

PARABLES IN LUKE

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Lesson 4

THE PARABLE OF THE SEEKING SPIRIT Luke 15:8-10

Do you have someone who is very precious to you who is not yet a Christian? Perhaps this loved one is a son or a daughter, a mother or father, a grandfather or grandmother, a brother or sister, or whatever. Perhaps you have a dear friend whom you long to see come to Christ, but there is no real interest in that person for spiritual realities.

If this is your situation, the Parable of the Seeking Spirit has something very definite to teach you on the matter of waiting for God to touch your loved ones for Christ. This parable should encourage you to keep on witnessing to and praying for those who are yet outside of salvation.

THE SETTING AND THEME

The occasion for this parable arose because of the self-righteous, religious Pharisees who were disturbed with Jesus Christ who in His earthly ministry was eating with tax gatherers and sinners. There was no question in anyone's mind in all Israel that tax gatherers were sinners. They were crooks and the scum of the earth who bled the people of their money to support the Roman government and to line their own pockets. The "sinners" were the social outcasts in Israel such as prostitutes, gamblers, thieves and bums. The Pharisees thought themselves so much better, so much superior to others and they were convinced that they were going to heaven because of their good works. They felt that publicans and sinners were lost because they did such awful things. The Pharisees never dreamed that they were lost. They thought they were saved because they did such good deeds. They were sincere, but sincerely wrong.

The theme of this parable is God's heart of rejoicing when He sees a sinner truly repent. Again, this theme was set forth by Christ to show the Pharisees that they could not get to heaven by their good works and that religion in itself could not save them. We will discover that the reason a sinner truly repents is that God was working in him to bring him to repentance. Therefore, God rejoices in His own spiritual work of salvation in the sinner who turns to Jesus Christ. Our Lord often used parables about grace to break through the hard shell of self-righteousness do-gooders placed around themselves.

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE PARABLE

We must remember that this is a parable, and it is difficult to make every detail of a parable fit our theology.

However, I would like to suggest that the woman is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. The previous Parable of the Lost Sheep speaks of the shepherd as being God, the Son. The later Parable of the Prodigal Son speaks of God, the Father. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that this parable speaks about the work of God, the Holy Spirit in salvation.

The ten silver coins are symbolic of the totality of God's elect, whether they be saved or unsaved. In the mind of God, He has a plan and this plan includes knowledge of those who will be saved and those who will be lost. This plan, however, is known only to God and no human really understands God's sovereign purposes.

The one lost coin is symbolic of an elect sinner who has not yet been saved. He has been elected by God in the eternal counsels but in his experience he is wayward and separated from God. As a sinner, he has made a miserable mess of his life. He does not care about God and does not want to know anything about God's plans and purposes. He is indifferent to God and knows nothing at all about God's desire to save him. He only knows that he is unfulfilled, miserable, unhappy and frustrated with life.

THE CONCERN OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (15:8a)

“Or what woman if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, ...” -- The woman lost this one coin in her house. The homes of the poor were very meager in the East and there was only one door and no windows. It was easier this way to keep the heat in in the winter and out in the summer; however, it made the homes very dark. Most of the homes had no flooring at all, so straw was laid on the dirt floor and changed quite often.

The ten silver coins were probably part of the woman's dowry, and she probably wore the silver around her head as a beautiful headband. The coins were not worth much in monetary value. They valued at about sixteen cents apiece, or \$1.60 in all, and represented about ten days' wages. The coins, however, had great sentimental value to this woman and they were precious to her heart. For some unknown reason, this woman lost one of these coins.

The lost coin represents the unsaved sinner who is lost. Man in his natural, unsaved state is of little value, worthless and insignificant. God would lose nothing and would sense no great loss if He were to wipe out the human race because all men are rebels towards God and indifferent to Him who created them. Sinful man is of very little worth, very little value. BUT when God begins to seek and to save a sinner, when God begins to move in the life of a sinner so as to redeem him through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, that person takes on infinite value in the mind of the Almighty God. God takes a personal interest in that individual so as to make that person precious in God's sight.

Our hope for mankind is that God will save sinners; that is, He will take men who are of little value and make them valuable through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then men will become important because they are linked up to the Living Christ.

So many people today, especially in the intellectual circles, think that man is just an animal, just a machine and the victim of a deterministic process. This is true if there is no personal God and there is no redemption in Christ. All human philosophies that see man as the victim of a mechanistic system do so because they have repudiated the idea of a personal God. If redemption is true (and it is), if there is a real God who exists and if this God seeks and saves sinners, then man takes on tremendous value.

Man is lost with no value and worthless. He has no purpose and no meaning to life; he is confused and frustrated about life and the hereafter. Why? Because he is a sinner and because even as a sinner he still retains the image of God stamped on his life,

even though it has been terribly marred by sin. The Roman silver coins were all stamped with the image of the Roman Emperor, and so every sinner is still stamped with the image of God. The image of God which was marred in the Fall can be restored by the redeeming work of Christ. Christ can restore our lost image and we can become of value to God as His redeemed people.

THE TOIL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (15:8b)

“Does not light a lamp and weep the house and search carefully until she finds it?” -- The woman went into a flurry of activity to find the lost coin and she spares no effort to find it. The very first thing this woman did was to light a lamp that the coin might be illuminated and exposed. She knew she was working in darkness, and light was necessary to expose the coin.

May I suggest that the light is the light of the gospel of Christ - the good news that Jesus Christ saves sinners. The truth about Christ's saving work is found in the Holy Scriptures.

“Again therefore Jesus spoke to them saying, ‘I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life’” (John. 8:12).

“Thy word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

When the Holy Spirit begins to seek and to save a sinner, He does not do it apart from the gospel of Christ, but through it. He illuminates a person to the truths of the Word of God. A person may hear the gospel for a first time and may not respond at all; he may hear a second time and show no interest. He may seem totally indifferent after he has been exposed fifty times. The person may not respond for days, weeks, months or years. However, during this time of rejection, God may be using the gospel as a light to illumine this person to the truth. The person may begin to see and wrestle with the truth of who Jesus Christ is and what He came to do in His death.

The second thing this woman did was to sweep the house. She carefully and tediously swept the floor looking for the lost coin. She removed the furniture, uncovered everything, and looked in every nook and cranny. She laid everything bare so as to expose the coin.

I believe that this is a picture of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. ***“And He (the Holy Spirit), when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8).*** One of the main works of the Holy Spirit is to convict and convince men of the truths of the gospel. Conviction must come to the sinner if there is going to be true salvation. The Holy Spirit will convict men of sin, righteousness and judgment. This convicting work may continue for a long time after one is exposed to the gospel. The Spirit so works that a person begins to lay bare his life, be transparent about himself, and honestly evaluate his spiritual condition, and this is not an easy thing to do. There may be rank rebellion against the gospel, or a silent snubbing of Christ and Christianity as something that is a religious crutch for old ladies and

weak-minded men. A person may rebel by rationalizing that Christianity is not intellectually acceptable in the twentieth century or that it will cramp his free lifestyle. A person may fight the gospel and draw back from his personal responsibility and commitment to Jesus Christ for a long period of time.

A few people hear the gospel once or twice and respond to it, but most people hear it for a long period of time, fight it, and even curse it before they truly bow their wills to the resurrected, sovereign Christ. It is quite normal for people to fight the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.

One of the greatest movings of God in all history was during the Great Awakening in America in the seventeenth century. The Great Awakening brought a tremendous revival of Christianity. During this period, there was a mighty work of God in convicting men of their sins. Men were struck down in the fields, burdened with conviction. Women could not sleep at night because an overwhelming sense of guilt came to their souls. Children could not concentrate on their studies at school because they became aware of their sinful condition before a holy God. It was not the preaching in itself that produced this great conviction, for the preachers were not all that good, but it was the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit as the gospel was preached. The people for years had been exposed to the gospel and were illuminated about Christ, but they were not saved. They had grown cold and indifferent to Christianity but then God swept down, brought conviction, and saved multiple thousands for Himself.

The third thing the woman did was to search diligently for the lost coin. She searched with minute pains of effort, and she gave much thought as to how to secure the coin.

This illustrates the searching work of the Holy Spirit. He searches a person's heart; He searches the soul and He searches the mind of the wayward sinner so as to bring that one to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. ***“No one can come to Me (Christ), unless the Father who sent Me draw him; and I will raise him up on the last day” (John. 6:44).*** The Holy Spirit not only searches but draws the convicted and enlightened sinner. The Spirit may draw through the hearing of the preached Word, through the rebuke of a friend, through the reading of the Bible, but the drawing process becomes most obvious through circumstances. The Holy Spirit sets up circumstances in a person's life that will ultimately make the person want to come to Jesus Christ and accept Him as Lord and Saviour. Through these drawing processes, the individual begins to come to grips with his sinful condition, his lostness, and his potential eternal destruction if he does not turn to Christ.

The unsaved sinner under the convicting and drawing work of the Holy Spirit has a tremendous tug of war going on inside of him. The Holy Spirit is telling him to accept Christ as God and Saviour, and something else is telling him to go his own independent way and be his own god. This is a tremendous conflict in the man whom God is convicting, convincing and drawing to Himself.

I know that conviction of sin must precede salvation because this is the way it happened in my own life. I made a profession of faith in Christ my freshman year at college and played the role of being a Christian. However, I was not saved and my life was not changed, for I had a secret life that was filled with rebellion to God and sin. In my junior year, one night, after having been exposed to the gospel and rebuked by a new Christian, I came under the convicting work of the Spirit. I knew I was sinful. I felt my

lostness. I sensed if I should die that night I would go into eternal damnation. I fought and struggled with my decision to accept Christ. I could not sleep. I tossed. I turned. I broke out in a cold sweat. That conviction lasted for almost twenty-four hours and then I knelt beside my bed in my fraternity house (all by myself) and received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour. That was my blessed hour of salvation and I praise God for it.

The fourth and last thing the woman did was to search until she found the coin. She did not give up on the search and she did find the coin.

By application, we see that the Holy Spirit never stops searching for God's elect. He searches and searches until He brings every one of God's elect to the Saviour. The sinner may rebel, fight, get angry, become argumentative, put up all kinds of defense mechanisms and even run from God, but the Holy Spirit is going to get God's elect.

A very encouraging sign is rebellion to the gospel when people first hear it. This shows that God is convicting them. They are wrestling with their sinfulness and their need to commit to Christ. If people just love the gospel you are giving them, you are not giving them the true gospel of Christ, because men must be convicted of their sinfulness and lostness before they will ever flee to the Saviour. The gospel, when truly preached, is accompanied by the work of the Holy Spirit, and men and women, boys and girls, come under conviction. This is the reaction we want. We do not want people to be happy about the gospel until they first see their need of a Saviour. They must come to grips with their sin and lostness and give the Holy Spirit time to draw them to the Saviour.

THE SUCCESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (15:9)

“And when she had found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!’” -- The woman called together all of her female friends and neighbors to tell them that the lost coin had been found. Can you imagine the excitement among these females, for no one can show excitement like a group of giddy, happy and excited gals.

Notice carefully the woman says, “I have found the coin.”

The Holy Spirit finds the lost sinner. It is not the lost sinner who finds the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who takes the initiative to save the wayward sinner. What is it that makes Christianity different from all the religions of the world? One very obvious thing is that Christianity is the only religion in the world that says you cannot do anything yourself to be saved. God must save a person purely by His grace. Christianity says God seeks the sinner, God draws the sinner, and God saves the sinner, and this is supernaturalism from beginning to end. Every other religion says that man must do some good works to be accepted by God.

Norval Geldenhuys, in his Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, says,

In no other religion in the whole world does one come to know God as the One who in His love seeks the lost person to save him through His grace. In the writings of other religions, we see how man seeks and yearns for God, but in the Bible we see how God in Christ seeks man to save him for time and eternity. Because the Saviour has paid with His precious blood for the redemption of man, every soul has an infinite value

in God's sight and the way to the throne of grace lies open to everyone who desires to enter.

THE JOY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (15:10)

“In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” -- The Holy Spirit, with all members of the Trinity, experiences great joy. This is not the joy of the angels per se, but it is the joy of God when He brings a sinner to Himself. God rejoices with exuberant joy and this in turn causes all the angelic hosts to rejoice with Him. This parable tells us that God gets great profit from the conversion of a sinner.

God rejoices over the sinner who repents. Notice carefully God convicts, God convinces, God searches, God draws and God finds, but God does not repent for the sinner. God calls to salvation, but God does not answer that call for the sinner. God does not repent; it is man who must repent. This is the marvelous, yet baffling, mystery between the sovereign work of God and the human responsibility of man to repent. If man repents and believes on Christ, he shall be saved. ***“For WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVE”***: (Romans 10:13). If he changes his mind about sin, God and Christ, he will be brought into God's redeemed family. Yet, the Bible makes it very clear that if a man does repent it was because God was working in the sinner to bring him to that place. If any man wills to be saved, he shall be saved. This is a mystery that none of us can completely grasp, but it seems to be the clear teaching of Scripture.

CONCLUSION

If you are without Christ, I have good news for you. You need not despair or think that you are beyond the possibility of salvation, even if you think yourself the chiefest of sinners. As long as you are breathing and conscious, there is hope for your salvation. As long as God exists, there is the possibility that you may be saved. If God in grace moves upon you and you repent, you will be saved. God saves the most rebellious of people and does so because He is God.

My hope for your salvation is not in your own ability to turn to Christ, but my hope is in the God who exists, who really is. This God can and does move in the hearts, minds and wills of sinners to bring them to the place of repentance. I will never give up on your salvation because I know that the omnipotent God is able to work supernaturally to bring you to Christ.

Where are you, sinner? Has God used this message to prick your conscience? Is God drawing you? Is God seeking you? Have you truly repented? Will you change your mind about sin, God and Christ? Remember, God rejoices over every sinner who truly repents, and He is waiting for you to answer His call and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour.