

**GOD'S RESCUES, OR THE  
LOST SHEEP, THE LOST COIN,  
AND THE LOST SON: THREE  
DISCOURSES ON LUKE XV**

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God's Rescues, or the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son: Three Discourses on Luke XV  
by William R. Williams

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**WILLIAM R. WILLIAMS**

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GOD'S RESCUES.

# GOD'S RESCUES;

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AND THE LOST SON.

THREE DISCOURSES

ON

*LUKE XV.*

By WILLIAM R. WILLIAMS.

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## THE LOST SHEEP:

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THEN DREW NEAR UNTO HIM ALL THE PUBLICANS AND SINNERS FOR TO HEAR HIM.

AND THE PHARISEES AND SCRIBES MURMURED, SAYING, THIS MAN RECEIVETH SINNERS, AND EATETH WITH THEM.

AND HE SPAKE THIS PARABLE UNTO THEM, SAYING,

WHAT MAN OF YOU, HAVING AN HUNDRED SHEEP, IF HE LOSE ONE OF THEM, DOETH NOT LEAVE THE NINETY AND NINE IN THE WILDERNESS, AND GO AFTER THAT WHICH IS LOST UNTIL HE FIND IT?

AND WHEN HE HATH FOUND IT, HE LAYETH IT ON HIS SHOULDERS REJOICING.

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.

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.

—*Luke, chap. xv. 1-7.*

IN those catacombs at Rome, where the early Christians sheltered themselves from their Pagan persecutors, one of the favorite portrayals is that which presents the Saviour in the imagery of this parable. A shepherd is seen bearing a lamb flung across his shoulders. In the pictures and



coins of old Christian art, it is a frequent representation. One delineation, in these dark subterranean galleries, is supposed to be fifteen centuries old. It shows how, in days all saddened by recent bereavement and by impending martyrdom, the early confessors of the faith solaced themselves for the dark yesterday or darker to-morrow, by remembering the self-sacrificing tenderness, and the infinite carefulness, and the untiring might, and the illimitable resources, of the great God, their Redeemer and their Elder Brother—"The Chief Shepherd and Bishop of their souls"—as He is elsewhere called. That name, "Bishop," blends the images of the Overseer, the Guardian, the Rescuer, and the Avenger.

How touchingly is it introduced in the narrative of the Gospel. The Pharisees murmured—reputable and exemplary men as they deemed themselves—that one, claiming to be the Messiah, should be so accessible to the disreputable and the outcast. "This man receiveth sinners and eateth

with them." Their own idea of sanctity was, that it shunned the contact of such guilty and abject souls. For a John the Baptist, living sternly alone in the desert, far from the ordinary resorts and the everyday entanglements of society, the Pharisees might have some cold and distant respect. He might seem to them as shunning to be brushed by the world's ordinary throng of sinners, sacred in his reserve, and saintly in the very fact of his utter isolation.

But that the Baptist's Master should accept, from Zaccheus the publican, an invitation to dine beneath his roof—should enrol Matthew, another of that hated class, the tax-gatherer, the publican, among his Apostles; and should even permit a woman, that had been once notoriously a sinner, to bedew His feet with her tears, and wipe off the fast-flowing drops with her thick tresses, was in their view unbeseeming the dignity of His character and hardly to be reconciled with the sanctity of His mission.

Our Lord replies, by a matchless train of

parables. The first, that of the Lost Sheep; the second, that of the Lost Coin; and the last, that of the Lost Son; each bringing forward some new trait of anxiety for the souls ready to perish, and shedding, from some new point, another beam of hope on the path of the penitent.

The first parable presents the great doctrine of the Atonement, and the work of God the Son, as the Redeemer. It is a condensation of the Epistle to the Hebrews: Christ shown in His sacrifice and priestly intercession. The second parable brings out the lessons of the Gospel of John—the work of God the Holy Spirit, who convicts that He may convert, and disturbs, that He may comfort; like the besom sweeping off the dust, that has gathered in the heart and conscience, and upon the Bible and on the Book of Providence, and making all the soul for the time confused and discordant, and, as it may seem, even chaotic. But by the lamp, enlightening as well as sound-founding; searching out truths once dispar-