

“I Searched and Searched until He Found Me?”—Ephesians 1:3-6

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “I Searched and Searched until He Found Me?”, is Ephesians 1:3-6 → *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Have you ever experienced a time in your life when you felt lost? Such a time usually elicits feelings of anxiety and fear, motivated by thoughts of an uncertain future. Questions can flood your mind in a sweep of panic and desperation: “Which way should I go? Is there anyone around to whom I can turn for help? If so, can I trust him or her? What if no one finds me? How will I survive?”

Being lost or losing actually changes relationships. Jesus taught many parables about something or someone being lost and its affect on relationship. He told a story about a man losing one of his sheep and a

woman losing one of her silver coins, emphasizing their commitment to finding the lost, restoring relationship and rejoicing over that restored relationship! (cf. Luke 15:1-10) When He told the parable of a father losing his son to rebellious, hedonistic living, Jesus depicted the father's desire to search for his son as constantly waiting for him to return so he could restore their relationship again. (cf. Luke 15:11-24) These stories expressed Jesus' desire *to seek and to saved the lost* (cf. Luke 19:10)— those lost in their sin.

When you lose something you generally search and search until you find it. However, when you “lose” a person in relationship you may search and search and make all kinds of efforts to restore relationship and feel it is all to no avail. Parents experience this in their child who is lost spiritually and emotionally, unable to find his way in life. While it tears their hearts apart, such grief is heightened when their child doesn't think he's lost and they watch him go through a frantic search for perfect relationships in life, even to the point of being self-destructive. Thus, they may be driven to wait and pray for their child lost in his sins to “come to his senses,” repent and seek a restored relationship.

The very core of our creation is a perfect relationship with God and with each other. When God created Eve He said *it is not good that the man should be alone*. (cf. Genesis 2:18) However, those first humans got lost in their relationship with God and each other by disobeying His

command. From that time forth, people have been searching for perfect relationships in homes, on the job, with friends and in congregations. Unfortunately, their searching tends to be on their own terms which are clouded over by sin and leads them deeper into their lost condition in sin and further away from a restored relationship with God and others. Thus, helpless to restore perfect relationships, Yahweh promises to restore them Himself! (cf. Genesis 3:15) He wants a perfect relationship with His children again.

Our text reveals to us the extent to which our Father in heaven goes in order to find us lost, self-destructive children who are on a desperate search for perfect relationships in our lives. As Paul began his letter to the Christians in the town of Ephesus, he spoke about our restored relationship with the LORD as **totally** His doing. Notice the direction of initiative as he talks about our relationship with the LORD in verse 4 of our text: *He chose us*; in verse 5 → *He predestined us*; in verse 6 → *He has blessed us*. Whenever Scripture speaks about our salvation God is **always** the subject (i.e. the One Who is making the action happen) and we are **always** the objects (i.e. the ones who receive the benefits of God's action).

God has to take the initiative because sinners do not recognize the severity of their lost condition. Even if people recognize that they are lost and are searching for the LORD, the problem is that their search is

usually on their own terms. Things get mixed up where I become the subject, intent on making a restored relationship with God happen. It's as if God becomes the object Who needs to be "found" by me or convince that I'm worthy to be in relationship with Him or One Whom I have to appease somehow.

Such a misunderstanding of relationship with God on your own terms leads to a number of misconceptions:

- ① It fails to recognize that faith in God's plan of salvation for your life confesses that **God gets the complete credit for salvation**, including the "finding . . . accepting . . . believing in . . . receiving and . . . choosing" Christ. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in your hearts as you encounter the Person & Work of Jesus in the Word. 1 Corinthians 12:3 says that *no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit*. Ephesians 1:13-14 says, *In Him you also, when you heard the Word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, Who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.*
- ② Another misconception with making myself the subject of salvation is that God must meet my expectations in this relationship. I view God as the great "blesser" in my life . . . **according to my definition of a blessing** (kind of like a cosmic "santa claus" who exists to give me

whatever I want). Verse 3 of our text says that God *has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places*. Notice we have been *blessed . . . **in Christ** with every **spiritual** blessing **in the heavenly places***.

This includes the spiritual battles within which we find ourselves every moment of every day this side of heaven. Ephesians 6:12 says our struggles is not simply *against flesh and blood* (i.e. just human relationship struggles), but *against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places* (i.e. against the devil who works to destroy perfect relationships). The search for the blessing of perfect relationships this side of heaven will lead us into struggles with sin and unfulfilled expectations. We need the perfect relationship **which God has established with us in Christ** to deal with these spiritual battles this side of heaven. Since “struggle-free,” perfect relationships come when we get to heaven we need to function with Christ’s forgiveness in the meantime.

This is why our text puts God’s action of saving us into the context of His grace as displayed in the perfect life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Phrases referring to God’s working in our lives *in Christ* or *in Him* are used repeatedly throughout the first fourteen verses of Ephesians. It is important to recognize God’s choice of us *according to **His** purpose, which He set forth **in Christ*** from eternity to eternity! (cf.

Ephesians 1:9) Through the Person & Work of Jesus God brings us into a relationship with Himself as His children, who, as John 1:13 says, *were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Many people “search” for God as if He were the One Who was “lost” and needed to be “found” and somehow they need to come into possession of Him. Rather, we are the ones who are lost in our sin and God takes the initiative to search us out in Jesus Christ so that we might live eternally. God’s promise from Ezekiel 34:16 holds true for us in Christ, our Good Shepherd: ***I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak.*** Notice what **He will do** in our lives.

The process could actually be describe as, “I searched and searched until He found me.” We do search for meaningful relationships in life this side of heaven, a searching which constantly reveals just how lost in sin we really are. However, the LORD “finds” us in our searching and gives us His grace, love and forgiveness in Christ Jesus so that we can have a restored relationship with Him and others through faith in Jesus.

In this restored relationship we also “find” ourselves in a different kind of search on a daily basis. Isaiah 55:6-7 describes it: *Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near; let the wicked*

forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. We seek the LORD as sinners who get “lost” in sins by repentance daily as well as gathering regularly to dispense and receive His forgiveness in Divine Service. We get to experience His spiritual blessings of forgiveness, eternal life and the Holy Spirit anew. True faith recognizes that our seeking the LORD is a response to His gracious searching for us and possessing us in Jesus!

As a result of being “found in Christ” by God we recognize the seriousness of our lost condition in sin, our complete inability to “acquire” God on our own terms and our constant need for His grace and forgiveness in Christ. We confess that it is a relationship based completely upon His grace, His undeserved favor. We also seek the guidance of His Holy Spirit so that we can serve the LORD in this restored relationship and break forth in praise with the words of verse 3 of our text: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places! Amen.*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,

keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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