

'Where Art Thou?'

by D.L. Moody

The sermon emphasizes the importance of examining our lives and our relationship with God, and the love of the Father who seeks and forgives us when we stray.

Scripture: Genesis 3:9, Matthew 11:28, Luke 15:20, James 4:8

Topics: "God's Pursuit", "Spiritual Reflection"

Description

D.L. Moody's sermon 'Where Art Thou?' emphasizes God's relentless pursuit of humanity after the fall, illustrating His grace and mercy as He seeks out the lost. Moody challenges listeners to reflect on their spiritual state, urging professed Christians, backsliders, and the ungodly to consider their relationship with God. He highlights the importance of living a life that reflects one's faith and warns against the dangers of complacency and neglecting one's spiritual duties. The sermon calls for a personal examination of one's faith and a return to communion with God, emphasizing that true joy and peace are found only in Him. Ultimately, Moody encourages all to respond to God's call and return to Him, regardless of their past.

Transcript

THE very first thing that happened after the news reached heaven of the fall of man, was that God came straight down to seek out the lost one. As He walks through the garden in the cool of the day, you can hear Him calling "Adam! Adam! Where art thou?" It was the voice of grace, of mercy, and of love. Adam ought to have taken the seeker's place, for he was the transgressor. He had fallen, and he ought to have gone up and down Eden crying, "My God! my God! where art Thou?" But God left heaven to seek through the dark world for the rebel who had fallen -- not to hurl him from the face of the earth, but to plan him an escape from the misery of his sin. And he finds him -- where? Hiding from his Creator among the bushes of the garden.

The moment a man is out of communion with God, even the professed child of God, he wants to hide away from Him. When God left Adam in the garden, he was in communion with his Creator, and God talked with him; but now that he has fallen, he has no desire to see his Creator, he has lost communion with his God. He cannot bear to see Him, even to think of Him, and he runs to hide from God. But to his hiding place his Maker follows him. "Where art thou, Adam? Where art thou?"

Six thousand years have passed away, and this text has come rolling down the ages. I doubt whether there has been anyone of Adam's sons who has not heard it at some period or other of his life -- sometimes in the midnight hour stealing over him -- "Where am I? Who am I? Where am I going? and

what is going to be the end of this?" I think it is well for a man to pause and ask himself that question. I would have you ask it, little boy; and you, little girl; and you, old man with locks turning gray, and eyes growing dim, and natural force abating, you who will soon be in another world. I do not ask you where you are in the sight of your neighbors; I do not ask you where you are in the sight of your friends; I do not ask you where you are in the sight of the community in which you live. It is of very little account where we are in the sight of one another, it is of very little account what men think of us; but it is of vast importance what God thinks of us -- it is of vast importance to know where men are in the sight of God; and that is the question now. Am I in communion with my Creator, or out of communion? If I am out of communion, there is no peace, no joy, no happiness. No man on the face of the earth, who was out of communion with his Creator, ever knew what peace, and joy, and happiness, and true comfort are. He is a foreigner to it. But when we are in communion with God, there is light all around our path. So ask yourselves this question. Do not think I am preaching to your neighbors, but remember I am trying to speak to you, to everyone of you as if you were alone. It was the first question put to man after his fall, and it was a very small audience that God had -- Adam and his wife. But God was the preacher; and although they tried to hide, the words came home to them. Let them come home to you now. You may think that your life is hid, that God does not know anything about you. But he knows our lives a great deal better than we do; and His eye has been bent upon us from our earliest childhood until now.

"Where art thou?" I should like to divide my audience into three classes -- the professed Christians, the Backsliders, and the Ungodly.

First, I would like to ask the professors this question, or rather let God ask it -- Where art thou? What is my position in the church, and among my circle of acquaintance? Do my friends know me to be, out and out, on the Lord's side? You may have been a professing Christian for twenty years, perhaps thirty, perhaps forty years. Well, where are you tonight? Are you making progress towards heaven? And can you give a reason for the hope that is within you? Suppose I were to ask those who were really Christians here to rise, would you be ashamed to stand up? Suppose I should ask every professed child of God here, "If you should be cut down by the hand of death, have you good reason to believe you would be saved?" Would you be willing to stand up before God and man, and say that you have good reason to believe you are passed from death unto life? Or would you be ashamed? Run your mind back over the past years: would it be consistent for you to say, "I am a Christian;" and would your life correspond with your profession? It is not what we say so much as how we live. Actions speak louder than words. Do your shopmates know that you are a Christian? Do your family know? Do they know you to be out and out on the Lord's side? Let every professed Christian ask, Where am I in the sight of God? Is my heart loyal to the King of heaven? Is my life here as it should be in the community I live in? Am I a light in this dark world? Christ says, "Ye are My witnesses." Christ was the Light of the world, and the world would not have the true Light; the world rose up and put out the Light, and now Christ says, "I leave you down here to testify of Me; I leave you down here as My witnesses." That is what the apostle meant when he said that Christians are to be living epistles, known and read of all men. Then, am I standing up for Jesus as I should in this dark world? If a man is for God, let him say so. If a man is for God, let him come out and be on God's side; and if he is for the world, let him be in the world. This serving God and the world at the same time -- this being on both sides at the same time -- is just the curse of Christianity at the present time. It retards the progress of Christianity more than any other thing. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."

I have heard of a great many people who think if they are united to the church, and have made one profession, that will do for all the rest of their days. But there is a cross for everyone of us daily. Oh, child of God, where are you? If God should appear to you tonight in your bedroom and put the question, what would be your answer? Could you say, "Lord, I am serving Thee with my whole heart and strength; I am improving my talents and preparing for the kingdom to come?" When I was in England in 1867, there was a merchant who came over from Dublin, and was talking with a business man in London; and as I happened to look in, he introduced me to the man from Dublin. Alluding to me, the latter said to the former, "Is this young man all O O?" Said the London man, "What do you mean by O O?" Replied the Dublin man, "Is he Out-and-Out for Christ?" I tell you it burned down into my soul. It means a good deal to be O O for Christ; but that is what all Christians ought to be, and their influence would be felt on the world very soon, if men who are on the Lord's side would come out and take their stand, and lift up their voices in season and out of season. As I have said, there are a great many in the church who make one profession, and that is about all you hear of them; and when they come to die you have to go and hunt up some musty old church records to know whether they were Christians or not. God won't do that. I have an idea that when Daniel died, all the men in Babylon knew whom he served. There was no need for them to hunt up old books. His life told his story. What we want is men with a little courage to stand up for Christ. When Christianity wakes up, and every child that belongs to the Lord is willing to speak for Him, is willing to work for Him, and, if need be, willing to die for Him, then Christianity will advance, and we shall see the work of the Lord prosper. There is one thing which I fear more than anything else, and that is the dead cold formalism of the Church of God. Talk about the isms! Put them all together, and I do not fear them so much as dead, cold formalism. Talk about the false isms! There is none so dangerous as this dead, cold formalism, which has come right into the heart of the Church. There are so many of us just sleeping and slumbering while souls all around are perishing. I believe honestly that we professed Christians are all half asleep. Some of us are beginning to rub our eyes and to get them half-opened, but as a whole we are asleep.

There was a little story going the round of the American press that made a great impression upon me as a father. A father took his little child out into the field one Sabbath, and, it being a hot day, he lay down under a beautiful shady tree. The little child ran about gathering wild flowers and little blades of grass, and coming to its father and saying, "Pretty! pretty!" At last the father fell asleep, and while he was sleeping the little child wandered away. When he awoke, his first thought was, "Where is my child?" He looked all around, but he could not see him. He shouted at the top of his voice, but all he heard was the echo of his own voice. Running to a little hill, he looked around and shouted again. No response! Then going to a precipice at some distance, he looked down, and there upon the rocks and briars, he saw the mangled form of his loved child. He rushed to the spot, took up the lifeless corpse and hugged it to his bosom, and accused himself of being the murderer of his child. While he was sleeping his child had wandered over the precipice. I thought as I heard that, what a picture of the church of God!

How many fathers and mothers, how many Christian men, are sleeping now while their children wander over the terrible precipice right into the bottomless pit of hell. Father, where is your boy tonight? It may be just out there in some public house; it may be reeling through the streets; it may be pressing onwards to a drunkard's grave. Mother, where is your son? Is he in the house of the publican drinking away his soul -- everything that is dear and sacred to him? Do you know where your boy is? Father, you have been a professed Christian for forty years; where are your children tonight? Have you lived so godly, and so Christ-like, that you can say, Follow me as I followed Christ? Are those children walking in wisdom; are they on their way to glory; have they been gathered into the fold of Christ; are their names written in the

Lamb's Book of Life? How many fathers and mothers today would be able to answer? Did you ever stop to think that you were to blame; that you had not been faithful to your children? Depend upon it, as long as the church is living so much like the world, we cannot expect our children to be brought into the fold. Come, O Lord, and wake up every mother, and may everyone of us who are parents feel the worth of the souls of the children that God has given us. May they never bring our gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, but may they become a blessing to the church and to the world. Not long ago the only daughter of a wealthy friend of mine sickened and died. The father and mother stood by her dying bed. He had spent all his time in accumulating wealth for her; she had been introduced into gay and fashionable society; but she had been taught nothing of Christ. As she came to the brink of the river of death, she said, "Won't you help me; it is very dark, and the stream is bitter cold." They wrung their hands in grief, but could do nothing for her; and the poor girl died in darkness and despair. What was their wealth to them? And yet, you mothers and fathers are doing the same thing in London today, by ignoring the work God has given you to do. I beseech you, then, each one of you, begin to labor now for the souls of your children!

A young man, some time ago, lay dying, and his mother thought he was a Christian. One day, passing his room door she heard him say, "Lost! lost! lost!" The mother ran into the room and cried, "My boy, is it possible you have lost your hope in Christ, now you are dying?" "No, mother, it is not that; I have a hope beyond the grave, but I have lost my life. I have lived twenty-four years, and done nothing for the Son of God, and now I am dying. My life has been spent for myself; I have lived for this world, and now, while I am dying, I have given myself to Christ; but my life is lost." Would it not be said of many of us, if we should be cut down, that our lives have been almost a failure -- perhaps entirely a failure as far as leading anyone else to Christ is concerned? Young lady! are you working for the Son of God? Are you trying to win some soul to Christ? Have you tried to get some friend or companion to have her name written in the book of life? Or would you say, "Lost, lost! long years have rolled away since I became a child of God, and I have never had the privilege of leading one soul to Christ?" If there is one professed child of God who never had the joy of leading even one soul into the kingdom of God, oh! let him begin at once. There is no greater privilege on earth. And I believe, my friends, there has never been a time, in our day, at least, when work for Christ was more needed than at present. I do not believe there ever was in your day or mine a time when the Spirit of God was more poured out upon the world. There is not a part of Christendom where the work is not being carried on; and it looks very much as if the glad tidings were just going to take, as it were, a fresh start, and go round the globe. Is it not time that the Church of God should wake up and come to the help of the Lord as one man, and strive to beat back those dark waves of death that roll through our streets, bearing upon their bosom the noblest and the best we have? Oh, may God wake up the Church! And let us trim our lights, and go forth and work for the kingdom of His Son.

Now, Secondly, let me talk a little while to those who have gone back into the world -- to the Backslider. It may be you came to some great city a few years ago a professed Christian. You were member of a church once, and a teacher in the Sabbath school, perhaps; but when you came among strangers you thought you would just wait a little -- perhaps take a class by and by. So you gave up teaching in the Sunday school; you gave up all work for Christ. Then in your new church you did not receive the attention or the warm welcome that you expected. and you got into the habit of staying away.

You have gone so far now, that you are found in the theater, perhaps, and the companion of blasphemers and drunkards. Perhaps I am speaking now to someone who has been away from his father's house for many years. Come, now, backslider, tell me, are you happy? Have you had one happy hour since you left Christ? Does the world satisfy you, or those husks that you have got in the far country? I have traveled a

good deal, but I never found a happy backslider in my life. I never knew a man who was really born of God that ever could find the world satisfy him afterwards.

Do you think the Prodigal Son was satisfied in that foreign country? Ask the prodigals in this city if they are truly happy. You know they are not. "There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked." There is no joy for the man in rebellion against his Creator. Supposing he has tasted the heavenly gift, and been in communion with God, and had sweet fellowship with the King of Heaven, and had pleasant hours of service for the Master, but has backslidden, is it possible that he can be happy?

If he is, it is good evidence he was never really converted. If a man has been born again, and has received the heavenly nature, this world can never satisfy the cravings of his nature. Oh, backslider, I pity you! But I want to tell you that the Lord Jesus pities you a good deal more than anyone else can. He knows how bitter your life is; He knows how dark your life is; He wants you to come home. Oh, backslider, come home tonight! I have a loving message from your Father. The Lord wants you, and calls you back tonight Come home, oh wanderer, this night; return from the dark mountains of sin."

Return, and your Father will give you a warm welcome. I know that the devil has told you that God won't have anything to do with you, because you have wandered away. If that is true, there would be very few men in heaven. David backslid; Abraham and Jacob turned away from God; I do not believe there is a saint in heaven but at some time of his life with his heart has backslidden from God. Perhaps not in his life, but in his heart. The prodigal's heart got into the far country before his body got there.

Backslider! tonight come home. Your Father does not want you to stay away. Think you the prodigal's father was not anxious for him to come home all those long years he was there? Every year the father was looking and longing for him to return home. So God wants you to come home. I do not care how far you have wandered away; the great Shepherd will receive you back into the fold tonight. Did you ever hear of a backslider coming home, and God not willing to receive him? I have heard of earthly fathers and mothers not being willing to receive back their sons; but I defy any man to say he ever knew a really honest backslider want to get home, but God was willing to take him in.

A number of years ago, before any railway came into Chicago, they used to bring in the grain from the Western prairies in wagons for hundreds of miles, so as to have it shipped off by the Lakes. There was a father who had a large farm out there, and who used to preach the gospel as well as attend to his farm. One day, when church business engaged him, he sent his son to Chicago with grain. He waited and waited for his boy to return, but he did not come home. At last he could wait no longer, so he saddled his horse and rode to the place where his son had sold the grain. He found that he had been there and got the money for the grain; then he began to fear that his boy had been murdered and robbed. At last, with the aid of a detective, they tracked him to a gambling den, where they found that he had gambled away the whole of his money. In hopes of winning it back again, he then had sold the team, and lost that money too. He had fallen among thieves, and like the man who was going to Jericho, they stripped him, and then they cared no more about him. What could he do? He was ashamed to go home to meet his father, and he fled. The father knew what it all meant. He knew the boy thought he would be very angry with him. He was grieved to think that his boy should have such feelings towards him. That is just exactly like the sinner. He thinks because he has sinned, God will have nothing to do with him. But what did that father do? Did he say, "Let the boy go?" No, he went after him. He arranged his business and started after the boy. That man went from town to town, from city to city. He would get the ministers to let him preach, and at the close he would tell his story. "I have got a boy who is a wanderer on the face of the earth somewhere." He

would describe his boy and say, "If you ever hear of him or see him, will you not write to me?" At last he found that he had gone to California, thousands of miles away. Did that father say "Let him go?" No; off he went to the Pacific coast, seeking the boy. He went to San Francisco, and advertised in the newspapers that he would preach at such a church on such a day. When he had preached he told his story, in hopes that the boy might have seen the advertisement and come to the church. When he had done, away under the gallery there was a young man who waited until the audience had gone out; then he came towards the pulpit. The father looked, and saw it was that boy, and he ran to him, and pressed him to his bosom. The boy wanted to confess what he had done, but not a word would the father hear. He forgave him freely, and took him to his home once more.

Oh, prodigal, you may be wandering on the dark mountains of sin, but God wants you to come home. The devil has been telling you lies about God; you think he will not receive you back. I tell you, He will welcome you this minute if you will come. Say, "I will arise and go to my Father." May God incline you to take this step. There is not one whom Jesus has not sought far longer than that father. There has not been a day since you left Him but he has followed you. I do not care what the past has been, or how black your life, He will receive you back. Arise then, O backslider, and come home once more to your Father's house.

Not long ago, in Edinburgh, a lady who was an earnest Christian worker, found a young woman whose feet had taken hold of hell, and who was pressing onwards to a harlot's grave. The lady begged her to go back to her home, but she said no, her parents would never receive her. This Christian woman knew what a mother's heart was; so she sat down and wrote a letter to the mother, telling her how she had met her daughter, who was sorry, and wanted to return. The next post brought an answer back, and on the envelope was written, "Immediately -- immediately!" That was a mother's heart. They opened the letter. Yes, she was forgiven. They wanted her back, and they sent money for her to come immediately. Sinner, that is the proclamation, "Come immediately". That is what the great and loving God is saying to every wandering sinner -- immediately. Yes, backslider, come home tonight. He will give you a warm welcome, and there will be joy in heaven over your return. Come now, for everything is ready.

A friend of mine said to me some time ago, Did you ever notice what the prodigal lost by going into that country? He lost his food. That is what every poor backslider loses. They get no manna from heaven. The Bible is a closed book to them; they see no beauty in the Word of God.

Then the prodigal lost his work. He was a Jew, and they made him take care of swine; that was all loss for a Jew. So every backslider loses his work. He cannot do anything for God; he cannot work for eternity. He is a stumbling block to the world. My friend, do not let the world stumble over you into hell.

The prodigal also lost his testimony. Who believed him? I can imagine some of these men came along, natives of that country, and they saw this poor prodigal in his rags, barefooted and bareheaded. There he stands among the swine and someone says to another, "Look at that poor wretch." "What," he says, "do you call me a poor wretch? My father is a wealthy man; he has got more clothes in his wardrobe than you ever saw in your life. My father is a man of great wealth and position." Do you suppose these men would believe him? "That poor wretch the son of a wealthy man!" Not one of them would believe him. "If he had such a wealthy father he would go to him." So with the backsliders; the world does not believe that they are the sons of a King. They say, "Why don't they go to Him, if there is bread enough and to spare? Why don't they go home?"

Then, another thing the prodigal lost was his home. He had no home in that foreign country. As long as his money lasted, he was quite popular in the public house and among his acquaintances; he had professed friends, but as soon as his money was gone, where were his friends? That is the condition of every poor backslider in London.

But now I can imagine someone saying, "There would be little use of me attempting to come back. In a few days I should just be where I was again. I should like very much to go to my Father's home again, but I'm afraid I wouldn't stay there." Well, just picture this scene. The poor prodigal has got home, and the father has killed the fatted calf; and there they are, sitting at the table eating. I can imagine that was about the sweetest morsel he ever got -- perhaps the nicest dinner he ever had in his life. His father sits opposite; he is full of joy, and his heart is leaping within him. All at once he sees his boy weeping. "My son, what are you weeping for? Are you not glad to have got home?" "Oh, yes, father; I never was so glad as I am today: but I am so afraid I will go back into that foreign country!" Why, you cannot imagine such a thing! When you have got one meal in your Father's house, you will never be inclined to wander away again.

Now let me speak to the Third class. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Sinner, what is to become of you? How shall you escape? "Where art thou?" Is it true that you are living without God and without hope in the world? Did you ever stop to think what would become of your soul if you should be taken away by a sudden stroke of illness -- where you would stand in eternity? I read that the sinner is without God, without hope, and without excuse.

If you are not saved, what excuse will you have to give? You cannot say that it is God's fault. He is only too anxious to save you. I want to tell you tonight that you can be saved if you will. If you really want to pass from death to life, if you want to become an heir of eternal life, if you want to become a child of God, make up your mind this night that you will seek the kingdom of God. I tell you, upon the authority of this Word, that if you seek the kingdom of God you will find it.

No man ever sought Christ with a heart to find Him who did not find Him. I never knew a man make up his mind to have the question settled, but it was settled soon. This last year there has been a solemn feeling stealing over me. I am what they call in the middle of life, in the prime of life. I look upon life as a man who has reached the top of a hill, and just begins to go down the other side. I have got to the top of the hill, if I should live the full term of life -- threescore years and ten -- and am just on the other side.

I am speaking to many now who are also on the top of the hill, and I ask you, if you are not Christians, just to pause a few minutes, and ask yourselves where you are. Let us look back on the hill that we have been climbing. What do you see? Yonder is the cradle. It is not far away. How short life is! It all seems but as yesterday. Look along up the hill, and yonder is a tombstone; it marks the resting place of a loved mother. When that mother died, did you not promise God that you would serve Him?

Did you not say that your mother's God should become your God? And did you not take her hand in the stillness of the dying hour, and say, "Yes, mother, I will meet you in heaven!" And have you kept that promise? Are you trying to keep it? Ten years have rolled away: fifteen years -- but are you any nearer God? Did the promise work any improvement in you? No, your heart is getting harder: the night is getting darker; by and by death will be throwing its shadows round you. My friend, Where art thou?

Look again. A little further up the hill there is another tombstone. It marks the resting place of a little child. It may have been a little lovely girl -- perhaps her name was Mary; or it may have been a boy -- Charley;

and when that child was taken from you, did you not promise God, and did you not promise the child, that you would meet it in heaven? Is the promise kept? Think! Are you still fighting against God? Are you still hardening your heart? Sermons that would have moved you five years ago -- do they touch you now?

Once more look down the hill. Yonder there is a grave; you cannot tell how many days, or weeks, or years it is away, you are hastening towards that grave. Even should you live the life allotted to man, many of you are near the end, you are getting very feeble, and your locks are turning gray. It may be the coffin is already made that this body shall be laid in; it may be that the shroud is already waiting. My friend, is it not the height of madness to put off salvation so long? Undoubtedly I am speaking to some who will be in eternity a week from now. In a large audience like this, during the next week death will surely come and snatch some away; it may be the speaker, or it may be someone who is listening. Why put off the question another day? Why say to the Lord Jesus again tonight, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for Thee?" Why not let him come in tonight? Why not open your heart, and say, "King of Glory, come in?"

Will there ever be a better opportunity? Did not you promise ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years ago that you would serve God? Some of you said you would do it when you got married and settled down; some of you said you would serve Him when you were your own master. Have you attended to it?

You know there are three steps to the lost world; let me give you their names. The first is Neglect. All a man has to do is to neglect salvation, and that will take him to the lost world. Some people say, "What have I done!" Why, if you merely neglect salvation, you will be lost. I am on a swift river, and lying in the bottom of my little boat. Down yonder, ten miles below, is the great cataract. Everyone that goes over it perishes. I need not row the boat down; I have only to pull in the oars, and fold my arms and neglect. So all that a man has to do is to fold his arms in the current of life, and he will drift onwards and be lost.

The second step is Refusal. If I met you at the door and pressed this question on you, you would say, "Not tonight, Mr. Moody, not tonight;" and if I repeated, "I want you to press into the kingdom of God," you would politely refuse: "I will not become a Christian tonight, thank you; I know I ought, but I won't tonight."

Then the last step is to Despise it. Some of you have already got on the lower round of the ladder. You despise Christ. You hate Christ, you hate Christianity; you hate the best people on the earth and the best friends you have got; and if I were to offer you the Bible, you would tear it up and put your foot upon it. Oh, despisers! you will soon be in another world. Make haste and repent and turn to God. Now, on which step are you, my friend; neglecting, or refusing, or despising? Bear in mind that a great many are taken off from the first step; they die in neglect. And a great many are taken away refusing. And a great many are on the last step, despising salvation.

A few years ago they neglected, then they got to refuse; and now they despise Christianity and Christ. They hate the sound of the church bell; they hate the Bible and the Christian; they curse the very ground that we walk on. But one more step and they are gone. Oh ye despisers, I set before you life and death; which will you choose? When Pilate had Christ on his hands, he said, "What shall I do with him?" and the multitude cried out, "Away with Him! crucify Him!" Young men, is that your language tonight? Do you say, "Away with this gospel! Away with Christianity! Away with your prayers, your sermons, your gospel sounds! I do not want Christ?" Or will you be wise and say, "Lord Jesus, I want Thee, I need Thee, I will have Thee?" Oh, may God bring you to that decision!

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