

SEEKING THE LOST

Chapter One

One Parable in Three Parts

Luke, chapter fifteen, records the parable of “the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son” which is commonly viewed as three separate parables. However, by a careful reading, we see that all three parables constitute only one single parable in three installments. Jesus called these a “parable.” **“And he spake this parable unto them, saying.” (Luke 15:3)** Here the word is “parable,” (singular) not parables, (plural).

Jesus continues the second part with the word EITHER.

“Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it.” (Luke 15:8)

The Lord begins the third part with the conjunction “and.” **“And he said, A certain man had two sons.” (Luke 15:11)**

If we are to arrive at the true meaning of this parable, all three parts must be considered together. As we shall see, this one parable in three parts form a golden chain of three links.

As with all great Bible themes, we must consider that the Bible is the most unique Book ever written. There are a number of elements that set the Bible apart from all other books ever written.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (II Timothy 3:16)

Then, too, we must understand that all Scripture may be written for us; however, all Scripture was not written to us.

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” (I Corinthians 10:11)

All Scripture, when written, was a message or a prophecy directed to a specific person, persons, nation, or the whole world. It is therefore important to keep in mind the first three rules of Bible study. We must first consider:

- (1) The place and time the Word was given.
- (2) To whom the Word was given.
- (3) The reason the Word was given.

Having done this, we can then understand the second three rules of Bible study.

- (1) All Scripture contains a “PRIMARY interpretation.”
- (2) Much of the Bible contains a “PROPHETIC revelation.”
- (3) The Bible records many “PRACTICAL applications.”

Nowhere in Scripture do we find more evidence of all three of these elements present than in the parable of “the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son.”

The setting and occasion for this parable was in response to the criticism and accusation of the Pharisees, the religious rulers of Israel. They accused Jesus not only of “receiving sinners,” but that he would stoop so low as to even “eat with them.”

Instead of denying the fact that He was a friend of sinners, Jesus answers with the parable of “the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son.”

As we continue our lesson on this three-part parable we will consider the first element mentioned at the beginning of this lesson; the primary application of the Scriptures. This parable was addressed to a specific group of people.

“And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them.” (Luke 15:2, 3)

To whom was it addressed? It was addressed to the ones who accused Him of being a friend of sinners; the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of the nation of Israel. More than half the contents of the Bible relate to one people, the nation of Israel. Other nations are mentioned only as they relate to this nation. The only religion, worship or communion with God was administered by this nation.

“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.” (Romans 3:1, 2)

We can understand their chagrin when Jesus broke with their centuries of religious tradition and “received sinners.”

The primary interpretation of this one parable in three parts becomes clear. Jesus is delivering a message to the religious rulers of the nation of Israel; a message never before revealed to man.

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.” (John 10:16)

The Lord Jesus confirms this truth in Matthew chapter thirteen, verse thirty-five.

“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet,

**saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.”
(Matthew 13:35)**

This truth is explained by Paul, in Ephesians chapter three, verses five and six.

**“Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;
That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”
(Ephesians 3:5, 6)**

The primary interpretation of this three-part parable was God’s way of revealing to the nation of Israel that God’s plan of redemption also included the Gentile nations, who were so hated and despised by these self-righteous, religious leaders of God’s chosen people.

Jesus is telling these self-righteous leaders that in order to be saved they too must realize their lost condition and trust this same Shepherd to save them.

Having seen the primary interpretation of this parable, we can now turn to the prophetic fulfillment of this parable, which takes place some nine years later, in the household of Cornelius.

“When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” (Acts 11:18)

Before we close our first lesson we would like to give an overview of each part of this parable.

In part one, the story of “the lost sheep,” we have the CAUSE of man’s lost condition.

“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?” (Luke 15:4)

Mankind, like sheep, is hopelessly lost, and therefore at the mercy of a Shepherd who is willing to come to the rescue.

The second part of this parable, “the lost coin” illustrates the CONDITION of the lost sinner.

**“What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;
As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:
There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God,
They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”
(Romans 3:9-12)**

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

A lost coin is of no more value than a small pebble along side the road, or a piece of broken glass found in a trash bin.

The third part of this parable is “the lost son.”

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

The “lost son” illustrates the CURE for man’s lost condition. Before we will ever be welcomed by the Father, we must make the same admission as this lost son.

We see the evidence of another practical lesson presented in this parable of “the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son.” In the account of each can be seen God’s wonderful program of finding each of the lost.

Each part becomes a golden chain of three links. The Shepherd in the story of the lost sheep becomes the first link, the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11)

The second link is the woman in the story of the lost coin. The woman in this story represents the Church, the body of born again Believers, whom our Lord has entrusted to deliver the message of His redemption.

The lost son represents the third link in this chain. This link represents the RESPONSIBILITY of the sinner to respond to the message delivered by the woman, the Church.

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

With the Scripture recorded by John, **“It is finished.” (John 19:30)** the ministry of the “Shepherd” on earth was complete, and the ministry of the true Church began.

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (II Corinthians 5:20)

It is up to the lost son to respond to the message of reconciliation. **“I will go to my Father.”**

Chapter Two

Man's Lost Condition

In our previous lesson we gave the primary meaning of the parable of “the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son.” We closed the lesson by giving an overview of all three parts of this parable.

In this lesson we will turn to some of the details contained in each installment, starting with “the lost sheep.”

“What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing,

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.” (Luke 15:4-7)

To understand this part of the parable, the lost sheep, we must first identify the three subjects mentioned. We have no problem with the shepherd and the lost sheep; however, the ninety and nine seem to present a different problem.

The most widely accepted interpretation of the ninety and nine is that they are saved individuals who are safely in the fold, and the lost sheep is the sinner who has wandered away from the Church.

The Bible, however, does not say that they were left safely in the fold, but it says, **“doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness.”** The Greek word for wilderness is “eremos” and means “a lonesome waste land, a desert or solitary place.” This may be a fitting description of some churches; however, it is not the description of the Church of which Jesus said, **“the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18b)**

The ninety and nine, therefore, cannot represent saved individuals at all. The ninety and nine are identified in Luke chapter fifteen, verse seven.

“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.” (Luke 15:7)

Who is there among us that needs no repentance?

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks,

repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Acts 20:21)

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” II Peter 3:9)

The ninety and nine left in the wilderness represent the self-righteous Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel, who were unwilling to admit their lost condition and their need of the Saviour. This is made plain in Luke chapter eighteen, verses 9 through eleven.

“And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.” (Luke 18:9-11)

The descendents of the Pharisees are with us today. They see no need for mercy for themselves.

We see another truth in this also. Jesus left the nation of Israel in the wilderness, while He went to seek the one lost stray, the Gentiles.

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.” (John 10:16)

The “other sheep” in this verse can refer to none other than the Gentile nations of the world.

Having identified the “sheep,” we turn now to the central figure in this parable, THE SHEPHERD. The good Shepherd becomes the first of three links in a golden chain in God’s plan and purpose for the age in which we live, called by Paul (Ephesians 3:2) the dispensation, (age) of grace.

The Bible calls Jesus the “good Shepherd.” It tells us why Jesus came into the world and His purpose for coming into the world.

“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11)

The Lord Jesus Christ did not fail, or become a martyr before He finished his job and went back to Heaven. But He did leave the responsibility of completing the job upon His Church.

The most accepted, and certainly the most celebrated view of our Lord’s first coming was “to bring peace on earth.” **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”** (Luke 2:14)

When we contrast the most accepted view of this Bible theme with what the Bible actually says we are not being judgmental, or condemning all who do not agree.

If the nation of Israel had accepted Jesus as King there would have been peace on earth. **“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” (John 1:11)** By their rejection the “peace on earth” is postponed until His second coming.

Before we settle the question of why Jesus came the first time, we look at the four reasons FOR WHICH HE DID NOT COME. In His own words:

First, He said He did not come “to Bring Peace.”

**“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.
For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.
And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.”
(Matthew 10:34-36)**

“Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.” (Luke 12:51)

Second, He said He did not come “to Judge the World.”

“And if any man hear my words, and believe not: I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” (John 12:47)

Third, He said He did not come “to Condemn the World.”

**“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”
(John 3:17)**

Fourth, He said He did not come “to Destroy Life.”

**“And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?
But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.
For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” (Luke 9:54-56)**

When faced with so much scriptural evidence, why are so many who claim to believe the Word of God, so quick to assume that every catastrophe, whether by nature or man-made, is in some way a retribution from God? This assumption comes from not taking into account the full dimension of the age of Grace. (Ephesians 3:2)

According to Revelation chapter fifteen, verse one, the wrath of God, instead of being visited upon the world today, is being stored in what the Bible calls “seven vials filled up with the wrath of God.”

“And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous,

seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.” (Revelation 15:1)

When these vials are full, God will then give the instructions to the seven angels to pour out His wrath upon the wicked, Christ rejecting, God-hating nations of the world.

“And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.” (Revelation 16:1)

God will need no help from any human source, no more than He needed help to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Bible is crystal clear as to the one, and only one, reason for the Lord Jesus Christ coming into this world.

“As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10:15)

Jesus did not become a martyr. The Jews, nor the Romans, are responsible for the death of Jesus. The following scriptures make this truth plain.

“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” (John 10: 17, 18)

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

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” (I Timothy 1:15)

You have the choice of believing on Him as your Saviour by believing His Word, or this same Word will be your judge.

“And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” (John 12:47, 48)

Jesus Christ is not only “the way,” He is THE ONLY WAY to the Father. Jesus says in John chapter fourteen verse six, **“I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”**

Jesus says in John chapter ten, verse nine **“I am the Door.”** And He says in John chapter ten, verse one, **“He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.”**

Peter, in his address to the Sanhedrin says, **“Neither is there salvation in any other”** (Acts 4:12)

Paul writing to Timothy says: **“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”** (I Timothy 2:5)

Chapter Three

The Mission of the Church

We begin our third lesson on “seeking the lost” with the second part of the three-part parable given by our Lord, “the lost coin.” (Luke 15:8-10)

As the ministry of the Lord Jesus was illustrated in the story of the lost sheep, we see the ministry of the Church illustrated in the second story, “the lost coin.”

The story of the lost coin parallels the story of the lost sheep with one notable exception. A woman with a light and broom, instead of a shepherd, is mentioned as “seeking that which was lost.”

The lesson in the story of the lost coin is to emphasize our part in God’s plan of redemption. Our part in God’s plan of redemption is well defined in Scripture. Christians are to continue the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is to **“Seek and to save that which was lost.”** (Luke 19:10)

Paul confirms this truth in Second Corinthians chapter five, verses eighteen through twenty-one.

**“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;
To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.
Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.
For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”
(II Corinthians 5:18-21)**

The woman with the lighted candle and the broom left no stone unturned until she found the lost coin.

In our ministry of seeking the lost, God has provided us with two vital elements, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Without these two vital elements it would be impossible to get the job done.

What we are teaching in this lesson is not to diminish the importance of the local assembly. The commission was not given to just “a local church,” but to THE Church, made up of ALL BELIEVERS.

This commission is mentioned in all four Gospels, as well as in the book of Acts.

“And he said unto them go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15)

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (Matthew 28:19)

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

Search as you may, nowhere is there even a hint that the mission of the Church is to build a super structure.

There are three important elements mentioned in these verses.

The first one is to GO.

The second one is to PREACH.

The third one is to TEACH.

In every instance the instructions given by our Lord in reference to the mission of the Believer is to “GO.”

“Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” (Matthew 9:37, 38)

The “labourers” are not instructed to build a barn, and then wait for the harvest to come into the barn. The shepherd did not wait for the lost sheep to come to him. The lost sheep, on its own, would have never found its way home.

So too, with the lost coin, without the frantic search of the woman with the candle and the broom, the lost coin would have never been found. This same lesson is taught in Luke chapter fourteen, verse twenty-three.

“And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” (Luke 14:23)

Nowhere is the message of “taking the gospel to the lost” made more plainly than it is in Romans chapter ten, verses fourteen and fifteen.

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of

**whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?
And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Romans 10: 14, 15)**

The “feet” mentioned in this Scripture (verse 15) speaks of more than taking the gospel to the lost. It also addresses the “conduct” of the one who takes the gospel.

“Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” (I Corinthians 9:14)

I do not have to catalog the ”do’s” and “don’ts” of those who take the gospel to others, but let the Bible do it instead.

When it comes to the “feet,” Paul records six “walks,” (Ephesians, chapters two, four and five,) that should characterize the walk of all who take the gospel.

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)

“I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.” (Ephesians 4:1, 2)

“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.” (Ephesians 4:17)

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.” (Ephesians 5:1, 2)

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.” (Ephesians 5:15)

The most important sermon is always preached with the “feet,” not with the mouth.

**“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.
Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.
Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)**

We will not quote the many Scriptures on this subject; however, there is one other Scripture that I use as a guidepost for my ministry.

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” (II Timothy 2:24, 25)

We come now to the second part of the commission: “AND PREACH THE GOSPEL.”

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” (I Corinthians 1:18)

To the unsaved the preaching of the cross is absurd; however, this is the method God has chosen to “save them that believe.”

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” (I Corinthians 1:21)

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” (II Timothy 4:2)

Preach the Word with urgency. Be ready whether the opportunity seems reasonable or unreasonable; favorable or unfavorable, convenient or inconvenient, welcome or unwelcome. No one is ever saved apart from the preaching of the Word of God.

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” (I Peter 1:23)

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” (Ephesians 2:8)

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

The Bible also says in Isaiah chapter fifty-five, verse eleven:

“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:11)

The first and foremost ministry of the Church is to “preach the Word of God.”

“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” (Acts 5:42)

The victory of the Church is not dependent upon the success of reforming a political system. Neither does the Bible say there will be joy in the presence of angels over the completion of a church building. The Bible says:

“Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” (Luke 15:10)

There is a reason the Bible says there is “rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repents,” and that is because the repentant sinner, saved by His grace, is the only visible object on the face of this earth that will be in the new heaven and the new earth.

**“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.
Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,
Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.
Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” (II Peter 3:10-13)**

Not one church building, not one stained glass window and not one plush pew will survive. The “treasure in heaven” will consist only of the “lost coins” found by the preaching of the gospel.

Every child of God must make the important decision whether to invest their time and effort in that which will one day be burned up, or to invest in that which will survive. Perhaps the following Scriptures will help you make the right decision.

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.” (Proverbs 11:30)

**“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” (Psalm 126:5, 6)**

“And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and

he that reapeth may rejoice together.
And herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth” (John 4:36, 37)

**“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?
For ye are our glory and joy.” (I Thessalonians 2:19, 20)**

Chapter Four

Lost and Found

In this three-part parable of “the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son” Jesus presents the three-fold method of God’s plan of redemption, which would include the Gentiles.

There is a reason this parable must be viewed as one parable divided into three parts. The three parts of this parable, therefore, become one in God’s plan and purpose; with all three parts forming a golden chain of three links that must not be broken. By removing any one link, God’s plan would break down completely.

The first link in this chain, part one of this parable, is seen in “the lost sheep;” which represents the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ who laid down His life for His sheep. **“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11)**

**“As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father:
and I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10:15)**

This link in the chain was formed some two thousand years ago by the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The second link of this golden chain, part two of this parable, is found in “the lost coin.” In this we are given the ministry and responsibility of the Church; continuing to search for that which was lost. This we covered in our previous lesson.

In the third link of this chain, part three of this parable, we see the third part of God’s plan of redemption, “the prodigal son.” This shows us the responsibility of the lost sinner to respond to the gospel.

This is perhaps the most familiar story in the Bible. The full account is in Luke chapter fifteen, verses eleven through thirty-two. The lost son was just reaping what he had sown.

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” (Galatians 6:7)

“Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.” (Job 4:8)

“For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.” (Hosea 8:7a)

In this lesson we are not dealing with the cause of the son's condition, but the "cure." The cure for his terrible plight is found in the following Scriptures.

**"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!
I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.
And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet 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 unto him, Father I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.
But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." (Luke 15:17-22)**

You will not find a better answer, than these Scriptures, to the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

There are five Bible facts stated about the lost son that must take place in the life a lost person if they are to be received by the heavenly Father.

(1) He used his head.

The four most important words in the whole narrative are "He came to himself."

It is my prayer for all who are lost, who are trying to "find themselves," that they will find themselves, and come to the Saviour. Until you see yourself as God sees you, you will never see your need of the Saviour.

When the prodigal son came to himself, he did not like what he saw. This is a picture of an unsaved person who, in God's sight, is a poor bankrupt pauper, living like an animal in the pig pen. This is not a pretty sight. No wonder those who are saved, like the psalmist, can rejoice.

**"I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.
He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.
And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." (Psalm 40:1-3)**

God will always hear your cry, when you come to yourself and admit you are lost. Only the lost can be saved. **"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10)**

“And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31, 32)

(2) He used his will.

He said, “I will arise and go to my father.” Regardless of what you may believe about election and predestination, there still must be an act of the will.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:14-18)

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” (Revelation 3:20)

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” (Revelation 22:17)

(3) He used his feet.

He acted upon his conviction.

How many times have you been convicted of your need of salvation, and you have said, “One day I am going to do something about my condition?” However, you have never acted upon your conviction. There will never be a better time than right now to do so. The Bible says: **“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (II Corinthians 6:2b)**

“Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” (Proverbs 27:1)

“He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” (Proverbs 29:1)

(4) He used his mouth.

He said “father I have sinned.” The three hardest words to say in any language, and yet the three most important when it comes to salvation is “I have sinned.”

(5) He used his heart.

Not only did he use his mouth, he used his heart. He said “I am no more worthy to be called thy son.”

**“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.”
(Matthew 10:32)**

**“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”
For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” (Romans 10:9-11)**

The father welcomed the prodigal son home with open arms.

“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20)

The father “ran.” The price the Father paid for our redemption shows His concern.

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (II Peter 3:9)

First, “he received a robe;” the best robe. Luke chapter fifteen, verse twenty-two tells the story.

“But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.” (Luke 15:22)

Our “robe of righteousness” is not sufficient. The first thing the Father does when we come to Him by faith is to clothe us in the robe of His Son’s own righteousness.

**“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”
(II Corinthians 5:21)**

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the

world through lust.” (II Peter 1:4)

“And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:14)

Second, after the robe came the ring. And he **“put a ring on his hand.”** He was accepted into the family with all the privileges of a son.

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” (John 1:12)

Third, then came the shoes. After the robe and the ring came the shoes. The shoes speak of service.

“And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Romans 10:15)

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” (Ephesians 6:15)

- (4) The never ending joy. Last, but not least comes the never ending joy. **“And they began to be merry.” (Luke 15:24b)** As far as we know, this rejoicing may still be going on in Heaven.

“Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” (Luke 15:10)

