

The Present State Of The Lost

By Everett Hardin

In Luke 15 Jesus spoke three parables occasioned by the complaint of the Pharisees and scribes, who stood aloof, critical, and uttering condemnation. The three parables set forth the Father's love for His wayward creatures. In the parable commonly called "The parable of the prodigal son," we see the condition of a man away from God. It is clearly revealed that "*the way of the transgressor is hard,*" Prov. 13:15.

The State of the Lost

1. A state of departure from God. The son "*took his journey into a far country,*" Luke 15:13. His going into the far country, probably, was to get away from the restraining influence and authority of his father. Man is drawn away into sin by his own desires, by exercising his own will. "*Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin,*" Jas. 1:13-16. Some who have been born into God's family rebel against the restrictions and order and vainly imagine that away from God, Christ, and the church there is freedom. Some wish more liberties than their heavenly Father will allow, and they go into the far country of sin to exercise their liberties.

2. A wasteful state, in which divine endowments are wasted. The son, "*wasted his substance in riotous living,*" Luke 15:13. He had lost his money, manhood, self-respect and good name. All away from God expend the forces which God has created in them and committed to them. They misuse the powers of the soul, misspend their opportunities and bury their talents. Every sin with the hand, foot, eye, or mind is sinning with that which God has blessed us with. It results in vicious lies, a sordid society, agony of soul, sickness, death, and decay. There is a great waste of talent, material possessions and moral character.

3. It was a wanting state. "*And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in the land; and he began to be in want,*" Luke 15:14. There is always a famine in the far country when one looks for things good for the soul. Only in the presence of the Father can necessities for the soul be found. That which was a joy and a pleasant companion, now has become a cruel taskmaster. He was now reaping what he had sown, Gal. 6:7-8. Paul warns us not to be misled into thinking we can ignore God and avoid the undesirable consequences of an unrighteous life. If you sow the seeds that are qualified for the production of a fleshly crop then you shall reap corruption. If we gratify our fleshly lusts, we shall do so at the expense of our souls.

4. A state of perpetual dissatisfaction, of want and suffering. He "*joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine,*" Luke 15:15. This was the lowest depth of degradation to which a Jew could think of going. Sin takes people to the lowest and most shameful depths. So great was his want that he would have been glad to satisfy his hunger by eating husks that the swine ate. Apart from God there is no real pleasure in life, 2 Peter 3:10-12. Wealth and pleasure can satisfy the body, but the "husks of animal pleasure" cannot satisfy the soul. They are not suitable to the nature of the soul, do not satisfy its desire, nor fulfill its need. Solomon proclaimed the nothingness of all earthly things. He possessed them in all their fullness. After drinking from the various spring of pleasure, wealth, and knowledge, he was dissatisfied and said, "*Vanity of vanity...all is vanity,*" Eccl. 12:8. Hence, the demands of our physical life may be satisfied and the spiritual man dies of starvation.

5. A state in which we can expect no help from others in that state. The son was in

want, “*and no man gave unto him,*” Luke 15:16. There were no genuine friends, love or sympathy in the devil’s kingdom. Man may cry in vain to the world of flesh (the gods he has served), but they have nothing to give that will feed and nourish the soul. They cannot deliver from sorrow, sickness, and death. The word of the Lord constitutes the spiritual food that will sustain mankind in this world and bring eternal life. There is none other to whom we can go, John 6:68. “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,*” Psalm 46:1.

6. A state of madness, when one is not himself; he is not thinking as God gave him the ability to think. “*He came to himself,*” Luke 15:17. Leaving the father’s house was the cause of all his woe; a return would correct his misery. So, those who are in sin will suffer until they make up their minds to return to their Father. They cannot hope to enjoy the blessings of God in that far away land of sin. But going back to the father would make it necessary to confess his waywardness. And his deep penitence is demonstrated in his willingness to be satisfied with the place of a servant instead of a son. So with shame and repentance in his heart and a confession on his lips he started back to his father.

7. It is a state of death. The father said, “*This my son was dead,*” Luke 15:24. When two things are separated they are dead to each other. The son was dead to his family, cut off from them as a member of family, and therefore dead. The sinner is “*dead in trespasses and sin,*” Eph. 2:1. He has no union with Christ, and no fellowship with God. No man can possibly be a partaker (have fellowship) with God who lives in darkness. “*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness we lie, and do not the truth,*” I John 1:6. In the judgment sinners will be driven from the presence of God, and the separation will be everlasting. The Lord will come “*in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power,*” 2 Thess. 1:8-9. “*The wages of sin is death,*” Rom. 6:23.

8. It is a lost state. Again the father said, “*this my son was lost,*” Luke 15:24. He was lost to everything good, lost to all virtue and honor, lost to his father’s house, they had no joy of him. All souls separated from God are lost. “*He is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him,*” Heb. 5:9. “*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of us as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ,*” Gal. 3:26-27. Unfaithful Christians will be lost if they are not restored. “*For if after they have escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them,*” 2 Peter 2:20-21. Many carelessly postpone obedience not realizing that the only thing separating them from eternal punishment is the brittle thread of life. Jesus came “*to seek and save the lost,*” Luke 19:10. “*God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,*” 2 Peter 3:9. Why then will you commit deliberate spiritual suicide?

Back Home Again

The son made a full unreserved confession of sin, “*I have sinned against heaven and before thee. And am no more worthy to be called thy son,*” Luke 15:18-19. He did not say, “*Father, if I have sinned.*” When people cannot make up their minds whether they have sinned, they either have done nothing wrong, or they are not humble and penitent enough to confess it. He had forfeited the right to son ship in his sinful life in that far country. His confession was full and open.

God will receive us back into our place as a child, in spite of sins we have committed while wandering in the far country of sin. “*Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry,*” Luke 15:23-24. This illustrates the joy of heaven over the return of one sinner.

Sin is the curse of man, the grief of heaven, and the delight of Hell. It is not just a simple mistake, that we can reject, minimize, or explain away. “*The soul that sinneth it shall die,*” Ezek. 18:4. Why not today obey the gospel and live? Your eternal destiny depends upon it.
