

Unit I: Our Holy God and the Holy Scriptures

Safe and Secure

DEVOTIONAL READING: 2 Timothy 2:8-13

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Luke 2:11, 30-32; 15:3-7;

John 3:14-17; 10:9-11, 14-16, 27-28;

Acts 3:1-18; Romans 5:1-11; Philippians 2:5-11; 2 Timothy 1:9-10

PRINT PASSAGES: Luke 15:3-7; Romans 5:6-10

KEY VERSE

If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (Romans 5:10, KJV)

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If, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! (Romans 5:10, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Explain the differing images of Jesus as both “shepherd” and “sacrificial lamb.”
- Express gratitude for the ways in which you have experienced Christ's rescue.
- Address and resolve conflicts by actively receiving Christ's power of reconciliation.

*Key Terms

Died (Romans 5:8)—Greek: *apothnéskó* (apoth-nace'-ko): perished; decayed.

Find(s) (Luke 15:4)—Greek: *heuriskó* (hyooris'-ko): learn(s); discover(s).

Joy (Luke 15:7, KJV)—Greek: *chara* (khar-ah'): delight; gladness.

Parable (Luke 15:3)—Greek: *parabole* (par-abol-ay'): a comparison, figure, proverb (often of those uttered by our Lord); an adage.

Rejoicing (Luke 15:5 [KJV]; 15:7 [NIV])—Greek: *chairó* (krah'-ee-ro): being joyful; being glad.



The Biblical Context

Luke, the author of the Gospel account bearing his name, portrays Jesus as the Jews' long-awaited Messiah and humanity's Savior. A unique focus of Luke's account is the emphasis he places on Jesus' concern for women, the economically challenged, the marginalized, the weak and suffering, and those considered "sinners" by Israel's religious leadership. Luke wrote his gospel mainly for non-Jews, especially Greeks, who valued logic and clear thinking. That's why his writing is detailed, well-organized, and easy to follow. He wanted to give an accurate and reliable account of Jesus' life and ministry. To do this, Luke carefully gathered information from written sources, talked to eye-witnesses, listened to people who had served with Jesus, and was guided by the Holy Spirit. Structurally, Luke outlines his account as follows: Preparation for ministry (see Luke 1:5–4:13), Jesus' Galilean ministry (see Luke 4:14–9:50), Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (see Luke 9:51–21:38), and His passion and resurrection (see Luke 22:1–24:53). This lesson's text is embedded in Luke's account of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, which contains a section of parables unique to only his gospel.

Righteous (Romans 5:7)—Greek: *dikaios* (dik'- ah-yos): correct; by implication, innocent; just (in the eyes of God).

(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Introduction

First responders are individuals in various professions who are trained to provide immediate assistance in an emergency and who put their lives on the line for others. As the title suggests, they are the first persons to arrive at the scene of an emergency and are tasked to assess the situation, take immediate action to ensure individuals are safe and provided with required medical assistance, and transport people to a hospital if needed. Their potential to save lives is essential because their on-the-spot choices can distinguish between a serious injury and the loss of life. First responders are heroes because of their bravery, dedication to responsibility, and intensive training that prepares them for the vital task of saving lives in emergencies. Jesus Christ, in His dual role as Shepherd and sacrificial Lamb, is synonymous with being a first responder. He was equipped for this dual role from the world's foundation (see 1 Peter 1:20) and willingly put Himself in harm's way to protect, rescue, and save humanity from sin's condemnation. Believers can be thankful that Jesus responded to humanity's most significant "emergency": eternal separation from God because of sin.

Just as first responders risk their lives to save others, Jesus gave His life through His sacrificial death on the cross—the ultimate act of bravery—paying the highest

price to save humanity. First responders provide critical assistance, which offers victims hope and a second chance at life. Likewise, Jesus Christ, our Shepherd and Lamb, rescued us from sin, ensured hope, and gave us a second chance to experience abundant life now and eternally.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

The Shepherd's Compassionate Search (*Luke 15:3-7*)

KJV

3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

NIV

3 Then Jesus told them this parable:

4 “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?

5 “And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders

6 “and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’

7 “I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

Luke 15 presents three parables illustrating different types of sinners who stray from God: those who wander foolishly (the lost sheep), those who are lost unknowingly (the lost coin), and those who rebel willfully (the lost son). The occasion for these parables arose from the constant criticism Jesus faced from the Pharisees and scribes, who took issue with His intentional choice to associate with tax collectors, sinners, and social outcasts. The parable of the lost sheep was Jesus’ initial response to the religious leaders’ latest critique. As He often did when confronted by them, Jesus employed a metaphorical story, framing it to invite His listeners to see themselves in the narrative. Shepherding was a familiar occupation in Jewish culture, and Jesus emphasized the shepherd’s profound sense of responsibility and the inherent value placed on each sheep. In this parable, the listener takes on the role of the shepherd—losing one sheep out of a hundred, leaving the ninety-nine behind to search for it, joyfully restoring it to the fold, and calling others to celebrate its return (verses 3-6).

However, the shepherd in Jesus’ story starkly contrasts the Pharisees, who failed in their duty as spiritual leaders. Instead of caring for and guiding the “sheep” entrusted to them, they abused their authority and rejected those who strayed. In contrast, Jesus declares that heaven rejoices over the restoration of even one lost sinner (verse 7). This parable underlines the mission of Jesus’ earthly ministry: “to seek and save the lost.” While the parable portrays God as the Shepherd

who relentlessly pursues sinners and rejoices over their return, it also highlights Christ's role as the Good Shepherd—guiding, protecting, and caring for all who come to Him in faith. Ironically, Jesus implies that the Pharisees and scribes are represented by the ninety-nine—those who believe they are spiritually secure in their self-righteousness yet fail to recognize their own need for the salvation that God offers through Him. While this parable assures the safety and security of our salvation because of Jesus, it also challenges us to mirror His compassionate concern for the lost and extend His grace to them as He does daily.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How can the parable of the lost sheep influence the faith community's ministry and how we treat those who have strayed from the faith?

The Lamb's Supreme Sacrifice (*Romans 5:6-10*)

KJV

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

NIV

6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.

8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

10 For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Romans 5 explores the benefits of justification—being declared righteous through Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross for our sins. This significant truth emphasizes Jesus' role as the ultimate sacrificial Lamb sent to take away the world's sins (see John 1:29). As the sacrificial

Lamb, Jesus fulfilled the act of offering His life as a perfect sacrifice pleasing God, atoning for our sins, and making salvation and being declared righteous possible. Christ's sacrificial death also provides evidence of God's unconditional love, a point Paul emphasizes beginning with verse 6. Here, he highlights that Jesus' sacrifice was made while we were still powerless to do anything about our sinful condition—an act motivated by God's profound love. Christ's death “at the right time” refers to Jesus' coming at the precise moment in history when His mission lined up with God's plan for humanity. Paul contrasts God's love demonstrated by Christ's death on the cross for the completely unrighteous, undeserving humans as an uncommon sacrifice for someone of high character, let alone offering one's life for the ungodly—yet, Christ did (verse 7).

Paul expands on the reality of the unconditional love that moved God to sacrifice His Son for the ungodly in verse 8. God didn't wait for the ungodly to “get right”; Christ died for us, in our place, while we were still sinners. Because of sin, we deserved God's wrathful judgment and death, but Christ took that judgment on Himself and died in our place—demonstrating proof of the extent of God's love for us. Paul explains that because Christ's blood justified us and made us righteous by His violent death, we are safe and secure from condemnation (verse 9). In verse 10, Paul shifts from emphasizing our legal standing (declared righteous) because of Christ's sacrificial death to our new relationship with God. Everyone declared righteous is no longer God's enemy. Instead, they are reconciled to Him by Christ's death and saved from eternal separation from God by our now-living Savior's power. Christ's paradoxical role of both Shepherd and sacrificial Lamb are inseparable and still functional. As the perfect sacrificial Lamb, He secured eternal salvation while continuing to be our Shepherd through His life as the provider, protector, and guide, caring for the weak, leading us to spiritual nourishment and safety, and intentionally seeking the lost.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Paul emphasized Christ's death on the cross as the sacrificial Lamb “while we were still sinners.” What does this truth imply about how the church should respond to unbelievers?

A Closing Thought

One of the great benefits of justification by faith in Christ is that the reconciliation with God is only possible by His intervention as the ultimate sacrificial Lamb. Christ's death on the cross is the undeniable and unaltered proof of God's grace toward undeserving sinners. Through His sacrificial death, Christ legally declared us righteous, ensured our escape from God's righteous judgment, freed us from sin's condemnation, guaranteed eternal life, and provided access to His continuing ministry of intercession, provision, protection, guidance, and spiritual nourishment as the Good Shepherd. Those who are His followers must show concern for the lost, hurting, and needy with sacrificial service in His name.

Your Life

Jesus fulfilled the paradoxical roles of Shepherd and sacrificial Lamb and guaranteed our eternal safety and security because we accepted Him as Savior by faith. However, the blessings we receive are not an end in themselves. They should motivate us to share Christ's redemptive work by worshipping Him authentically, responding to those needing salvation, and advocating for social justice.

Your World!

Luke 15 and Romans 5 beautifully merge Christ's dual role as the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost and the Lamb who redeemed sinners while they were still ungodly. His work on our behalf is undeniably a cause for gratitude and worship. Yet, these passages also highlight the church's responsibility to target its evangelistic and mission efforts—demonstrating God's unconditional love for others and unwavering confidence in His saving grace, secured by our living Good Shepherd and sacrificial Lamb.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank You for sending Your Son as our Shepherd and redeeming sacrificial Lamb. He was the ultimate “first responder” at the right time, and we are now safe and secure eternally. We pray that You will use us to model His mission as Your redemptive agents in the world in gratitude for being justified by His death on the Cross for our sins. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Next week's lesson explores and answers the question, “What shapes one's core identity?” Read Romans 8:12-17, 26-27.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, December 22	“The Spirit Accomplishes God's Will”	(Zechariah 4:1-7)
TUESDAY, December 23	“The Spirit Bestows Gifts”	(1 Corinthians 12:1-13)
WEDNESDAY, December 24	“The Spirit Gives Wisdom and Understanding”	(Isaiah 11:1-9)
THURSDAY, December 25	“The Spirit Works in Jesus' Birth”	(Matthew 1:18-25)
FRIDAY, December 26	“The Spirit Reveals God's Glory”	(Acts 7:51-60)
SATURDAY, December 27	“The Spirit Creates and Renews”	(Psalm 104:24, 29-35)
SUNDAY, December 28	“The Spirit Affirms Our Adoption”	(Romans 8:12-17, 26-27)