SERMON V.

THE NATURE OF FINDING CHRIST EXPLAINED, AND THE PRIVILEGES ENJOYED BY THOSE WHO HAVE FOUND HIM OPENED UP.

John i. 41.—"We have found the Messiah; which is, being interpreted, the Christ."

In the last discourse I endeavoured to open up that great duty and privilege, of seeking a crucified Christ, from these words, Matt. xxviii. 5. "And the angel answered and said unto the woman, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified." Seeking and finding are connected together, as the precept and the promise, the duty and the reward. If you have been really seeking Christ, as you were directed, you have been well employed, and I hope not altogether without success; and you will desire to hear something about finding him.

The words read, give us occasion to discourse on this subject, which follows naturally upon the former. "We have found the Messiah," &c.

John the Baptist, Christ's immediate forerunner, had two of his disciples standing with him; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he says in their hearing, "Behold the Lamb of God," ver. 36. The Lord so far blessed this verbal testimony of John to his disciples, that they presently followed Jesus. One of the two who heard John speak, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He was concerned to get his brother acquainted with Christ; therefore he, and probably the other disciple, went both together in search of Peter; but Andrew first found him. Hence observe, the
grace of God in the heart gives one a kindly concern for the salvation of others. Andrew got acquainted with Christ, and he cannot be easy, till he get his brother acquainted with him also. Paul's heart's desire and prayer to God for his countrymen, was not the restoration of the worldly kingdom to them, or that all their enemies might be subdued under their feet, but that they might be saved; saved with a spiritual and eternal salvation, Rom. x. 1. When Agrippa said to him, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," he answers with great good will and concern for the king's soul, and the souls of those who were with him, "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds," Acts xxvi. 28, 29. If a man's riches and wealth increase, he grows more covetous and envious; he would engross all to himself, and cannot bear any to be above him, or equal with him. The world contracts the hearts of its children, and makes them narrow spirited, selfish and invidious. But the grace of God has just the contrary effect; it dilates, widens and opens the heart where it dwells; so that truly gracious persons earnestly desire, that all others be partakers of the same grace with themselves, and will use all proper means to bring them unto the possession thereof. Andrew here seeks his brother, and brings him to Christ.

The words of my text, are Andrew's joyful and triumphant speech to his brother upon finding him; "We have found the Messiah; which is, being interpreted, the Christ." The word Messiah is Hebrew; and being turned into Greek, it is Christ; and both these words being turned into our language, signify the same thing, viz. the Anointed. The particle the, in this place is emphatical, and not merely propositive. He is the, or that anointed one, by way of eminency. Other kings, prophets and priests, were anointed; yea, all the people of God are called his anointed; but he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and received not the Spirit in measure.

This word, eureka, "I have found it," is made famous
by Archimedes the mathematician, who, in a great excitement, between gloriing and rejoicing, first cried out so, when he had found the secret of king Hiero's crown; but it is made much more famous by Andrew, in the text, who, upon the finding of Christ, came running to Peter with Archimedes's word; we have found him, we have found him.

In discoursing farther on these words, I will first show what it is to find Christ: and secondly, what they find who find Christ, that fills them with such joy and triumphant boasting.

As to the first of these, what it is to find Christ, I take it up in two things.

1st, There is a saving discovery of Christ made unto the soul; and the soul sees him in such a light as it never saw him in before, which makes it cry out with Andrew, I have found him, I have found him: and behold, "He is altogether lovely, the chief among ten thousand," Cant. v. 16.

There is an objective discovery of Christ made in the gospel, to all that hear it. There he is held forth and exhibited, in his glorious person, natures, offices, and graces, as the great propitiation through faith in his blood; as the only mediator betwixt God and man; as the way, the truth, and the life, through whom alone sinners can come unto the Father. But though the sun shine in his meridian brightness and splendour, they that are blind cannot see it. And thus it is with sinners; the god of this world hath blinded their minds, that they cannot behold Christ, the brightness of the Father's glory, shining in the dispensation of the gospel.

But there is an internal subjective discovery of Christ made in, and unto the soul, that finds him by the Holy Ghost. This Paul experienced at his conversion; and speaks of it, Gal. i. 15, 16. "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." The particle in is emphatic: Christ is
revealed unto all that hear the gospel; but he is revealed only in them that believe. A ray of heavenly light darts upon their minds, and dispels the thick darkness which formerly overshadowed them, and makes them to discern Jesus Christ in his superlative beauty, brightness, glory, and excellency. The apostle Paul, at his conversion, had not only his bodily sight restored unto him, but the eyes of his understanding were enlightened; for he was filled with the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to discover Christ unto the soul, and to form Christ in the soul.

Now, the mind being thus enlightened, it discerns in Christ three things:

1. A transcendent glory and excellency in him; whereas, formerly, it saw no form nor comeliness in him, for which it should desire him; and therefore despised and rejected him. Now, the man sees a glory in his holy, though humble and mean birth; in his righteous life, and in his bloody death: instead of being ashamed of the cross, which was, and is the great stumbling block to the world, he glories in it, and desires to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified: what formerly he thought a blemish in Christ, he now esteems as a shining beauty.

2. A suitableness in Christ, both as to the glory of God, and to its own case in particular. When once the sinner’s eyes are opened to behold the abominable nature, and the dreadful demerit of sin, he begins to think how he can be saved, in a way suited unto the honour of the divine perfections. Sin is a breach of the law of God; it is injurious to his justice and righteousness; and such is his holiness, that he can have no communion with sinners: and the word of truth is already gone out of his mouth, “the soul that sinneth shall die.” How then can sinners be saved, in a consistency with God’s perfections? Why, the soul finding Christ, discovers in him a suitableness unto all the divine perfections; so that, in and through him, mercy and truth shall meet together, and righteousness and peace shall embrace one another. He who was not subject to the law, shall be made under the law, and magnify and
make it more honourable by his obedience unto it, than it would have been by the continued obedience of saints and angels through eternity. He who knew no sin, shall be made sin; and he who is the fountain of blessing, shall be made a curse, that we may be made the righteousness of God in him; and that we may be redeemed from the curse of the law, and obtain the blessing.

But then, the soul finding Christ, finds in him a suitableness unto its own particular case and circumstances. We never saw one thing answer to another so exactly, as the Saviour does to the sinner; and those who find him, are made very sensible of this: they are poor and miserable, he has riches unsearchable: they are weak and foolish, in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom: they are guilty and bound over to death, he is the great propitiatory sacrifice: they are unholy, yea, all as an unclean thing, he is without spot and blameless, and is made unto them sanctification: they are in bondage to their enemies, he is a King able to subdue them.

3. An ability and willingness to save. The soul finding Christ, not only finds one who is able to save to the uttermost, but one who is as willing as he is able. The soul discerns good will and kindness in Christ, towards itself in particular; as Paul did, 1 Tim. i. 15. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

Sinners, under deep convictions, are ready to hesitate on Christ's willingness, saying, will he ever be merciful to such a vile sinner as me? But when there is a full discovery of Christ made to the soul, the objection is removed; and the soul discerns good will and kindness towards itself, in the face of Jesus Christ.

2dly. This saving discovery of Christ being made to the soul, immediately the soul closes with him, and is united unto him by the Spirit and faith. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee," Psal. ix. 10. "If thou knewest the gift of God—thou wouldest have asked of him," John iv. 10. The soul finding Christ, says of him,
"This is my rest, and here will I abide. He is my righteousness, my rock, my refuge, my portion, for time and for eternity."

I proceed, secondly, to show, what they find who find Christ, that fills them with such joy and triumphant boasting. And,

1. They who find Christ, find life. Prov. viii. 35. "For whoso findeth me, findeth life; and shall obtain favour of the Lord." How greedily would a drowning man lay hold of a rope thrown in to him to pull him out? how would the malefactor upon the scaffold rejoice at the king's pardon being sent to him? How much more must the sinner, who saw himself bound with the cords of death and damnation, rejoice to have them loosed! The judge said unto him, thou shalt surely die, and he looked for nothing else; but Christ has said unto him, thou shalt live and not die.

They who find Christ, find a life of justification. The law's condemnatory sentence is repealed, and its obligatory bond cancelled: they are declared righteous, on account of his righteousness imputed unto them, and they are adjudged unto eternal life. They find a life of sanctification: the seeds, habits, and principles of grace, are implanted in their hearts by the Holy Ghost: so that from thenceforth they live unto God, and unto his Son Jesus Christ.

They find a life of inward comfort. Christ says to the justified sinner, as David's men said to Nabal, "Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast," 1 Sam. xxv. 6. None have such cause to lead a joyful life, as those who have found Christ; for they have peace with God and eternal life: all things are theirs, and all things shall work together for their good.

They find a life of glory. John x. 28. "I give unto them eternal life." This life of glory is begun in their regeneration, and carried on in their gradual sanctification. Heaven is brought down to their souls; and when their souls are carried up into heaven, and "when Christ who
is their life shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory.”

2. They who find Christ find liberty. “In whom we have redemption through his blood,” Eph. i. 7. Christ himself says, “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed,” John viii. 36. Life is very uncomfortable without liberty. How would it embitter life, to be always in prison and in chains; but if it could give one joy, just to be brought out of prison and set at liberty, how much more would one rejoice, to be brought out of prison to reign, as Solomon speaks? What a heavy life had the Jews in Babylon for seventy years, being in bondage to a foreign enemy; and “how was their mouth filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing, when the Lord turned again their captivity,” Psal. cxxvi. 2. Then they cried, “The Lord hath done great things for us: whereof we are glad,” ver. 3. I remember it is said of the Grecians, that when Titus Flaminius had restored their ancient liberties, and proclamation was made thereof by an herald, they so pressed to hear it, that the herald was in great danger of being squeezed to death among the people; but when the proclamation was ended, there were heard such shouts and acclamations, that the very birds of the air fell down astonished with the noise, while they continued to cry, a saviour, a saviour.

My brethren, that thraldom and bondage from which Christ delivers us, is much greater and more dreadful, than that from which Titus delivered the Greeks. Sinners are bond slaves to a foreign prince, a prince of another nature than themselves; they are shut up in the prison of a natural state, and bound with many bands and fetters: but finding Christ, they find liberty; he knocks off their chains and fetters, opens the prison doors, and says to them, Go forth, you are free. Oh then, how much are they bound to show forth the praises of him, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light!

3. They who find Christ, find a treasure. The kingdom of heaven, i. e. the gospel, or Christ in the gospel, “is like
unto a treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field;" Matt. xiii. 44.

There are several things in the notion of a treasure, which agree very well unto Jesus Christ. Thus, for example, there is preciousness in the notion of a treasure; things treasured up are precious, either in their own nature, or in the esteem of those who make them their treasure. How well does this agree to Jesus Christ! he is precious in himself, and likewise unto them that believe. They who find him, find the pearl of great price; the plant of renown; the altogether lovely object; the most valuable blessing that heaven can bestow, or mankind receive.

There is riches in a treasure. Worldly men treasure up riches and wealth as their portion; but whose find Christ, find the richest treasure that can be conceived. Hence we read of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and of all fulness dwelling in him.

These riches do not consist of silver and gold, which are perishing things, and unsuitable to the soul; but they are spiritual and eternal riches, riches of grace, and riches of mercy, and riches of glory.

Again, there is hiddenness in a treasure. Things treasured up are secret and hidden from the world. Christ is the treasure hid in the field of the gospel; he is a vailed beauty which few have eyes to discern; he is a mystery in his person, offices, and grace; the blind world know him not at all; they who believe know him but in part; "but when that which is in part shall be done away, then that which is perfect shall come."

And then, there is a variety in a treasure. And so those who find Christ, find a rich variety in him for their entertainment: here is food, here is clothing, here are remedies for all diseases, salves for all sores; here are all the precious promises; here is armour for the day of battle, and comfort for the day of distress; here is wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

4. They who find Christ, find rest: he is the rest where-
with the weary may obtain rest, and he is the refreshing; therefore he solemnly invites the weary world of mankind sinners unto him, saying, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you for it is easy, and my burden for it is light," Matt. xi. 28, 29. Now those who find Christ, find a threefold rest.

1st, They find a present rest to their consciences, Rom. v. 1. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." When conscience is awakened by the terrors of the law, the sinner naturally seeks rest and peace in the law, by his reformation and obedience; but still the conscience is not at peace, for it is impure, and threatens the sinner with eternal wrath: but the sinner finding Christ, gets the thorn of guilt pulled out of his conscience; it is purified, and pacified, and instead of accusing and condemning him, it absolves, and clears, and comforts him.

2dly, They find a present rest to the heart. The heart of man is a large and capacious thing, so that the whole creation can never satisfy it; but it is still crying, give, give, and never says it is enough. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing; that which is crooked cannot be made straight, that which is wanting cannot be numbered." The world is such a lottery, that if a man were to draw through eternity, he would still draw blanks, and never draw the prize. But they who find Christ, find an immediate rest to the wandering unsatisfied heart. Now they are at a point, and will go no further: they say with the Psalmist, "And now, O Lord, what wait I for? my hope is fixed on thee; this is my rest, and here I will abide."

3dly, They find a future eternal rest in heaven, Heb. iv. 9. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." They may have a restless life here, in respect of outward troubles and calamities; but heaven will make amends for all. And as meat relishes best with the hungry, and rest is most refreshing to the weary; so there will be a certain sweetness in the heavenly rest of the saints, after all their
labours, and sorrows, and sufferings, which would not have been in it, if they had never endured these things.

5. They who find Christ, find a refuge. David tells us, that when he was in great distress, and all refuge failed him, he said unto the Lord, "Thou art my refuge," Psal. cxlii. 4, 5. It is prophesied of the Messiah, that he "shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of waters in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," Isa. xxxii. 2. The justice of God pursues the sinner out of Christ; and when the sinner's eyes are opened to see the enemy and avenger hard at his heels, he cries, and flies, and knows not what to do: but finding Christ, he finds a refuge where he may be safe from the pursuer. And oh, how acceptable and refreshing is this refuge unto him! It is like the water brooks to the poor panting and braying hart, or the king's pardon to the malefactor upon the scaffold.

It is observable, that great pains were taken of old to make the way unto the cities of refuge plain and patent. The magistrates of Israel were commanded to prepare the way unto them, as we see, Deut. xix. 3. And it is in allusion hereunto, that the Baptist calls himself, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." The roads leading to this city were to be more than thirty cubits broad; the hills on the way to them were to be levelled, the ditches to be filled up, and bridges laid over the waters; and, at the parting of the roads, there were statues erected with this inscription, refuge, refuge, and with a hand pointing to the city of refuge, that those who were flying to them might have nothing to retard their motion.

And no doubt, the first sight of one of those cities would be very rejoicing to the heart of a poor man, who having slain one unawares, was flying thither: even so the poor convinced contrite sinner, hotly pursued by avenging justice, rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory, to find Christ, the great refuge of heaven's estimation for people in those circumstances.
6. They who find Christ, find a portion. When David found himself cast off at all hands, he cried unto the Lord, "Thou art my portion in the land of the living," Psal. cxlii. 6. The double portion of goods moveable, was one of the rights of primogeniture among the Jews; and so all those who are members of the general assembly and church of the first-born, having Christ for their portion, have the double portion. It is not a portion of silver and gold, houses or lands; all these things fade away and perish with the using; but it is a portion that will outlive all the clay portions of the world's children: it is a crown of glory that fades not away; an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled; it is a soul enriching, satisfying and up-making portion for time and eternity.

Lastly, They who find Christ, find all things in him necessary to their eternal happiness and welfare. Read the eighth chapter to the Romans, and there you have an inventory of your privileges in and by Jesus Christ. "Whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

The things of the world answer their respective ends and purposes for which they were designed; but Jesus Christ is profitable for all things; in him we are completely furnished with every thing necessary for our eternal well.

Use 1. Let us see, acknowledge, and applaud the happiness of those who have found Christ. Let us say, Happy is the people in such a case! "Happy art thou, O Israel, 0 people saved by the Lord." They have found liberty, a treasure, a rest, a refuge, a portion, all things necessary for their eternal happiness. Is it possible for us to figure in our own minds a person or a people in better circumstances?

You that are merry jovial persons in the world, think not religion a melancholy exercise; count not the saints of the Most High to be of all men the most miserable: they are satisfied with their lot and portion, yea, rejoice and glory in it, and would not exchange with you for a thousand worlds.
2. Search and try, examine yourselves whether you have found Jesus Christ? You were lately making a very solemn profession of seeking a crucified Jesus, while you sat down at his table. How have you succeeded? Have you found him? Consider,

1st, If you have found him, you will prize the discovery and be highly transported with it. Augustine was so transported with the discovery of the truth, in his dispute with the Manicheans, that he clapt upon the table, and cried, Conclusum est contra Manicheos. "The Manichees have no more to say." If the discovery of truth is so transporting, how much more transporting must the discovery of him who is the truth itself be! You will say within yourselves, I was seeking asses, and behold I have found a kingdom; I was wandering in search of happiness, now I have found it; I was a dog under the table, now I sit among the children at the table; I was feeding on dust with the serpent, and on husks with the swine, now I have found the hidden manna, the bread of life which came down from heaven.

2dly, If you have found him, you will love and esteem him above all things.

The merchantman seeking goodly pearls, when he had found the pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it, Matt. xiii. 46. People may judge of their state, by the habitual current of their affections. What is it you love and esteem most of all? Is it Christ or the creatures, heaven or earth, the seen or the unseen world?

3dly, If you have found him, you will have got other views of sin and of yourselves, than ever you had before.

Manifestations of the glory of Christ, are ever attended with humbling discoveries of the nature of sin. When Job had seen the Lord, he cries out, "Behold I am vile; I abhor myself, and repent in dust and in ashes:" and Isaiah, upon the same occasion cries out, "Wo is me, for I am undone; I am a man of unclean lips," Job xlii. 5, 6. Isa. vi. 5.
4thly, If you have found him, you will earnestly desire greater and farther discoveries of him; you will say with Moses, “I beseech thee, show me thy glory,” Exod. xxxiii. 18. Moses had often before this time seen the glory of the Lord; the Lord had talked with him face to face, as a man talks with his friend. But communion with God is one of those things which never cloys or wearies the soul; therefore he cries out, with as great earnestness as ever, “I beseech thee, show me thy glory.”

Lastly, Unregenerate sinners, living without God in the world, I exhort you to seek Christ, and not to give over the search until you find him.

1. Consider what a great mercy it is, that God will be found of you. He will not be found of the fallen angels; he will not be found of the damned in hell; but he will be found of you, if you will seek him with all your heart.

2. If you will not seek him now, the time will come when you shall seek him and he will not be found of you. So he has threatened, Prov. i. 24. and downwards, “Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hands and no man regarded. I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.”