
Christ and the Seeking Soul

*“Come unto me, all ye that labour
and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.”*

— Matthew 11:28

L. R. Shelton, Jr.

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1. What is required of the seeking soul?
2. The hope set before seeking souls
3. How Christ deals with seeking souls
4. Pardon and grace await seeking souls

*These were originally four messages delivered over
The Word of Truth Radio Network in the 1970s.*

1. What is required of the seeking soul?

For the past weeks the Lord has been laying upon my heart a series of messages on the subject: *Christ and the Seeking Soul*. I desire, by the grace of God and power of the Holy Spirit, to lay before your hearts in this series that which the Word of God teaches about the seeking soul: what is required of the seeking soul, the hope set before seeking souls, how Christ deals with seeking souls, and the fact that mercy, pardon, grace and full salvation awaits those who seek Christ, for in Him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3).

My prayer has been that as these four messages go out over the radio and in print, it will please my blessed Lord to use them for His glory for the salvation of precious, never-dying souls, and for the encouragement of God's people.

Listen now! It has pleased God, the God of the Bible, to save His people by the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ Whom He has set forth as the only Redeemer, the only Savior, the only Substitute for sinners. It has pleased God that all things would head up in Christ and that He would have the preeminence over all things. We read in Colossians 1:16-19, "For by him [Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell."

Since our Lord Jesus Christ is set forth as Head over all, then the Scriptures declare that God would have us seek Him THROUGH CHRIST by faith; and it is to this seeking soul that God promises He will be merciful. In Hebrews 11:6 we read, "But without faith it is impossible to please him [God]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

You see, dear friend, since all things are given to us in Christ, and all things are headed up in Him, then it is to Him we come for all our needs for time

and for eternity. Acts 5:31 tells us that God has exalted Christ “with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior”—and for what reason?—“to give repentance...and forgiveness of sins.” So it is the Lord Jesus Christ we seek for these precious gifts of repentance and forgiveness; for they are given by Him to every seeking soul.

We find in John 17:2 that Christ has power over all flesh—and for what purpose?—that he might give ETERNAL LIFE to as many as the Father had given Him. So again we find we must seek Christ by faith, for He alone can give eternal life. And what is life eternal? John 17:3 tells us: “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” ETERNAL LIFE THEN IS KNOWING THE ETERNAL SOVEREIGN GOD AS HE IS REVEALED IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. To know Him is to have eternal life.

The Bible declares that you and I must have a perfect righteousness, a perfect standing in the sight of God before we can enter heaven; and this righteousness, this perfect standing, is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ Who is made unto us the righteousness of God. Romans 3:21-23 declares: “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

Brother Paul tells us that his one desire was to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through

the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith (Phi 3:9). So we see in these Scriptures that we must seek Christ and Him alone for a right standing before God; it is found in no one else, nor anywhere else. As Romans 10:4 tells us, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

We must come to Christ seeking His face; for all our needs are found in Him and are met in Him. He is the only Way to the Father as we read in John 14:6, "Jesus saith unto him [Thomas], I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Also, since He is the only High Priest, the only Intercessor, the only Advocate, the only Mediator set forth in the Scriptures, then it is to Him only we can come for all things.

The question is then asked, "WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SEEK CHRIST, TO COME TO HIM?" Well, it implies LEAVING ALL OTHER CONFIDENCES. To come to anyone is to leave everyone else. To come to Christ is to leave everything else, every other person, to leave every other hope, every other trust. Let me ask you: "Are you trusting in your own works for salvation and heaven? Are you trusting any man, a minister or priest? Are you trusting in the merits of the Virgin Mary? or in the saints and angels in heaven? Are you trusting in anything, anyone but the Lord Jesus Christ?" If so, leave it, be done with it all. Come away from every other reliance and trust in Christ crucified; for this is the only way of salvation as shown in Acts 4:12—"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

To come to Christ, to seek Him alone, means to TRUST HIM. He is the Savior; it is His business to save. If you could save yourself, you would not need a Savior; and since you cannot save yourself by all your works, then seek Christ; come to Him, look to Him, lay all your needs at His feet and trust Him. Bring all your sins in one heap and lay them upon Him, and He shall save you for time and eternity, cleansing you from all your sins by His precious blood.

To come to Christ, to seek Him, not only implies leaving all other confidences and trusting Christ, it also means FOLLOWING HIM. We continue to seek Him all the days of our lives. If you leave your soul in His hands, you must take Him to be your *Master and Lord* as well as your Savior. You see, Christ has come to save you *from* sin, not *in* sin. He will help you to leave your sin, whatever it is. He will give you victory over sin, make you holy, and enable you to please God, for He is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him. But you must come to Him, you must seek Him if you would be saved by Him; you must follow Him.

This then is the way I seek Him and come to Him: I renounce all hope in my own obedience, and base all my hopes of salvation on the obedience of my Blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I came to Christ guilty, that I may be forgiven; I came to Christ naked (spiritually) that I may be clothed; I came to Christ polluted, that I may be sanctified; I came to Christ lost, that I may be found; I came to Christ empty to find in Him all things and receive all from His fullness; I came knowing nothing but Christ and Him crucified, contented to be nothing

that He may be all in all. This to me is grace, that we can thus come to Christ and He will not turn us away.

The Scriptures themselves abound with admonition as to how we should seek the Lord. Hosea 10:12 tells us to do it IMMEDIATELY. “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground; for it is *time to seek the Lord*, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.” Do not wait one day longer, seek His face now; for now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

We are told in Psalm 105:4 to seek the Lord FOREVER. “Seek the Lord, and His strength: seek his face evermore.” To Whom coming, always coming, is the call of God’s Word. God’s children are always seeking His face, for like Peter we cry, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

Again, we read in Isaiah 55:6, “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.” Then that 7th verse tells us what to do as we seek His face: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Yes, we are to seek Him while He may be found— *today* —for tomorrow may be too late!

Again, we are instructed to seek the Lord DILIGENTLY, in Hebrews 11:6. Yes, diligently, perseveringly, the whole man is to go in search of Christ. If seeking will find Him, then I will continue seeking Him till He saves me. This leads us to Deuteronomy 4:29, which reads: “But if...thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek

him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.” What the Lord is saying here is that there must be no pretence about seeking Him. If you desire to be saved, there must be no playing and trifling and half-heartedness with Him. The search must be real, sincere, earnest and intense, or it will be a failure. Half-hearted seeking is no seeking at all. To ask for mercy from God and at the same time be willing to go on without it is a mere pretence of asking. If you are content to be put off with an inferior blessing, you are not seeking the Lord at all. Matthew 7:7-8 tells us to *Ask* and *Seek* and *Knock* if we are to enter in; and to *keep on* asking, seeking and knocking; “for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

In our next three messages, I trust, by the grace of God, to set before you examples from the Word of God of those who diligently sought the Lord and how they pressed in. Let it suffice for now to give you this brief account of those who sought diligently and entered in. In Mark 10:46 we have the story of blind Bartimaeus who sat by the highway begging. When he heard the Lord Jesus was passing by, he began to cry out, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” The crowd tried to shut him up, but he cried so much the more, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” He kept crying after Jesus; he couldn’t see Him, but he kept seeking Him for he knew that Christ alone could heal him. Then the Lord stopped and called for him, and healed him. You see, we have here the example we should follow to press into Christ: cry after Him, seek His face

until He has mercy upon us, and heals our souls from sin.

In Matthew 15 we read of the Greek woman who came to Christ crying for the deliverance of her demented daughter. Hers was a story of continued pressing in because we know from verse 23 that our Lord “answered her not a word;” so she overcame His silence. In that same verse, our Lord’s disciples requested Him to send her away because she cried after them; so she pressed in over the discouragement of those who should have been helping her. In verse 24 our Lord told her the blessing was only for “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” but yet she pressed in crying “Lord, help me;” as she overcame the precious doctrine of election. In verse 26 our Lord told her it was not right for Him to take the children’s bread and cast it to dogs, but she came back and pressed in with these words, “Truth, Lord.” That’s right, I don’t deserve your mercy, I am just a Gentile dog, but yet “the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.” Just give me a crumb for my daughter and I will be satisfied. Then listen to our Lord’s reply—“O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”

Oh, this is the diligence our Lord likes to see as we seek His face for mercy. He loves faith that will not take no for an answer. He delights in us casting our all upon Him and trusting Him only. He wants us to come to Him only. He wants us to come to Him in the same way, proving His faithfulness to His Word.

May many precious souls who have read this message today take courage and seek the Lord by

God's grace while He may be found. Surely He will hear you and have mercy upon you, as you call upon Him in faith. Believe Him and trust Him.

2. The hope set before seeking souls

We desire by the grace of God to continue our messages on this series, CHRIST AND THE SEEKING SOUL, by looking now at the Gentile woman of Matthew 15 as she pressed in to Christ, and see how she received the blessing for her daughter.

Now with your Bibles in hand, let us read the account of our Lord's dealings with this SEEKING SOUL as found in Matthew 15:21-28, "Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

I see in this account of our Lord's dealings with this seeking soul that the mouth of faith should never be closed in crying after the Lord; for if ever the

faith of a woman was tried so as to make her cease from seeking the Lord with true seeking faith, it was this woman of Tyre. Therefore I am hopeful that perhaps some poor soul out there today who may be under very discouraging circumstances—perhaps a seeking sinner or a seeking saint may be led to believe the Lord Jesus Christ with a strong and persevering faith. I trust that your struggling faith may be strengthened by the example of this Canaanitish woman as we go into our message today.

Truly we see in this Gentile woman an example of how to put to the test the admonition of Matthew 7:7-8, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” She asked and kept on asking until she received. As we said before, we see here that the mouth of faith can never be closed; for if ever the faith of a woman was tried so as to make her cease from prayer, it was this woman of Tyre. She had difficulty after difficulty to encounter and yet she would not be put off from her pleading for her little daughter, because she believed in the Lord Jesus as the great Messiah, and able to heal all manner of diseases. And she meant to pray to Him until He yielded to her importunity; for she was confident that He could chase the demon from her child. Oh what an example of seeking faith we have here! A seeking faith that our Lord desires us to emulate.

We see first of all that THE MOUTH OF FAITH IN A SEEKING SOUL CANNOT BE CLOSED EVEN ON ACCOUNT OF THE SEEMINGLY CLOSED EAR AND CLOSED

MOUTH OF CHRIST. We are told she came to the right Person, and to the right place—at His feet. She came asking for the right thing—mercy from the Lord. She came recognizing Him to be God and also the Messiah, the Son of David. Yet the Scripture said, “He answered her not a word.” Listen again! She spake very piteously; she came and threw herself at His feet; her child’s case was very urgent; her motherly heart was very tender; and her cries were very piercing; and still He answered her not a word. Yet she was not staggered; she believed in Him; and even He Himself could not make her to doubt. You ask, “Why did He do this to her? Seemingly He had no use for her or her petition.” But let me answer! *He tested her faith and her sincerity* ; and so He does the same today to you and me. He hears, but delays, to see if we desire Him and His glory. Surely He waits to see if we will cry like Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him” (Job 13:15), or else like Peter, “To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). Dear friend, He delights in us pressing in with believing hope even though all around us is silence and darkness.

We see in the second place that HER SEEKING FAITH COULD NOT BE SILENCED BY THE CONDUCT OF THE DISCIPLES. In Matthew 15:23 we read, “His disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.” These were cold, hard, and very unkind words; but their unsympathetic behavior could not prevent her pleading with Him in Whom she believed. She could not cast away her confidence in Him because others were not pleased with her. Oh what seeking faith is given us here as an example to follow!

I wonder how many seeking souls under the sound of my voice today have had to overcome even false professors of Christianity, who—instead of helping you seek Christ with sympathetic prayer and blessing—have only tried to keep you from Christ by their ungodly lives and personal testimony. Oh poor sinner, I know some of you are saying, “I am longing to be saved, but such and such a “Christian” man has dealt very bitterly with me; he has doubted my sincerity and questioned the reality of my repentance, and would send me away from Christ empty-handed because I can’t get it all settled. But, my poor seeking soul, take hope in the attitude of this poor seeking woman and press on to Christ, for He will hear you; no soul has ever sought Him in vain (John 6:37).

Perhaps there is some mother today who is seeking with all her heart and faith for the salvation of her lost son or daughter, and Satan, the world, or your so-called “friends” and loved ones continue to tell you there is no hope. But don’t believe them; continue to seek the Lord with all your heart. You may yet hear Him say, “O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”

In the third place, HER SEEKING FAITH WAS NOT SHUT OFF BY EXCLUSIVE DOCTRINE WHICH APPEARED TO CONFINE THE BLESSING TO A FAVORED FEW. Our Lord said in Matthew 15:24, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” She seemed to be stopped by the doctrine of election, but she pressed on anyway because she knew that He and only He could heal her daughter. By pressing in she showed she had the faith of God’s elect; so she entered in.

Oh, how many seeking souls stumble over the doctrine of election, but it should not be so. To me, the doctrine of election is one of the most encouraging truths of God's Word; for without it no one would be saved. It encourages because we know the Lord shall save His people from their sins. If He called me by His gospel to come to Him for salvation; then I want to press in, knowing that the words of Christ are true—"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

Does Satan tell you that the promise is not for you? Does he tell you that there is no hope for you because you are not one of the chosen? Then cry like Job—"Though he slay me, yet will I trust him" (Job 13:15). Though he send me to hell, yet in hell I will trust Him. To me, dear friend, this is the faith of God's elect, which faith surely shall be heard by the Lord.

In the fourth place, I see here that THE MOUTH OF SEEKING FAITH WAS NOT CLOSED EVEN BY A SENSE OF ADMITTED UNWORTHINESS. In Matthew 15:25 after our Blessed Lord had said He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, then she took courage and pressed in the more to Him, crying "Lord, help me." She had His ear now; for He was talking to her, so she pressed in the more with the need of her demon-possessed daughter. It is then we hear our Lord speaking again, and listen to what He was saying! "It is not right to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." Oh how many of you would continue to press in to Christ if He called you a dog? But she did, and received her blessing and her request.

Did she argue with Him? Did she lash back in a rage and say, “You are not going to call me a dog! Take your salvation and all of your mercy and leave me alone; I will have no part of such degrading, be-meaning language!” Oh no, she came back at Him yielding the point and saying, “Truth, Lord”—that’s right, I am a Gentile dog, not worthy of the least of your mercies; yet Lord, the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table, and that’s all I want, just a crumb. Oh what faith and boldness to thus plead with the Lord!

My friend, it is right here that many a sinner turns away and goes to hell. They will not seek the Lord when He tells them the truth. They do not know it is wisdom to say, “Truth, Lord.” No, they go away mad and will not listen to the Word of God because they do not want their pride broken. They are too proud to admit they are sinners—lost, depraved, with a deceitful heart that is desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9).

But, oh I beg you, my seeking soul, admit what God the Holy Spirit shows you about your heart, don’t turn away in a rage like Naaman the leper did at first. Do not rage against the faithfulness of God’s Word when it exposes your corruption and lays bare your falseness, your pride and unbelief. Take the lowest place before Christ and own yourself to be a sinner, lost, ruined and undone. Say, “Truth, Lord, I am nothing but a wretch, an ill-deserving, undeserving, hell-deserving sinner.” Oh dear seeking soul, never let proud nature contradict the Lord, for this is only to increase your sin!

But on the other hand, I believe I am speaking to someone now who is saying, “Pastor, I admit all that

the Lord is showing me.” Then I say, oh sinner friend, if you feel yourself to be the worst sinner out of hell, still pray believingly, pray for mercy. If your sense of unworthiness be enough to drive you to self-destruction, yet I beseech you—out of the depths, out of the dungeon of self-loathing—still cry unto God; for your salvation does not rest on any degree of yourself, nor upon anything that you are or hope to be. You need to be saved FROM YOURSELF, not by yourself, and Christ is able to do this for you; because He is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them (Heb. 7:25). I don’t care how black or dirty or filthy you see yourself to be; pray on, look to the Lord. Open your mouth in believing prayer, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth from all sin (I John 1:7).

In the last place, we notice that THIS SEEKING SOUL DID NOT DISPUTE WITH THE LORD; she only said, “Truth Lord,”—‘I agree with all you say about me.’ But she did take His Word and give it back to Him as a basis for pleading mercy. She pleaded with Christ from her hopeful position; and this is what we should do. We should cry, “Lord, I am a sinner, but as a sinner I have been permitted to hear the good news of the gospel, therefore I will not let you go, oh God, until you bless me. You have brought me to this hour, will you leave me now? You have started a good work in me, shall you not complete it? You have kept my soul out of hell this long, shall you not by Thy power deliver me out of it forever? Oh Lord, my God, please be merciful to me, the sinner! Save me, Lord; deliver me, Lord;

hold me, Lord; cleanse me, Lord. I do trust Thee and Thee alone for my salvation. I rest wholly and completely upon Thee and Thy finished work. Lord, Thou hast said it was the Father's will that of all which He had given, You should lose none, but would raise them up at the last day (John 6:39). So my Blessed Lord and Savior, I rest my all upon Thee."

This, my friend, is the seeking soul whom Christ will save and keep. Have you and I thus sought Him like this Gentile woman? If we have, then we have found mercy in His eyes; for He turns none away who seek Him in this manner.

3. How Christ deals with seeking souls

I desire to continue our messages on CHRIST AND THE SEEKING SOUL by setting before you Job's cry after the living God, showing that this is the cry of every seeking soul after Christ. In Job. 23:3 we read: "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!"

It is the burden of my heart to set before each seeking soul—those of you who are longing to find God in Christ—a clear way of seeking Him; for I know that the greatest thing in this life is to be awakened to our need of Christ, and then to know Him in that union of life and love. Yes, to know Christ, to be found in Him, having His righteousness for our covering, His blood for our cleansing, and His salvation for our hope of heaven is to have all that God in His love has prepared for poor sinners.

I have had many letters in the past weeks from those who are deeply anxious about their never-dying souls; who, I believe, are crying, "Oh, that I

knew where I might find Him!" Therefore, in trying to meet your case, my dear friend, I would set before you these two thoughts for your consideration. What sort of desire is this?—The desire that makes a man, a woman or a child cry out, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" And then, what is the answer to it? How can I find the God of the Bible in Christ?

In answer to the question: "What sort of desire is this that makes a man cry after God, that makes him anxious for his soul?" I would say first that this is a desire CONTRARY TO WHAT YOU ARE BY NATURE. If you feel yourself lost and you are beginning to cry, "Oh that I knew the Savior of sinners, how do I come to Him? how do I find Him?"—I would say, dear friend, that this is not a natural desire. When you were satisfied with the world, you never had this desire. There was a time when it never crossed your mind for a moment. When Adam and Eve sinned, they did not want to find God. They hid themselves among the trees of the garden. And you, while you love sin, do not want to find God. You are like Jonah; you would willingly take ship and flee from God's presence rather than seek Him. No, the natural man without the Holy Spirit never says, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!"

Another answer to our question is this: A desire of this nature never comes except *by grace*. This desire never takes full possession of any man unless it is worked in him by the grace of God. In the excitement of a revival meeting you may say, "I wish I was a Christian," but to carry this desire about with you, to have it always within you as the deep desire of the inner man—Oh, that I knew where I might

find Him! THIS IS THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

My cry is that those who are listening may feel these first pangs of the new birth; for where God begins with us by working in us this desire, He will in due time gratify it. If He gives us a desire for Himself, He gives us Himself to satisfy that desire.

Another answer to our question is this: this desire after Christ is MET BY THE SEEKING SAVIOR HIMSELF. The desire of a man after God is paralleled by Christ's desire after him. We read in Luke 19:10—"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." To me this is a blessed thought because it is encouraging to a seeking soul to know that he will be found of Him Whom he is seeking. Yes, the Shepherd of love is seeking poor sinners today and He will find you right where you are lost. Cry after Him, for He will hear you, come to you, and bring you home upon His shoulders rejoicing that He has found the sheep that was lost.

The next question concerning this desire, "Oh, that I knew where to find Him!" is: *What is the answer to it?* How can I find the God of the Bible as He is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ? The Word of God tells us in Romans 10:6-10 that He is revealed to us by faith, for we read: "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above): Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt

believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Remember then, from these Scriptures and the whole Word of God, that God in Christ is to be laid hold of only by faith. Eyes are of no use in this case; you cannot see a Spirit. Ears are of no use in this case; you cannot hear a Spirit. Your senses must be put aside now; the new sense, the new eye, the new ear is FAITH. Come, deal with God in Christ Who is near you now by faith.

But further let me tell you, if you want to find Him, SEARCH HIS WORD. If you will read His Word with the steady resolve to find God within its pages, I am able to tell you based upon His precious Word that you will not seek Him in vain. If you will take His Book, the Bible, and search it through to learn how God is to be found, you will find Him as He is revealed out of its pages by faith. “Pastor, can you please give me a practical example of this?” Yes, I believe I can, and may your heart be open to receive it and put it into practice! Take the Gospel of John and read it with this prayer in your heart: “Lord, show me myself and then show me Thyself.” If you will do this, then I can say I know your prayer will be answered because He never teases poor sinners; He did not tease me. Follow me now as we go through the Gospel of John, and let us find out how we may seek Him in faith. In John chapter 3 we have the story of Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, who came to Jesus by night asking the way of salvation. Sit down with this learned man and hear what our Lord said to him; ask Him to say it to your heart.

John 3:3—"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." What our Lord told Nicodemus, what He tells you and me, is that we need a new heart, a new nature. We need to be made new creatures spiritually or we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. What we are asking and seeking then is to be born from above by the Word and Spirit of God. If it is being made a new creature, then it is not by the works of our hands but by the power of God's Spirit working in us. Dear friend, ask the Lord as you sit like Nicodemus before Him to work this work of grace in your heart so you too may be born again by His Spirit.

Now let us go into the 4th chapter of John and sit down with the Samaritan woman as our Lord deals with her heart. She had come to draw water at noon, hoping no one would be there, for she was a deep-dyed sinner. Our Lord gives her a thirst for living water, just as He has given you a thirst for living water; for that is the reason you are crying, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" But when she asked in all sincerity, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw," He tells her, "Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." You see, He put His finger on her sin, her lust, and made her confess it before He gave her the water of everlasting life. And, dear friend, as you sit like this woman at His feet crying for mercy, He will, in love to your soul, also point out the darling sin of your life what-

ever it might be. Dear friend, when He does, acknowledge it and say, "Truth, Lord." Don't argue with Him; confess it and believe that He is able to forgive you of all your sins based upon His shed blood in your behalf.

Next, go to John 4:46 and you will find our Lord dealing with a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. When the nobleman "heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then Jesus said unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die." Dear seeking soul, stop and consider this man's difficulty, because it certainly has been a difficulty to many with whom I have come in contact. Our Lord said, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." Perhaps this is where you are, dear friend, as you cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him." You will not believe Him with naked faith apart from some feeling, great emotion, vision, some light or hearing a voice for your assurance. Rest assured, dear friend, that God does not deal in this manner; we trust Him and His Word apart from all of these things. For if God gave them to us, *they* would be our assurance and not the sure Word of God, witnessed in our hearts by His Holy Spirit Who is given unto us.

So stop right there in your search for Christ and tell Him that you do not desire to see signs and wonders before you will believe Him; but with all the faith He has given you, you will trust Him, take Him at His Word, knowing that He cannot lie.

Then next, let us take our place with the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda in John 5 and see ourselves as helpless as this man who had an infirmity 38 years. When our Lord asked him if he would be made whole, he answered and said, “Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool.” What a great lesson this man had learned, which is what we need to learn when we cry after Christ—that He is the only One Who can save us. This man had come to the end of his flesh, and the flesh of all men, for he said, “I have no man,”—no man can help me. This, dear seeking soul, is where our Lord brings us in our search for Him. No man can help us, no church can help us, no ceremony can help us, no set of rules can help us, no works that we can perform will help us; Christ alone can say, “Rise, take up your bed and walk,” and He does say this from His Word as we by faith look only to Him.

In John 9 we find the story of the man born blind. Let us stop and meditate for a while. Spiritually we are in the same fix—blind, in darkness, not understanding the things of the Spirit. But as our Lord Jesus passes by, He sees us in this blinded condition. This is the reason you are crying after Him, for you cannot see Him. Your cry, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him” certainly means you are desiring after Him to give you sight. Tell Him then that you know you are blind but you desire that He will open the eyes of your soul so you might see Him in the Scriptures lifted up as your Lord and Savior, the One Who has died in your place.

Then read the story of Lazarus in John 11 and see yourself dead in trespasses and sins. Lazarus was in the grave four days when our Lord cried, “Laza-

rus, come forth.” Yes, dead and helpless is the way the Scriptures picture all of us because of sin; but the Lord of glory came and died for the purpose of bringing us out of our dead state and back to God by His resurrection power. He stands ready to hear and answer your cry after Him, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!”

Then go on to John 19. Sit down and watch by faith the Son of God dying in your place. Hear Him as He cries, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luk 23:34), and know that He stands ready to forgive you of every sin. Listen as He cries from the cross, “E-li, E-li, la-ma sa-bach-tha-ni? My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mat 27:46) and know by faith that He was forsaken of God for you, that you would not be forsaken in the day of judgment. Further, as you look at Him in the Word lifted up for your transgressions, see Him bleeding for you; watch as His blood flows freely from His five precious wounds, and know by faith that it is by the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, that you are saved and cleansed from all your sins.

As you sit there by faith looking at Christ lifted up in the Word, hear Him cry, “It is finished” (Joh 19:30), and know that all of the work of salvation has been accomplished. He has satisfied God’s broken law; He has satisfied God’s justice in that God can be just when He justifies sinners; He has paid in full the sin-debt of His people, those whom the Father had given Him for His inheritance.

Also understand as you sit there looking at Christ by faith lifted up in His Word that He loves you. All He has done is based on His love for you.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1Jo 4:10). Oh may the love of God break your heart as the eye of faith beholds a bleeding Savior dying in your place.

But one more thing: the power of the gospel to save your soul lies in the power of the resurrection. We do not seek a dead Christ, but a LIVING Lord—One Who is alive from the grave. By that resurrection power then, we are raised from the grave of sin, born into the family of God, made heirs of God in Christ; we have victory over sin, the world and Satan; and by that power we live unto God in the newness of life, the life of His resurrection power.

Then in salvation the Holy Spirit is given unto us to indwell us, to empower us, and to take the things of Christ and reveal them unto us (John 16:15).

Oh what a blessing then awaits every seeking soul in Christ as they follow on to know Him in full assurance of faith! So then, dear seeking soul, rest not until you rest BY FAITH in your risen Lord.

4. Pardon and grace await seeking souls

Now I desire by the grace of God to show how each seeking soul may obtain peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. I trust that when we are finished, both the saved sinner and the lost sinner will be looking unto Jesus alone for all that is needful for time and for eternity.

In Hebrews 12:2, we find this expression and word of God Himself to every seeking soul: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” I believe, dear friend, the secret of life is found in

these three words: LOOKING UNTO JESUS, for there is salvation in none other; there is mercy in none other; there is deliverance in none other; for in Him, Christ Jesus our Lord, dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily and we are complete in Him (Col 2:9-10). It is in Him we find hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It is in Him we see the Father: His love, His glory and His mercy. It is in Him that we have victory, hope, deliverance, forgiveness, and a home in heaven.

Let us then, by the gracious power of the Holy Spirit, open up this text today for every seeking soul; and I trust the Lord will take home to our hearts and show us what it means to rest by faith in Christ and to know that peace that passeth all understanding.

Remember I said that the secret of life to the seeking soul is "looking unto Jesus." Yes, look unto Jesus in the Scriptures to learn Who He is, what He has done, what He gives, and His work of full satisfaction to all the needs of our souls. What does it mean to look to Jesus? Who is He? Look unto Jesus as the Great I AM of Scripture. He said, "I AM the Way [back to God], "I AM the Light [that lights the way; walk ye in My light]. "I AM the Door," [by Me any man may enter in and have eternal life]. "I AM the Resurrection and the Life,"[he that looks to Me, he who comes to Me, I will give him life more abundantly].

You ask, "*What has He done* that we are to look to Him?" He has satisfied the demands of God's broken law for us. He has finished the work of redemption, and has opened the way back to God by His reconciliatory work; for He was made "sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the

righteousness of God in Him” (2Co 5:21). You and I as sinners cannot come back to God by ourselves, for we are nothing but sinners; but Christ by His life, death, and resurrection has opened the door for us to come to God the Father in Him.

Next, we are to look unto Jesus crucified *to find in His blood our ransom*, for He gave Himself a ransom for many. We are to find in Him a complete *pardon* for all our sins, trespasses, and guilt. And we are to find in Him our *peace*, for He is our Peace, having made peace by the blood of His cross. There is no peace outside of Christ. There is no peace in things; there is no peace in self and its attainments. Christ alone can give that peace that passeth all understanding, that peace of God that keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus our Lord. Yes, He does this for us in this troublesome world, giving us His grace to walk with Him in peace.

Next, the expression, “Looking unto Jesus” means to look unto Him as our risen Lord. Romans 4:25 tells us that He “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” According to 1 Corinthians 1:30, He, as our risen Lord, is made unto us wisdom for our ignorance, righteousness for our guiltiness, sanctification for our filthiness and redemption for our enslavement. Therefore we are commanded to look away to our Risen Lord for all we need for our never-dying souls for time and eternity. There is in Him plenteous grace.

Again, we are told to be “looking unto Jesus” *glorified*, to find in Him our heavenly Advocate, Who appears in the presence of God for us. Hebrews 4:6 tells us to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in

time of need.” What a blessing! What a privilege!—to come by faith as seeking souls and cast ourselves upon Christ, to pour out our souls unto Him, to tell Him all our sins, our faults, our mistakes, our shortcomings, and to know He understands us and prays for us unto the Father. Yes, “looking unto Jesus” as my Mediator, my Go-between with the Father; for we read in 1 Timothy 2:5, “There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

Next, we know that in the expression, “looking unto Jesus,” we are filled with His Spirit—Who transforms our lives, delivers our wills from the bondage of the depraved heart, gives us victory over sin by breaking its power, and causes us always to triumph in Him.

What grace it is to every seeking soul to know that in “looking unto Jesus” by faith we have strength in our weakness and wisdom in our stupidity; for His strength is made perfect in our weakness (2Co 12:9), and He gives us wisdom as we ask Him (Jam 1:5).

It is sad, but it is true, that so many seeking souls believe they must stay away from Christ until they have performed so many works of penitence, said so many prayers, suffered for a long time under conviction, and felt the very fire of hell in their souls, or had some great experience; but *this is not so!* We are to come to Christ as we are and look to Him for repentance and remission of sins (Act 5:31). We are to look to Him for a new heart (Eze 36:26). We are to come and look immediately to Christ, for He alone has the words of eternal life. Sinners are invited to come to Christ to find in Him their all in

all; for all of God's salvation and *all the means of obtaining* it are found in Christ.

Not only do we look to Jesus Christ at the beginning of our seeking Him, but at *every stage* of our Christian life. He has promised to keep us from falling and present us faultless before the presence of His glory (Jude 24); so we look to Him for this. He has promised never to leave us nor forsake us, "so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb 13:5-6). He has promised that He will not suffer us to be tested above that which we are able to bear, but will with each testing make a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it (1Co 10:13); so we look to Him for this. He has promised: "God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phi 4:19); so we look to Him for this. He has promised that He will give us dying grace; He has promised to give us new bodies in the resurrection (Phi 3:21); so we by faith look to Him for this. So you see, dear friend, it is a continuous "looking unto Jesus" for time and eternity.

We are to keep "looking unto Jesus" in order that the brightness of His face may be the light for our darkness (2Co 3:18); to keep "looking unto Jesus" that our joys may be holy, our sorrows calm, and our life His life. To me these are precious words that we read in Colossians 3:1-4, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

Listen further now! We are instructed to look *not* to ourselves, our thoughts, our desires, our purposes, but unto the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ—*not* to the world, its lusts or its joys, but unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith. We are *not* to look to Satan in his rage, nor to his flattery; but we are to look only unto Jesus, the One Who has conquered Satan and put him under our feet (Rom 16:20).

Listen closely now! I want this to go home to your hearts. We are *not* to look to our meditations, no matter how great and how long they are (yet may God give us more of this), but we are to look only to Jesus for our all in all. We are *not* to look to our prayers (yet may God give us more of a praying heart), but we are to look only to our Lord Jesus as our hope and trust.

Again, we are *not* to look to our pious conversation, or our edifying reading; but unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Oh there are so many who look to their meetings and their fellowships, and find their all in these things; but we are to look only unto Jesus. We need our fellowships and our meetings, but our eyes should be only upon our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ Who alone is worthy to be the object of our faith.

Listen again! We are commanded to look unto Jesus, and not to our position in the church, to the name we bear or to the doctrine which we profess. I hear so many say, “I sit under this man’s ministry, for he preaches the truth.” I say, “Fine, but are you looking to Jesus, or to a minister?” Another says, “I go to such and such a church, or I belong to such and such a denomination.” I say, “Fine, but are you look-

ing to your church or denomination, or are you looking unto Jesus the Author of your faith?" Another says, "I believe in the doctrines of grace, I know my theology is straight." I say, "Fine, I would not want you to believe anything else, but, my dear friend, are you looking to Jesus, the Author of these doctrines of grace?" Only as you look to Him are you saved and kept.

Again, we are told to look unto Jesus and not to the obstacles which meet us on our journey. Oh how many of us get hung up here! We look at the hardness of the way, the buffetings of Satan, the deep depravity of our own hearts, the ridicule of friends and loved ones, and thereby stay in a constant state of misery. We should instead be looking unto Jesus, Who has promised "in the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (Joh 16:33).

Again, we are *not* to look to the temporal blessings which we enjoy, but unto Jesus. There are many in this world upon whom God has showered much of this world's blessings, yet they care nothing for Him. Earthly benefits are no sign of spiritual favors. Also, there are many who look to their own strength instead of looking to Jesus and His strength. It is His might that we must focus upon, not our own weaknesses.

We are told to look only to Jesus and what He has done for us and not to what we have done for Him. If we are too taken up with our work for Him, we soon forget His work for us. Also, if we would make it a practice to look not to our apparent success for Him, but to His complete victory and satisfaction

for us, then we would certainly be able to run the race with much more patience.

There are those who look to their spiritual gifts and make much of them, instead of looking alone to Jesus. If we put a so-called spiritual gift between us and Christ, then we have our eyes in the wrong place, and so we will fall.

One more point before closing: We are to look unto Jesus and not to our faith. The last device of our adversary the devil, when he cannot make us look elsewhere, is to turn our eyes from our Savior to our faith, and thus to discourage us if it is weak, or to fill us with pride if it is strong.

So our message to seeking souls is: Look unto Jesus as long as you remain upon this earth; yes, moment by moment, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." Look to Him now, look to Him anew, look to Him alone, look to Him again, and look to Him always. Then 2 Corinthians 3:18 will surely take place as we behold "the glory of the Lord;" we shall be changed into His likeness from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.



When pains of death seized o'er my soul,
Unto the Lord I cried;
Till Jesus came and made me whole,
I would not be denied.

As Jacob in the days of old,
I wrestled with the Lord.
An instant with a courage bold
I stood upon His word.

Ol' Satan said my Lord was gone,
And He would not hear my prayer;
But praise the Lord, the work is done,
And Christ the Lord is here!

I would not be denied,
I would not be denied,
Till Jesus came and made me whole,
I would not be denied.

—anonymous

L.R. Shelton, Jr. (1923-2003) was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he later became associate pastor in his father's Baptist church. While he did not have the opportunity to attend college or seminary, as a young man he devoured the writings of Spurgeon, Pink, the Puritans, and Lloyd-Jones. In 1970 he began a church, Christian bookstore, and gospel outreach in Litchfield, Minnesota. There he developed a God-given burden to share classic Christian literature from prior centuries freely worldwide, beginning to reproduce sermon booklets on a mimeograph machine. In 1978 the small ministry moved to Pensacola, Florida, where Mount Zion Bible Church was founded. In subsequent years were added several printing presses, the prison ministry (1984), the Chapel Library audio tape ministry (1987), the *Free Grace Broadcaster* quarterly magazine (1988), and the Mount Zion Bible Institute (1995).