

Lost Sinners

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Let me invite you to look with me in Isaiah chapter 29. Last time we didn't get too far looking at this subject of what it is to be lost. We looked primarily at the importance of considering our state before the Lord as we are born in this world, all of us being born lost.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,”¹ all of his sheep.

If the Lord has been pleased to reveal Christ in us that is his grace. That is his mercy. That is what he purposed to do through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. But let us never forget that in our nature we are no different than anybody out there and so let's read here in Isaiah 29, again, beginning with verse nine down to verse 14 and I will attempt to get through this entire portion today, the Lord helping me.

Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.²

¹ Isaiah 53:6.

² Isaiah 29:9-14.

We looked last time at what it is to be lost. We saw that it really involves two types of people, even those that are the Lord's by his purpose, that he purposed to save. Yet as they enter into this world they enter it lost. And yet at some point, if they are the Lord's sheep, he will be pleased to draw them to himself.

I trust that describes some here.

And yet there are those that will be eternally lost. And that may describe some here.

You come, you sit, you listen, you read just as anybody reads, you seek understanding but it is not with an interest in Christ. Only that comes through the Spirit to give you that interest.

There will be many knowledgeable people that will spend eternity separated from God in hell, that will know the doctrines of grace and define sovereignty and even talk about particular redemption and yet be lost, eternally lost.

What did these not know in Israel concerning the God of Israel? Very sobering when you think about it. And yet the Lord has so purposed that it be that way.

And that was the first point that we saw last time and the message was that to be lost means that you don't even perceive it in yourself. I know that was my testimony for years having been through college and seminary. I thought I knew the Lord and yet I was lost, but didn't know it until such time as it pleased the Lord to reveal Christ in me. And I can identify with what we read here in verses nine and 10, to be drunk with wine, to stagger, but not with strong drink. It is not talking about being physically drunk. It is being drunk with yourself, having a high opinion of yourself, feeling in some measure that your will really does have something to do with God saving you.

Dear friends, that is idolatry, just straight and simple. That is an idol that will—unless the Lord causes you to tear it down and to burn it—you will die that eternal death holding on to it, because that is what men do. They hold on to idols unless the God of glory teaches them otherwise.

And what it is is a spirit of deep sleep even as it is described there in verse 10.

“For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep.”³

You know, if you have been in a deep sleep and suddenly awakened, you shake yourself a little bit to get your bearings. You say some things that you don't even realize you are saying.

I recently had a procedure this week and my wife tells me about some things I was babbling and didn't even know it. You don't perceive it because you come to. You know, suddenly things become clear, but it reminded me a little bit of that stupor in which men

³ Isaiah 29:10.

are. They babble. They say things that they don't even realize is to their condemnation. They talk about their faith. They talk about their years of service. They talk about knowing God, knowing Christ. They have every confidence that Christ has died for them. They use terminology like that. But they know not what they say. It is like someone talking in their sleep.

And I will tell you. Unless the Lord wakes you up, unless the Lord gives you a mind and a heart to know Christ in truth, you will go to your deathbed babbling even reading this Scripture in a stupor and your eyes being closed.

We live in a day and age when men are exalted as preachers and they are exalted as being rulers, as being seers. Where do men go whenever they are troubled in spirit? Don't they run to a preacher when they are troubled? And preachers are quick to soothe their minds and their consciences, make them feel better about themselves.

It was so in Isaiah's day. You can see there in verse 10, "The prophets and your rulers [and] seers hath he covered."⁴

It is nothing more than the blind leading the blind. And there are many, many men out there that love to have it so. They love to have people come to them and seek their advice, pray for them, give them some comfort, some peace of mind and then go their way. Let's be careful not to give men and women today a sense of false peace especially when they ask you, "Do you think I am saved? Do you think I am the Lord's? I am a little troubled by it. What can you do to help me?"

There is preachers that are there for instant gratification.

"Oh, you shouldn't be troubled. You know, you are really one of the Lord's. It is just at time of doubt. Let's have a word of prayer together and let's move on."

That is how these things are dealt with. But there is a reason men are troubled. There is a reason why their conscience is pierced. There is a reason why they can't rest because rest is only in Christ. Rest is in him causing the sinner to see that all of their hope is in that blood that he shed and that righteousness that he worked out alone. And if the Lord should give you up or me up to a judicial blindness as he did with Israel and they be eternally lost except for those that he has purposed to separate out to himself, can you agree with God that he is just in doing so? That is where most people have an argument. They can't agree with God. They have trouble agreeing with God when it involves someone else. But they really have trouble agreeing with God when it involves them.

But if God should cast you or me into an eternal hell and separation from him, can you testify sitting where you are right now that he is just in doing so? If not, you have a problem with God and who he is. And that is where the Lord will have to deal with your heart and soul.

⁴ Isaiah 29:10.

So many rather than face it try to defend themselves. They try to justify themselves before God. And that is the point we saw last time. They are lost and don't even perceive it. Some will plug their ears and run hard the other way and say, "Oh, let's don't talk about these things."

But God is God and he is just and right in all that he does.

And, secondly, what I want you to see here in verse 11 is that those who are lost are ignorant of the true message of Scripture. They don't perceive that they are lost and they seek themselves as confidants as far as the Scriptures go. They boast in what they know and understand of Scripture as did I.

You know, Paul said that he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. That pretty much describes what I was. Growing up, going through school, learning the original languages, at a very young age starting to preach, too young. I can't tell you the shame of having been pushed into standing behind a pulpit to preach when I knew nothing of Christ.

Let's don't be in a hurry to stand up here and open our mouths and pretend as if we know something that the Lord hasn't taught us.

You know, as the Lord teaches you of your lostness, that is where you really begin to realize just how stupid and ignorant you are of the things of Christ. And as the Lord began to teach me that was my humbling, that in spite of all the years of training I was lost and did not know Christ.

When people would come initially and talk to me I liked to be able to answer. I liked to be able to say, "Well, let's take the Word and open it here. Let's just show you where you are ignorant and how the Scriptures can straighten you out."

But as the Lord begins to teach a heart this tongue... I know we talk about the tongue being loosed to declare the glories of Christ, but I am telling you this. You are not as cock sure as you used to be.

And that is what we read here in Isaiah 29 and verse 11.

"And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned."⁵

See, that is the Greeks. Pretend to have wisdom

"...saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed."⁶

I remember when the Lord began to deal in my own heart and I realized that in spite of all of my training I really did not know Christ. You know, there were some that I was

⁵ Isaiah 29:11.

⁶ Ibid.

pastoring at the time. I can remember the next Sunday having to stand up to preach and being as a kindergartener, not even knowing where to begin. There were people... some would ask you questions like they did before and you would just have to tell them, you know, "Why, I don't know what that means."

It is like starting all over. I wondered at how I could have read these Scriptures and studied them even in the original languages and missed Christ. I went back and started reading again. It was like do not disturb. I have got to find out this message for myself. I was ready to pack up and come back to the States. I had no desire even to stand up and preach.

I will tell you this. It is better never to stand here and declare a word unless Christ has taught these lips. It would be better to be as a dumb man than to open it and babble before the Lord.

It is like it says in Ecclesiastes in a multitude of words there is transgression. And I plead guilty. I plead guilty.

And so then you look at verse 12.

"And the book is delivered to him that is not learned."⁷

You see, that is the way it goes these days. You know, there are a lot of people out there that aren't getting fed. They are being led by preachers that know nothing. They are CEOs of organizations they call churches. And people are starving. And so what do they do? They get together in little groups. Let's form little cottage groups. Let's try to figure this out ourselves. And maybe you are part of a group like that. I don't know. I know some acquaintances that are right now. They are not being fed. They are not being taught, but they thing, "Ok, we can figure this out."

Look what it says here in verse 12.

"And the book is delivered to him that is not learned."⁸

Hadn't been taught in the schools.

"Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned."⁹

That is a good thing to admit. I know nothing except for what Christ is pleased to teach me.

You know, oh that we would come with that attitude even ourselves. And as the Lord teaches you the less you know. I know that sounds like a paradox, but the more the Lord

⁷ Isaiah 29:12.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

opens your eyes to his glory and honor the less you know and the more you are brought to have to confess before him, “Lord, unless you teach me, I am unlearned.”

Look over in Luke chapter 24.

There were these two disciples on the road to Emmaus and we begin reading in verse 13 in verse 13.

“And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.”¹⁰

Just about 262 yards times 60. Two hundred and sixty-two yards was about the size of a stadium at the time around. And, in fact, that is what a furlong is in the original. It is the word stadium. So that was how they measured things. If you calculate it out, it was about a little over seven miles walking here.

“And they talked together,”¹¹ verse 14, “of all these things which had happened.”¹²

This is on the heels of Christ’s crucifixion.

“And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned...”¹³

The things you try to figure out in your mind concerning Christ and his death.

“Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.”¹⁴

And look at verse 16. “But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.”¹⁵

So even in this matter of being lost, you know, it is one thing to be in darkness. It is another thing for the Lord to begin to teach you, but is there ever at time when you don’t need to be taught? To have your eyes opened.

And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?¹⁶

They are talking to Christ this way. They have a lot of blindness. They are discussing his death and there he is in their presence and they know nothing of him.

¹⁰ Luke 24:13.

¹¹ Luke 24:14

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Luke 24:15.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Luke 24:16.

¹⁶ Luke 24:17-18.

And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.¹⁷

You talk about lack of faith.

Verse 21.

“But we trusted...”¹⁸ past tense. It means it is in the sense of we are trusting no more.

But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.¹⁹

So even the testimonies of men concerning the truth did not change them being able to see Christ.

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.²⁰

Now here is what made the difference.

“And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.”²¹

Their eyes were opened. But until the Lord opens the eyes, dear friends, that is just how lost we are. We are ignorant of the true message of Scripture. They were until Christ was pleased to reveal himself unto them.

¹⁷ Luke 24:19-20.

¹⁸ Luke 24:21.

¹⁹ Luke 24:21-24.

²⁰ Luke 24:25-30.

²¹ Luke 24:31.

Let's come back to our text and look here in Isaiah 29 verse 13 and the third point concerning this matter of being lost and that is this, that those who are lost often have an outward form of worship, but their heart is still as blind and darkened as those who are nothing more than idolaters.

You know, people in this society get upset when you refer to them as idolaters. I have had some talk to me or email me for even suggesting that they are idolaters. But I speak by experience, first of all, knowing myself to be such. That is what we are by nature, where we hide behind a form of worship, but the heart is blind and darkened.

And that is what our Lord addresses here in verse 13.

“Wherefore the Lord said...”²²

Do you see that? Read the Scriptures.

“The Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.”²³

A lot of brainwashed people that we deal with day in and day out that are meeting in places of worship. They have been trained to do that. It is Sunday.

And we talk about you hear even country western songs about going to church on Sunday. That is just the way that people are raised. And there are a lot of people that do and yet know nothing of Christ. They feel some measure of assurance. Isn't that what most people are after? Give me some assurance. And so they are taught forms of worship. Just come. You know, just... you begin to sing. A lot of groups emphasize different things. Pray more. Read the Scriptures more. Do these things and the Lord will give you assurance.

“Many will say to me in that day,”²⁴ the Lord said in Matthew seven, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?”²⁵

And Christ will say unto them, “I never knew you.”²⁶

Do not hide behind worship. Do not hide behind forms of worship. Do not feel better about yourself when you are asked to stand or to sit or to bow your head or to pray or to read Scripture and go away feeling, “Ok, I have done my duty.”

²² Isaiah 29:13.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Matthew 7:21.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Mathew 7:22.

There are some that preach up the ordinances. Just, you know... They say, “Get into the Word. You know, improve your prayer life and all of these things will just start feeling better about yourself.”

Well, you can do that and be far from the Lord.

It says... and the problem is, as it says there in verse 13, “[you] have removed your heart from [him].”²⁷

How does that happen? By following the natural course of this heart that would lead you to believe that somehow what you do is improving your state before the Lord. There is only one righteousness that has ever, ever satisfied a holy God and given a sinner that right standing before the Lord. And it is not your righteousness.

I hope you are not disappointed when I tell you that. Your righteousness has absolutely nothing to do with it. It is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

If you look over in Galatians chapter two look how the apostle Paul puts it here in verse 18.

“For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.”²⁸

What he is talking about is after having preached Christ as all of salvation, to go back and imply or instruct others to somehow go back and keep part of the law either as a way of gaining or maintaining salvation, he says, “I make myself a transgressor. I am making myself a double minded man to say that it is all of Christ and then to go back again and say, ‘well, no, there is a certain part you have got to keep,’” which here happened to be circumcision that was being preached, but it could be anything, any kind of work that you would confide in.

In so doing you remove your heart far from the Lord.

He says, “For I through the law am dead to the law.”²⁹

He is saying that that law has already been satisfied in a legal way. So I have nothing more to do with it by way of satisfaction, for having to keep any part of it. Christ did that.

He says, “That I might live unto God. [So] I am crucified with Christ.”³⁰

In other words, when he died, I died. When he rose again, I rose again.

²⁷ Isaiah 29:13.

²⁸ Galatians 2:18.

²⁹ Galatians 2:19.

³⁰ Galatians 2:19-20.

“Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live...”³¹ How? Not by faith in the in the Son of God, but “...by the faith of the Son of God,”³² all that he accomplished, everything in connection to his death is all of my salvation, nothing more, nothing less.

“...who loved me, and gave himself for me.”³³

There is substitution. There is satisfaction.

And look at it here, verse 21.

“ I do not frustrate the grace of God.”³⁴

I am not going to mix it. I am not going to mingle it. I am not going to mix... put leaven with it.

“... for if righteousness come by the law,”³⁵ any righteous standing before a holy God come by the law, “then Christ is dead in vain.”³⁶

Therein is the truth. But there are those that even though the Scriptures clearly lay it out they still feel that somehow there is something they have to do to contribute. And the Lord describes it for what it is here.

“Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.”³⁷

There are many today who still even though they acknowledge Christ with their lips, they would still rather look to a man to give them something to do.

Give me a prescription.

I will tell you. There is only one prescription and that is by the great physician himself. And there is only one remedy and that is his blood and righteousness. Everything else is a placebo. There is nothing to it.

If you look at Matthew chapter 15 and verse three this is our Lord’s condemnation to the religious leaders of his day. Even as it was in Isaiah’s day, their eyes were closed, but so were those of the prophets and the rulers and the seers. They were covered. They didn’t... They were pretending to be able to be the teachers of men and yet it was by their own

³¹ Galatians 2:20.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Galatians 2:21.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Isaiah 29:13.

precepts. And you can see as they confronted Christ here in Matthew 15 verse two, “Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.”³⁸

There was a whole ceremony of dipping your fingers up to the second joint, pulling them out and shaking them off every time you went out. You were being, according to them, sullied by the world. So you had to come back and do this ceremony even before you ate.

You know, what is wrong with that view? It assumes that all the evil is out there and that there is no evil in here. But do you realize every time you bow your head to pray you are bowing your head to pray as a sinner separated from a holy God, but for the blood and righteousness of Christ?

Every time you take this book in your hands to read it you do so as a sinner before a holy God that apart from the blood and righteousness of Christ these very words that you read will condemn you. That is how we approach.

But there are some that are taught by the precepts of men or the traditions of elders, little rituals, little things to do and to say to make yourself right with God. And then he will hear you. That is how they are taught to think. I have been in meetings like that.

Let’s all bow our heads right now and everybody in a moment of silence get themselves right with God before we continue. It is all that religiosity.

“But he answered,”³⁹ verse three, “and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?”⁴⁰

I will tell you this. If the Lord ever teaches you of Christ all of those things you are going to see, as Paul called them, dung. And that is a nice word. But that is what it is. It is just dung before a holy God. But people that are lost don’t perceive it. They are taught to feel better about themselves by going through the motions of worship.

My hope is built on nothing less,
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.

Is that your hope? Well, if the Lord has taught you, it is.

And then to wrap it up here two final points. Come back to Isaiah 29 verse 14.

³⁸ Mathew 15:2.

³⁹ Matthew 15:3.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

“Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.”⁴¹

Just two things here. Those who are lost, if the Lord does not deliver them, if Christ has not paid their debt, they are under eternal condemnation.

The Lord says, “I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people.”⁴²

Everybody is always worried about the world out there, but he is talking about this people. He is talking about Israel that he would raise up a wicked and evil nation to come and to take them away and to destroy them all the while they kept their confidence in who they were, in their traditions, in their denomination, in their... in the fact that they had the temple, all of these things, but it was nothing before the Lord. He calls it a marvelous work. That word means to be an astonishment.

And you always think about the Lord working a work of judgment out there, but I am mindful that there are some who are eternally lost right here.

And then, lastly, to be lost is to be made to see that whatever wisdom and understanding you thought to have before a holy God is nothing but a vanishing vapor where it says, “the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.”⁴³

You know, we like to exalt men even quote men, speak highly of men, read men’s commentaries. Even that you stop and think about it. Since when did a man’s commentary become more important than this book? And the Lord is going to confound the wisdom of men.

So often when you talk to people about this Word and endeavor to point them to Christ—and, again, I plead guilty. I used to pride myself on how many books I had in my library. And as the Lord began to teach me, I started weeding them out.

I remember one time taking a whole pile of them out and started to burn them. And I had some people coming by and saying, “What are you doing?” as if that was God’s Word that I was burning. But I had read enough at that point to know that none of those books had ever done me any good as far as pointing me to Christ.

And, you know, I still sit in my study at home, look around at books on my shelf thinking I need to get rid of these. It would be great to get it down to just maybe one shelf that contained a commentary or a concordance, something that would point me again to this Word and Christ be my teacher, because there are an awful lot of men whose names are being floated around as being experts that have massive followings around the world and

⁴¹ Isaiah 29:14.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

that is what they boast in, worldwide ministries and yet are not pointing men to Christ, but are rather drawing men to themselves.

Oh, to be given eyes to see and to rest on Christ alone. I trust and pray that that is where we are looking by his grace.

All right. Brother Mike...