

# The Lost

By: Clay Barnes

Jesus plainly taught that His purpose on this earth was to seek and save the lost. On more than one occasion, He used parables to reveal the importance of the soul, and the restoration of those who have been lost. Matthew records...*the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.*(Matthew 18:11-13)The Lord seems to infer that those He came to save were once “saved” in some capacity. It is not that they had no need of a Saviour – all need Jesus. But, Jews under the Law were saved prospectively if they did what was commanded in the Law. They waited for Messiah, the Saviour to come. However, some strayed from

the truth, even fold. It was this sort that Jesus sought to find and bring into the fold of His kingdom.

Contrary to the commonly taught doctrine of hereditary depravity, all at one time were in the fold of safety, but have strayed. Paul told the Romans, *I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.*(Romans 7:9)

When was Paul alive without the law? The law had been in existence for well over 1,000 years before Paul was born. He's speaking about a time when he was not amenable to the law – when he was a child. But eventually he came to an age when he was responsible to the law, and at that point, he died spiritually, for he broke the law. Such is true with all of us. There was a time when we were all spiritually safe, not dead in sin, but then when we came to an age of responsibility, we too died in sin; not by inheritance, but by practice (Romans 5:12). We've all become lost sheep needing to

be found by the Shepherd.

Jesus says that the shepherd will leave the 99 and go out to the mountains in search of the one who has strayed. In some circles, suffering a 1% loss would be more than acceptable. If 99% of the farmer's crops are harvested and go to market; if 99% of the general's troops come home from war; if 99% of the merchant's goods sell, it would be exceptional. Not so with the Lord and the souls of men. The Lord doesn't want to lose any, for the loss is truly great! Jesus said on another occasion...*what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?* (Matthew 16:26-27) Luke 15 has a parallel to this parable in Matthew 18. It not only mentions the lost sheep, but also a woman's lost coin and a man's lost son. In each case, when the lost was found, there was joy in heaven. It is not that there is not happiness about the steadfastness of those who have not strayed. The Father expressed his

appreciation for the elder faithful (Luke 15:31), but went on to say, *It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.* (Luke 15:32)

The apostle Paul wrote...*if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a sone in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.* (Galatians 6:1) James penned...*if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.* (James 5:19-20) In the context of the parable we started with in Matthew 18, Jesus speaks of our responsibility to restore those who have strayed from a faithful walk. He stated...*Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more,*

*that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'* And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. (Matthew 18:15-17) Not many verses later, Peter came to the Lord asking how often he should forgive one who sins against him. Jesus told him “up to seventy times seven”. (Matthew 18:22) So long as a brother is penitent, we ought to forgive. How is the Lord out on the mountain seeking those who have strayed? It is through us, for we are the point of contact for the lost. Friend, let us be diligent to seek and to save, even as Jesus did while He was upon the earth. Let us understand the eternal importance of turning souls back to God.