

In other words, you are important to our heavenly Father, for we are told in this parable that all the angels rejoice over even **one** sinner who repents rather than the 99 who need no repentance. The question is: Are we able to share in God's joy over the one sinner who repents?" While the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were unable to do this, the angels of heaven rejoice. We rejoice because we were once in their shoes. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (NIV) "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

Let us take to heart the lessons of this parable. 1) Let us go to the lost sheep of Israel as Jesus encourages us to do in Matthew 10:6. May God give us a heart for the lost sheep who yet have not entered His sheep pen. 2) Let us rejoice with God for the work He accomplishes in the hearts and lives of others just as we rejoice in God bringing us to faith. Together we all may sing with confidence: "Amazing Grace."

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who, in the days of Your flesh, was moved with compassion because of the bodily as well as spiritual needs of men, and Who, as a true and faithful Shepherd, does even now follow Your lost sheep in the wilderness: Grant us grace, we ask You, to have pity upon all whom You do pity, and after Your holy example, to seek to bring deliverance from sin and all its evil fruits to all who suffer in body and soul; Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns with You, one God, world without end. Amen

THE LAMPLIGHTER



**THEME: Jesus Spoke to Them in Parables –
“Joy Over Just one”**

“Then Jesus told them this parable: {4} ‘Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not 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 15:3-7 NIV)

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Dear Sheep of His Flock,

John Newton, pastor and hymn writer, came into ministry at the age of 39, but as you hear the story of his life one can see God at work to mold and to shape him into His servant. Following in his father's footsteps, he goes to work on his father's ship at the age of 11. Through the years he served on several ships during which he got involved with the African slave trade. Eventually, he acquired his own ship. Selling and transporting of black slaves to the West Indies and America was cruel and vicious, but a way of living for him. He felt convicted of the inhuman aspects of his work and became a strong crusader against slavery.

At 23 years of age, while returning to England from Africa, the voyage was particularly stormy. He was on board a cargo ship against heavy seas and turbulent weather. Worn out and almost frozen, it appeared all would be lost. Newton began reading Thomas Kempis' religious classic: Imitation of Christ. The book and his near death experience were the turning points of Newton's life. He was amazed to be saved from almost certain death.

On his return to England John married his sweetheart Mary Catlett in 1750, and became a clerk at the Port of Liverpool for the next 9 years. It was then that he felt God calling him to preach the Gospel. It seemed that wherever John Newton preached, large crowds would gather to listen to the "Old Converted Sea Captain." In 1790 he lost his beloved Mary to cancer and in 1807, the year that John Newton died, the British Parliament Abolished Slavery of which he became a main spokesman. Newton's hymn, "Amazing Grace," represented for him the total expression of his life.

As we look over the years of our lives, how much does this amazing grace represent for us the work God has done

for us and all mankind. We identify with John Newton's stanza that says "I was lost but now I'm found; was blind but now I see." For we once belonged to the category of the lost. Isaiah the prophet said that we like sheep have gone astray, each of us have turned our own way; a way that led us in a direction that took us further and further away from our heavenly Father. A similar thought is captured by King David. (Ps 119:176 NIV) "I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant, for I have not forgotten your commands." (Ezek 34:4 NIV) "You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally." Jeremiah the prophet uses the same terminology in reference to one who dwells outside of a relationship with God. (Jer 50:6 NIV) "My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray and caused them to roam on the mountains. They wandered over mountain and hill and forgot their own resting place."

Unless the lost sheep is sought out, it would be forever lost and possibly destroyed. The Good Shepherd comes into this world and says: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10 NIV). Now it was not uncommon for a shepherd to own a hundred sheep. The unusual thing was that this shepherd left the ninety-nine in an open field to seek out the one that was lost. Such a point directs us to the value of even one lost soul. It points to a love that goes beyond anything human; it is a divine love which seeks the lost.