

Moments *for* You

Volume 58, Number 3

Theme: Lost

**I WILL SING THE WONDROUS STORY
OF THE CHRIST WHO DIED FOR ME.
HOW HE LEFT HIS HOME IN GLORY
FOR THE CROSS OF CALVARY.**

**I WAS LOST, BUT JESUS FOUND ME,
FOUND THE SHEEP THAT WENT ASTRAY,
THREW HIS LOVING ARMS AROUND ME,
DREW ME BACK INTO HIS WAY.**

**YES, I'LL SING THE WONDROUS STORY
OF THE CHRIST WHO DIED FOR ME,
SING IT WITH THE SAINTS IN GLORY,
GATHERED BY THE CRYSTAL SEA.**



ONE WORD

“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

There is one word in this portion of holy Scripture to which we would call your attention. It is the word *lost*. This is God’s own word, used by Him to describe the natural state of every man, woman, and child. There is no possibility of excluding ourselves from the ranks of the lost. People may, as they often do, compare themselves with others, as to the measure or number of sins they have committed. In doing so, the self-righteous person congratulates himself that he has never been guilty of the most “serious” sins. However, these self-righteous ones are just as much lost sinners before God, as the most immoral person you can imagine. “Lost” applies to the entire human race without one solitary exception.

You or I can never be saved until we have first discovered that we are lost. The question is, has this solemn and sad truth been brought home to your soul by the awakening power of the Holy Spirit? The terrified jailer of Philippi (Acts 16) felt his lost condition under the mighty power of God: hence his alarm and fervent exclamation, “What must I do to be saved?” Unbelieving reader, do you question that you are a lost sinner? Then let me remind you that Christ came to seek and save none but the lost. God says you are lost, and His dear Son would never have left the glories of heaven to come and seek you had you not been lost. Without His wondrous grace and immeasurable love, we would all be lost forever.

See to it, then, that you do not fail to seek your true place before God now as a lost, guilty, and ruined sinner. It is God’s will for you to see and know that in His infinite love He has provided a present, perfect, and eternal salvation for you through the work of His own dear Son.

—Adapted from “Four Words” by R.A., originally published in *Things New and Old*.

People do not really believe that they are lost. They believe that they have sins, but it is quite another thing to have the consciousness that “I am lost.”

—J.N. Darby

GOOD NEWS FOR THE LOST

When a man has broken the laws of his country, and is under a sentence of death, he paces the floor of his gloomy cell, looks through the steel bars, and thinks of the fearful tomorrow. If you could speak to him, what would you say? Would a lecture on morality do him any good? Would you tell him to be a good man and to keep the laws of his country? Most likely he would reply, “What are you talking about? That doesn’t help me at all. I’m going to die tomorrow!”

Poor lost one! Would it help him if you kept the laws of his country for him? Not in the least. The law demands his life, and the day is set. The only way to satisfy the law for him would be to die in his place (if that were possible), and the only good news for him would be the granting of a pardon.

Isn’t it just the same for an awakened sinner who realizes he is lost? This world is a condemned cell to

him. The devil roars in his conscience, “Guilty! Guilty!” He has tried to be innocent. He has pleaded, “I’m not as guilty as my neighbors.” He has tried to make things in his life right. He has tried to keep the law of God, but he has broken it more and more. And now, trembling with guilt and fear, conscience—the devil’s jailer—has turned the heavy bolt of the gate of despair.

In this way, every sinner who will be saved is brought to utter hopelessness, knowing that there is nothing in himself that can remove his guilt. Is there good news for a man who has learned the truth about himself, and feels that he is lost? Will it be enough to tell him to make his life better, to love God, and keep His commandments? Surely he would reply, “You don’t understand my case at all. If I could do those things, I wouldn’t be lost! I am lost, I am vile, I am condemned. I feel that I have lost my life, lost the chance of going to heaven ... lost my everything!”

Reader, are you this person? Have I described your condition? Are you the one who feels lost? Listen and I will tell you of One who came to seek and to save the lost. I do not come to your cell’s gate to tell you what you must do—nothing that you can do can save you from your dark condemned cell or your future fearful doom. I tell you, if the Spirit of God has made you feel that you are lost, I have good news from heaven for you! Jesus sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He is the blessed One, who came in pity to this condemned cell, who took the sinner’s place, and died—the Just for the unjust.

Think of the glory of this mighty Savior. He knew that nothing short of His very life’s blood could meet your guilty, condemned state. He gave it

freely. What a plentiful redemption we have through that precious blood! You have sinned against God, but God is satisfied, justified, and glorified by this precious sacrifice. God has raised Him from the dead, and through Him is preached the forgiveness of sins—free and full. You can have everlasting forgiveness through Him—not through your own doing. If you will put your trust in Jesus Christ, who died for you and rose again, your cell door is open. Come out, and rejoice in the gospel, the good news for the man who feels he is lost.

—Adapted from *Bread Cast Upon the Waters* by C. Stanley

Do you know that you are a lost sinner? By this I mean, are you aware that you are in a hopeless condition, that, if you are left to yourself, there is not only no possibility of recovery, but also that you must certainly perish forever? —E. Dennett

THREE LOST THINGS

If possible, read Luke 15.

In speaking of Luke 15, J.C. Ryle once said that “There is probably no chapter of the Bible that has done greater good to the souls of men.”

SEEKING THE LOST

Jesus was ministering to society’s outcasts: tax collectors, whom everyone hated, and sinners, which meant those who did not observe the legal rules set forth by the Pharisees. Jesus freely mingled among such people. He did not despise them as others did—He loved them. Because He loved them, it was natural that they loved Him and sought Him out in return. That was noticed and resented by the teachers of the law who said

that “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (v. 2). They meant it as a slur on Jesus’ reputation, but actually it was part of the great glory of our Lord that He did stoop to save sinners. These three stories are intended to show that it was not only right, but also a revelation of the loving character of God the Father that He did so.

LOST, BUT VALUABLE

The most obvious similarity among these three parables is that in each, something has been lost. In the first a sheep is lost, in the second a coin, and in the third a son. This speaks of our miserable condition apart from God. We, too, are lost.

In each case, the object lost remained valuable in the mind of the owner. We can imagine an owner of sheep who might say, “What’s one sheep when I have ninety-nine more? It’s only a one percent loss for my business.” Similarly the woman might have said, “I’m not going to bother myself about this one lost coin. I still have nine more.” Or imagine if the father had decided, “Well, my younger son is gone, but it’s just too bad. I’ll focus my attention on the remaining son.” Of course, that’s not what the owners or father did. The father longed after his prodigal son, and in the first two parables, the owners diligently searched for the lost objects.

What is the explanation for their behavior? Only that the object had value to the owner even though it was lost, and that the owner was determined to recover it again. We are lost, but God loves us and is determined to find and reclaim us.

GOD’S VIEW

So often, we consider these parables from the point of view of the lostness of the sinner. We think of the misery of the sheep, the hopeless

condition of the coin, or the degradation of the son. But Jesus begins, not with the object’s loss, but with the loss sustained by God. In these parables, we see the feelings of God toward the sinner. He is anxious about each one and will go to great efforts to regain them.

If you are lost, apart from God, know that you are valuable to God even in your lost condition. You may be worthless in your own sight because you can only see what you have made of yourself, but you should learn that you are valuable to God. He is able to see what you were created to be and what He can yet make of you.

In Isaiah 53, the prophet compares sinners to lost sheep: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (v. 6). But, as Isaiah goes on to show, God has sought us out even in our lost condition. Jesus became like us, a “sheep [silent] before her shearers” or a “lamb [led] to the slaughter,” in order to find us and restore us to God (v. 7).

A SEARCH PARTY

Some have suggested that in these three stories each Person of the Godhead is pictured. In the first, Jesus is portrayed in the person of the shepherd. He Himself said, “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11,14). In the third parable, the divine Father is portrayed in the person of the human father. It is suggested that the Holy Spirit appears in the second parable, in the figure of the woman who lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and carefully searches until the misplaced coin is found. That might suggest the Holy Spirit’s work of illumination. It is the entire Godhead that is involved in the sinner’s salvation. The Father plans the restoration. The Son achieves it

by His work on the cross. The Holy Spirit applies it to the individual by opening his or her mind to the truth of the love and work of God, and by bringing about a repentance that leads the erring one back from sin to the Father.

ARE YOU LOST? TURN TO GOD

This is our hope—not that we are at work, but that God is at work. He is seeking, and what He seeks He finds. He has said to us, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Luke 11:9). Jesus said, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Taken together, it is an amazing picture of God. He is seen grieving, seeking, finding, and rejoicing. This has been true of God’s thoughts and actions toward anyone who has ever been found by Jesus. Remember, no matter how great your sins may be, this is the day of grace. The Bible says, “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 55:7).

—Adapted from *The Parables of Jesus* by James Montgomery Boice.

Every time I see my brother, I just praise God for God’s grace in his life. Because if God can change Franklin from a prodigal into a man of God, he can do it for anybody. —Anne Graham Lotz

WHAT THE PRODIGAL LOST

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned” (Luke 15:18).

Think about what the prodigal son

lost in all these years. First, he lost his home. As long as he had money, his friends might have invited him around to their homes; but it was not the same as the loving home he left behind. There is not a prodigal upon the face of the earth who has not lost their home. You may live in a mansion on a hill, but if God is not there, it is no home. If your conscience is calling you back home, you are not home.

He also lost his food. His father’s table with all its bounty did not go to that far country. After he lost it all, the prodigal would have fed on the husks that the swine ate, but no one gave to him. This world cannot give satisfaction to the soul; only God can do that.

Then he lost his testimony. I can imagine some of the young men of that country seeing him among the swine, feeding them and taking the place of a shepherd’s dog among them, and they said, “Look at that poor wretched young man, with no shoes on his feet, and with rags for clothes.” They looked at him and called him a beggar, and pointed the finger of scorn at him. He said, “Don’t call me a beggar; my father is a wealthy man.” Not one of them believed him; his credibility and testimony were gone. When a man goes in the service of the devil, he sinks lower and lower, and it is not long before everyone loses confidence in him. One sin leads to another, and before long his testimony is gone.

But there is one thing that he did not lose, and for anyone who is a backslider, there is one thing you have not lost. That young man never lost his father’s love. I can imagine one of his father’s neighbors meeting him in that place, and saying to him, “Your father wants you to come home.” I can imagine the young man said, “I

thought he had forgotten me.” “No,” says the man, “he thinks of you day and night. He cannot forget you; he loves you too much for that!” You, too, can never lose the Father’s love. He is there for you, waiting for you to return to Him.

When the prodigal finally came to himself, he said, “I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father” (vv. 17,18). And that was the turning point in this young man’s life. There is always hope for a person when he or she begins to think. I wish you would bear in mind that, if you are willing to own your sin, and confess that you have wandered from God, God is willing to receive you. The very moment you are willing to come, that moment God is willing and ready to receive you. He delights in forgiveness. I do not care how vile you have been. God the Father loves you still. His heart is aching for you as He stands waiting to forgive you freely.

—Adapted from “The Gospel Awakening,” a sermon by D.L. Moody.

LOST SAVOR

“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men” (Matthew 5:13).

In ancient times salt was the most important agent for seasoning and preserving foods. Pure salt is pungent and strong; it accentuates what is good, and prevents corruption. In the Bible, salt is a clear symbol of the sanctifying, keeping power of God which should be expressed in us. We are not sugar or honey, but the salt of the earth. If we stand for Christ in the face of mockery concerning divine things at school, at work, or in other situations, then we are the salt of the

earth. We might consider it useless to be the only ones in our surroundings who take a stand for the things of our Lord, but let us remember: “Ye are the salt of the earth!” Often, our mere presence will exercise a moderating influence on unbelievers.

Two further passages make clear that this “salt” should not be confused with arrogance or condescension. The Lord says in Mark 9:50 to His disciples: “Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.” Paul writes to the Colossians: “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6). Grace and peace are not opposed to salt, but complementary to it.

The salt known in ancient times did not have the purity of modern salt. In particular the salt gained from the Dead Sea contained considerable amounts of minerals. If the salt got too wet, or was stored for a long time under wrong conditions, the useful part—the saltiness—could be washed out. Thus the salt became of no use because only the useless ingredients remained, which were then cast out to be carelessly trodden under foot by men.

Salt is a picture of the influence going out from the testimony of a believer. Somebody whose testimony does not have this power is useless. We must be careful when reading this passage. It does not deal with whether or not a born again Christian can be lost. God’s Word does not leave this question open. He who believes on the Son of God has eternal life. And no one can or will seize out of His and the Father’s hand those to whom He has given eternal life (John 3:36; John 10:28,29). Saints can never lose their soul, but they can lose their savor!

The words of the Lord contain a serious admonition for each one of

those who belong to Him. Is not our spiritual life and our witness often useless and without power? Then we are, practically speaking, useless for the Lord! We are like the salt that has lost its taste and power. If we do not have fellowship with our Lord daily, by prayer and the reading of His Word, our spiritual life will be dry and without joy and power.

—Adapted from “The Sermon on the Mount” by Arend Remmers, originally published in *Truth and Testimony*.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF JOY

“There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:10).

In Luke chapter 15 we are presented with three parables which speak of God’s grace in seeking the sinner. In one case, the shepherd seeks the lost sheep “until he find it,” and in another the woman sweeps the house diligently until she finds the coin which was lost. Notice the joy in each case: the joy of God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and God the Father, filling the courts of heaven over one sinner that repents.

Beloved fellow Christians, what fellowship do we have with God in all of this? Are we diligently sifting through our homes and churches for every lost soul, and are we searching the wilderness with the Lord? Rather, aren’t we more like one who seeks a nice green tree, with soft grass beneath, where he may sit in comfort beneath the shade? Have we not sat down and said, “If the lost sheep wanders enough, it will just come to me”?

Jesus says, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17). Surely it is blessed to sit beneath His shadow with great delight, but what about that poor wanderer, God’s lost sheep, far away from the flock? What

about the lost ones among the millions that have never heard the name of Jesus? Is it not time to diligently seek the lost until they are found?

When you hear of the conversion of a sinner—the deep repentance of a prodigal—does it give you any joy? How many of us would rather go to hear a sermon from some noted servant of Christ, than go with Jesus to seek the lost sheep? Do you know the joy of bringing that dear lamb to the Shepherd’s bosom? The Shepherd has given us the Spirit, who diligently searches the hearts of lost people, and who enables us to do His very work during His absence. And honestly, are we not asleep instead of seeking diligently?

He says, “I come quickly.” Oh, what a change would take place if the saints of God were to awake, and seek diligently the lost ones, and seek until we found them. Awake, my brethren, awake, and let us experience more of the joy of heaven. Wherever a true follower of Christ is in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, with the Father and the Son, seeking the lost sheep diligently until he finds it, there is blessing. On the other hand, if we are utter strangers to this joy of the Lord, is there any wonder why we find utter barrenness in our lives and local churches? Do not be weary: search the wilderness, and sweep, sweep until you find the lost one!

—Adapted from “Fellowship” by C.S., originally published in *Things Old and New*.

If we would sweep the house, the good work will be measured, not by the amount of dust that is raised, but by the pieces of silver that we find. For he that winneth souls is wise.

—F.W. Grant

TWO SEEKERS

“He sought to see Jesus . . . the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:3,10).

There are two exceedingly anxious seekers in this passage, Zacchaeus and the Lord Jesus, and we should not be surprised that they found each other. God’s word describes them as the perfect complement for one another: a sinner seeking a Savior, and a Savior seeking a sinner.

If you are seeking Christ, dear friend, I have very good news for you: He is seeking you, too. By nature, man does not seek the true God: “There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God” (Romans 3:11). But when divine light breaks in upon a person’s soul, it sets him seeking to find God. It makes him feel that there is something wrong with him, that there is a void, a vacancy, an emptiness, a want—that he is not satisfied. That is the first thing. Then, very likely, he will find out that he has to meet God. You have to meet Him—so do I. Every sinner has to meet Him sooner or later. The next thing he will discover is, that he is not fit to meet Him. Let me ask you, have you realized that you not only have to meet God, but also that you are not ready to meet Him? The one who gets his heart illuminated, and who feels his true need, says, “How can I be ready to stand before God?”

Whenever that is the case, God puts the gospel in his way, just as you have it here in this remarkable scene

with Zacchaeus. Here was a man who was very eager to see Jesus. Now, I wonder, has there ever been in your history, such a record by God as this, that you desired to see Jesus? It is a wonderful moment in the history of a man when he wants to see Jesus, and when, in plain language, he sets out to seek the Savior.

Zacchaeus was drawn to the Lord in a remarkable way. Doubtless he had heard of Jesus previously, for the Lord had passed near, if not through, Jericho on a previous occasion. But after this day, He never passed through it again. That is what gives the story its great force. Zacchaeus had one last opportunity to get into contact with Jesus, and he took it. Notice that he embraced it; he seized it. I can understand why the Lord says, “Make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house” (Luke 19:5).

Suppose Zacchaeus had put it off, and declined the Savior’s call, as perhaps you have declined His call until today. What would have been the result? He would never have gotten another opportunity. Jesus never passed that way again. This may be the last time that God will give you a call. It may be the last opportunity that God will give you for hearing anything about His blessed Son. Decide for Christ today.

“Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near” (Isaiah 55:6).

—Condensed from *Seekers of Light* by W.T.P. Wolston.

“What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36)

**TO LOSE YOUR HEALTH IS MUCH, TO LOSE YOUR WEALTH IS MORE,
TO LOSE YOUR SOUL IS SUCH A LOSS, THAT NOTHING CAN RESTORE.**