

FINDING GOD

by

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE GOSPEL (1)

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor” (Luke 4:18).

I WANT TO CALL YOUR ATTENTION TO Luke 4:18: **“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.”**

I have spoken a great many times in New York City, but I believe I have never preached the Gospel there but once. That was a long time ago, down in the Tombs. I have spoken a great many times in different parts of the city. I have tried to arouse Christians to work. People are in the habit of thinking that anything that is in the way of a religious meeting is the Gospel; but they are mistaken. I have had quite a number of letters from Christians, complaining because I don't preach the Gospel to the people. I want to tell you, if I can, what the Gospel of the Son of God is. I pray that God may help me to make the way of life plain; and that everyone may know what the Gospel of God is. I believe I was converted years before I knew what the Gospel meant. Now the word Gospel means *“good spell,”* or in other words, *“God's spell.”*

When Christ commenced His ministry, about His first words were: **“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.”** That doesn't mean those who are poor in this world's goods, but that means the poor in spirit. Christ says, **“the Lord has anointed me”** for that purpose. He had been out of Nazareth for a few weeks, and had gone down to Jordan, where He had met the great wilderness preacher. Christ had left Nazareth, and went to meet John, that man from the desert that was more like Elijah than any man since Elijah went up to Heaven in a chariot of fire. There he met a great many people, tens of thousands of people probably, and he was crying that the kingdom of God was at hand.

Down there into the audience came a Man, who passed down into the water, and He requested John to baptize Him. John said that he needed to be baptized of Him. But after the baptism there came a voice—God confessed His Son: **“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”** These thousands took the tidings all over the country, and the voice had reached Nazareth, that Christ had been baptized by John, in Jordan, and that there came down a voice from Heaven saying, **“This is my beloved Son: hear him.”** When He arrived in Nazareth there was no small assemblage ready to meet Him.

He went into the synagogue, as was His custom, and He stood up and read the prophecy of the prophet Esaias, and He opened the book to read— they did not have books like we have, they used to have parchment. He might have turned to chapter 1, “**But Israel doth not know.**” He might have read not that, but “**from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it.**”

He passed by chapter 35: “**Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.**” He might have read that, but Calvary had to have a victory before that could be said. He passed over chapter 9, He passed over chapter 40. He might have turned to chapter 53. He had not been wounded. He had not yet gone through Gethsemane. But we read that He found the place where it is written: “**The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek.**” And that was the commencement of His ministry, and that was on His going back to Nazareth. In Isaiah 61 he stopped right in the middle of a sentence.

There were seven things He had come to do. He read that part which said that He had come to preach the Gospel to the poor. The second was: “**He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted.**” Wasn’t that good tidings? You would think that was good tidings, wouldn’t you? The third was He had come to proclaim liberty to the captives; and the fourth, as Luke says, was the recovery of sight to the blind; and fifth, to set at liberty them that are bruised; and sixth, to open the doors to the captive; and seventh, preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and He closed the book. And the eyes of the whole congregation were upon Him. The next sentence which He omitted was, “**The day of vengeance is at hand.**” I have an idea when the prophet Isaiah wrote those words he did not fully see the first and second coming of Christ. One has already passed; the day of vengeance has not come.

Christ shut up the Book; He will come back by and by, and He will open the Book, and He will commence to read where He left off. You can cry for mercy then, but the door will be shut. But Christ did not come to condemn sinners. He came to save them. I am not preaching “**the day of vengeance is at hand.**” I am proclaiming the Gospel of Christ.

I am telling you the good tidings. Christ did not come into the world to condemn the world, but that through Him the world might be saved. In Luke 9, you will read that He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over devils, and to heal the sick; that is what He came for—to preach the Gospel of God, and to heal the sick. Then in the next chapter He calls around Him the seventy—He had appointed other seventy, also; and He sent them, two and two, before His face, into every city and place whither He Himself would come. Now, we find that He had come into the world just to bring glad tidings. Did you ever see or hear of anyone that didn’t like to receive glad tidings? One proof that people don’t believe in the Bible is their long faces; they look as if they had accepted an invitation to an execution. That isn’t the Gospel.

The Gospel is good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, “**for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour.**” I don’t believe that better news ever fell upon the ears of mortal man, than the news of the Gospel. I don’t believe any man ever heard better tidings, and it is glad tidings of Heaven.

God never had but one Son, and He called Him to take that good news: “**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.**” We find that Moses was anointed. He went down into Egypt, and death followed. When he was opposed, look at this plagues that fell upon the Egyptians.

We find that the Spirit of God was upon Elijah! When he wanted to protect himself, men lost their lives. The fifty came to get Elisha, and he called fire down from Heaven, and he was taken up to Heaven. The Spirit came down upon Gideon, and when men came out to meet him he slew them by thousands. The Spirit of God came upon Samson, and he slew men by thousands. The Spirit came upon holy men of old; but when Christ comes, He says, “**the Spirit of the Lord is upon me**” (not to take men’s lives)—the only man that lost anything was the man who lost his ear. Peter’s faith got lukewarm, and he cut off a servant’s ear, but the Lord gave it back to him. I don’t suppose he lost it more than five minutes, and it was just as good as ever when he got it back. I don’t suppose you could find a scar there.

Christ says: “*I did not come to destroy men’s lives. I came to save them.*” And it seems to me to be the greatest madness that the world doesn’t receive Christ. That we should have to coax and entreat men to receive Christ is a mystery. Suppose a messenger should hand a mother a letter that contained good tidings. Don’t you suppose she would be glad to receive it? Suppose it told her that her boy has returned? He ran away ten years ago, and the messenger hands her a letter stating that he who ran away has come home. Don’t you think that mother’s face would light up, so it could be seen in her countenance? And so, when I preach the Gospel, I can’t help but see those who believe. The joy lights up their faces.

Look at our churches, how the people throng to them to hear the Gospel! Let a man preach about something other than the Gospel, and see if the people throng to them. There is a void in everyone’s heart that will never be filled until he receives the Gospel of Christ.

Now, I want to tell you why I like the Gospel; for I don’t believe God calls on us to believe the Gospel without giving us good reason; and I don’t believe He would call it good news unless He gave us a reason. It has taken out of my path the most bitter enemies I had. It tells us in First Corinthians 15:26 that the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Many of you have lost loved ones. Many of you know what it is to have death come to your door, when some loved child has been taken from your bosom. Now, I don’t know but some of you will say, “If a person is afraid of death, he is a coward.” I don’t believe there is a man or woman who ever lived who is not afraid of death, unless he knows that Jesus Christ would overcome death. Before I knew the Son of God as my Saviour, death was a terrible enemy to me.

Up in that little New England village where I came from, it was the custom to toll out the bell whenever anyone died, and to toll one stroke for every year. Sometimes they would toll out seventy strokes for a man of seventy, or forty strokes for a man of forty. I used to think when they died at seventy, and sometimes at eighty, that it was a good way off. But sometimes it would be a child at my age; and then I used to be very solemn. Sometimes I could not bear to sleep in a room alone. Death used to trouble me; but thanks to God, it doesn’t trouble me now.

If He should send His messenger, and the messenger should come and say to me, “Mr. Moody, your hour has come; I have to take you away,” it would be joyful news for me; for though I should be absent from the body, I should be present with the Lord. Through the world I can shout, “**O death, where is thy sting?**” And I hear the voice — “buried in the bosom of the Son of God.” That is what Calvary means.

“**The wages of sin is death,**” but He took the wages Himself. That is the Gospel of the Son of God, and there is no fear for them who believe in Christ Jesus.

There was Paul; he had got virtually over death. Let death come—“**O death, where is thy sting?**” Sometimes I used to go into a graveyard when someone was being buried; and when the sexton would shovel dirt in on the coffin, it would be like a death knell to my soul. I would hear him say, “**Dust to dust, ashes to ashes.**” Now I can measure its depths. I can shout as Paul did; I can say, “**O death, where is thy sting?**” But this soul of man shall go into the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Oh, the grave is lost in victory! It is lost in Christ.

Oh, the blessed Gospel of the Son of God, what would we do without it? When we lay our little children away in death, they shall rise again. I was going into a cemetery, and over the entrance I saw these words, “They shall rise again.” Infidelity didn’t teach that; we got that from the Book.

Oh, the blessed Gospel of the Son of God! How everyone ought to believe it! If you have been careless up to this time, oh, may you wake up! May you this hour not hesitate to turn from your sins unto God, and believe the Gospel of His Son.

I used to be a good deal troubled with my sins, and I thought of the Day of Judgment, when all the sins that I had committed in secret should blaze out before the assembled universe. But when a man comes to Christ, the Gospel tells him his sins are all gone, and in Jesus Christ he is a new creature. All I know is that out of the love which my Lord has for me, He has taken all my sins and cast them behind His back; that is, behind God’s back. How is Satan to get at them? If God has forgiven us our sins, they won’t be mentioned. In Ezekiel, we are told not one of them shall be mentioned. Isn’t it a glorious thing to have all our sins blotted out?

There is another thought, and that is the judgment. You know when a man has committed some great crime, and he is to be brought into judgment, how he dreads it! How he dreads that day when he is to be brought into court, when he is put into a box and witnesses are to come up and testify against him, and he is there to be judged! But the Gospel tells us that if we come to Christ, we shall never come into judgment. And why? Because Christ was judged for us. “**He was wounded for our transgressions.**” If He has been wounded for us, we don’t have to be wounded. “**Verily, verily**” (which means truly, truly—“**I say unto you**” (just put your name in there—“**He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath**” (h-a-t-h, hath. It doesn’t say you shall have when you die. It says hath—“**He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation.**” That means into judgment. He shall not come into judgment, “**but is passed from death into life.**” There is judgment out of the way. He shall never come into judgment. Why? Because God has forgiven him, and given him eternal life— that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Ought people to be gloomy and put on long faces when that is the news?

Away out on the prairies where men sometimes go to hunt, the grass in the dry season sometimes catches fire. You will see the flames rise twenty or thirty feet high; and you will see those flames rolling over the western desert, faster than any fleet horse can run. Now what do the men do? They know it is sure death, unless they can make some escape. They would try to run away, perhaps, but they can't; that fire goes faster than any horse. What do they do? Why, they just take a match and they light the grass with it; and away it burns, and then they get into that burned area. The fire comes on: and there they stand perfectly secure—nothing to fear. Why? Because the fire has burned all there is to burn.

Take your stand there on Mount Calvary. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is to **“whosoever will come.”** I thank God that I can preach a Gospel that is free to all. It is free to the most abandoned.

Still, it may be there are some wives that are discouraged and disheartened. I can tell you the joyful news that your husband and sons have not gone so far but that the grace of God can save them. The Son of God came to raise up the most abandoned. I noticed on the street this morning not less than four or five tramps. They looked weary and tired; I suppose they had slept on the sidewalk last night. I thought I would like to have time just to stop and tell them about the Son of God, and how much Christ loves them.

The Gospel of the Son of God tells us how He loves us. He takes our feet out of the pit, and He puts our feet on to the Rock of Ages. And that is what Christ wants to do; and don't think that there isn't someone in your homes whom He wants to save. Tell him there is none too abandoned, none so young, none so fallen, but that God can save him.

There was William Dawson, and the power of the Lord was upon him, and in closing his meeting one night, he said there wasn't a man in London so far gone but that the Lord could save him. There was Whitefield, and the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he said, “God is so anxious to save souls that he will take the Devil's castaway.”

There was a lady missionary whom I knew, who found a man who said there was no hope for him; he had sinned away his day of grace. She went to Mr. Dawson, and said to him, “Mr. Dawson, will you go down and see him, and tell him what you said?” Mr. Dawson said he would be glad to go and see him.

He went up into a five-story house, and away up in the garret he found a young man lying upon some straw. He bent over him, whispered in his ear, and called him his friend. The young man looked startled. He said, “You are mistaken in the person when you say, ‘my friend.’ I have no friends. No one cares for me.”

Mr. Dawson told him that Christ was as much his friend as any man's in London. Poor prodigal! And after he had talked with him for some time, he prayed with him, and then he read to him out of the Bible, and at last the light of the Gospel began to break in upon that darkened heart. This young man said to Mr. Dawson he thought he could die happy if he knew his father was willing to forgive him. Mr. Dawson said, “Where does your father live?” The young man said he lived in the West End of London.

Mr. Dawson said, "I will go and see him, and see if he won't forgive you." But the young man said, "No, I don't want you to do that. My father would abuse you if you should speak to him about me. He doesn't recognize me as his boy any more." Mr. Dawson said, "I will go and see him."

He went up to the West End of London, where he found a very fine mansion, and a servant dressed in livery came to the door, and he was ushered into the drawing-room; presently the father, a bright, majestic-looking man, came into the room. Mr. Dawson held out his hand to shake hands with him, and said, "You have a son by the name of Joseph, have you not?" And when the father heard that, he refused to shake hands with him, and turned to leave the room.

The father said, "If you have come up here to talk about that worthless vagabond, I want you to leave the house. He is no son of mine."

Mr. Dawson said, "He is yours now, but he won't be long; but he is yours now."

"Is Joseph sick?" said the man. "Yes," said Mr. Dawson, "he is dying. I haven't come for money. I will see that he has a decent burial. I have only come to ask you to forgive him."

"Forgive him! forgive him!" said the father. "I would have forgiven him long ago if I thought he wanted me to. Do you know where he is?"

"Yes, sir, he is in the East End of London." "Can you take me to him?"

"Yes, sir, I will take you to him." And the father ordered out his carriage, and they were on their way. When they got there, the father said, "Did you find my boy here? Oh, if I had known he wanted me to, I would have taken him home long ago."

When the father went into that room he could hardly recognize his long lost boy. The father went over and kissed the boy, and said, "I would have forgiven you long, long ago, if I had known you wanted me to. Let my servant order the carriage and take you home."

But the boy said, "No, father, I am dying; but I can die happy in this garret, now that I know you are willing to forgive me."

And he told his father how Jesus had received him; in a little while he breathed his last, and out of that dark garret he rose up into the kingdom of God. You may rejoice to hear such words. Oh, that today you may receive Christ!

~ end of chapter 11 ~

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