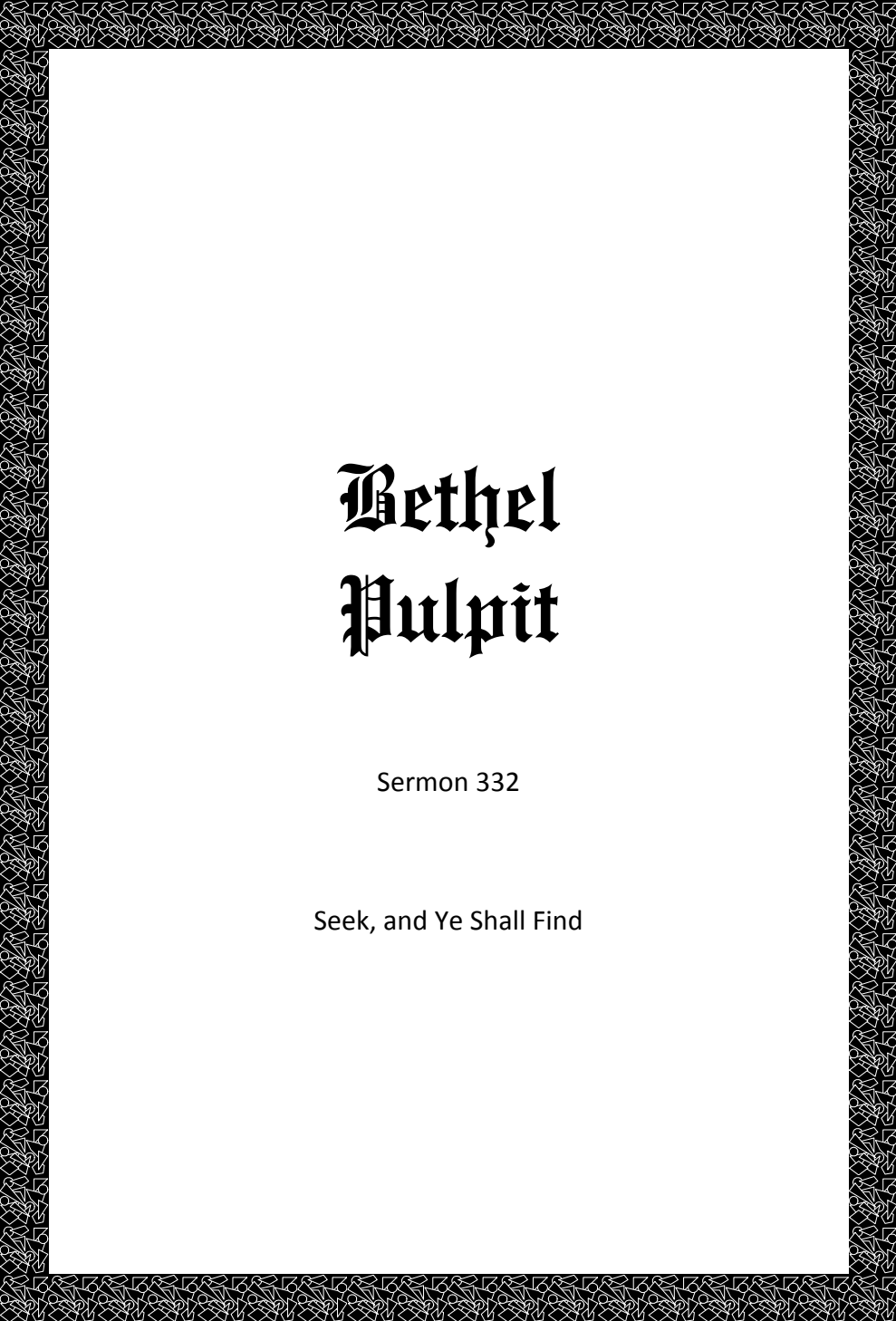




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 332

Seek, and Ye Shall Find

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 3rd February, 2013**

Text: *"Seek, and ye shall find"* (Matthew 7. 7).

This is a very short word, a very simple word, no word more simple in all Scripture. But remember, it was spoken by Him whose voice created the world. That is the weight of it; that is the authority of it. "Seek, and ye shall find." And the Lord still encourages sinners to seek Him. He says, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found," which means there will come a time when the Lord no longer will be found. I take that to be the day of our death. I know some of the old, godly Scots and the Puritans – I am not so sure about the Dutch – felt the sinner has a day of grace and that day of grace could end long before that person died. Rather I think we believe that "long as the lamp holds out to burn, the vilest sinner may return." But there will be an end.

"Seek ye the Lord *while* He may be found, call ye upon Him *while* He is near: let the wicked forsake his way." If there is a seeking the Lord, there is a forsaking his ways. If there is going after Him, there is leaving the world. If there is faith, there is repentance. "Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." So thoughts have to be forsaken – sinful thoughts, and self-righteous thoughts, and unconcerned thoughts, and worldly thoughts. "Let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy." That is what he is after. "And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" – not just pardon – *abundantly* pardon.

"Seek," says the Lord Jesus, "and ye shall find." Now of course, this verse is so often spoken of as an encouragement to pray, and of course it is an encouragement to pray, and in the setting here, and especially in Luke's version of the gospel, it is set in the context of prayer. But it is not just asking the Lord for something in prayer and receiving it. It is the great matter of our sin and our soul and our everlasting salvation. Seek to be made right; seek to be made ready; seek to be prepared for the great day; seek to be forgiven; seek to be washed in the Saviour's blood; seek to be completely covered in the Saviour's righteousness; seek to know Him whom to know is eternal life. The Lord Jesus says, "Seek, and ye shall find." Now this is something that no sinner ever did by nature. This is the

work of the Spirit of God, and the mysterious paradox is that no sinner ever seeks the Lord and finds Him until the Saviour has first sought out that sinner and found him.

I do not know whether you have noticed, beloved friends, but there is a question asked in Scripture: “What seekest thou?” And it is a very important question, and it is a question we might be asked this evening. As you have come to chapel this evening, “What seekest thou?” Are there some who would have to ponder a bit? Are there some who wonder whether they have come seeking? Are there some who in their innermost hearts know what you are seeking? We can say to you as the angel said to those godly women on the day of the resurrection, “Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus.” An almighty God in heaven knows this evening to whom that word can be spoken. Then, “Fear not ye” – if you are found amongst them – “for I know that ye seek Jesus.”

Now by nature we do not seek Jesus and we do not seek the things of God. The things we seek are sinful things. They may not be openly wicked, but they are carnal things, even if they are right things, even if they are lawful things. We seek happiness, contentment, pleasures. Different ones seek it in different ways. Some seek it in evil things; some seek it in more refined things. But it is, to use a popular and right word, self-seeking. It is not God-seeking. O look back over your life, and from childhood days, just seeking things which concerned ourselves and the things we would like, things we want, the things we would like to have, the things we would like to do.

Now grace will always make a change, and only grace can do it. It is only grace that can make you obey this word of the Lord Jesus. It is only grace that can cause a sinner to seek after Him. But grace will do it. If the new birth takes place, then there will be various effects, but whatever there is or whatever there is not, you will be seeking something that you have never sought before. Why, you have to be saved or lost eternally.

As we read the chapter through this evening, some of those things came very close – these solemn warnings about those who think they are right and who are not right, and the man with his house built on the sand. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” But we do not by nature, but we certainly do now. We may not be able to go to a time and place and spot. We may

not know what is happening. The preacher may set out the marks of grace and we may feel we have not got some of them, but there *is* a difference. There is that seeking. We want something; we must have it; we cannot do without it. We might try to go back to our old friends and the world and try to seek happiness there. But there is a thorn in the nest. “This is not your rest: because it is polluted.” It is “still seeking rest, but finding none,” seeking peace.

That sentence: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” You *know* you are not ready. You *know* you are not prepared. You are seeking that you might be prepared and only the Lord can prepare you. Where are you seeking? Where are you seeking for your happiness now? You are not seeking it out in the world. You are not seeking it in a way of carnal pleasure. You are seeking it in the Word of God. Perhaps you have been taught to read a passage from the Word of God. It is a good habit; it is a good practice. But you know what it is now:

“I seek and hope to find
A portion for my soul.”

Can I find anything to help me, to encourage me? You are seeking in the Word. You are seeking at the throne of grace, the blood-sprinkled mercy seat. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy” – that is what you are seeking. “And find grace to help” – that is what you are seeking. “In time of need.” It is a time of need, and that is why you are seeking, because for the first time you have felt your need, and until you feel your need, you will not seek, not rightly, not in the right place, not for the right thing.

But the new birth – you feel your need. You are a needy sinner and you cannot be satisfied until that need is supplied. And so the Holy Spirit brings you to seek. You seek some peace, some resting place, some satisfaction, some joy, some hope. You seek it in the Word of God. You seek it in prayer. It must be in prayer. You seek it continually. You seek it in the house of God. When you come, there is something you are longing for, something you are seeking for.

“Seek, and ye shall find.” And then there are the encouragements. That beautiful word in the gospel in Isaiah where the Lord says, “I have not spoken in secret.” It is not something hidden; it is glorious tidings. It

is something the Lord would have made known. “I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain” – which means the Lord does not tantalise His people. He does not disappoint them. He does not begin a work and then leave it. He does not change His mind. “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of Thine own hands.”

So this sinner seeking after Jesus. “I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain.” It is one of those negatives. You have a few in the Word of God, where the Lord in love and mercy tells us something He has never said. One thing is this that the Lord has said He will never do: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” And He never said to a seeking soul, “Seek ye Me in vain.” The seed of Jacob – Jacob was a sinner. We hear of so many mistakes, so many faults, so many sins, so many failures, but if you read the life of Jacob, so often he had to seek the Lord and the Lord did not disappoint him. The Lord continually fulfilled this word: “Seek, and ye shall find.” The Lord never said to Jacob, despite his sins, “Seek ye Me in vain,” and He will never say to you, “Seek My face in vain.” “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

“Seek, and ye shall find.” Of course there are a few other Scriptures. One is this: “And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.” Sometimes that troubles us, because we feel half-hearted in our seeking. “When ye shall search for Me with all your heart.” Another one is this: “It is time to seek the Lord.” We are becoming careless. We are becoming forgetful. We perhaps think there is plenty of time. We are seeking carnal things. They are important. “It is time to seek the Lord.” O how we should esteem and value the words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ when He speaks a solemn, sacred word like this: “Seek, and ye shall find” – an encouragement to pray, an encouragement to seek His face.

“Seek, and ye shall find.” But it is seeking the Saviour, and it is that seeking everything that is in the Saviour, and that true seeking cannot be satisfied till it finds. But here is a yea and amen covenant promise that cannot be broken. “Ye shall find.” I do hope this simple word will be a help to you, and I am thinking of our young people; I am thinking of those in the beginning of a work of grace; I am thinking especially of those of

you who perhaps seem to walk in a measure of darkness, those of you who are tried or tempted. You perhaps look at your own religion and there seem to be so many things, you wish they were different. There are things there, you wish they were not there; things you feel, the things you feel God's people are like, and you feel you have not got them. You feel all these things, and, "What am I, and where am I?" And then this beautiful word: "Seek, and ye shall find." Perhaps you feel, I can definitely come in there, because I have not got this, and I have not got that, that I should have; I have all these things that I should not have; but I believe I really am seeking after the Lord. It is the one thing, the only things that matters. I am seeking Him as the Saviour. I am seeking His great salvation. I am seeking these blessings of His grace. I cannot do without them. I cannot be satisfied without them.

"I must have Christ as All in all,
Or sink in ruin, guilt, and thrall."

"Seek," says the Saviour. "Seek, and ye shall find." O may the blessed Spirit enable us to seek, and may He enable us to find.

I want to speak very, very carefully and advisedly here. There is a term, an expression that has grown up in our chapels, referring to people as *seekers*. That word, that expression never appears in the Word of God once. There are many, many, many verses concerning seeking the Lord, examples of those who sought the Lord, encouragements to seek the Lord, promises to those who seek the Lord, but we never have a group of people called *seekers*. Now I know what godly people mean when they have used that word, but don't we have to beware that we do not have three categories: the Lord's people, and those who are not the Lord's people, and those who are seekers. There is not any no-man's-land in between. We are either right or we are wrong. Of course, those who are right, some may have the sweet assurance of faith and some may feel the opposite, but we must not get into that habit of speaking of a class of seekers.

"Seek, and ye shall find." It is not just to the beginner in the things of God. It is so, blessedly so, but we sing, "Blest soul that can say, 'Christ only I seek.'" But it is not just at the beginning: it is all along, day by day, throughout our pilgrimage, right to the journey's end. There will never be a time when we do not need this word, "Seek, and ye shall find." So many

things to seek for, all in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus once crucified, now risen and glorified, exalted.

Really the best commentary on a word like this is surely the whole of the gospels. A leper – he seeks the Lord; he wants cleansing, and he finds it. And Bartimaeus – he wants his sight. He seeks it and he finds it. And so you might go on – the woman with the issue of blood, and Jairus and even the mad Gadarene. You can go with them all. You can come right to the end, the dying thief. They sought the Saviour, and they sought His blessing, and they found it.

Now people say if you read the gospels, there was none ever sent empty away – which is not strictly right. What it should be: there was never one who came with a need, or who came with a case, who was sent empty away. Those who did not need the Saviour, well, they were sent empty away. For instance, that scribe who said, “Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.” He did not ask the Lord for anything. He did not want the Lord to do anything for him. It was all what he was going to do. He was sent empty away. And the rich young ruler, he went away sorrowful. But never was there a needy sinner in all the gospels who sought the Lord, who did not find Him. There never was a needy sinner who was sent empty away. And do not forget, this same Jesus, that loving, human, tender heart He still retains, enthroned in highest bliss. He understands these longing, seeking souls.

“The Lord delights to see them come,
And knock at mercy’s door;
’Tis grace that makes them feel their need,
And pray to Him for more.”

“Seek,” says the Lord Jesus, “and ye shall find.” Some people have tried to explain a difference between ask, seek, knock. But really it seems that the meaning of it is this: do not give up. Continue, even if you are disappointed, even if at first the Lord does not seem to heed you or to hear you, but still keep asking; still keep seeking; still keep knocking. That word *importunate* – not giving up, still keeping on, because the Lord speaks this word again in Luke chapter 11, and there almost immediately before and immediately afterwards, he speaks of the one who was knocked up in the middle of the night by a friend wanting three loaves of bread. He did not want to rise, but he did because this one kept on asking, seeking,

knocking. And then we keep having it: “How much more.” We have it in this chapter. “How much more.”

“Seek, and ye shall find.” But not just at the beginning, when a person is first born again and going after the Saviour and seeking His salvation, praying for a word in season, a token for good, and to be raised up to a good hope, but in the whole of our Christian life and the whole of our profession, our problems, difficulties, temptations and sorrows, still this word: “Seek, and ye shall find.” As you go on, seeking help, when you painfully feel to need it; seeking grace. Many of you are like the old minister when he was asked what he wanted more than anything else: “*more grace.*” And what does one of our hymns say? “Seeking mercy every hour.” And strength equal to your day. O so many things. Your need, and a promise: “My God shall supply all your need.” Now there will always be something for you to seek for, and there will always be the throne of grace.

We were trying to speak this morning of how the Father says of His beloved Son, “I will fasten Him as a nail in a sure place.” And how He is fastened secure in His promises, and He is fastened secure in His everlasting love. And do not forget this: He is fastened secure on the mercy seat sprinkled with blood. He is fastened secure on the throne of grace. He is always there. There will never be a sinner ventures and He is not there. There will never be a sinner ventures and it is no longer a throne of grace. He is fastened there as King, as a prayer-hearing, answering God on the throne. And so He delights when His people come with all their needs, and here you have the encouragement: “Seek, and ye shall find.”

It has been remarked that if we have some of these ordinary, short, simple texts, we should ask that question: Where is it found in Scripture? Where does it appear? Well, where does this appear? In the well-known sermon of the Lord Jesus usually called “the Sermon on the Mount.” If you read it through with a tender conscience, you will feel the standard is too high for you. You will feel how far short you come. Then in the middle of it: “Seek, and ye shall find.” In other words, does the Lord bid you walk worthy of your high calling? Then, “Seek and ye shall find” help day by day; help from Him who has said, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness”; help from Him who has

promised His abiding presence with you, His abiding presence right to the journey's end.

“Seek, and ye shall find.” And then the unknown way stretching before you. You do not know what it holds, but you know this: that you will need the Saviour. You will not be able to do without Him. You will be compelled to seek Him. But graciously, lovingly, smilingly He binds Himself in this promise, that you shall find Him. Mr. Gosden – both Mr. Frank and Mr. John – used to use that expression quite a bit: what a mercy that the Lord has made Himself *findable*. I do not know whether there is such a word really, but you know what they meant. The Lord had made Himself *findable*, and it is so sweetly revealed in the gospel.

“Seek, and ye shall find.” Well, the question keeps coming up in the Word of God: “What seekest thou?” Surely, surely many of you could give an answer to that. But to be made honest – what are you seeking tonight? Wasn't that question asked to Mary Magdalene: “Whom seekest thou?” And she knew the answer. “Whom seekest thou?” There are times in the life of a grace-taught soul when it is: “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.” We are not ashamed to say whom we seek and what we seek, and we know what that parable means, even if we cannot explain the details: a man seeking goodly pearls, but when he found the one Pearl of great price, he was willing to let go all the others if only he might have that one. That is you and me by nature. We are looking for peace and satisfaction and enjoyment and a purpose in life, and they are goodly pearls. But there is one Pearl of great price, and Jesus is His name, and to be made willing to give up all that we might find Him and possess Him, to mean feelingly what we sing:

“To know my Jesus crucified,
By far excels all things beside.”

Now what a word this is! No shorter word, none more simple, but spoken by the eternal Son of God incarnate. “Never man spake like this Man.” And what a blessing, what an encouragement this has been made to thousands over the years: “Seek, and ye shall find.”

I am reminded of what J.C. Philpot says in one of his letters. At that time, some of you will remember, there was a clergyman called John Kay who was evicted from the Church of England because not only he preached the truth, but he preached it so faithfully and also strongly. He became acquainted with Philpot and Tiptaft and began to preach in our chapels – John Kay of Abingdon. Because he had seen so much false religion, he got more and more and more severe, warning and cutting and separating, so it was causing some of the Lord's people with tender hearts some measure of distress. Philpot said in one of his letters to Joseph Parry of Allington, "There is one thing John Kay cannot do, and that is to cut out of the Word of God the Saviour's promise: 'They that seek shall find.'" Now what a mercy! This is something you can hang upon, that will never give way, and as Oliver Cromwell wrote in a letter to his daughter when she was seeking the Saviour: "Finders shall every true seeker prove to be at last."

May the Lord bless this simple and yet weighty word to us this evening. "Seek, and ye shall find.... For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."