

Look at him in many lights. He is a toiling, hard-working creature. He is an anxious, careworn creature. He is a weary, sorrowful, restless creature. But for the Redemer's purpose, the characteristic that surmounted and included and leavened and ran through all the rest, was, that he is a *lost* creature.

Yes, brethren, we are *lost*! And what wide meaning, what unutterable sadness, are in the word,—*lost*! What pictures are called up before our mind's eye by that word, that tells us what we are by nature!

We think of the poor wayfarer in the sandy desert, who has strayed from his path. He has lost all count of the landmarks; he has hurried feverishly hither and thither, thinking he had caught some clue; his blood feels like liquid fire, his brain is in a bewildered whirl; and now, parched, fainting despairing, he sinks down on the hot ground to die!—That man is *lost*!

We think of the gallant ship ploughing her way across the Atlantic,—a floating palace, a detached sample of all the science and refinement and might of the land, far upon the sea; we think of her, in the deceiving fog, steered at her full speed upon the huge iceberg: then the sudden shock, the wild despair of most, the desperate efforts of some; the sudden partings, the wild horrible hurry and confusion, the water rising foot by foot, and then, when the vessel made the last sickening plunge and went down, that final frightful cry of perishing hundreds, which was once described as having been heard on the shore eight miles off, like a high, faint, prolonged wail, like the faintest murmur of an Æolian harp. They tell us that that sound curdled the blood of those who heard it. Yet all this horror we can crowd into the commonplace statement, that *that* ship was *lost*!

Then we think again of some guileless youth, brought up in a pious home far in the quiet country, who must go out at length, like a bird from the nest, to stand on his own responsibility, and push his way in life far from a father's and a mother's care. We think of him, (ah! have we not known of him?) falling from his early truth and integrity, beginning by petty pilferings, gaining gradually in hardihood, till some day the tidings reach the cottage far away that he, the clever boy at the parish-school, the lad who was to make his parents independent in their old days,—that he has fled from justice to some distant country, where he may join himself to desperadoes, himself as desperate;—and the heart-broken father and mother never hold up their heads again. And all the neighbors who knew him, now look sorrowful when his name is mentioned; and every one who has a heart, ever afterwards speaks the more respectfully and kindly to the poor silent old couple, whose darling boy is so sadly *lost*! "So I lost her," wrote the kindly genius, as he told the story of his

parting in childhood from the mother whom he saw no more. "It was in the fever we lost him, and then we lost heart," said the poor starving widow in her bare garret, when she told a humane visitor how her husband died, and she and her children sunk always lower in sorrow and want. "I have lost a day," said the Roman emperor, when he remembered how on that day he had done no good. "That man is lost," we say of one who is placed in circumstances in which his powers, of body or of mind, are turned to no useful account. It would be easy to run up the induction of instances in which we use this word to convey a vivid meaning,—a meaning, for the most part, more or less sad. We have mentioned these that we may say that in all these senses, and many similar ones, man is spiritually lost.

Yes, brethren, such is our natural state. No doubt our spiritual condition may be put in various ways. We are guilty creatures; we are depraved creatures; we are condemned creatures: in all these fashions, and more you may truly and justly describe our spiritual state, and express those things about us which make us so greatly in need of a part in Christ's great salvation. But probably there is no single word which you could employ which gives so complete and comprehensive a description of man as he is by nature, as to say that he is *lost*. All error from the right way, all distance from our Heavenly Father's house, all destitution and danger and impossibility of return and imminence of final ruin, are conveyed in that one word,—*lost*! Trace that word's meaning out into its various shades and ramifications, and you will find it implies, as no other can, all that we are, all that makes our need of the Saviour,—His sacrifice, His Spirit, His intercession. We are lost as the wayfarer is lost, because we have gone away from our Father's house, and we are wandering in the wilderness,—in a wilderness where there is no supply for our soul's greatest needs, where we are surrounded with perils, and whence we can of ourselves find no way to return. We are lost, as the great ship is lost, for we have made shipwreck of our best interests; and we drive, without a helm, over the trackless sea of life; and, away from Jesus, we know no haven for which to steer. We are lost, like the guilty child that by reckless sin has broken his father's heart; for, evil by nature, and worse by daily temptation and transgression, we are left to ourselves, lost to holiness, to happiness, to heaven, to God. We have lost our birthright, lost our Father, lost our home, lost our way, lost our hope, our time, our souls! And what loss there is in our unimproved and unsanctified powers and faculties! How these souls are lost, in the sense that so little is made of what was meant for so much: lost as the untilled field is lost; as the flower which no man sees is lost; as the house built and then left empty