

THE ECHO

NO. 767

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AT SURREY CHAPEL, BLACKFRIAR'S ROAD.

“When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek.”
Psalm 27:8.

THIS ready response to a Divine call may be looked at in three ways. It may be said of it, first, that it is the natural duty of man to God such as his responsibility to his Creator demands. I should not like to think it necessary to prove that statement in this assembly. Surely when God creates a man it is but a matter of right that the man created should answer to the call of his Maker. When the Creator says, “Seek you My face,” it is the natural duty of the creature to reply, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” And the more is this so, because our Creator renews our obligations hourly by exercising His sustaining power and maintaining our existence. In a certain sense we are “created” every day, because the creature would go back to its native nothingness—our bodies would return to the dust, and our spirits would expire—if it were not for a continued action of Divine Omnipotence by which we are retained in being.

Being, therefore, every day dependent upon the Preserver of men, it is but an everyday obligation that when God says, “Seek you My face,” the daily debtor should cheerfully reply, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” If any should say that this is *not* a duty on such grounds, I would reply that the commands of God are always so good and so reasonable that it must be the duty of man to obey them. If it were possible for the Most High to command anything unrighteous, or unreasonable, the question of His claims might be raised. But since what the Word of God commands is always most to our interest—at once the wisest and the best thing that we could possibly do—it becomes the duty of a rational and an intelligent being to follow the wise, loving, and tender counsels of the great God.

And when his heavenly Father bids him seek His face, he should readily answer, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” But, while I am quite sure that this is the case and dare never say otherwise, although prompt obedience is a *duty*, wherever it exists, it is a work of the *Holy Spirit*. There never was a mere man in this world, since the days of Adam, who ever did heartily make the reply mentioned in the text unless the Holy Spirit made him *willing* to do so in the day of God's power.

We do not excuse those who are disobedient, but if any are obedient, the glory of their obedience must be given to the Holy Spirit who works all our works in us and makes us both to will and to do of the Lord's good pleasure. We are quite certain that in our own case this was so, for the Lord said unto us, “Seek you My face,” hundreds and thousands of times, in our infancy, in His own Word—both when we read it and when we heard it preached—but we would not reply to the demand of God, but set our faces like a flint and went after our own devices.

But when He spoke *effectually* with that still small voice of the Holy Spirit which penetrates the soul, enlightens the understanding, sweetly bows the will, constrains the affections, and changes the nature—then it was, but never till then that we said, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” We heartily join in Mr. Bonar's sweet verses—

*“All that I was, my sin, my guilt,
My death, was all my own.
All that I am, I owe to You,
My gracious God, alone.
The evil of my former state
Was mine, and only mine.
The good in which I now rejoice
Is Yours and only Yours.
The darkness of my former state,
The bondage—all were mine.
The light of life in which I walk,
The liberty—is Yours.”*

And, therefore, in the third place, we may always view such a spirit as our text indicates as being an evidence of Election, an evidence of a saving interest in Divine Grace. How can we tell the Lord's people? They are discovered by the Lord's call. The call is general, and put in the plural, "Seek you My face," but the response to it is *personal*, put in the singular, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." This becomes, sooner or later, the answer of every chosen soul! Everyone ordained unto eternal life receives, in due time, the new nature—and this living and incorruptible seed, hearing the Gospel of its great Author—responds to it as an echo to the voice.

There is a very excellent image which is sometimes used to illustrate this Truth of God. When our brave King Richard was shut up in prison, far away in Germany, you know how he was found out by Blondel, a troubadour. The king and the minstrel had composed a song between them. First the minstrel sang one verse, and then the king sang one, and no other man the whole world over knew what the verses were except the king and the minstrel. So the minstrel wandered through many realms, and sang the first verse of his song, sang it at all kinds of castle gates and dungeon doors, but there came no response, for the king was not within.

But at the last, as Providence would have it, he sang it in the right place and faintly from within he heard from the deep dungeon the voice which knew, and could sing, the second verse. And as he sang the third, and the fourth came through the iron bars, he knew that the king was there, for the verses could have been sung by no other than he. I am sometimes occupied in preaching the Gospel, and I preach it to thousands who give no response. There is no evidence of the Lord's having chosen them. But another time there is a heart that says, "You say, 'Seek you My face.' My reply is, 'Your face, Lord, will I seek.'"

Then I have found out the Lord's chosen ones, found out the hidden ones, discovered as many as were ordained unto eternal life—for their *believing* is the response to God's Gospel—and the *evidence* of their being the favorites of Heaven. They, and they alone, thus believe. As for those who believe not, they perish in their sins, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Look, then, at the text, in these three ways. I should be happy if I felt that you would all accept it in these lights, for I find too much of chopping and choosing among Christians between this Truth of God and that, and, by the Lord's help, I am determined, so far as I know it, to pander to no man or set of men, but to hold myself ever free to preach every Truth that I find in my Master's Book.

You may call it Arminianism, or Calvinism, or whatever "ism" you like, yet, if it is in this Book, you shall have to account for it at the Last Great Day, whether you receive it or not. I say, again, then, that the *obedience* of the text is but the natural *duty of man* but wherever it is carried out, it is by the *work of the Spirit alone*, and wherever it exists, it is an evidence of election and a proof of the indwelling of the Grace of God in the soul. But I intend to handle the text in another way and shall endeavor to speak of the spirit of loving obedience to God's Word which this text breathes. I shall first say something upon the *absence* of that spirit. Then upon the *cultivation* of that spirit. And then upon a special *outlet* for that spirit, and, lastly, upon a *reward* for that spirit.

I. First, then, let me make a few remarks upon THE ABSENCE OF THIS SPIRIT IN SO MANY PERSONS. Ah, my dear Friends, it is mournful to think how few there are who can say, "When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek," for the great mass of men, if they spoke honestly, would have to confess, "When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice? I know not the Lord neither will I be obedient unto Him."

With some of you now present this has mournfully been the case. There has been in your heart a total absence of every response to the Divine Word. It has come to you in all sorts of ways, till it might be asked, "What further can be done to you?" You heard it from a mother's tender lips, and she spoke it as no one else could have done. You had it after that in your own flesh, when through sickness you tossed on your bed. You had it afterwards from kind teachers, from earnest ministers. Some of you get a good word almost every day. The very glance of your wife is a loving, constant sermon.

Some of you are not without sharp pricks of conscience—the stabs of that sharp little dagger within your soul that would gladly slay your sins. But, for all this there has been no answer to God's call. You have lived for vanity, if not for sin. You are neglecting the great salvation! He says, "Seek you My face." It is the cry of all these houses of prayer which are open every Sunday, "Seek you My face." But your answer has been, "I will seek anything but the face of God." And

this has been continued with some of you. Oh, that I should have to put this so seriously! You have done this, not for a week—a week is a long time for a sinful creature to hold out against God—but you have done this for months, yes, and even for years!

A year is a long time for a child to hold out against its father. How few monarchs can keep their patience with a besieged city for 12 or 14 years: “No,” they say, “we will drag each stone from its place and hang every citizen in the city by the neck.” Their patience soon grows cold and their wrath waxes hot. But God has laid siege to some of you, by the instrumentality of the Gospel, for 30, 40, 50, 60—did the little bird say 70 years?—and all the time you have continued to give God the negative. And while the demands of friends, and the requests of kindred have been complied with that wonderful Word, “Seek you My face,” it has received from you nothing but the cold reply, “With God I will have nothing to do.”

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me! The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” Oh, wonder of deep ingratitude—man—year after year turns a deaf ear to the sweet commands of Divine Grace! Now, in some of you, this cold negative has been disturbed a little, but not broken. Perhaps, from this very pulpit, some of you have heard appeals which have considerably shaken you. Many of us, before conversion, were frequently the subjects of impressions, and some of you unconverted ones are not long without them.

Christ has knocked at your door and you have heard His voice again and again. You are not long without such knocks. Christ has often knocked. He stands at the door and knocks, as the Scripture says. He does not knock and walk away, but He stands at the door and knocks. The knocks have been repeated and continued, and you have frequently but falsely said, “I will open.” You have vowed that you would change and turn. Shall all those vows be registered against you? Shall all those resolutions help to increase your doom, being evidence of your trifling with God and attempting to deceive the Omniscient One?

O Sinner, how much has been done for you? What more can be done for you, vain Man? What more shall be done for you, careless Woman? It is useless that you should be stricken any more—you will revolt more and more. You have suffered and you have smarted till your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint, and God’s rod has made you smart till you are full of wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores—but still you do not turn!

I have this much to say to you, and then I shall have to leave you to go to another part of the text. There is in this Book a very terrible passage which I commend to you who have up to now declined to accede to the Divine Word. You will find it in the first chapter of Proverbs, at the 24th verse, “Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes; when your fear comes as desolation, and your destruction comes as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish comes upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”

That is the voice of God to you, Sinner, you who have said, “I will not serve the Lord.” Take that bitter morsel and chew it. Roll it over again and again till you have got the very bitterness out of it. O may God make your *sins* as bitter as the *judgment* upon your sins! May the blessed Spirit lead you to the Cross of Christ, for you never will yield to the Cross of Christ unless the Holy Spirit constrains you. O that you may “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way”—the worst place to perish—to perish *in* the way and *from* the way, “when His wrath is kindled but a little.”

Now, I will read the text again, and if any of you feel that its ready obedience is not found in you, that its joyful conformity to God does not in any way describe you, you need not listen to the rest of the sermon but just cover your faces, and may God help you to pray, and then, I trust, before the sermon is done, you will get an answer to your prayer. “When You said, Seek you my face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek.” Lord, if I cannot say that, break my heart now with Your great hammer and help me to yield myself up to Your will that I may be Yours now and Yours eternally.

II. Now, leaving that—not forgetting it in our hearts, though, for I trust we shall continue praying God to bless that short word to the unconverted—I now come to talk to the Believer about THE CULTIVATION OF A CONSTANT

SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE TO THE LORD'S WILL. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, will you please notice in the text two or three points which I want you to attend to, and will you labor, by the help of God's Spirit, to get your spirits up to them?

The first point is, notice the universality of this spirit of obedience in the text. David says, "When You said, Seek you My face," he does not mention any *time*. Notice, "When You said." If it were early in the morning, his heart said, "Your face, Lord, will I seek. I want You, for I have the day before me." If it were at midday and the Spirit of God said, "Seek you My face," David's heart said, "O Lord, I will seek You. I want You now that the sun is scorching." If it were towards evening and the voice said, "Seek you My face," David said, "Ah, Lord, the day is far spent. I may well seek Your face now." And if it were in the dead of night, when he awoke, his heart was still with God, and still ready to hear the Divine Word.

"When You said, then I said. When You commanded, I obeyed. When You called effectually, I yielded cheerfully." Oh, what a mercy it would be if every Believer's heart were in this state! Then we would not be *sometimes* obedient and sometimes have our own way—sometimes respond to the Divine voice and at other times put our fingers in our ears. Then we would be in so sanctified a frame of mind that whenever the Master came to us, whether at cock-crowing, or at the evening watch, He would find us with our loins girt about willing to go forth in His service. The text, you see, breathes the true spirit of *service*.

It shows a mind that was constantly under Divine influences, perpetually subject to the Divine will. The magnetic needle always desires the pole—the Christian's heart should always desire communion with God. The rivers run into the sea—their waters continually flow into the mighty ocean—let our souls, by the stress of their new nature, continually be seeking conformity to the Divine will. Oh, it is easy to *say* it, but it is hard to *do* it when it comes to the pinch. To say, "Your will be done," on the top of Tabor, is as easy as possible. But to say it in the gloom of Gethsemane is so difficult that none but God Himself can enable us to say it.

And yet it may be attained—entire resignation is within reach—for all things are possible to him that believes. Let us seek it with the fullness of intense desire—

*"Jesus, spotless Lamb of God,
You have bought me with Your blood,
I would value nothing beside Jesus—
Jesus crucified. I am Yours, and Yours alone,
This I gladly, fully own;
And, in all my works and ways,
Only now would seek Your praise."*

Next to the universality, I would draw your attention to the promptness of the spirit of obedience expressed in the text. "When You said, then I said." He did not ask questions. He did not stop to say, "Lord, when shall I do it? How shall I do it? Where shall I do it?" No, but, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." Beware of a questioning spirit in plain matters of duty—to delay to fulfill a conviction is to abide in sin! The Lord's command is not to be quibbled at, but to be obeyed at once. We find not quibbling here, much less do we find any objection. There are no objections about himself, the work, or its difficulties. David at once, and on the spot acts as with the prompt movement of a soldier when commanded by his officer.

The Word is no sooner heard than the mind is swayed by it when the mind is under the sweet influences of Divine love. The Gospel according to Mark is regarded by some students as being peculiarly the Gospel of service. It is said that in the early Church the emblem for Mark was an ox to signify service. And it is very singular, whether that is so or not, that the evangelist Mark uses the word *eutheos*, or "straightway," more frequently than any of the other Evangelists when he is speaking of Christ.

If you will notice, Mark always says, "straightway," or "immediately." For instance, in the very first chapter, "And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him: and immediately the spirit drove Him into the wilderness...And when He had gone a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway He called them." This is the very mark of the true servant—when he knows his Lord's will, he gives himself to it at once.

As the centurion said, “I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it,” so should it be with us. There should be a prompt response at once to the Divine will. Do you always find it so? Does not God have to speak to some of us many times and put a bit in our mouth, and a very sharp and cutting one, too, and tug at the reins a long while? Yes, and take to the whip, too, before He can get us to be as we should be? “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.”

But seek, my Brethren—this is what I am driving at—seek to cultivate a spirit of prompt obedience to the Lord’s will. Take the advice of Mary which she gave to the guests at Cana’s feast, “Whatever He says unto you, do it.” Whatever is the Word of God follow it in the strength of God at once, and without delay. There is a little story told of an infant class being examined by its teacher. The text to be thought about was, “Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven,” and the teacher said to the little girls, “How is that, my Dears? How do they do God’s will in Heaven?” One said, “They do God’s will in Heaven always, Sir.”

“That is well, but what next?” “They all do it; they all do it cheerfully, Sir.” The next one said, “Please Sir, they do it directly,” and the next, “They do it without asking any questions.” Good answers, certainly, and that is how we should do the Lord’s will—and so make a Heaven of this poor earth. O that our lagging feet were winged with sanctified alacrity, our obstinate necks made pliant with hallowed submission, our wavering hearts confirmed in constant holiness! This is one of the noblest works of the Spirit of holiness—may He make our nature the seat of so transcendent a miracle, so glorious a change!

Observe that next to universality and promptness, we are bound to note the *personality* of David’s reply. “You said, Seek you My face.” That was the command to *all* Your people, but, “Your face, Lord will I seek,” was the *personal* reply of the waiting servant of God. Egotism is, no doubt, a very bad thing when it means self-conceit, self-seeking, self-confidence, self-laudation—but *egoism* in the sense of realizing one’s own individual responsibility is a most desirable virtue. We need two words—egotism to signify that vice which admires and loves itself, and is thoroughly detestable. And then egoism which determines that self shall be obedient, and pure, and firm, whatever others may be—this to be cultivated daily.

Look at good old Joshua, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Oh, it is a grand thing to see a man forcing his way up the stream, struggling with manful vigor against the general current, swimming as live fish will do, against the stream, not floating down it as the dead fish do, but saying, “Let the world take its way. I take mine.” “I, Athanasius, against the world,” said that brave old confessor. And so must we say sometimes, “I, I will seek Your face, Lord—let others do as they will.” Let us not be so attentive to other people’s vineyards that our own vineyard is not kept. Whatever else we neglect, let our own personal godliness be the object of our constant care.

Let our heart be sound in the statutes of Jehovah. Let us see that our own garments are kept unspotted from the world and that in our pilgrim life we keep to the very center of the road. True religion must begin at home. Unless we, ourselves, are in good condition, our Christian efforts cannot be healthily conducted. Depend upon it, the worm at the root of our usefulness is bred amidst the decay of our personal piety. When you and I lose power in the family, power in the Church, power in the world, it is because we have lost power with God in private. The Lord give us the habit and spirit of close, consistent, careful, conscientious personal obedience.

Then, too, the heartiness of David’s obedience demands our attention. “My *heart* said.” Not my lips only, but my very heart said it. My soul was stirred to its depths and moved to its center by the voice of God. Men who have great hearts are the men for power—they are full of force because their inmost nature is on fire. There have been some men in this world who have had little else to recommend them except that by which they have attracted their fellow men to yield them homage—like Napoleon Bonaparte, for instance—when he said to his soldiers at Austerlitz, “Soldiers, this battle must be a thunderclap; we must hear no more of the foe.”

And the men, filled with eagerness by his passionate energy, did his bidding and made it such a thunderclap that all Europe shook beneath the march of those men-at-arms. He had the power, somehow or other, of making men yield to him as if they were all machines, impelled by the force of his personal will. They were not *dragged* into battle, but *rushed* with enthusiasm to the fight, longing to win glory or death.

Now the voice of God should be to the Christian a voice that speaks to all his soul, wakes up his dormant faculties and stirs the enthusiasm of his noblest nature so that his heart says, "I will, indeed, seek Your face." As the British sailor, when Nelson said to him, "Ready?" replied, "Ready, yes, ready," and fired red-hot shot at the foe, so should our hearts respond to God's, "Seek you My face." "Lord, blessed be Your name for telling me to do that, for You and I are of one mind here. You love me to seek Your face, and I love to seek You. My heart responds—not my lips, not my body, dragged slavishly into the form of obedience—but my *heart* says, 'Your face, Lord, will I seek.' "

Dear Friends, get, hold, *live* out a hearty religion! Depend upon it that the religion which has not your heart in it is best left alone. I scarcely can recommend you to go through religious performances if you look upon them as a dull routine. Do let your souls be in the ways of God. If ever you have a happy feast, let it be on Sunday! If ever there is a delightful walk, let it lead up to God's House! If ever there is a sweet song, let it be one of the songs of Zion! If ever there is a choice, retired, happy moment, let it be the moment which you spend in your closet in communion with God! O for more heart-work in our devotions!

Once more, cultivate the spirit of resolution in this matter. "Lord, Your face will I seek." Not "I *hope* I shall. I *trust* I may. I *desire* to. I sometimes think that one day I *shall*." No, but, "My heart said, Your face, Lord, will I seek." Men do not grow much better in this world by *hoping* that they will. If a man does not get so far as resolution, he may reckon that he has not started upon his journey. The Christian man resolves in his soul—

*"Though floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes."*

And if he cannot always carry out his resolution as he would, yet oftentimes his Master accepts the will for the deed.

To use John Bunyan's homely metaphor, "You send your servant for a doctor, and put him on the horse: the horse is but a sorry jade and cannot go fast. But if the man tugs at the bridle, and uses the spur, and kicks and strains as if he would go if he could, you set the pace down as what the man would have it to be. You do not blame him for not going faster because you clearly perceive that he would go fast if he could. So the Lord often looks upon His servants and regards them."

But what shall I say to those who would not go if they could, who do not say, "Your face, Lord, will I seek," but who hope, and who trust, and so on? That means that they will give God the go-by with mere hopes and fears, and trusts, instead of the strong resolution—"Your face, Lord, will I seek." In the teeth of all my natural sluggishness, in the face of all my business cares, I am resolved and set on this, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." Cultivate, then, a spirit of universal response to the Divine Word—prompt, personal, hearty, and resolved.

Before I leave this point—and then I will not detain you long with the rest—I cannot help thinking on an image which keeps coming to my mind while I am speaking. In the usual route which everybody takes in going through Switzerland there is a long tract of country where there are innumerable beggars and people trying, in various ways, to get money from the traveler. One way which generally succeeds is that of blowing an enormous horn just opposite certain rocks. As soon as this horn is blown, the rocks resound on either side, repeat the note exactly, and then again, and again, and again—sometimes, perhaps, 12 or 20 times the echoes take up the notes and prolong them, producing some of the sweetest effects that ever charmed the human ear—"Linked sweetnesses long drawn out."

You want the boy to blow again, and as he blows another blast, and gives intonations and notes to it, the rocks begin to sing again. Those rocks reminded me, as I stood and listened to their sweet notes, of God's people. Ah, I thought, you could not sing if it were not for the horn! You could not make any of these sweet notes if it were not for the living breath that is here! But you are so placed by God in His arrangements that as soon as the sound is made by the living mouth, it is taken up and repeated, sweet, and sweet, and sweeter still each time.

Thus should all the people of God be, so that when the Lord speaks, all the Lord's people should take up the echo, and repeat it again and again by practical obedience to the Divine command. As the echo to the voice, so should your heart and mine be to the voice of God.

III. But, now, thirdly. We have spoken of the absence of this spirit, and the cultivation of this spirit. Now a word or two upon THE SPECIAL OUTLET FOR THIS SPIRIT SUGGESTED IN THE TEXT. The outlet suggested is seeking God's face which I shall interpret to mean meditation, and especially the private and public worship of God. Now, you

who love the Lord, you are all day long hearing God say, “Seek you My face,” when the morning light awakens you, it is God saying, “Up, My child. The natural light streams from the sun—come and seek the spiritual light—seek My face.”

If you wake to abundant mercies, why, all the provisions on the table ought to say to you, “I am God’s gift to you. Seek the face of the Giver.” Go to Him with a note of praise. Be not ungrateful. And suppose that you are in need and have to say, “What shall I eat, and what shall I drink?” Why, all your needs say to you, “Seek the Lord’s face. He has provision, go to Him.” Your abundance or your need may equally be a signpost to point you on the road to God. Suppose your child comes and asks you for something—it is God teaching you to do the same—to go like a child to your heavenly Father.

If you are full of joy, should not your joy be like the chariots of Amminadib, to bear you to Jesus’ feet? And if you are full of grief should not your sorrow be as a swift ship that is blown by the winds? Should you not get nearer to God? During the day perhaps you hear of the fall of some professor. What does that say to you? “Seek God’s face, that you may be held up.” Perhaps you hear a sinner swear. What does that say to you, but, “Pray for that sinner”? All the sins we see other men commit ought to be so many jogs to our memory to pray for the coming of Christ, and for the salvation of souls. In this way you may go through the world, and the very stones in the street will say to you, “Seek you the Lord’s face.”

If you meet a funeral, what does that say? “You will soon be dying. Seek the Lord’s face now.” And when Sunday comes, what a call is that—“Seek you My face!” Brothers and Sisters, I wish that we responded to each one of these invitations of our heavenly Father. His likeness is stamped in some of its lineaments on all His works. By the visible things of God the invisible things are to be discovered. Go forth, like Isaac, and meditate at eventide and you will find the heavens declaring His glory and the firmament showing forth His handiwork. The lilies of the field will tell you of One who has hidden His wisdom in the raiment which decks them more brilliantly than Solomon in all his glory.

As the Master Himself often retired for meditation and prayer to the mountainside and the garden’s shade, that alone with his Father He might seek the face of His God, so let us leave, awhile, the busy scenes of life and the haunts of men to spend a still hour in quiet meditation over the works of God’s hands. And then let us pour out our hearts into His ever-loving breast. How much we lose by not noticing God in Nature and the Presence of our Father besetting us behind and before! I wish we were more in prayer. I long for it for myself—I desire it for you, also. I wish we were more in praise, too. Well would it be for us if the blessings of God, poured out upon us so lavishly, excited in us true gratitude at all times. Happy would that man be who responded to each touch of God’s beneficent hand like a well-made instrument answers to the fingers of the player.

If our whole life were thus vocal with praise, the music of our grateful souls would come up with acceptance before God and we should find in our joyful spirits a continual feast! This joy of the Lord would be our strength—we should have meat to eat which the world knows not of. O that our days were more filled up with what will be our heavenly occupation, namely, adoring love, grateful wonder, thankful praise! As God is so continually saying to us, “Seek you My face,” let our spirit find vent for itself in this, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.”

IV. And, now, the last thing is WHAT WILL BE THE REWARD OF SUCH A SPIRIT? Have you a marginal Bible with you? If so, kindly read the margin. It runs thus, “My heart said unto You, Let my face seek Your face.” Ah, there is a new meaning there, and a blessed meaning, too. Let me read it again, “My heart said unto you, Let my face seek Your face.” I suppose that is the more literal, probably the more accurate rendering, and I gathered from that the thought of the reward of those whose spirits yield to the will of God.

That is to say they enjoy *communion with God*. It is the long-lost blessedness of Eden restored to us with greater sweetness added to it. In Paradise God came and talked with Adam as a man talks with his friend. Our first parents had communion with God which they lost by sin, but it is now more than restored to us in Divine Grace. Heaven will be the place of perfect fellowship but we may foretaste much of the bliss of the future world, and eat of the grapes of Eshcol before we ever tread the green fields of the better land. Yes, it means lost blessings *restored*, and future ones realized when we can set ourselves face to face with God, and hold blessed communion with Him.

Now, is this the life we are leading? Many Christians contrive to live without getting into the heart of Christianity at all. In the wilderness the children of Israel dwelt round the tabernacle, each tribe marching or resting in its appointed place. They were all under the protection of the cloud and followed the guiding pillar, and enjoyed the Divine blessing.

But this was not enough—they might enter, and were bound to do so, the precincts of the tabernacle—and there witness the worship of God. And, bringing their sacrifice they also took part in the homage paid to their God and King. Beyond the outer court of the people was that of the priests—and there the favored few might go and present the incense before God on the altar of gold, spread before Him the show bread and light the seven-branched lamp. These enjoyed nearer fellowship with God—they were emphatically called the “servants of the Lord.”

There was, however, an *inner* place shut out from the eyes of priest and people alike, where once a year the High Priest entered alone, with blood, and he of all men living, drew near to God who dwelt between the cherubim in the Holy Place. Now, we are a royal priesthood and through the torn veil we have boldness of access to the very Mercy Seat in the holiest of holies, and we ought to realize and enjoy daily our high privilege! Far be it from us to remain in the camp outside the tabernacle. It is true we may be safe there and enjoy many mercies, but it is not living up to our blessings.

Go into the court and present your offering of prayer and praise! Go as a priest and enter the inner place, and stay till you have trod the secret place of the Most High—and face to face with God upon the Mercy Seat had real dealings with Him Himself. This is your right, and to neglect it is to despise one of the choicest blessings conferred by God on fallen, but now in Christ, redeemed ones. Let your hearts ever cry—

*“Lord, let me see Your beauteous face!
It yields a Heaven below;
And angels round the Throne will say,
‘Tis all the Heaven they know.
A glimpse—a single glimpse of You,
Would more delight my soul
Than this vain world, with all its joys,
Could I possess the whole.”*

But we find in the text another thought of blessedness. On our face is reflected the likeness of God so that men see our good works and glorify our Father which is in Heaven. We, by communion with God, may become manifestly like He, partakers of the Divine nature. As men we were made in God’s likeness—we fell and lost it—but by Divine Grace we are restored. How shall I illustrate this? Why, there is Moses. Moses on the Mount for 40 days sees God and when he comes down, the result, as shown in his face, is that his face shines! How could it be otherwise? God had been shining right into his face and he could not but reflect that delightful glory! That is the meaning, I suppose, of the passage, “Being changed from glory to glory, as by the image of the Lord.”

It is our looking upon God, producing sanctification—the light of God shining into our faces till our faces, also, shine with the reflected glory. “Let my face seek Your face.” Ah, Beloved, I could say some things I scarcely like to say about that text, for it looks not only as if the saints said to God, “Lord, look at me, and let me look at You. Show me Your face, and You look at my face. Lord, let us spend our time and our eternity in lovingly looking at each other.” But I wish the saint to understand that there is another way in which our face seeks Christ’s face.

It is thus expressed by the spouse, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine”—when the soul of the saint and the heart of the Well-Beloved fall into such visible union with each other that the conjugal kiss is given, and they come into the fullest, nearest, ripest, richest, and most celestial fellowship that can be known this side Heaven—

*“Like some bright dream that comes unsought,
When slumbers over me roll,
Your image ever fills my thought,
And charms my ravished soul.”*

And again, as Dr. Watts has well put it—

*“The smiles of Your face,
How amiable they are!
‘Tis Heaven to rest in Your embrace,
And nowhere else but there.
You are the sea of love,
Where all my pleasures roll;
The circle where my passions move,*

And center of my soul.”

May you and I often have in our hearts that panting, that longing, that sighing, that crying after fullness of fellowship with Jesus. May our hearts always say, “Lord, let my face seek Your face. Let my face never be satisfied till it sees Your face. Let my love never be satisfied till it is lost in the ocean of Your love. Let me never be content till self is wholly lost in the all-absorbing love of Divine Immanuel.” O so may it be! Then so shall it be, if your heart now says, in answer to God’s voice, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.”

I hope you have not forgotten the first point, however, and what I said about the unconverted. Let them take their portion. God grant that by getting their portion tonight, they may not get their portion in the flames of Hell. Then you Believers get your portion, also. Remember, the Lord’s portion is His people, and, on the other hand, “The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore will I trust in Him.” The Lord bless you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307