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Lesson IV. July 27. Luke 15: 1-10.

LOST AND FOUND.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."—Luke 15: 10.

EXPLANATORY.

I. TWO CLASSES OF SINNERS. FIRST, THE PUBLICANS. 1. *Then.* Not a note of time, but a Greek participle, usually translated "but" or "and" or "now," as in Rev. Ver. *Drew near unto Him.* The imperfect tense in the original denotes continued, habitual action. What was going on at this time was the usual custom at this period of Jesus' ministry. *All the publicans.* The whole class of publicans. "The word 'all' emphasizes the freedom with which He allowed any one of that class to approach Him and share His teachings." Publicans were of two classes. The *publicani*, so called because they gathered the *publicum*, or state revenue. Besides these were the *portitores* or *exactores*, the publicans of the New Testament, and of Josephus (B. F., 2: 14, 11), men of an inferior sort, who did the lower work of the collection. They were everywhere hateful for their rudeness, their frauds, their vexations and oppressions; we possess long lists of opprobrious epithets with which among the Greeks they were assailed. *And sinners.* The criminals and outcasts of society, notorious offenders against morality and law. *For to hear Him.* Because He spoke words of love and hope and help.

WHAT ATTRACTED SINNERS TO JESUS. (1) It is probable that in some degree the growing antagonism of the Pharisees to Jesus tended to make the publicans more ready to listen to Him. (2) Jesus attracted them by His real goodness. (3) Jesus felt a true and earnest love for publicans and sinners. (4) Jesus brought them what they needed. Their consciences were sore, they knew they were sinners, they felt unworthy, but Jesus came as the good physician to heal their broken hearts, to forgive their sins, to renew their souls, to restore them to God and heaven.

SECOND, THE PHARISEES. 2. *And the Pharisees.* The Pharisees (*separated*) were the political national party of the Jews, opposed to foreign influence and domination. They were also the national religious party, adhering to the religious books, traditions, and customs of the nation. They were led to great exactness in the forms and ceremonies of religion, and to adopting innumerable traditions of the elders, and minute interpretations of the law. These things bore the fruit in their characters (1) of empty formalism, without the spirit of piety; (2) of outward morality, without real love to God or man; (3) of hypocrisy (4) of self-conceit and self-righteousness; (5) of spiritual pride; (6) of a life strict in some regards as a substitute for right action in other directions.

They were equally sinners with the publicans, but in another way. They did not realize their sinfulness. They were too self-righteous to repent. Their hearts were very hard. They were lost, but did not know it. *Murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.* The substance of their charge was not that He *taught* sinners, but that He *ate* with them, that is, mingled with them on terms of social equality.

II. THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP. 3. *And He spake this parable.* To illustrate and enforce the truth. Compare Matt. 18: 11-14.

FIRST, THE SAFE FLOCK. 4. *What man of you.* "There is not a single one of you who accuse Me here who does not act exactly like Me in similar circumstances." Your own conduct in other things answers your complaints. *Having a hundred sheep.* Enough, but not so many but that each one could be under the personal watch and care of the shepherd. *Who are the ninety and nine?* "called in ver. 7 just persons which need no repentance." There are many opinions among commentators, but to my mind the truth lies in one or in both of the following: (1) Regarding the whole human race as the lost sheep, then the safe ones are the angels and the saints made perfect, "the other sheep not of this fold," the holy inhabitants of other worlds not fallen, probably many times the number of the human race. (2) The safe ones are the true church of God in all ages, "the men of the stamp of John the Baptist, Zacharias, Elisabeth, Simeon and Anna, Joseph, the Virgin Mary," and all real Christians since. These were not sinless, but they had been sought and found, and had repented, and did not need the great act of repentance changing their whole lives, as do those who have never turned from sin to God.

SECOND, THE LOST SHEEP. *If he lose one of them.* This is the type (1) of the human race, who fell from Paradise. (2) Of the sinner going away from a loving Shepherd.

THIRD, THE GOOD SHEPHERD. Jesus is the good Shepherd (John 10: 1-16) who knows His sheep, and called them by name. (1) Jesus feeds the sheep, leading them by the still waters and into green pastures. (2) He provides a home for them. (3) He defends them from all dangers. (4) He rules over them with justice and kindness. (5) He has a personal love for each one. (6) He will do all these for them, even at the expense of His life.

FOURTH, THE SEARCH FOR THE LOST. *Doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness.* We are not to understand "the wilderness" as a sandy or rocky desert, without herbage; but rather as wide-extended grassy plains or savannas, called desert because without habitation of men, but exactly the fittest place for the pasture of sheep. These were not neglected, but were in the pasture, guarded and guided by the under shepherds, and safely folded; but the shepherd himself went after the lost. This could not be entrusted to any other. *And go after that which is lost until he find it.* In Palestine, at any moment, sheep are liable to be swept away by some mountain-torrent, or carried off by hill-robbers, or torn by wolves. Every hour of the shepherd's life is risk. Pitiless showers, driving snows, long hours of thirst,—all this he must endure, if the flock is to be kept at all. So Jesus gave His life for the sheep. If the Shepherd had not sacrificed Himself, the sheep must have been sacrificed. The suffering of Christ was death. But the suffering from which He redeemed us by death was more terrible than death. The pit into which He descended was the grave. The pit in which we should have been lost forever was the pit of selfishness and despair. *Until he find it.* A hint of what is the patience and perseverance of Christ, and what should be the patience and perseverance of the Christian.

FIFTH, THE RETURN. 5. *He layeth it on his shoulders.* A familiar practice with shepherds when the creature is sick, fatigued, or in any way unable to travel on its own feet. *Rejoicing:* alike in the retrieval of his own loss, and in the rescue of his sheep from danger and distress.

NOTE that the Good Shepherd deals gently and lovingly with the sheep that is found; no scolding, no harsh words, no "I told you so."

SIXTH, THE JOY OVER THE FINDING OF LOST SHEEP. 6. *When he cometh home.* This refers to the whole process by which the ignorant and bewildered sinner is brought into safety. *Calleth together his friends and neighbors.* The disciples, all the good who are interested in the salvation of men, and are working for it, the angels and the saints in heaven.

7. *I say unto you.* Who are complaining because I seek to save the publicans and sinners. Whatever you may think, the angels rejoice. Perhaps this should make you inquire whether you are so good and heavenly as you imagine. *Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.* This verse opens a window in heaven from which a ray of light comes, revealing (1) the employments and interests of heaven. The angels are ministering spirits, missionaries, doing all they can for the salvation of men (Heb. 1: 14). (2) The value of the soul. Cities and empires may rise and fall, but nothing is said of joy in heaven over it, but there is joy all through heaven over one soul saved. (3) The awful danger of the sinner. Deliverance from some small pain or danger would occasion no such joy. The greatness of the joy is a measure of the greatness of the danger. (4) We see here the desire of God and of all holy beings for the salvation of men (Ezek. 18: 31, 32). *More than over ninety and nine.* See under verse 4. God has joy and delight in the ninety and nine, as is expressed abundantly in the Scriptures. But the redemption of a soul from eternal sin and danger awakens new emotions of joy such as had not been known before.

III. THE PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN. FIRST, THE COIN,—THE HUMAN SOUL. 8. *Either what woman having ten pieces of silver.* The women of Nazareth still wear around the forehead and face a roll of silver coins, callen "*semedi*," to which the Saviour here alludes.

SECOND, THE LOST COIN. *If she lose one piece.* The coin being lost suggests that in sinful man the image of his Maker has gone out of sight, and the great purpose of his being has been frustrated.

THIRD, THE SEARCH. The *woman* is usually regarded as representing the work of the Holy Spirit in recovering lost sinners. *Doth not light a candle* (or lamp). Most of the native houses are without glass windows, and are very dark when shut up. The floor, too, is often earth, or perhaps mortar, and very dirty. Where animals dwell with the family, as is very common, the dirt is such as is best left to the imagination. The lighting of the candle represents the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. *And sweep the house.* The *sweeping* represents that disturbance of settled opinions and practices, that turning of the soul upside down, which is frequently seen as the forerunner of conversion; for here also chaos often precedes creation. *And seek diligently.* In the former parable the figure was addressed to man. This was "made to interest a different class of hearers,—the women who were listening, who had no experience in going after the sheep that was lost.

10. *That repenteth.* The choice still lay with the sinner. God will not destroy the very citadel of his manhood. Jesus went with sinners, but only to lead them away from their sin.

Conversion and Baptism of a Jewish Rabbi.

The following appears in *The Standard* of Chicago. It is from the pen of Rev. A. A. Cameron, late of Winnipeg, and pastor of the Calvary Baptist church, of Denver:

Dr. Wexler is the eldest son of His Eminence, the Chief Rabbi of Austria, part of Egypt, and the Holy Land. He is still a young man, a university graduate, can preach in Hebrew, German, French and English.

While Rabbi of Immanuel Temple, Vienna, he was preaching one day in the synagogue of a small town in the neighborhood. In the same synagogue sat the venerable and renowned Dr. Delitzsch, the modern apostle to the Jews. He was deeply interested in the young Rabbi's discourse and earnest spirit, and was secretly asking the Lord to add his name to the 1,000 of once equally prejudiced Jews whom the Lord had given him as seals to his apostleship. At the close of the service he asked an interview on the morrow. The request was granted, but before the appointed hour Rabbi Wexler was summoned by telegraph to Vienna.

Weeks pass. Dr. Delitzsch is in Vienna; he calls on his friend; presents him with a Hebrew New Testament (his own translation) with the earnest request that he would take the earliest opportunity of carefully reading it. He left, promising to call next day. On the morrow he asked the young Rabbi if he had looked into the New Testament. Wexler answered: "No! Do you suppose I would insult my father and Father Abraham by reading about an impostor?" Dr. Delitzsch invited him to his own rooms, opened his Hebrew Testament and read from the fifth of Matthew. Closing his book he fixed his eyes on the Rabbi and said: "Do you believe these teachings are the teachings of an impostor? Let us pray. The grand old Hebrew, filled with the Holy Ghost, prayed with such power that before he rose from his knees the young preacher resolved he would make a study of the book that so fired the soul of the greatest scholar of the age. The latter returned to Leipsic, but correspondence was kept up with Wexler. Result: The Rabbi of Immanuel Temple, Vienna, was a convert to the faith of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

No one but a converted Jew can imagine how many things he had to suffer for Christ's sake. His own father deposed him from his office, erased his name from the family and tribal records, refused him audience, and left him an outcast from his home and people. He found a true friend in Delitzsch. Their first meeting in Leipsic cannot be pictured. Dr. Wexler was sent to London under the auspices of the British society. He was baptized, confirmed and ordained by the Lord Bishop of London. In the great city he labored successfully among the Jews for two years. Personal study of the New Testament led him to notice the wide difference between baptism as administered by the Lord Bishop of London and by John the Baptist and the apostles of our Lord. He was perplexed and troubled. He mentioned his difficulty to Mr. Kennedy, M. P., president of the society. He was warned that to throw doubts on his own baptism while preaching and administering the ordinances to others, would place him in a very awkward position before the church and the world.

He eventually resigned and came to New York, where he found successful mission work among the Jews. He heard of Denver as possessing a large Hebrew population without one minister of Jesus Christ to tell them that their Messiah King is already come and is coming again in great power and glory. In a very remarkable manner he was led to call on the writer. He preached in Calvary church on Sunday evening, June 15. His address made a powerful impression on Jews and Gentiles. It so happened that the ordinance of baptism was administered that evening. Dr. Wexler was deeply impressed with the symbolical burial of the young sister. He remarked at the close: "Bro. Cameron, I do pray the Lord that I may be in your hands soon, as that young sister to-night."

Dr. Wexler's wish has been realized. Last night, in the presence of an overflowing congregation of Jews and Gentiles, he was buried with Christ. But that is not all; without changing his baptismal suit, he leads a young man into the water and in the most solemn manner baptizes him in the name of the "God of Abraham, in that of the Son and the Holy Spirit." No such meeting was ever held in Calvary or any other church in Denver before. Strong men were moved to tears. The events of last night open a new field of usefulness for the Baptists of Denver, and indeed for our home society. Dr. Wexler's first intention was to simply ask for baptism, but on further conference he applied for membership and baptism in the regular way. Dr. Tupper had him address a large meeting in his church last week. He and his people are much impressed with his deep conviction of truth. The officers of the British Society bear testimony to his noble character and successful work in London.

There are some 10 Jews in Denver. He alone has the key that can open the door to them. Friends wishing to aid this new mission to the Jews can send to Hon. D. V. Burns, President of our Convention, or to the undersigned.

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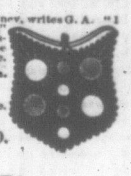

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