I am earnest in the desire of inducing every member of this church, and of every other church to be winners of souls. The preaching of the Gospel is God’s grand instrument of mercy, that is His great magnet. Those of you who can use this holy weapon, do. You that have ability and have talents, devote yourselves to God’s cause. Give yourselves up to His ministry. I would to God there were more of those who are successful in professions, men who either in medicine or law have attained eminence, would consecrate their talents to the ministry. They need not fear that in giving themselves to God, He will not take care of them, and as to honor, if it is found anywhere, it is the sure heritage of the faithful ambassador of Christ.

If you have been sought out, my brother, I do not blush to recommend you to give up the most lucrative employment to seek out others. If you have the power to stir other’s hearts, if God has given you the tongue of the eloquent, consecrate it neither to parliament nor to the bar, but devote it to the plucking of brands from the burning—become a herald of the cross, and let the whole world, as far as possible, hear from you the tidings of salvation.

The preaching of the Gospel is not the only means. It is a way of seeking out most commonly used, but there are other methods which I will recommend to you this morning. We are not to preach merely to those who come to listen. We must carry the Gospel to where men do not desire it. We should consider it our business to be generously impertinent—thrusting the Gospel into men’s way—whether they will hear or whether they will not.

Let us hunt for souls, first of all, *by visitation*. There are thousands in London who never will be converted by the preaching of the Gospel, for they never attend places of worship. Some of them do not know what sort of thing a religious service is. We may shudder when we say it—it is believed there are thousands in London who do not even know the name of Christ—living in what we call a Christian land—and yet they have not heard the name of Jesus. Thank God things are better than they were, but things are bad enough still.

Brethren, you must go and see these things and mend them. To the lodging houses, young men, you must carry the Gospel, and to those thickly-peopled habitations, where every room contains a family, and not one room a Christian. I believe there is very much good to be done by house-to-house visitation. Not by City Missionaries and Bible-women only—may God speed that noble body of laborers—but by all of you. By you who have position in society among your neighbors—make yourselves free, and go

and talk to them of Christ in the little houses that are near to you. As far as your time allows, be a visitor. And if there is one dark part of the town known to you as the haunt of sinners, make it a point to use this agency of visitation from house-to-house. Let the lost sheep of Israel's house be sought out.

Some will need special means, before ever they can be found and brought in. How does one's heart rejoice over the reformatories, and the midnight meetings—over the attempts to bring that class of souls to Christ. I have often heard it said that few of the *converts* from those meetings hold on and prove sincere. It is a great falsehood—a very considerable portion are reformed, and mere *reformatory* are of little use—but where *regeneration* is wrought, and these girls are pointed to a Savior, you will never find one of them go back.

Has not God been pleased to give us, in this church, scores of instances where those who were decoys for Satan are now the leaders of others to the cross of Christ, and like Mary, love much because they have been much forgiven? Seek them out. If there is any other class that is neglected, seek it out. If you happen to know any of the more degraded part of the population, who are only sought for by the policeman, and never hear a word of good advice—except from the magistrate—do you seek *them* out.

If Christ sought you out, the inference is strong that you ought to seek out others, and if special means are needed, let special means be applied. You must be very kind. To broken hearts you must speak very gently. Their distance from God is a distance of fear. The gulf that separates them is despair. There are some such in this house, perhaps. Seek them out, and if you find them very desponding, writing bitter things against themselves, let love be shown them.

Try if you can, to get the cords of affection around them, and so draw them to Christ. Do not turn from them and say, "They are such miserable objects, so unbelieving, I will not look after them." But the more you find they need a tender heart and weeping eyes to bring them to the Savior, the more carefully follow them till you bring them to Him. You will find some who will need a world of perseverance.

Perhaps your child has been for thirty years unconverted. Your prayers have been unheard till now, and the devil tempts you to give it up. Never do so. If you had to be sought so long—and some of you needed to be sought for fifty years before you were found—never give up a fellow creature. Follow your child in all his ingratitude, pursue his footsteps with your loving kindness, and never leave him until you have brought him at last to find joy where you found it—in the wounds of Jesus.

Let me beg you, where all other means fail, to seek men by *your prayers*. As long as a man has one other man to pray for him, there is a hope of his salvation. If you, in your daily supplications, make mention of men—if you select special cases—if you bear their names before the Lord, you shall have the joy of seeing them turned from darkness to light, and they, with you, shall be a people "sought out." If a word of mine shall stir up but one of you to seek the Lord's hidden ones, my soul shall rejoice. And if every one of you shall register a vow in this house of prayer, "I will seek out some family today, and continue my work tomorrow, and the next day I will be seeking out others. I will not wait till they come to me to be taught, but go and seek them and compel them to come in that the house may be filled, that the church of God may have its full complement of Christ's chosen." If you will do this, my soul shall be well content.

If you have never been sought, then you will not seek others. If you have never tasted that the Lord is gracious, I shall not marvel that you neglect this work. But oh! by the hell from which you are delivered, by the heaven to which you are going, by the blood which redeemed you from death and hell, by that gracious Spirit which quickened you, and still keeps you alive, by every glorious promise which stimulates you in your onward career, I pray you spend yourselves, and be spent in seeking souls.

Look at this great mass of habitation, this wilderness of human dwellings—if we do not work with all our might, we can never hope to see the knowledge of the Lord covering this great world of London—let alone the greater world outside. O let us be up and doing, and let it be told in every house, in every alley, that Christians care for souls. If you are the people sought out, go and seek others. Tell them that, "Whosoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved."

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.