

FINDING AND FOLLOWING CHRIST

"We have found Him."

John 1:45

I HOPE there are many here who are seeking Christ, but I feel sure that there are with us many more who can truthfully say, "We have passed beyond that stage, for we have found Him." Others may declare that there never was such a Person as Jesus of Nazareth, but we know there was and still is, for, "we have found Him," and we are living in happy daily fellowship with Him! We bear our glad testimony to what the Grace of God has done for us and we say with Philip, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph," whom we also worship as the Son of God.

Notice how positively Philip speaks. He had, himself, only just been found by Christ, yet he does not say, "We think we have found the Messiah," or, "We hope we have found the promised Deliverer." No, without the slightest hesitation he says, "We have found Him." This is a matter about which it is possible for us to be quite as positive as Philip was. There are abundant reasons why we may have a well-grounded assurance that Christ is our Savior if we have truly trusted in Him. Some have thought and said that it is not possible for us to know we are saved. Thank God that is not true and many can adopt the Inspired Language of the Apostle John and say, "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Such positiveness as this is attainable, by God's Grace, by every true Believer in Jesus Christ!

Let me remind you, first, that

it ought to be so. Whether we are saved or not is a matter of the greatest importance

to us. We cannot afford to let it rest upon a, "perhaps," or a, "maybe." If I have really found Christ, my sins are forgiven me for His sake—and this is a fact of which I ought to be quite certain. If I have found the Lord Jesus Christ, I am reconciled to God by the death of His Son, I have been adopted into the family of God, I may confidently look to God for the supply of all my needs, both for this life and for that which is to come—and I may expect to be taken at the right time to dwell with Him forever. Such glorious blessings as these ought not to be mere matters of speculation with us! Our possession of them ought to be the result of clean, unmistakable evidence. If I have not found Christ, I am in danger of death every day and of the Hell that is the everlasting prison of all unbelievers. If I have not found Christ, I am still without hope and without God in the world—"condemned already"—because I have not believed in the name of the onlybegotten Son of God! Surely I ought not to go to bed tonight with that all-important question unsettled. I can understand a man being in doubt upon this matter, but I cannot understand his resting comfortably while it is a matter of doubt! If you are content to be in doubt as to whether you are entitled to your estates, or as to whether you are mortally diseased or not, well, those are only minor matters compared with the salvation of your souls! God forbid that you should be willing to let the far greater matter remain in suspense! Seek the aid of the Holy Spirit and never rest satisfied until you know assuredly that you have found the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior!

A poor woman, some nights ago, wrapping around herself her poor thin shawl, was walking along the street because she had nowhere else to go. And as she was passing a certain building, she saw

written over the door, "For the homeless." "That is the place for me," she said, and in she went. Now, my Friend, are you a sinner? Then I have to tell you that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Are you lost? Then I have to tell you that He came to seek and to save the lost. It would have done that poor woman no good at all to sit down on a rich man's doorstep and consider how poor she was—she got what she needed by going to the Home for the Homeless—and Jesus Christ is a Home for Homeless souls, so away with you, poor homeless soul, and find in Him the shelter that you need! May God's Grace enable you to flee straight away to Christ, for if you do, He will not refuse to receive you!

Remember, also, that no real spiritual comfort can come to us until we know that we have found Christ. Perhapsesand maybes are like thorns in our pillow—they prevent us from resting. Or they are like stones in a pilgrim's shoes—they make walking very uncomfortable for him. To be able to say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day," is to have a fountain of consolation springing up within your heart! But to have to cry—

*"Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought—
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"*

is to be in continual unhappiness! The man who is in such a state as that may be safe, but he cannot have joy and peace. He must be weak, trembling and tossed to and fro, like the waves of the troubled sea when it cannot rest. It is only when we can say with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise," that there is the music of deep and lasting joy in the songs that we send up to Heaven!

Let me add that you may confidently hope to attain this assurance of knowledge because so many others have already done so. I have reminded you of Philip, John and Paul, but such knowledge as this was not confined to the Apostolic age—it is at this moment the priceless privilege of tens of thousands of Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ! If I were now to say, "Let all those Brothers and Sisters who know that Christ is theirs stand up and testify to this fact," I believe that the bulk of this congregation would at once rise! And I pray that you weaker ones, you timid and trembling souls may seek Him who can work this great Grace in you, also, so that you, too, may be able to say as positively as Philip did, "We have found Him."

1. Now I am going, with the Holy Spirit's help, to suggest a few reflections for those to bear in mind who can say, "We have found Him." And the first is this—IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, HE MUST HAVE FIRST FOUND US.

Two verses (v 43) before our text, we read that this very man who had found Christ, had himself been found by Christ. It is probably true, my dear Brother or Sister in Christ, that you were brought to know the Lord through some human instrumentality. A godly father or mother, a faithful minister of the Gospel, a loving Sunday school teacher or other Christian friend. Or the reading of the Word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit may have been the means of your conversion. There is a very precious link between the instrument of your salvation and yourself which you ought never to forget. Surely we can never cease to thank God for the man or the woman whom He used to lead us out of darkness into His marvelous Light! Yet that holy man did not convert us. That gracious woman could never have given us a new heart and a right spirit. We must trace our new birth to its superhuman origin—it was the Lord, and the Lord alone who worked that wondrous miracle of regeneration! "You has HE quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." If the Lord has not turned you from the error of your ways, you are still in the broad road that leads to destruction! If He has not found you as the shepherd finds his lost sheep, you are still wandering on the dark mountains of sin and woe! And, as the sheep would never find its shepherd unless he first found it, so you, if you have found Christ, must first have been found by Christ!

I want you to go still further back and to remember that, inasmuch as you never imagined that it was wrong for Christ to save you, although He has not saved all other sinners and although some in your own family have not yet found Him— and although some who attend the same place of worship as you do have not found Him, while you have found Him and been found by Him—you have never thought that it was wrong for Christ to make this difference between you and others. I want you to also remember that whatever Christ has done, He must have always meant to do—it must have been His eternal purpose to do it! Unless you are a careless blunderer, you do not do anything without having made up your mind to do it. And certainly, the Lord Jesus Christ has not acted in this great matter of the salvation of souls without thought and deliberation! Do you not see that this brings us to the Doctrine of Election? Many people do not like that Doctrine, but all Christian people, though they may not believe it as we do, must believe that which is the very essence of it—for if there is a difference between ourselves and others, it must have been Christ who made it by His Grace! And as He made it, then it must have been right for Him to make it, and it could not have been wrong for Him to purpose to make that difference! We do not believe that Christ does anything without a plan and a purpose. And it makes no difference whether the purpose was in His mind a year ago or from all eternity! I mean that there would be the same difficulty with regard to the Doctrine, though I see no difficulty in it at all. Well then, the Lord Jesus Christ purposed from all eternity to work His good work in you by His Holy Spirit—to bring you to repent of your sin and to trust in His atoning Sacrifice—and, therefore, it is a part of His promise to bring you home to Heaven to dwell with Him forever! Yet there have been and still are many in this world who have not found Him—more eminent than you are, people of greater ability and loftier station. There are wise men who have never become wise unto salvation and rich men who do not possess this heavenly treasure. There are mighty kings who lord it over mighty hosts of men, who know not the Lord of Hosts and yield not homage to the Lord Jesus Christ! When you think of all this, do you not marvel that you should have been found by Christ and that you should have found Christ? Do you not wonder that God should have chosen you, that Christ should have redeemed you? And will you not bless and praise the Lord to all eternity for making you the simple subject of His Grace while such multitudes and so many far more mighty ones have been passed by?

This teaching, which seems to me to be so simple and plain, lies at the root of the most profound Doctrines of Holy Writ and it is, at the same time, one of the most practical Truths of God in the whole of the Divine Revelation! Nothing makes us love Christ more than knowing that He has loved us with an everlasting Love and, therefore, with loving kindness has drawn us unto Himself. Nothing makes us crave for likeness to Him so much as the knowledge that He has chosen us and ordained us, that we should go and bring forth fruit and that our fruit should remain even, “fruit unto holiness, and the end, everlasting life.” I wish that this Truth was understood and believed by all Christians, for it is God’s Truth, and a very precious Truth. I feel sure that it is believed by many who have not recognized it or fully understood it. I remember preaching in the open air to a great crowd of miners, most of them Methodists. And as I preached, they shouted, “Glory!” “Hallelujah!” “Praise the Lord,” and so on. Just as they were in full cry in that fashion, I paused a moment and then said, “This brings me to the Doctrine of Election.” I could almost feel the cold shiver of disappointment that seemed to pass through the crowd. And it appeared likely that there would be no more “Hallelujahs” during that discourse. But I said to them, “In your hearts you really believe that Doctrine, though you imagine you do not. And before I have finished my sermon, I will prove it to you, and many of you will shout, ‘Praise the Lord,’ for it even more loudly than you were doing just now.” I saw the look of incredulity upon their faces, but I went on. “Here is a man who was once a drunk, a swearer, a Sabbath-breaker, a thief, a liar and everything that was bad. But a great change has somehow come over him and he is quite a new man compared with what he used to be. There is no such alteration in many of his old companions and friends—who can have made him so different from what he once was? Here is a glorious golden crown and whoever has made this man to be such a contrast to what he was before ought to have this crown placed upon his head!” Then I said, “Shall I put the crown on the man’s own head? Did he make this change in himself?” “No, no” came the answer from all parts of the crowd. “Well then,” I asked, “On whose head shall I put the crown? Who is to have the glory of this man’s conversion?” At once they cried, “The Lord, the Lord alone! Put the crown on His head.” So far we were all agreed and I, therefore, asked next, “Was it wrong for God to make this difference?” No one dared to say that it was, so I advanced to my next question, “As it was right for God to make this difference, was it not also right for God to plan beforehand that He would do so? The Lord

did not act without a set purpose and, therefore, as He is to be crowned for the action, is He not also to be crowned for the purpose to do it?" "Yes, that He is!" cried the crowd. "Bless His name, hallelujah!" So I won the hallelujahs, by His Grace, of my Methodist friends for the Doctrine of Election as I said I would!

We do not preach, we have never preached and we shall never preach that God has created any man for the purpose of destroying him! But we do preach and shall preach as long as we live, that salvation is of the Lord and all of Grace from first to last! And, therefore, that all the glory of it must be given to the Divine hand that worked the work, to the eternal mind that planned the work and to the great heart of love that was the Fountain and Source from which the gracious purpose sprang! The only explanation of the whole matter is the one we have so often sung—

*"What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so, Father,' you must sing,
'Because it seemed good in Your sight.'
Then give all the glory to His holy name,
To Him all the glory belongs,
Be yours the high joy to still sound forth His fame,
And crown Him in each of your songs."*

II. My second observation is—IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, LET US FOLLOW HIM. Philip found Him and followed Him all his days.

Christ was given to be the Leader and Commander of His people, so His people should all follow Him. You have followed Him, Beloved, but can you not follow Him yet more closely? You are His disciples, but can you not learn more of Him than you have yet learned? Let us follow our Jesus promptly. I want to be in such a state of heart and mind that the moment I know what Christ's will concerning me is, I do it! I would like to be a leaf borne along by the blessed current of His Divine Purpose—having no will or wish to resist the sacred influences of His unerring mind and loving heart—to obey His commands promptly and cheerfully and, not only to obey cheerfully, but also to suffer cheerfully if He so pleases! It is a blessed condition to be in to take anything and everything from Christ, whether it is a kiss or a blow—to do anything for Christ, whether it is pleasing to the flesh or not—to yield up everything for Christ, to be, indeed, a divine sacrifice for Him, which is, after all, only the "reasonable service" which He is fully entitled to claim from us! We read in the Revelation concerning some, "These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes." And happy are they who imitate them, even while here on earth! Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I entreat you to leave no path untrodden where you can see the footprints of your Lord and Master! Jesus went to Jordan's stream and was baptized there by John—have you followed Him in this blessed ordinance? Jesus, even while living and laboring among sinners, was separate from them—are you living the separated life? What He did, let us do as far as it is in our power! What He was, let us be as far as that is possible! He was reviled, despised and rejected of men—so let us count it an honor to receive similar treatment for His sake. He was content to walk on the bleak side of the hill—let us not seek the sunny side by craving the world's esteem. Is this your heart's desire, Beloved? Do you sing—

*"Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes"?*

Then mind that you not only sing those lines, but make them true in your life! Are any of you following Christ afar off, as Peter did? Then beware lest you fall as Peter did! Are you following Christ in your business, or do you forget Him when you are in the office or in the market? Do you follow Christ in your home, or do you forget Him when you are there? Some of you used to follow Jesus very closely and to be very warm friends of His—have you been growing cold towards Him?

Oh, let this no longer be the case! If you have found Him, follow Him and follow Him “wherever He goes.”

III. Now, thirdly, IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, LET US PRIZE HIM. It is no trifle that we find when we find Him, for He is the priceless pearl whose worth no man fully knows!

If I have found Him, how shall I prove that I prize Him? First, let me be willing to lose all that I have for Him. Does my present position in life involve me in sin? Then let me leave it rather than grieve my Lord. Is my business an evil one? Then let me renounce it at once, for if I do not, I shall have to renounce Him! Have I any companions who are the enemies of Christ? Then I dare not call them my friends. Is there some dear one with whom I have entered into such close association that it will draw me away from Christ? Then, while I can, let me break the connection, for I must give up all for the Christ who gave up all for me! The captain of a vessel, when his ship is in danger of sinking, will throw the most valuable cargo into the sea if, thereby, he may save the ship and the lives of all on board. And I must be willing to part with my joys, my pleasures, my money, my friends and all that I have rather than give up my Lord and Savior, for I must have Christ at any cost!

Further, if you have found Christ and want to prove that you can prize Him, study to find out all that you can about Him. Jesus Christ is a great mine of untold wealth and no man has ever yet perfectly explored that mine. Read the Scripture to learn all you can about Christ. Listen to any preacher or teacher who can tell you anything about Christ—and be sure to meditate as much as you can upon Christ. He is the chief among ten thousand—“yes, He is altogether lovely.” At our first sight of Him, we fall in love with Him, but His choicest beauties are the hidden ones which we only find by diligent search and much fellowship with Him. As you get to know more of Him in His Person, in His work, in His office, in His promises, in His power, in His love—you will prize Him all the more until you would not set even Heaven, itself, in comparison with Him—for what would Heaven be if He were not there?

Further, Beloved, if you prize Christ as you ought, you will make all the use you can of Him. And He loves to be of use to His people. Is there any sin upon your conscience? Run to Him to remove it from you! Is there any trouble on your mind? Go and tell Jesus! Is there anything that is a burden to you? Cast your burdens upon Him and He will relieve you of them, or give you the Grace and strength to carry them! Remember that Jesus Christ is an everyday Savior, an all-the-year-round Savior, a whole-of-life Savior, a Savior for the body as well as for the soul! Whatever there may be lacking in you, there is nothing lacking in Him and He can supply all that you lack! He is the Bread of Life, so feed upon Him! He is the Light of the World, so see everything in the light that comes from Him! He is your All-in-All, so look for all in Him!

Show, too, that you prize Christ as you should by letting others see how you value Him. A bride who has many precious jewels will wear them where they can be seen and admired by others. And we, too, are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ who is more precious than all the gems in the universe! Some professing Christians are apt to blush at any allusion to their Christianity—but if it is the blush of shame, they have cause to be ashamed of such blushing! I never hear of any man blushing because he is a peer of the realm, though there have been many of the so-called “nobility” who might well cause their fellow peers to blush. But to blush because one is a Christian, oh, this must never be! As well might we blush at being likened to an angel! Suppose the ungodly point the finger of scorn at you—that is the only way in which such people can really honor you. Will you strike your colors because the enemy attacks you? No, no! Nail the flag to the mast and fight so bravely for Christ that the enemy has to strike his colors! It is the act of a pirate to sail under another flag, so whatever ship you meet on life’s wide sea, fly the flag of your King and defy the devil and all his legions to do their worst! At home and abroad, in the House of God or in the street, in the market or wherever you may be, let friend and foe, alike, know that you belong to Christ! I would that all of us who are members of this Tabernacle might love the Lord with a far deeper and more fervent love than we have ever yet experienced. I know that there are some eminently gracious souls among us and I pray that their number may be greatly increased, but I am anxious lest, as a Church, we should fall to the low level of so many of the professing Christians of this age! Our Lord Jesus Christ deserves the very best that we can bring to Him, so

let us give Him our hearts, our minds, our time, our talents and all we have, to show how greatly we prize Him whom we have found!

IV. Fourthly, and briefly, IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, LET US NEVER PART WITH HIM. Philip became one of Christ's disciples, then one of His Apostles—and now he is with Christ forever!

Tomorrow you will go, young man, into the workshop or to the counter and your companions will laugh at you if you say you are a Christian. But do not part with Christ because of the laughter of fools! Some of you will be going to the Stock Exchange or to the various markets of this great city—but part not company with Christ by doing what is wrong. Hold Him fast and keep to that which is right, honest and true, for he is a traitor to Christ who gets even a penny by an unrighteous action! Tomorrow some of you may hear that which is blasphemous or foul—rebuke it in your Lord's name, for he who is silent when he ought to speak is tacitly denying his Lord and Master. Again I say to you, hold Him fast however much men may scoff at you for doing so, for such a treasure as Christ is well worth holding! Let no man separate you from your Lord. If you are truly His, I am persuaded that no one and nothing shall be able to part you. Though the devil himself should try to tear Christ away from you, he cannot do it, for Christ is stronger than Satan and He holds you with a Divine grip which the devil and all his hosts cannot relax!

I especially urge you not to let Jesus slip away from private prayer, or the reading of the Scriptures, or your intimate personal communion with Him. Make your prayers more fervent, your study of the Word more intense and real, and your daily walk with Christ more close and tender. Abide in Him! Never give Him or anyone else cause to think that you have left Him. The good soldier of Jesus Christ never has a furlough—he is like the knights of old who slept in their armor and were ready for the fray at any moment. A Christian is to always be a Christian and in every place! He may not do wrong once a year, nor once in a lifetime. What would you say to a man who told you he was only going to poison himself once? What would you think of a wife who said she was going to cease loving her husband just once? We, too, are married to Christ, so we are His and wholly His—and only His! Hold us fast, O blessed Lover of our souls, for only so can we continue to hold You fast!

1. My last injunction is this—IF YOU HAVE FOUND CHRIST, TELL OTHERS ABOUT HIM, even as Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found Him."

I have sometimes feared that some professing Christians fancy that they are to keep Christ all to themselves. They seem to have an idea that Heaven is just—

"A little spot enclosed by Grace"—

where only they and a small select company of like-minded persons will gain admittance! I cannot congratulate them upon harboring such a notion and I very strongly urge them to imitate the example of a man who found that he had a forged bank-note in his possession—he threw it over a hedge and ran away as fast as he could for fear anybody should think it belonged to him! Such a spirit as that seems to me to be quite contrary to the mind of Him who wept over Jerusalem and who said, "How often would I have gathered the children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not!"

Have you found this great hive of honey and is it very sweet to your taste? Then tell others of it, for there is abundance for them and you, too. You are not like the poor people in a besieged city who feel that every mouthful that someone else eats leaves so much the less for them. Oh, no! There is "bread enough and to spare" in the great Father's house, so no prodigal son need perish with hunger! At the Gospel banquet you may eat as much as you want, but there will be just as much left for others. We have to deal with the God who is Infinite and Omnipotent, whose supply is inexhaustible and who will be glad and gratified as we spread far and wide the invitations to the great feast in honor of His Son! My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as you love Him, follow His blessed example by going after the lost sheep until you find them! If you had only common humanity, it ought to make you earnest in seeking to deliver others from going down to the Pit, by

telling them of Him who has paid the ransom price for all who put their trust in Him! A battlefield must present a terrible sight to all who gaze upon it. I wish all those who are so eager for war could see the horrors of which we can scarcely bear to read. Yet this great London presents a still more terrible sight to those whose eyes have been opened to see sinners as they really are in the sight of God! Our streets swarm with the unregenerate! Many of you live next door to them when they are at home. Some of you live in the same house with them. Some even sleep in the same room with them. Plead for your husbands or wives, your brothers and sisters, your parents or children—and plead with them as well as for them! God forbid that you should be eternally separated from those who are so near and dear to you! Pray for them night and day! You who are the Lord's remembrancers, take no rest and give Him no rest, and give them no rest until they are saved! Next to your own relatives, plead with and for your employees, your employer, your neighbors and all with whom you come in contact! And then widen your sympathies and supplications until they shall embrace all of woman born! Remember Richard Krill's question, "Brethren, the heathen are perishing, will you let them perish?" Do not neglect the heathen abroad or the heathen at home! An earnest minister said to his people one Sabbath, "I am going, this week on a mission to the heathen." The deacons looked at one another, for the pastor had not mentioned the matter to them. And the members thought, "We are about to lose our dear minister, but whatever has made him think of going as a missionary to the heathen?" While these thoughts were passing through their minds, he quietly added, "But I am not going out of this town in order to be a missionary."

And there is no need for anybody to go out of town in order to be a missionary to the heathen! There they are, Brothers and Sisters, all around you! And you are the missionaries. There is your work—go and do it—and may God bless you in it—and so may many precious immortal souls through you be led to find Jesus and to trust in Him for salvation, for His name and mercy's sake! Amen.