

SEEKERS DIRECTED AND ENCOURAGED NO. 1457B

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And you shall seek Me and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart.”
Jeremiah 29:13.*

THIS was a part of the direction, which God gave by His servant to the captives in Babylon. They were to remain quiet in Babylon until the set time came for their deliverance and then there would be granted to them a gracious visitation from God, which would move them to repentance and incite them to prayer. Then might they be quite sure that the time had come for their deliverance, when they sought the Lord with their whole heart. It is a general principle that a blessing is about to come from the All-Merciful One when we are moved to pray for it with all our heart. The Lord of grace may send us blessings before we search for them, for He is a sovereign and often far outstrips what we might have expected, but His promise runs, “Seek and you shall find it,” and it is with the promise that we have most to do. A cheering assurance is given to those who seek in hearty earnest and to this requirement of heartiness we must give earnest need.

At this time I shall not attempt instruction, but strive to drive home the truth into the heart and conscience. I pray the Holy Spirit to help me and I ask the prayers of those who have power with God that the Word may be as a goad to waken, bestir, and urge onward those upon whom it is used.

Our address will be, first, to the *unconverted*. Secondly, to *backsliders*. And thirdly, to *this church* or any other Christian people.

I. And first TO THE UNCONVERTED. Our text has a word for you. “You shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart” You have lost your God—you are at a distance from Him. Your sins have separated you from your Maker and nothing will ever be right with you—really right—till you get back to your God. You are a sheep away from its shepherd; you are a prodigal son away from his father and you will never be right, I say, till, as a sheep, you get back to the fold, and as a son that has rebelled, you are reconciled to your Father. You need your God and you will never be right till you find Him. You are therefore stirred up by the text to “search for” Him. You are not to sit still with folded arms and say, “He will come if He will.” The prodigal said, “I will arise and go to my father,” and some such spirit must be in you or we cannot hope well of you. You must search after the Lord.

In this search it will be of no use for you to look within your heart, for it is empty and void of anything godlike and altogether estranged from God. Expect not to find the remedy in the disease. No one turns to his empty purse in the hope that it will supply his necessities, for poverty is not the source of riches. It were vain to look for the living among the dead, therefore look not for grace and salvation in yourself. Neither will it be the path of wisdom to endeavor to perform good works of your own, hoping to set yourself right by your own exertions in gaining merit. Man, the whole mischief is that you are separated from God and you must get back to Him. The best works done while you are at enmity with your Lord and King are only part and parcel of the proud, presumptuous sin which rejects the Savior and sets up itself in His place. It would have been quite right for the prodigal to wash himself and cease from feeding the swine. It was most desirable that he should leave the harlots and the riotous living in which he had indulged, but if he had done all that and nothing more the great mischief would not have been cured, for the radical evil lay in his being away from his father’s house. That is the essential wrong in your case, O unconverted man, unconverted woman. You will never be perfectly happy and right till you are reconciled to God.

You are allowed to search for Him and what a privilege that is. When Adam sinned, he could not go back to Paradise, for with a flaming sword in his hand there stood the armed cherub to keep the way that he might not touch the Tree of Life. But God, as far as the garden of His mercy is concerned, has moved that fiery sentinel and Jesus Christ has set angels of love to welcome you at mercy's gate. You may come to God, for God has come to you. He has taken upon Himself your nature and His name is Emmanuel, God with Us. Yes, the Infinite became a man and He that built yonder arch of heaven and hung it with those starry lamps, came down below to be subject to lowly parents, to work in a carpenter's shop, and to die upon a felon's gallows, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Search for Him and you must find Him, for so stands His own word, "You shall seek Me and find Me."

The text, however, demands that our searching after God should be done with all our heart. There are several ways of seeking God which must prove failures. One is to seek Him *with no heart at all*. This is done by those who take their book and read prayers, never thinking what they say, or who attend a dissenting place of worship, and hear another person pray, but never join in it. This is done by those who bend the knees at eventide and mutter pious words, but never think—who rise in the morning and repeat sacred sentences and never consider—who with regard to divine things are as little thoughtful as if the gospel were all a legend or an old wives' fable, not worth an hour's meditation. I have seen young women sometimes when I have been traveling, reading those trashy novels which they purchase at the railway stall. And I have seen them waste their tears on some imaginary heroine or hero and yet they and others hear about the majesty and the love of God without emotion and read of heaven and hell—and Christ and God—with scarcely a tear or a thought. Dear friend, you will never find the Lord if you seek Him in a heartless, unthinking manner. God is not mocked. If any of you have fallen into a formal religion and seek the Lord without your heart, your seeking is in vain.

Some seek God *with a false heart*. They flame with zeal and would have their friends know it, for they say as Jehu did to Jehonadab, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord." But their heart is not true towards God. Their piety is an affectation of feeling and not deep soul-work. It is sentimentality and not the engraving of God's Spirit upon the heart. Beware of a false religious excitement—of being borne up with religious gas as some are, inflated like balloons by a revival, only to burst by-and-by when they need something to support them. God grant us to be saved from a lie in the heart, for it is a deadly canker, fatal to all hope of finding the Lord.

Some seek Him, too, *with a double heart*—a heart *and* a heart, as the Hebrew puts it. They have a heart towards God and they have a heart towards sin—they have a heart towards the pardon, but they have also a heart towards the transgression. They would gladly serve God and mammon. They would build an altar for Jehovah and still keep Dagon in his place. If your heart is divided, you will be found lacking. Those prayers will never get to heaven which only fly upward with one wing. If one oar pulls towards earth and the other towards heaven, the boat of the soul will revolve in a circle of folly and never reach the happy shore. Beware of a double heart.

And some seek God *with half a heart*. They have a little concern and are not altogether indifferent. They think when they pray or read or sing, but the thought is not very intense. Superficial in all things, the seed is sown in stony ground and soon it is withered away, because there is no depth of earth. The Lord save us from this.

Now, you that are seeking Christ, remember that if you would find Him you must neither seek Him without heart, nor with a false heart, nor with a double heart, nor with a half heart, but "You shall find Me," says the Lord, "when you shall search for Me with *all* your heart."

Nobody gets on in the world who is half-hearted. If a man needs money, he must hunt for it morning, noon, and night. If a man longs for knowledge, he cannot take a book and ladle it into his brain with a spoon—he must read and study if he is to be a scholar. If a man desires to rise in such an age as this, he cannot do it without stern labor. Great discoverers, eminent artists, and powerful orators have all been men of hard work. Handel, who composed such majestic music, practiced so often on his harpsichord that he hollowed out the keys like spoons through his constant use of them. Nothing is to be done with-

out earnestness and you may not expect that God is to be found, pardon is to be received, and grace to be had while you have only one eye open and are not half awakened out of sleep. What did Jesus say?—"The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force." Heaven's celestial bastions must be stormed by downright persistence. You must take the knocker of heaven's gate and not drop it from your fingers with a dainty tap, but hammer at mercy's door again and again till you make the infernal deeps of despair resound with your desperate knocks and cause heaven itself to echo with your hopeful determination that you will enter in or know the reason why. Oh, knock and knock and knock and knock again, for the door shall be opened when you knock with all your hearts. Surely, dear friends, if any men have reasons to bring their whole hearts into action, you unconverted people are the people. I am sure that if I were to intimate to you that a hundred pounds of gunpowder were stowed away in yonder center seat and the probability was that it would soon explode, you would not remain very long in this Tabernacle, but would hurry out with all your heart. But any destruction that could be caused by gunpowder, as far as its effects on earth are concerned, could be nothing at all as compared with the overwhelming destruction which will come upon body and soul to men who are under the wrath of God. That wrath of God abides on every one of you who are not converted. God is angry with the sinner every day and if it is so, your position is the most perilous one conceivable. You will soon die. Do not be vexed with my reminding you of it. We are compelled to see it, some of us, who watch large congregations. Never does the same assembly meet in this place twice and I suppose between Sabbath and Sabbath it happens almost invariably that some hearer goes to his account. Certainly, in this church we lose all the year round more than one per week of our friends. It is true, then, that you will soon have to die—how will you bear to close your eyes on all mortal things without a hope of immortal joy? To go before the dread tribunal of your Maker and your Redeemer unwashed in the precious blood—with all your sins from the first day of your life until now about your neck like millstones—to sink forever—how can you bear it? Think of this and if you do, you will have good reason for seeking your God with all your heart. Remember also that after death comes judgment. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. And after the judgment comes the final award, which to those who have rejected Christ will be eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. Do not, I pray you, defy the wrath of God or dare His infinite displeasure. He Himself has said it, "Beware you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver." Surely every man in his senses who knows that he is exposed to such an imminent risk as this will, with his whole heart, seek unto the Lord.

But why is it that when men search with all their heart they find God? I will tell you. The only way in which we can find God is in Jesus Christ. There He meets with men, but nowhere else, and to get to Jesus Christ there is nothing on earth to be done but simply to believe in Him. It is a matter which does not take a moment. Believe God's testimony about Jesus Christ—trust yourself with Jesus Christ and salvation is yours. The saving word is near you, in your mouth, and in your heart, and that is why when men seek the Lord with their whole hearts they find Him, for before they called, the Lord was ready to answer. Jesus was always ready, but other wishes and other thoughts made the seeker unready. Sins were there and lusts of the flesh and all manner of obstacles to hinder the man. When a man comes to seek God with all his heart, he lets those things go and soon sees Jesus. Then, too, a man becomes teachable, for when a man is in earnest to escape from danger he is glad enough to be told by anybody. If I had lost my way and feared I might fall over a precipice, I should be glad for the tiniest child to tell me the right road and a man is likely to learn who is willing to be taught. This seeking God with all his heart makes a man quick in understanding. Before, he was a dolt, because his heart was not in it, like a boy at school who does not want to learn. When a man seeks God with all his heart, you do not need to preach fine sermons to him—he does not crave elegance or eloquence—no, tell Him Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that "there is life for a look at the crucified one," and he jumps at it. "That is what I want," he says.

The Spirit of God has made him eager to learn and so he catches at once at the blessed message and believes in Jesus. Half a heart, or no heart, or a double heart will not see what is as plain as a pikestaff

and will not accept a gospel which is as glorious to God as it is simple to man. I charge you, then, you that seek the Lord, to be whole-hearted in it, for you cannot expect peace and joy in the Holy Spirit till all those straggling affections and wandering desires are tied up into one bundle and your entire being is eager in the search for God in Christ Jesus.

II. I cannot spare the seeker any more time, for I need to have five minutes with THE BACKSLIDER. Backsliders, you have left your Lord. Perhaps you have left the church or the church has left you by putting you outside its pale and deservedly so, because you were a dishonor to it. I am glad you come among us to worship. You have had to be cut off from our fellowship because of your sad conduct, but you still stick to us and I am glad to see you. I always feel hope for you as long as you love the old house. I am glad that though you are not recognized as a child in it, and do not feel that you ought to be, yet you still wait under the window to hear the family sing. When the children of God are feasting together at the Table I have marked you looking on and wishing you were again in the happy household. I do not know whether you are God's children or not. I cannot judge your hearts. I call you backsliders, not because I am sure you are really so, for it is very possible that you made a false profession and you afterwards did what was natural you should do—you broke down in trying to carry out a practical lie. I will not try to judge that, but I will say this to you—surely, if there are any people in the world who ought to be whole-hearted in seeking after God, you are the people. If I am to be lost, I pray God I may not perish as an apostate or a backslider. O you who once made a profession of religion, I cannot understand how you can dare to think of the judgment day, for you will not be able to plead ignorance, for you knew the truth of God and professed to believe it. You will not be able to say, “I never heard of these things.” No, but you came to the communion table and you joined the church. You even preached to others or you taught in the Sunday school. You ran over at the mouth about divine things though you were empty at the heart. How speechless you will stand at the last dreadful day with your old regimentals hanging about you to prove that you were deserters! You will not be able to lift a finger or utter a word in defense of yourself. And what will you do when you go down to hell? The prophet represents the king of Babylon as going there and as he descended the little petty princes whom he put to death, who were lying there in their dungeons in the prison of hell, rose and leaning on their elbows, looked at him and said, “Have you become like one of us?” I think I hear the drunkard rising up and saying to you, “What? And are you here after all? You used to preach sobriety to me and warn me of the drunk's doom.” Ah, my hearers, hypocrites are damned as well as drunkards. Then will speak the woman whom you talked about reclaiming and what a sneer she will meet you with and say, “You needed a refuge yourself, you hypocrite!” Then, too, will speak your neighbors who never went to a place of worship, whom you thought were so very bad because you went there and forgot what you heard. They will say, “This is what came of your going to the Tabernacle and hearing Spurgeon! Is this the result of your joining the church and going to the communion table?” What answer can you give when those eyes shall leer on you and those lips shall hiss in derision at you? Others shall say, “I never had the opportunities you had. I was never warned as you were. I never rejected Christ as you have done—I never stained the robes of His church and wounded Him anew in the house of His friends as you have done.” Then they will insult and triumph over you. If a prince of the blood were sent to a common jail, what a misery it would be to him. I pity every man who has to work upon the treadmill, so far as he can deserve pity, but most of all the man who has been delicately brought up and scarcely knows what labor means, for it must be hard indeed for him. Ah, you delicate sons and daughters of Zion—you whose mouths were never stained with a curse and whose hands have never been defiled with outward sin—if your hearts are not right with God, you must take your place with the profane and share with them. What do you say to all this? Do you say, “I would gladly return and find acceptance in Christ”? To you the text expressly speaks. Then shall you “find Me when you shall search for Me with all your heart.”

III. My last word is to you, my brethren in Christ, and especially TO you, the members of this church. Thus says the Lord, “You shall seek Me and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart.” Brethren, we need the Lord to be always among us. We have had His presence very gra-

ciously, but I am always troubled lest any sin of ours should cause Him to depart. I dread anything like a decline in zeal, ardor, generosity, prayerfulness and holy living among any of us, lest the glory should depart and Ichabod be written on our walls. We hunger for our God, for I trust we can say we love Him.

Can you say that? I heard this last week a story about that mighty preacher, Robert Hall, which touched me as I heard it. A friend related that Robert Hall was riding one day through a little hamlet on his way to preach at a country town. It snowed very heavily and Mr. Hall was passing through the village, unaware of the state of the road beyond. A Christian man who knew him well, cried out, "Mr. Hall, you must not go farther. The snow is very deep. You cannot get through it, you must come in." Mr. Hall stopped at the house and rested awhile. He looked out of the window and saw that it kept on snowing. He looked out again and it snowed more heavily than before and his friend said to him, "You cannot go, Mr. Hall, you cannot get there." "But," he said, "Sir, I must go." "Sir," said the good man, "you cannot. It is impossible. You cannot get to the place; the roads are blocked up." So the great preacher agreed to remain if he could deliver his sermon. "I must preach, sir; I must preach, sir. I cannot remain unless I preach." His host went round the hamlet, knocked at the doors of the cottages, and got a few people together into his home. Mr. Hall preached a wonderful sermon. The good man seemed to mount to heaven in preaching from the words, "I saw no temple therein." When the people had gone home he said to his friend, "My dear sir, I am afraid I am not a child of God." "Why, Mr. Hall, how can you say such a thing as that?" "But I am afraid I am a hypocrite, sir." "Well, nobody else is afraid of that about you, Mr. Hall. And I cannot think how you can give way to such a notion." "Ah, but I want to ask you a question, sir. What do you think is a sure sign that a man is a child of God?" "Mr. Hall," said the good man, "you ought to know better than I do. I cannot undertake to instruct you." "I need to know, sir, and shall be obliged by your judgment," said Mr. Hall. "Well," said the man, "this is what I think is a sure sign—if a man really *loves* God, he must be a child of God and there must have been a change in Him." "Thank you, sir. Thank you, sir, for that word," said Mr. Hall, "that is just what I needed. Love God, sir? I love Him with my whole soul." "And," said the good host, in talking to my friend, "you should have heard how Mr. Hall went on about God. It was wonderful to hear him, sir. He praised Him above all things. He said all that was good about Him and he kept saying, 'I cannot help loving such a being as God is and if that proves that I am saved, then I am sure of it, for I must love Him.'" Now, my brethren, we love God with all our hearts and therefore we desire to have Him glorified in our midst. Do you not, my brethren, vehemently desire this? I know you do. How, then, shall the Lord be honored? He may be glorified by holier living. How is that to be done? The text says we shall find Him if we seek Him with all our hearts and in finding Him we shall find holiness. I have given up the idea that I shall ever get a church in which all hearts will seek God earnestly. I know you will not all be alive and full of fervor, for some of you are a dishonor to the church. You will never help us, but you will remain among us as dead weights. How I wish I could hope otherwise, but I dare not deceive myself or you. I do expect, however, that all who have the life of God really in their souls will give their whole hearts to the glory of God and will do it intensely. I look to them to seek the Lord by prayer, praying much for God to be glorified and to back up their prayer by effort, cheerfully seeking to take their full share in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Brethren, did Christ die for you? Yes or no? If He did, then, in the name of common honesty, live unto Him, for you cannot be your own—He has bought you with a price. When you were baptized in the name of The Sacred Three, did you mean it? If you did, in the name of the truth, live unto God, for you confessed that you were dead to the world and buried with Christ and that you should always live unto Him. When the last time you came to the communion table, did you really believe that Jesus gave Himself for you and did you know that you feasted upon His flesh and drank His blood by faith? Then, I say, in the name of both honesty and truth, live as souls should live who have eaten better than angels' meat and have Christ within them.

I try to speak as earnestly as I can, but usually when I reach my home I say to myself, "What are you doing? You did not awaken those people or yourself either. You are getting dull and old—you are not

half so zealous as you used to be in your younger days.” I try to stick big pins into myself in a spiritual fashion, to wake myself up again for fear I should fall into the same drowsy state as some I know of, whose preaching is little better than articulate snoring. They are sound asleep and as a natural consequence their people are asleep, too. If this Book is true, the most of us are not living as we ought to live. If there is a heaven, we are not living in the joy which the hope of it ought to inspire. If there is a hell and some of our own children are going down to it, we do not act towards them as if we believed in their danger. We are acting like monsters and not like men if we suffer our fellow creatures to be lost without lifting a finger for their salvation. Awake! Arise, my brethren! Oh, church of God in this place and church of God everywhere, shake yourself from the bonds of your neck. Arise and sit down on your throne of power, O daughter of Zion. Put on your strength as in the ancient days, for strength shall be yours if you search after the Lord with all your heart. God grant that as a church we may be thoroughly earnest in seeking for a display of His saving power and He shall have the glory. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 11.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—429, 503, 549.**

TO MY CHURCH AND PEOPLE:

DEAR FRIENDS—I am hoping and praying that the special services at the Tabernacle may excel all that have gone before. To urge you to the utmost earnestness about them, I have written the short sermon of this week. It would give me great joy to hear, as I feel sure I shall, that in this as in all the other works of the church, you are abundantly filled with zeal and constancy. My one concern is lest the Lord’s work should suffer by my absence. I entreat you, do not permit it to be so in any point or degree.

The damp and dull weather, which has reached us even here, has somewhat retarded my progress to health and strength, so that I remain a very feeble traveler, but yet I am greatly improved and feel that my mind and spirits are the better for the rest. To all of you, from the bottom of my heart, I send my sincere love in Christ Jesus.

Yours to serve while there remains any life in me,
C.H. SPURGEON,
Mentone, February 6, 1879.

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TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

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