

FOUND BY JESUS AND FINDING JESUS

A Sermon Intended for Reading on Lord's Day, August 26th, 1894

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"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."—John 1:43-45

For a soul to come to Jesus is the grandest event in its history. It is spiritually dead till that day; but it then begins to live, and a saved man may reckon his age from the time in which he first knew the Lord. That day of first knowing Christ is important in the highest degree, because it affects all the man's past career; it sheds another light on all the years that have gone by. If he has lived in sin, as no doubt he has, the transaction of that day blots out all the sin. The day in which a man comes to Christ, that very day his transgressions and iniquities are blotted out, even as the thick clouds are driven from the sky when God's strong wind chases them away. Is not that a grand day in which our sins are cast into the depths of the sea so that henceforth it can be said of them, "They may be sought for, but they shall not be found; yea, they shall not be, saith the Lord"? I say that the day in which a soul comes into contact with Christ is the greatest day of its history, because all the past is changed by it; and as for the present, what a different life does a man begin to live on the day in which he finds the Lord! He commences to live in the light instead of being dead in the darkness; he begins to enjoy the privileges of liberty, instead of suffering the horrors of slavery; he is started on the way to heaven, instead of continuing on the road to hell. He is such a new creature that he cannot tell how changed he is. One said to me, "Sir, the change in me is of this kind; either the whole world is altered, or else I am." So is it when we are brought to know Christ; it is a real, total, radical change. With many, it is a most joyous alteration; they feel like the man who had been lame, and who, when Peter spoke to him in the name of Jesus, and lifted him up, so that his feet and ankle bones received strength, was not satisfied with walking, for we read, "He leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God." He was walking, and leaping, and praising God; do you wonder at it? If you had lost the use of your legs for a while, you would feel like leaping and praising God when you had them all right again; and thus is it with a soul when it first finds the Saviour. Oh! happy, happy day, when the miraculous hand of Christ takes away the infirmities of the soul, and makes the lame man to leap as a hart, and causes the tongue of the dumb to sing!

The day in which a man comes to Christ is also a wonderful day in its effect upon all his future. It is as when the helm of a ship is put right about; the man now sails in a totally different direction. His future will never be what his past was. There may be faults; there may be infirmities and shortcomings; but there will never be the old love of sin any more. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." This is God's own promise to us, given through his servant Paul. When Christ comes to our soul, he so breaks the neck of sin, that though it lives a struggling, dying life, and often makes a deal of howling in the heart, yet it is

doomed to die. The cross of Christ has broken its back, and broken its neck, too, and die it must. Henceforth the man is bound for holiness, and bound for heaven.

Now, dear friends, have any of you come to Christ? I know that you have, the great mass of you, and I bless God, and so do you, that it is so with you; but if there are any of you who have never come to the Saviour, I wish that this might be the night when you should find him. I am but a poor lame preacher; you are not often troubled with the sight of one sitting down and preaching; yet I think that if I had lost my legs, and had always to lie on my back, I would like even then to preach Christ crucified, and to "Tell to sinners round, What a dear Saviour I have found."

I do pray that some of you to-night, made to think all the more by the infirmity of the preacher, may be led to seek and to find the Saviour, and then it shall be a happy day indeed for you, as it has been for so many more.

I am going to talk to you about Philip's conversion, and first, I ask you to notice, in our text, the convert's description of it: "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." That is Philip's description of it: "We have found Jesus." It was a true description, but it was not all the truth; so, in the second place, we will notice the Holy Spirit's description of it: "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip." Philip's account of the incident is that he found Christ; but the Holy Spirit's record of it is that Christ found Philip. They are both true, however; although the latter is the fuller. We will talk a little about both descriptions of Philip's conversion.

I. First then, **THE CONVERT'S DESCRIPTION OF HIS COMING TO CHRIST** is given in these words, "We have found...Jesus," and what he says is perfectly true.

If any one of you is saved, it will be by finding Christ, by your personally making a discovery of him, as that man did who found the treasure that was hid in the field. There must be a search after Christ; but if there be a search after him, we may be certain of this one thing, that there will first be a consciousness of needing him.

Philip had sought Christ, or else he would never have said that he had found him; but, before that, Philip knew that there was need of a Messiah. When he looked round about on the world, and on the church, he said to himself, "Oh, that the promised Messiah would come! There is great need of him. The people need him, the church needs him, the world needs him." When Philip looked into his own heart, he said, "Oh, for the coming of the Messiah! I feel that I want him; I have urgent need of him." Dear hearer, do you feel that you need a Saviour? You never will seek him until you do feel your need of him. You must recognize that there is sin in you, sin for which you cannot make atonement, sin that you cannot overcome. You must realize that you need another and a stronger arm than your own, that you need divine help, that you need One who can be your Brother, to sympathize with you, and be patient with you, and yet who can be the Mighty God to conquer all your sin for you. You do need a Saviour; that is the first thing that will prompt you to search for him.

Wanting a Messiah, Philip read the Scriptures concerning him. He speaks about Moses and the prophets, and of what they had written concerning the promised Deliverer. O my dear hearers, if you want to find Christ, you must search the Scriptures, for they testify of him! Oh, that you did search the Scriptures more, with the definite object of finding the Saviour! Probably, the great majority of unconverted people never read their Bibles at all;

or they read only just enough to satisfy their curiosity, or their conscience. Perhaps they read the Bible as a part of literature which cannot be quite ignored; but they do not take down the Holy Book, and read it carefully and prayerfully, saying, "Oh, that I might find holiness here! Oh, that I might find Christ here!" If they did, it would not be long before they found Jesus. Well does Dr. Watts sing,

"Laden with guilt, and full of fears, I fly to thee, my Lord,
And not a glimpse of hope appears But in thy written Word.
The volume of my Father's grace Does all my griefs assuage;
Here I behold my Saviour's face Almost in every page."

He who reads the Bible with the view of finding Christ, will not be long before some passage of Scripture will seem to leap up, to attract his attention, as though it were set on fire, and then it will speak to him of Jesus, whisper to him of the great sacrifice on Calvary, and speak to his heart of divine love and mercy. Philip was a searcher after Christ in the place where Christ loves to be, in the pages of Scripture, and you must be the same if you desire to find Jesus.

But then Philip also gave himself to prayer. We are not told so, but we feel sure of it. He asked the Lord to reveal Christ to him, to guide him to where the Christ would be, to let him know the Christ. Oh, if you want to be saved, be much in prayer! I do not mean merely saying prayers; what is the good of that? I do not mean simply saying fine words of your own, merely for the sake of uttering them. Prayer is communing with God; it is asking the Lord for what you really feel that you need. What wagonloads of sham prayers are shot down at God's door, as if they were so much rubbish thrown away! Let it not be so with your prayers; but speak to the Lord out of your very soul when you come to the throne of grace. I cannot give you a better prayer than the one we have been singing,

"Gracious Lord, incline Thine ear, My requests vouchsafe to hear;
Hear my never-ceasing cry; Give me Christ, or else I die.
"Lord, deny me what Thou wilt, Only ease me of my guilt;
Suppliant at Thy feet I lie, Give me Christ, or else I die.
"Thou dost freely save the lost! Only in Thy grace I trust:
With my earnest suit comply; Give me Christ, or else I die.
"Thou hast promised to forgive All who in Thy Son believe;
Lord, I know Thou canst not lie; Give me Christ, or else I die."

With the open Bible before you to guide your understanding, kneel down, and say, "O God, graciously reveal Christ to me by thy Holy Spirit; bring me to know him, bring me this day to find him as my own Saviour!"

It is certain, also, that Philip realized that he might claim the Messiah for himself. One of the things that every man, who would find the Saviour, must do, is to make sure of his right to come and take the Saviour. The question that puzzles many is, "May I have the Saviour?" My dear friends, every sinner in the world is permitted to come and trust the Saviour, if he wills to do so. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "But," asks some troubled soul, "will Christ have me?" That is not the question; the question is, "Will you have Christ?" He says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." It is you who cast out the Saviour, not the Saviour who casts you out. The bolt to the door is on the inside; it is you who have bolted it, and it is you who must undo the bolt, and invite the Saviour to enter your heart. He is willing enough to come in;

wherever there is a soul that wants him, he comes at once; therefore, do not raise any quibbling questions about whether a sinner may come to Christ, or may not come. Is he not bidden to come? We are told to preach the gospel to every creature, and he who gave us our great commission also added, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Philip accepted Christ as the Messiah. Do you ask, "What am I to do that I may find the Saviour?" Well, what you have to do is practically this, accept him. If you were sick, and the doctor stood before you, with the medicine ready prepared, you would not say, "What am I to do with this medicine, sir? Am I to rub my hand on the outside of the bottle?" You know very well that there are certain directions as to how much is to be taken, and how often. What you have to do with the medicine is to take it. "But I cannot make that medicine work for my restoration." Who said you could? All you have to do is to take it. It is just this that you have to do with Christ; take him, accept him, receive him. Remember the twelfth verse of this chapter out of which our text is taken: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." That is it, you see, receive him, believe on his name. "But surely I am to do some good works." Certainly, you will do good works after you have received Christ; but for your soul's salvation, you are to do no good works, but simply to receive Christ. "Oh, but I must lead a holy life!" Yes, and you will lead a holy life after you have received Christ; but in order to the leading of a holy life you must have a new heart, and to get a new heart, you have to receive Christ. He will change you, he will renew you, he will make you a new creature in himself. What you have to do is to receive him, and to believe on his name. O my dear hearers, I do trust that I am speaking to some this evening who will understand what I am saying. I fear that I am addressing many who will not believe, though I may put the truth as plainly as it can be preached. You know that you may hold a candle right against a blind man's eyes, and yet he will not see even then. The Holy Spirit must open your eyes to see what is meant by this receiving Christ, or else you will not understand what you are to do. You are not to give anything to Christ; you are to take all from him. You are not to give anything to Christ; you are to take all from him. You are not to bring anything to Christ; you are to come to him just as you are, and he will bring to you everything that you need. Then, when you have accepted him by the simple act of faith, you will say with Philip, "We have found Jesus." That is the convert's description, and a very good one, too: "We have found Jesus."

II. But now, secondly, what is **THE HOLY GHOST'S DESCRIPTION**? I will read to you the very words again; here they are: "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip." Jesus finds Philip before Philip finds Jesus; Philip finds Jesus because Jesus has found Philip.

Now, notice, that this is the previous work; it came before Philip's own finding. Jesus would go forth into Galilee to find Philip. Dear friends, I recollect very well that, after I had found the Lord, I did not at first fully understand the doctrines of grace. I had heard them preached; but I had not comprehended them. I think at the time I should have been very much puzzled with the doctrine of election, if anybody had spoken to me about it; but I was sitting down, one day, gratefully reflecting on what God had done for me. I knew that my sins were pardoned, I knew that I was accepted in Christ Jesus, and I knew that I was renewed in heart, and in one moment the revelation came to me, "All this is the work of God." The instant I saw that truth, I said to myself, "Yes, that is the fact, and God

be glorified for it! But why has this great work been wrought in me?" I knew that there was no merit in me before the Lord had dealt in mercy with my soul, so I said to myself, "This is the effect of sovereign distinguishing grace." Then I understood in a moment how it is that God begins with us, and that it is God's will and God's eternal purpose, which, after all, lie deeper down than our will or our purpose; and God's will and God's eternal purpose must have the glory. What a revelation it was to me! I saw the doctrines of grace immediately; and I think that anybody who has been brought to find the Saviour, and who prayerfully studies the reasons for his salvation, can see the same truth that the Lord revealed to me.

Because, first of all, you began to be thoughtful, did you not? Who made you thoughtful? You would never have found the Saviour if you had not become thoughtful instead of careless and indifferent. Who made you think of divine things? What influence was it which wrought upon you, and caused you to feel that you must think about eternity, and heaven, and hell? Surely it was God the Holy Ghost going forth, in the name of Jesus Christ, and dealing with you in mercy.

Then you had a sense of your need and of your sinfulness. There was a time when you had no such sense; then, who gave it to you? Where do you think that repentance that sorrow for sin that desire after Christ, came from? Did all that grow in your own fallen human nature? Ah, believe me, that dunghill never brought forth such fair flowers as these! No, it was Christ who sowed the good seed in your soul; it was he who made you feel your need of him.

Next, when you read the Bible, you understood it. You perceived that Jesus was the only Saviour of sinners, you saw his fitness to meet your case, and you understood the plan of salvation. Who made you understand it? I know that it is plain enough for a child to comprehend; but no one ever does understand spiritual things except by the operation of the Spirit of God. It was the Holy Spirit who gave you the spiritual power by which you were able to grasp the simple truth concerning the way of salvation.

Then you began to pray. I have spoken of that matter already. But who taught you to pray? You had not been accustomed to real prayer; you had often had great mouthfuls of words; that was all; but now you began to cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Oh, the groaning of your spirit, and the anguish of your heart, as you cried to God! Who gave you that anguish? Who broke you all to pieces, and made every broken bone cry out for mercy? Who, indeed, but Christ who wrought mightily in your soul by the power of the Holy Spirit?

And when you yielded yourself up to Christ, when you believed in Jesus, and found salvation, where did that faith come from? Is it not always the work of the Spirit of God? Is not faith the gift of God, and do you not confess that it is so in your case? Once, when I was a little child, I thought I saw a needle moving across the table; and I should have been wondering who made the needle march as it did, but I was old enough to understand that somebody was moving a magnet underneath the table, and the needle was following the magnet that I could not see. Thus the Lord, with his mighty magnet of grace, is often at work upon the hearts of men, and we think that their desire after God, and their faith in Christ, are of themselves. In a sense, the desire and the faith are their own; but there is a divine force that is at work upon them, producing these results. It is Jesus finding Philip,

though Philip does not know it. Philip thinks that he is finding Jesus, but behind the veil it is Jesus finding Philip. This was the previous work.

And, dear friends, this was very delightful work for the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice how it is put: "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip." O my blessed Lord, how he will go forth to find a soul! A journey is never too long for him, and he never wastes a day. "The day following Jesus would go forth, and findeth Philip." Oh, may my Lord delight to come forth, and find some of you! You are to-night in a place where he has found a good many; I pray that he may find some of you. Perhaps you do not know how it was that you came here. You did not mean to come out to-night; but here you are in this crowd, in the thick of this great throng. My Lord has found many a precious jewel here; to its own self it seemed nothing but a poor pebble, but to him it was a diamond of the first water. O my Master, find some more of thy jewels to-night! Lord Jesus, come and find Philip, and find Mary, and then let Philip and Mary declare that they have found thee!

When our dear Master goes forth to find a soul, it is very effectual work. He said to Philip, "Follow me." I will gladly end my sermon just here if my Master will preach to some of you his two-worded sermon, "Follow me," "Follow me," "FOLLOW ME." "Come, poor soul, you do not know the way! 'Follow me.' You want some one to go before you, to be your leader. 'Follow me.' You want some one to be your shelter, your companion, your all. 'Follow me.'" That is what you have to do, good woman. You have been worrying about what you have heard from different preachers; Christ says to you, "Follow me." That is what you have to do, young man. You have been reading those rubbishing modern thought books till you do not know whether you are on your head or on your heels. Burn them. Jesus says, "Follow me." I know that some of you have been distracted with all sorts of silly talk; let that go to the dogs. Jesus says, "Follow me." The crucified Saviour says, "Follow me." Take him for your atonement. The risen Saviour says, "Follow me." Take him for your life. The Saviour on the throne says, "Follow me." Take him for your joy. The Saviour coming in glory hereafter says, "Follow me." Take him to be your hope. "Follow me," "Follow me," that is the text for to-night, and that is the sermon, too. Jesus said to Philip, "Follow me," and Philip followed him directly; and he not only followed Christ himself, but he began immediately to try to get others to follow him.

Please to notice also that Philip was found by Christ in a very different way from the other disciples. Two of them had been found through the teaching of John the Baptist; but Philip had apparently had no teaching. Another of the little company had been found through the private call of his brother; Philip may not have had any relative or friend to speak to him, but the Saviour just said to him, "Follow me," and he followed him. Dear friends, do not begin comparing your conversion with somebody else's. If the Lord Jesus Christ calls you, and says to you, "Follow me," and you follow him, if there never was another soul converted in exactly the same way, it does not matter at all. If you have come to him, if you have trusted in him, you are saved.

The pith of all that I have to say is this. Do not get worrying yourselves, as some of you do, about God's eternal purpose, and about the secret working of the Holy Spirit, and about how this can be consistent with your following Christ when he bids you. They are perfectly consistent. Some persons have asked me at times to reconcile these two things; and I have said to them, "Very well, tell me the difficulties, and I will reconcile them." It

would be quite as easy to state them as to meet them, for in fact there are none. "Oh, but," says one, "you tell me to believe in Christ, and yet you constantly preach that faith is the work of the Spirit of God." I do. "And yet you say that men are to choose Christ?" I do. "Well, how do you reconcile those two things?" Show me that there is any difficulty about the two things, and then I will reconcile them. You imagine the difficulty, for there is none in reality, there does not exist any in practical life. I believe that God has predestinated whether I am going down to the Lord's supper at the close of this service; but I shall go down as well as my legs can carry me. "Oh!" say you, "you make it out to be a matter of your own free will?" Yes, I do. "And yet you believe it to be God's eternal purpose?" Yes, I do. "Well, then, reconcile the two things." Again I say that there is no difficulty in the case, there is nothing to be reconciled, for both statements are true. You might as well ask me to reconcile the land and the water, or to reconcile the dog star, Sirius, and a farthing rushlight. There is no quarrel between them, and I have no time to waste on needless argument. Come you to Christ; and if you do, it will be because the Holy Spirit draws you. If you find the Saviour, it will be because the Saviour first found you. Perhaps, in heaven, you may see some difficulties, and get them explained; down here, you need not see them, and you need not ask to have them explained. Salvation is all of God's grace, from first to last; yet is it true that the grace of God leads men to do what Moses did, according to our subject this morning,—to make a choice and to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. God grant that you may make an equally wise choice!

I have done when I have said this one thing more. Philip, and Peter, and Andrew, were all of Bethsaida: "Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter." These three good men, these three apostles, were all of Bethsaida. That ought to be some comfort to many of you, my dear hearers, because there are numbers of you, who are here tonight, who are of Bethsaida. Sitting all round me, I see people who, I believe, are of Bethsaida. "Oh!" say you, "we never were there in all our lives." Listen. Bethsaida was one of the places in which Christ had done many of his mighty works; and you remember that, when the people repented not, Jesus uttered over them that sad lamentation, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."

Now, there are some of you here who have heard the gospel for many years, and have seen the power of the grace of God in your families, and it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than it will be for you, inasmuch as you have rejected the Saviour. But, as there were these three men, Philip, and Peter, and Andrew, who were of Bethsaida—and I should think that the home of James and John was not very far off from the same place—why should not you come to Christ? Why should not you become members of his Church, and, if it be the Lord's will, preachers of his Word? God grant that it may be so!

Oh, how I long in my soul for the salvation of every one of you! Many of you, who have come here tonight, are strangers to me. I trust that you will not be strangers to my Master.

To-night, I pray you, here in the very heat of midsummer, ere yet the harvest shall be past, and the summer shall be ended, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 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." Receive Christ. Trust in him. God grant that you may do so, for Jesu's sake! Amen.

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