**Bible/College Class Notes – *Studies in The New Testament* – Lesson 74**

**Good News of Salvation in the Saviour’s Parables**

**This week** – We continue our series of lessons based on some Parables of the Lord Jesus Christ. **NOTES**

The Lord Jesus said*,*

*“Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”* Luke 15v7

The Lost Sheep

Now if I were to ask you what sort of animal you would liken yourself to, I wonder what it would be, Perhaps, it would be a great eagle, soaring gracefully high up in the skies, looking down on this world. Maybe you’ve seen videos of eagles, or falcons and hawks as they swoop down on their prey.

Or maybe you might see yourself as a gazelle or an antelope, swift and graceful as it runs across the plains. Someone might think of themselves as a peaceful, harmless dove and maybe of course, someone might see themselves as a lion, bold and strong, the so called king of the jungle.

But when the Lord God looks down on us from Heaven, what animals does He liken us to? He sees our foolish sinful attitudes and behaviours and looks upon us as weak, silly, and vulnerable sheep, (Isaiah 53 v6).

Sheep are prone to wander thoughtlessly into danger and are weak and vulnerable. They can easily get themselves trapped in mud, unable to get out by themselves; they can get trapped in bushes, or in a fence, unable to free themselves. Maybe you might

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be out in the country and see a sheep on its back in the field. It might seem comical but actually that is a very dangerous place for the sheep to be, because if it doesn’t get back up, it could die.

Sheep are at the mercy of wild animals, such as dogs and wolves. In Bible times, they would have been at the mercy of wild bears and lions too. Sheep wander away, they are at their safest when they stay together with the rest of the flock, but they are silly and start to wander off, away from the place of safety, with little or no understanding of the dangers around them.

So, it may not seem flattering to us, for us to be likened to sheep, but it is a true comparison. We are just like sheep.

* We are prone to wander away from safety; we think we don’t need God, we don’t need His commandments. We think we can live our lives on our terms, living just for ourselves, with no thought for the danger we are in. We wander away – rejecting the wise and loving care of our Creator God.
* We are weak. We forget that this world is hostile and hates the Lord God. We forget that we are sinners. The world lures us with its temptations and we just go straight ahead and fall into sin, without even thinking of the consequences. We ignore our consciences which tell us when we are about to do something wicked.

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* Now I’m sure that you all here today have a mobile phone, but it’s not just a phone, is it? It’s a gateway into this world and all its temptations. You look on the internet and you’re quite happily watching something innocent but then there’ll be something smutty and dirty, maybe even worse, pornography or gratuitous violence. Maybe you’re messaging a friend and then he or she will start swearing and gossiping about someone, another friend and really, you’re murdering that person‘s character. Someone accuses you of something and you start making excuses, or you start exaggerating about something and before you know it, you’re telling lies after lies. Maybe you can’t stop yourself purchasing more and more apps and games for your phone and before long, you’re in debt, having to ask your parents to bail you out and pay for all you’ve purchased.

Our souls are at the mercy of this world and all the evil things in it. Like the sheep that we thought about in danger. we too need to be rescued from the danger and consequence of our sin by knowing the Lord’s lovingkindness, forgiveness, protection and guidance.

Who is the person who cares for the sheep? It is a shepherd. Sheep need the loving care of their shepherd to rescue, feed and guide them. The shepherd has a heart of compassion for his sheep, as he cares for them, risking his own life to protect the sheep and doing all he can to search for lost sheep and rescue them.

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It isn’t an easy life for shepherds today, and it was certainly much harder in Bible times. If a sheep was in danger, the shepherd had to save it, whether it was stuck halfway up a mountain ledge, sinking in mud or quicksand or trapped by ravening wolves and lions. It was the shepherd alone who had to save the sheep. If a sheep wandered away from the flock, the shepherd had to leave the others and go in search of the lost sheep, as we read in the Lord’s parable.

Whatever the weather, hot sunshine, rain, snow, hail, frost, the shepherd was there for the sheep, whatever the terrain, sandy, rocky, mountainous, whatever the situation, the shepherd had to seek and find the lost sheep. In the Lord’s parable we read that one sheep from his flock of 100 sheep had wandered off and was lost. The shepherd went off to find the sheep, he found it and brought it back upon his shoulders. The shepherd was so delighted that he had found the lost sheep, that he called together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

The Lord taught this parable to teach us many wonderful truths. Just as we are pictured as sheep in the Bible, this parable uses the illustration of a shepherd as a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

We are in great danger, our souls are dead in trespasses and sins, by nature we are sinners cut off from God, we are lost, but the great love and compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ is shown here as He came into this world to save sinners, to seek out the lost sheep and bring them back to Himself.

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If we do not repent from our sins and seek and find the Lord Jesus for ourselves, we are like the lost sheep, in great danger and destined for eternal judgement in Hell. But the Lord has come to save us and if we truly believe and trust in Him and ask Him to forgive us our sins, He will receive us, He will forgive us and will take us to Heaven when we die.

In Psalm 23, we read *“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”*

And in John 10, the Lord said *“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.”*

Jesus gave His life for sinners on the cross as a ‘ransom for many.’ His death at Calvary fully paid the debt for our sin so that we can go free. Just like the

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shepherd in the parable, the Lord Jesus gently bears us on His strong shoulders, carrying us back from danger to safety. ‘Underneath are His everlasting arms.’ Deuteronomy 33v37

A shepherd celebrates the rescue of his precious sheep. In the same way, we are told that there will be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Let’s think about that joy. There are some things in life that make us joyful. We can think of a football match, maybe a cup final, or the Champions League Final and for the winners, there is great joy and celebration. The joy in Heaven is so much greater than any earthly joy. Think about it; just one sinner being saved leads to much joy in Heaven. Isn’t that amazing? Any of you here today, if you truly come to know the Lord as your Saviour, there will be great rejoicing in Heaven amongst the angels and the souls of believers already there.

In our illustration of the football final, there are also the losing team and their supporters. No joy for them, only sadness and regret. So, the proud Religious Leaders were not saved as they did not see themselves as lost sheep needing the Lord Jesus as their Shepherd and Saviour.

What about you? Will you humbly accept that you are unworthy, headstrong sinners who can only be loved, and forgiven, by God because of the Lord Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross of Calvary?

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When we see the beauty of Christ and are humbled by our sin, repentance is not difficult.

Put sinful pride to one side and humbly ask the Lord to ‘take us on His shoulders’ and ‘into His care and keeping.’

He will certainly save us. May you each one come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Shepherd/ Saviour for yourselves.

Important Thought for us Today:

We all know that sheep are apt to wander, often away from safety, and into danger. The Greek word used in the Bible for a sheep is ‘one that walks ahead’, (πρόβατον, ‘probaton’) and the suggestion is ‘to walk ahead without due care’.

Sheep need a shepherd to watch over them, to keep them safe, ‘to lead them in green pastures and beside the still waters’, (Psalm 23) and to search for them, and rescue them when they wander away, and fall into danger.

What a beautiful picture we have in Scripture of the Good Shepherd, The Lord Jesus Christ, who loved His sheep so much that He came to die on Calvary to save them, and to carry them, safely, on His shoulders.

Is He your Shepherd and Saviou?