

# Seek the Lord—Isaiah 55

#0742

Study given by W.D. Frazee—1958

“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” Isaiah 55:6,7.

Let us meditate upon some of these expressions tonight, comparing Scripture with Scripture. First, the urgency of the Lord to us. Seek ye the Lord. Call upon Him. There is to be earnest entreaty.

There was a man in one of the central European countries. His life was in peril. He was a Christian. He felt that the only thing for him to do was to get out of that country and escape to the free world, which we call the Western powers.

Over a series of weeks, traveling by night and hiding during the daytime, going through many struggles and problems, he finally reached the border. The problem that faced him was how to get across it. The Russians patrolling the border had devised a system to keep anyone from slipping through. They had not merely a few strands of barbed wire, but they had all sorts of barbed wire entanglements mixed together six feet high and six feet wide. And those barbed wires were charged with electricity.

As this man came to the border and saw what he was up against, he sat there in the woods discouraged. He sat there for two days. What could he do? If he went back it would probably mean discovery, imprisonment and death. But how could he get across? They had cleared the woods on each side of the border, so even if he went out and approached the barbed wire he would be discovered. It seemed that all his hopes were vanishing.

But when a man wants something bad enough, and realizes it is his only hope, it is wonderful what he thinks to do about it. So the second night he had thought of a plan.

All he had with him was an extra shirt. He picked out a certain place at this barricade where there were some bushes near it that would give a little protection. He watched the guards for two days and one night and observed that a guard went by every twenty minutes.

When it was dark he watched the guard go by and then slipped out of the woods to the bushes near the barricade and started digging with his hands underneath those electric charged barbed wires. All he had was his hands. He dug what he could in fifteen minutes, and put the dirt in the extra shirt he had and slipped

back to the woods. He found a place and scattered the dirt and covered it with leaves. When the guard again went by the man went back and started digging again. He had to be careful he didn't touch those wires, for he would have either been electrocuted or set off some signal which would have been worse.

He had to dig deep enough to slip under. He dug through the night and the second night. Before the close of the second night he was able to pull himself under the barricade. He ran to the American zone. The strain and pressure and the anxiety and effort was such that he fainted. It was some time before he revived to find some American soldiers bending over him. But he was free.

Oh friends, as I heard that experience there came into my soul the thought that if God could only help you and me to be as desperately in earnest to get rid of sinning as that man was to get out of that country where his life was in danger, I believe we would get the help God has for us. I believe it.

I fear that sometimes we move along as if we were doing God a favor by even coming to church, or studying the Bible, or praying. We think we ought to have a little credit because we have learned a Bible text or studied our Sabbath School lesson, or given up something that might kill us anyway. Ah, we do God a favor in the sense that every time we do something to please Him, it does. But believe me, we need a new sense of urgency in getting out of the land of the enemy and into the hands of our heavenly Father.

“Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.” Oh, that we might seek with that intensity of earnestness which will bring us the blessing we need so much.

Zephaniah is a minor prophecy near the end of the Old Testament. It has a message addressed to us down here in these closing moments just before the ushering in of the great day of God's wrath:

“Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger come upon you. Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger” Zephaniah 2:1-3.

Here is the earnest appeal of Isaiah. Notice it is addressed not to the careless multitude, not to the wicked world, but to the people of God; the meek of the earth. They are exhorted to seek righteousness and seek meekness. In other words, it takes an extraordinary experience to meet the extraordinary issue of this final hour. Therefore, seek ye the Lord.

“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy;  
break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the  
LORD, till He come and rain righteousness upon you”  
Hosea 10:12.

Notice the relationship between seeking and righteousness. We are to seek for the righteousness of Christ. Any righteousness that is worth anything to us in the judgment is the righteousness of Christ.

But brethren, the righteousness we need to seek at this hour is not merely the imputed righteousness for the past, but the imparted righteousness for the present and the future. We need something more than pardon for our mistakes and failures of the past.

God is seeking to do a finished work in the earth, and it must be a finished work in the hearts and lives of His people. It is for this He bids us seek Him with all our heart. Notice again the earnest invitation to seek the Lord:

“Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him” Joel 2:12-14.

Oh, I want it at this hour, don't you? How will we get it? By seeking the Lord with all our hearts. That is the expression. Halfway measures will never bring a completed work.

“Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart” Jeremiah 29:12-13.

There is the expression again. That man who was digging his way hour by hour and inch by inch under that great barricade that kept him from freedom was doing it with all his heart. Everything was at stake. Every nerve and every muscle of his body was engaged in that battle for life. Let me tell you, when we seek God with such intensity of purpose we will find Him. He says so. “And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.”

There is great danger in being around one of God's institutions. Shall I tell you what that danger is? It is the danger of depending upon other people to push us into the kingdom. Or pull us in. It is a great danger. Every soul that enters the narrow gate must strive to enter in. And it will take the intense purpose of each individual soul to get through.

I am not talking about getting through the pearly gate. Oh, no. It won't take any desperate struggle to get through that. I am talking about that narrow gate that Jesus bids us enter as we seek to leave the world and sin and self, and enter into righteousness here in this present evil world.

That brings me to the next point. Oh, let us cease depending upon human beings to carry us in their arms to the kingdom of God. Thank God for all the help that may be around us. But, brothers and sisters, remember that Lucifer failed in heaven. So it is not surprising that people who depend upon others may fail here in this world.

There is an experience that must come to each individual. It is an experience of earnestly seeking God personally. Not depending upon others. It is all right to counsel with others. It is all right to get any help they may have by way of suggestions. But my dear friends, the biggest help that any human being can give you is to help you to feel such a sense of need that humanity can never fill it; to help you see that your only hope is on your knees before God, seeking God with all your heart that God may do something for you.

God wants to. He is ready and willing and anxious to do it, but you must seek. That is why Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth”  
Matthew 7:7-8.

Where must the seeking be done? We are in great danger of looking to men to do what only God can do for us, and wondering why men do not do more for us. So we get discouraged and then blame it on our brethren and sisters. What a pity. Notice the ringing words in view of the great day of God:

“Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day...And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols He shall utterly abolish. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth”  
Isaiah 2:10-11,17-19.

Men won't be afraid of other men in that day. There will be just one thing they are afraid of. It is the glory of God. So the prophet says:

“Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?” Isaiah 2:22.

Why spend so much time trying to please man and so little time seeking to please God? Why make so much effort to get so much help from man and so little effort to get help directly from God? Why look to man to know your duty in a thousand details that lie between you and your heavenly Father when all the while God is willing to tell you how He wants you to dress, what He wants you to eat, what He wants you to read, the education He wants you to get, and all the other details?

Don't misunderstand me. There is a place for human counsel, but it is never to take the place of the individual, personal relationship between your soul and God. There are many questions that nobody but God can ever give you the right answers to. "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

The servant of the Lord comments on this text three times. The first one appeared in the *Review and Herald* in 1890:

"Brethren, we must not put our dependence in man. 'Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?' You must hang your helpless souls upon Jesus. It does not become us to drink from the fountain of the valley when there is a fountain in the mountain. Let us leave the lower streams; let us come to the higher springs" *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 476.

Those of you who know the setting of this testimony will recognize that it is dealing with the great agitation and discussion over the message of righteousness by faith, which occupied much attention from our people during the 1890's. The message had been given at the General Conference by Elder Jones and Elder Waggoner. But there were some who opposed that message. For several years there was discussion back and forth.

Sorry to say, there were some leaders who opposed that message, in part because they did not appreciate the men God was using. Some of our people were in danger in looking to these men whom they had come to revere as leaders, and depending on their counsel, and thereby were in danger of rejecting the very message God was sending His people at that time. Brethren, we must not put our dependence in man.

So the messenger of God was led to quote this text from Isaiah. A few years later, in 1896, the message was repeated, and the same text quoted. I want to make clear in reading this that I am not seeking in any way to weaken confidence in the divinely appointed leadership God has given this people. God has established the Seventh-day Adventist church. He has established its leadership. It is in God's order that we have presidents and vice-presidents and secretaries, and other leading men to lead our people into the work of God. Let us make that very clear. And this in no way contradicts that. But it warns us of the danger:

"To place men where God should be placed does not honor or glorify God. Is the president of the General Conference to be the god of the people? Are the men at

Battle Creek to be regarded as infinite in wisdom? When the Lord shall work upon human hearts and human intellects, principles and practices different from this will be set before the people. 'Cease ye from man.' The Lord has a controversy with His people over this matter" *Ibid*, pages 375-376.

Then, twelve years later in 1908, we find the message repeated, and again this same text is quoted:

"As a people our faith and practice need to be energized by the Holy Spirit. No ruling power that would compel men to obey the dictates of the finite mind should be exercised. 'Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils,' the Lord commands. By turning the minds of men to lean on human wisdom, we place a veil between God and man, so that there is not a seeing of Him who is indivisible. In our individual experience we are to be taught of God" *Ibid*, page 403.

I thank God that those same thoughts and warnings are being echoed in this present hour. I pick up our official church paper, the *Review and Herald* for this week. The leading article is by Elder L.K. Dickson, vice-president of the General Conference, entitled *Sinful Unconcern*. I cannot take time to read all of this, but I consider it one of the most important articles that has ever been printed in the *Review and Herald*. In my humble judgment, it represents present truth in a very special sense. You must read it for yourself.

Elder Dickson calls our attention to the fact that the Laodicean message points out our great danger of being unconcerned about our spiritual condition. He points out the great danger of putting emphasis on activity, numbers, records, and losing sight of the great fundamental spiritual needs that we have as individuals and as a church. He calls us to seek the Lord most earnestly that this state of things may change:

"There must arise upon God's people a new awareness of the low level to which the spirituality of the church has fallen. We need greatly to concern ourselves with the reasons for this situation, the trends which have brought it about, and the remedies that must be quickly made.

"As touching the church in its vast program, we see dangerous trends resulting from a diminished spiritual emphasis in much of our service on all levels of the movement. The spiritual possessions that distinguish the apostolic life of the early church and the pioneers of our faith have leaked from us to a very alarming degree. These things could be recaptured and repossessed if our program of action were led more directly in that direction.

“There needs to be a new spiritual unity among us regarding these objectives. All voices must give forth a certain sound. Sinful unconcern must be banished from our personal lives and ejected from our circles when we choose our working forces. Some things that have seemed so paramount in our minds in choosing men must give way to the supreme qualification of a more demonstrated spiritual leadership if we would remedy our present low spiritual state.

“In the early church, and among the pioneers of this message, demonstrated ability to lead spiritual with great courage and faith took precedence over every other consideration in the choice of men. Today a direct relationship seems to exist between our accelerating spiritual decline and our making primary certain secondary considerations. Merely multiplying leaders among us that make numbers and records above spiritual attainments will never usher this people into the city of God. Steps need to be taken immediately to remedy at their sources these dangerous trends before which we have been weakening, but we seem to lack the spiritual fortitude to do very much about them in the fear of God.

“There seems to be a fear of standing alone if necessary, and of speaking forth against evils that are apparent. This fear of man and his power to demote and retaliate must be dismissed from among us. The domination of man must give way to the domination of God's Holy Spirit.

“How long must we linger before these weaknesses that are eating away at the very vitals of the church? No amount of imposing figures or records will hide this disease or remedy the present program of endeavoring to feed the multitude with spiritually feeble hands.”

Then Elder Dickson pinpoints the great trend away from sacrifice. He shows how in the days when Solomon's temple was erected that Israel lost the spirit of sacrifice, and there was a grasping for higher wages. He says that is going on in our movement today, and he appeals to the church to seek the Lord and do something about it.

My dear friends, the God who spoke and still speaks to us through the Bible, the dear Savior who spoke and is still speaking to us through the testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of Prophecy, that same Divine One is speaking in such articles I have just read from the *Review and Herald*. He is speaking to us through such leaders as I have just quoted. He is appealing to us to seek the Lord while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near, and cease to lull ourselves asleep, or be lulled asleep by the lullaby of going along in what is called the middle of the road.

It will take some intensity of purpose, some earnestness of effort to bring us to that place where the Spirit of God can be poured out in mighty power.

“Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.” Why does the prophet say that? Because time will not always linger. Things are not going to go on and on. They can't. Anyone who will look across the horizon of present conditions will have to say things cannot go on as they are at the present time.

Am I right? You know it. So while probation lingers, while we still have time and eternity waits, seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near.

“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” 2 Corinthians 6:2.

“And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man” Genesis 6:3.

For 120 years God strove. For 120 years did the Spirit appeal. But there came a last day. There came a final hour. There came a climatic moment when for the last time the aged messenger of God stood there and appealed to those people who had so often either made fun or delayed a response. Then, as the obedient ones found their way up the gangplank into the ark, the angel of God shut the door, and mercy ceased to plead for that guilty generation.

Seven days later the flood began, and thousands upon thousands of souls perished in the angry waters. It is written:

“As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” Matthew 24:37.

We are told the reason things are lengthened and delayed is that the Lord is longsuffering to us, not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9-10). But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. As unexpected as the midnight thief will come the hour which closes human probation, and the final withdrawal of mercy from this guilty world. Before that hour strikes, before the moment comes, seek ye the Lord while He may be found with intensity of purpose, with earnestness, with determination.

What shall we seek Him for? Righteousness. The righteousness that covers the past. The righteousness that empowers us to meet the tempter in the future and not fall as we have fallen in the past. Seek righteousness.

“If your heart is right, your words, your dress, your acts will all be right” *Messages to Young People*, page 131.

That is righteousness, isn't it? When everything is right? Do you want it? Listen:

“I saw how this grace could be obtained. Go to your closet and there alone plead with God: ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.’ Be in earnest, be sincere. Fervent prayer availeth much. Jacob-like wrestle in prayer. Agonize. Jesus in the garden sweat great drops of blood; you must make an effort. Do not leave your closet until you feel strong in God; then watch, and just as long as you watch and pray you can keep these evil besetment under, and the grace of God can and will appear in you” *Ibid*, pages 131-132.

This was written especially to young people. This isn't an experience just for older folks. It is for the children and youth. Dear boys and girls, dear young men and women, seek ye the Lord while He may be found. Seek Him for victory over sin. Seek Him for victory over every bit of the spirit of rebellion or disobedience, every spirit of worldliness to pride, of sentimentalism, of folly, of dishonesty. Everything. You can be victorious. You can be an overcomer. You do not have to wait until you are older. Right now seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.

There are some folks who are going to be just twelve years old when Jesus comes. There are some who will be just fifteen years old when Jesus comes. There will be some who will only be eight years old when Jesus comes. Do you think those folks in their childhood and teens can have an experience with God which will enable them to pass the test of the judgement and receive the seal of the living God? There is no question about it. I pray God that every one of our children and youth may share in that experience.

Dear parents, do not look forward to sometime in the future when your children will grow up and be old enough to give themselves to God and settle down to a serious, sober seeking of the Master. For yourselves seek God with all your hearts, and for your children seek God with all the heart, and get the children to seek God, for now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.

Let's go back to our text. It is a wonderful text. It has been running in my mind day after day for this past week. It has blessed my soul. See how there is great encouragement to seek God:

“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” Isaiah 55:6,7.

Oh, isn't that wonderful friends? See how God encourages us. Jesus was teaching the same lesson when He gave that wonderful story of the prodigal son.

You remember the boy who claimed his part of the father's riches when he didn't deserve them, and went away with those riches to a far country and squandered them in riotous living. He brought disgrace upon his father, and disease and wretchedness and poverty upon himself.

We finally see him out there in that hog pen watching the pigs; feeding the pigs. That is his job. It is all he can do. He is broke and dejected and discouraged. Bankrupt morally, financially, physically, and in every way.

As Jesus told the story, the prodigal son came to himself. He began to get some sense. Out there in the hog pen he made the decision that he would return to his father. When he first started he had no idea of the reception he would receive. He ventured something.

It is impossible for the sinner in the hog pen to know and understand how anxious God is for him to come back. But friends, venture something. Press toward home. God will receive you as the father of that boy did.

What does the record say? While he was yet a great way off his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

See that aged father as he runs down the road to meet that boy who was a ragged beggar, but in the father's sight he is the most precious sight in all this world. See how the father throws his arm about him and seeks to cover his rags with the robe of the father. He brings him in and has the servants get some decent clothes for him. He has a feast of welcome and rejoicing that night.

Likewise, I say unto you there is more joy in the presence of God over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. Let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. Ah, yes. Those hands that are stretched out to meet us are the hands that were nailed to the cross at Calvary. That heart of love that beats with longing for our return is the heart that was broken on Golgotha.

Jesus loves us. He wants us. But believe me, we can never be with Him in heaven until first we are with Him heart to heart in a love for righteousness and a hatred for sin. There are some things that prodigal son didn't drag home with him. He didn't bring back a lot of things he had back there in the far country.

Our text says to let the wicked forsake his way. This is no weak sentimentalism. Does the Father love you, and love you so much that if you must have the harlots, bring them home? If you must have the jazz bands and juke boxes, he will stand them in the living room so he can have you home?

Nothing of the kind. There is too much of that weak sentimentalism today that passes for religion and love. "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." The greatest sinner can find mercy if he will give up his sins to Jesus Christ. And the most self-righteous Pharisee will find himself outside the Father's house if he insists on holding onto his way.

We must come broken hearted, penitent, fully surrendered, giving up our sins. Let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, for He will abundantly pardon, and cleanse and keep.

“Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” Hebrews 7:25.

The One who died for us lives for us. The One whose heart was broken for us on Calvary has our names written on His heart in the heavenly sanctuary, and He is lifting up those wounded hands and praying for us. He is abundantly able to pardon and abundantly able to change these hearts of ours so that sin loses its hold, and we fear nothing but God and hate sin as God hates it.

My brother, my sister, if you want to seek God, come and seek Him right now. Let us seek God with all our hearts that He may do two things for us: Pardon for the past. But even more important, give us power to meet the temptations of Satan and have a righteousness which can resist every inroad of the enemy.

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P.O. Box 129, Wildwood, GA 30757-0102