

Study 49-A

Mini - Booklet Series

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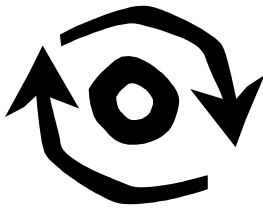
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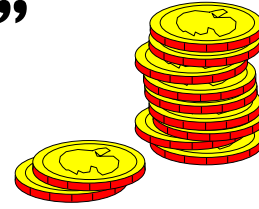
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The Three “Lost” Parables of Luke 15



Knowledge is the great enemy of blindness, partial and absolute, physical or spiritual. Knowledge fights against superstition and irrationality and wins every battle. Knowledge has the ability to free all of us from the blinders we wear.

We are required to teach what the Bible says is the truth,
not what we think it ought to be.

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Jesus Christ confirmed the fact that “lostness” is equal to “deadness” in three very familiar parables. All three parables, as we will see, connect with one another and as such, have a common theme—*if you are lost, you are dead; you are out of the picture*. Perhaps you have never looked at them from this point of view, if so, you may be pleasantly surprised.

Sometimes a misguided person will sincerely blurt out that an individual who is “lost” according to scripture is *not* “dead in his sins,” that he is *not* dead in the sense that he is unsaved. That view, as sincere as it might be, is simply in error. The Bible indicates that there are two states of mankind and two states only. They are (1) Dead, or, (2) Alive. Other ways of putting it are, *saved or unsaved, in Christ or not in Christ, in Adam or not in Adam, a child of wrath or a child of God, a saint or a sinner* (Col.1:2; Rev.15:3), or, *under grace or under the law, etc.* The words of Christ:

“Then he said to another, ‘Follow me.’ But he said, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father (a).’ Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead (b) bury their own dead (c), but you (d) go and preach the kingdom of God’ ” (Lk.9:59-60). The dead father (a) was physically dead. He is also referred to as dead (c). Group (a) and group (c) are the same. The individuals (c) who were to bury the father, however, are alive, yet they are said to be as dead as the one they were to put into the ground. They were *spiritually* or *figuratively* dead. Contrast this with the would-be disciple (d) who is placed into a different category than either of the others—*Jesus implies that he is alive because he said, “But you...” suggesting that he was not dead like the others, but alive.* Jesus makes no distinction at all between the physically dead man in the coffin and the “walking” or figuratively dead folks who are carrying the coffin.

We can only conclude from this example that Christ sees two categories of persons, i.e., the dead and the alive. The Greek word used in *both* places in this passage, translated as English “dead,” is **Strong’s 3498**, *neakroas* (nekros), from the root *neakus*

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meaning “a corpse,” and literally or figuratively, “dead.” The English word “necrobiosis” is derived from the Greek. It is the process of decay and death of body cells, while “necrology” is a list of the dead, a death notice. A “necrologist” is a writer of obituaries. Insofar as the Bible is concerned, if you are “figuratively” dead, you are dead, period. In one sense, “walking dead” people are in the state of “necrobiosis”—they are both dead and decaying.

Christ was blunt and clear on this subject. **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men’s* bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matt.23:27-28).** Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees that they were as good as dead *inwardly* although they were physically active. They were the “walking dead.” In addition, Christ tells us that hypocrisy and lawlessness are the hallmarks of deadness. Hypocrisy and lawlessness are signs of a *sinner* and sinners are *dead* people. Paul wrote to Timothy: **“But we know that the law *is* good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for *the* lawless and insubordinate, for *the* ungodly and for sinners, for *the* unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers” (1Tim.1:8-10a).** Sinners are unholy, ungodly persons.

I want to labor this point. We have been, and continue to be bullied and lied to from the pulpit on this subject and you should resent it. You should resent being called a sinner, if you are in Christ, and Christ is in you. Preachers are fond of babbling on in ignorance and foolishness in their groundless belief that “we are all sinners.” *We are not all sinners.* If you are a believer, you are not a sinner. The Bible never states, suggests, or implies that we are “all sinners.” It is a foolish and stupid thing for a preacher to pronounce that all those believers sitting before him are sinners. *They are not.*

The Bible distinguishes between saints and sinners. [A.] **“My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent” (Prov.1:10).** [B.] **“Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners” (Matt.26:45b).** [C.] **“But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom.5:8).** “While we were still sinners” implies and represents that “we are not *now* sinners though we were at one time”—we were *converted*. [D.] **“For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom.6:23).** The gift of eternal life is not given to sinners. [E.] **“For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom.3:22b-23).** It says we have “all sinned”—it does *not* say or imply, *therefore*, that *we are now all sinners*. To say that all “have sinned” is a far cry from saying that, “all are sinners.” A sinner is a person who sins *habitually*—it is his way of life. If your way of life is to sin constantly, you are a sinner and you are *dead*. But if you are a believer that occasionally (not frequently) stumbles into sin, you are a forgiven child of God, and *you* (but *not* the sinner) have an advocate in heaven, one Jesus Christ of Nazareth. [F.] **“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1Jn.2:1-2).** If you are a sinner then you have not been converted (changed!), conversely, if you have not been converted, you are indeed a sinner. The next time someone calls you a sinner, stand up and correct him—he just wrongly accused you. **“Repent therefore and be converted...” (Acts 3:19, cf. 2:38-39).**

“Lost” is equal to “dead.” For example, the parallelism: **“It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found” (Lk.15:32).** “Lost”: Strong’s Greek 622, *apollumi*, from 575 and the base of 3639, to destroy fully, (reflexive, to perish or lose¹), literally or figuratively, destroy, dies, lose, perish. Lost = destroyed, perished, dead.

The Three Parables

(Parable #1): **“So he spoke this parable to them, saying: ‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses (622) one of them, does not leave the ninety-**

¹ Reflexive, in grammar, expressing an action turned back upon the subject; designating a verb whose subject and direct object are identical, as in “I wash myself.”

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nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost (622) until he finds it? And when he has found *it*, he lays *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together *his* friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ (622).’ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance” (Lk.15:3-7).

When the Titanic went down, it was said that a certain number of “souls” were “lost.” These “souls” all died by having been “lost at sea.” Lost souls are dead souls; lost sheep are dead sheep. Christ equates a *lost* person with one who is a *sinner*. Sinners are lost and in need of repentance. Sinners are dead people, ergo; lost people are also dead people. A *repentant sinner* is one that changes—*he stops following his sinful ways*. By definition, a *sinner* has not changed; *he continues as before*. Sinners are lost (Lk.19:10); under God’s wrath (Jn.3:36); dead in sins and trespasses (Eph.2:1); without hope and without God (Eph.2:12); and unclean and black-hearted (Rom.1:19-32).

(Parable #2): “Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses (622) one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds *it*? And when she has found *it*, she calls *her* friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’ (622).’ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Lk.15:8-10).

There is rejoicing over one sinner who changes. If you are still a sinner, you have not changed—you have not repented, and no one is rejoicing! The importance of a sinner repenting and changing his ways before God cannot be overstated.

(Parable #3): “Then he said: “A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to *his* father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.’ So he divided to them *his* livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living...”

After a while, this son returned to his father. “But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put *it* on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on *his* feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill *it*, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ ”

The older son became jealous and angry. “ ‘But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead (3498) and is alive again, and was lost (622) and is found’ ” (Lk.15:11-32).

There are several lessons buried within these three “lost” parables. One is that no matter how jealous and angry we get with other people, even other believers, and nurse our warped view of them, God will have mercy and compassion on whomever he will. God does not care about our indignation regarding his choices. God just says, “Get over it, already!” “What shall we say then? *Is there unrighteousness with God?* Certainly not! For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’ So then *it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy”* (Rom.9:14-16).

Another lesson is clearly demonstrated for those who have eyes to see. The condition of deadness is exactly the same as the condition of lostness—there is no difference between them. So, the lost souls of the world, those that are not believers, are walking around in a dead state. While they live, however, there is hope for their conversion and change from “lost” to “found”—from dead to alive. After death, all hope fades because there is no activity in the grave (Eccl.9:10); all the dreams and plans of the person die with him. “He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, he has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but af-

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ter this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for him he will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” **Heb.9:26-28**). Jesus Christ appeared in the flesh totally as a man—not as a God, and when he appeared, the time was called “the end of the ages.” Remember, it is appointed for man to die once, then, the next thing that the man sees when he opens his eyes will be the judgment bar (**Heb.9:27**). Jesus Christ will return in judgment on the last day and for the ultimate salvation of the saints in Christ (**Jn.11:24; 12:48**).

Bottom Line: To be dead and then made alive again is a resurrection! Sinners that are dead and then brought alive into Great Shepherd’s fold have been resurrected! And when does the sinner come into the fold? Is it after he physically dies or is it when he repents? He can enter only after he repents, otherwise, he cannot enter.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matt. 7:21-23). This is serious business. People who practice lawlessness are sinners.

When any sinner repents, angels rejoice in heaven because the sinner is made alive where once he was dead—a *resurrection* has taken place—the *first* resurrection. Sinners, as the *lost* in the Bible, are considered equal to corpses—they *are dead; they are nekros*. They are lost and gone forever, *if they do not repent*. Dreadful sorry.

Jesus came “to his own,” but they rejected him, and in so doing, they rejected salvation and eternal life. **“He came to his own, and his own did not receive him. But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”** (Jn.1:11-13).

Receiving Christ, however it is done, represents entry into eternal salvation—into the familial relationship of being children of God. (*But you will not become God!*) The contrite person has to be born of God and this happens not because we strive for it, but because God gives it to us. Prior to this, we were all children of wrath, but praise and glory to God, we can become children of the Father in heaven. **“And you *he made alive*, [resurrected!] who were dead [3498] in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others”** (Eph.2:1-3). Jesus Christ came to the children of wrath, i.e., the lost, and the dead, and offered salvation. Yet, many of those sheep refused to hear him. Will you hear him?

“But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost (622, perished) sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt.15:24). Jesus was interested in *resurrecting* his sheep that had been fully destroyed and had fully *reflexively* perished. **“I am the good shepherd; and I know my *sheep*, and am known by my own. As the Father knows me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep”** (Jn.10:14-15).

The “lost” sheep are not merely sheep that have strayed from the fold in their meandering over the hill somewhere. The shepherd considers them *dead*(nekros) sheep! And so they are, for if a sheep remained apart from the fold for any length of time, it will fall prey to the wolves and be literally “lost”—destroyed, eaten. It will *perish*. I hasten to add here that the “fold” in question is not the organized church or fellowship you might happen to attend. So, I ask again: Will you hear the Shepherd who calls and knocks upon your heart, or will you continue to be *lost* and *dead*? ❖

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