

# Luke 15:1-7 Parable of the Lost Sheep

## Study Notes

**15 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”**

- **Pharisees--** The root meaning of the word "Pharisee" is uncertain. It is probably related to the Hebrew root, meaning "separate" or "detach." From whom did the Pharisees separate? From those, especially priests or clerics, who interpreted the Law differently than they? From the common people of the land ( [John 7:49](#) )? From Gentiles or Jews who embraced the Hellenistic culture? From certain political groups? All these groups of people the Pharisees would have been determined to avoid in their resolution to separate themselves from any type of impurity proscribed by the Levitical law — or, more specifically, their strict interpretation of it.
- **Scribes--** It is evident that in New Testament times the scribes belonged to the sect of the Pharisees, who supplemented the ancient written law by their traditions ( [Matthew 23](#) ), thereby obscuring it and rendering it of none effect. The titles "scribes" and "lawyers" (q.v.) are in the Gospels interchangeable ( [Matthew 22:35](#) ; [Mark 12:28](#) ; [Luke 20:39](#) , etc.). They were in the time of our Lord the public teachers of the people, and frequently came into collision with him. They afterwards showed themselves greatly hostile to the apostles ( [Acts 4:5](#) ; [6:12](#) ).
- **Tax Collectors--** As a class, the tax collectors were hated by their fellow Jews. This was almost inevitable. They represented the foreign domination of Rome. Their methods were necessarily inquisitorial. That they often overcharged people and pocketed the surplus is almost certain. In the rabbinical writings they are classified with robbers. In the synoptic gospels they are bracketed with “sinners” ( [Matt 9:10](#); [11:19](#); [Mark 2:15](#); [Luke 5:30](#); [7:34](#) ). This shows the common attitude of the Jewish people toward them. They were considered to be renegades, who sold their services to the foreign oppressor to make money at the expense of their own countrymen.
- **Sinners—**a class of people designated by ill-repute or of professions of sin, as well as the handicapped or deformed—believed because of their own sin or a previous generation.

**<sup>3</sup> So he told them this parable: <sup>4</sup> “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?**

- “No creature strays more easily than a sheep; none is more heedless; and none so incapable of finding its way back to the flock, when once gone astray: it will bleat for the flock, and still run on in an opposite direction to the place where the flock is: this I have often noticed. No creature is more defenseless than a sheep, and more exposed to be devoured by dogs and wild beasts... as the creature does not see where it is going, it soon falls prey to its destroyer. Satan is ever going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; in order to succeed,

he blinds the understanding of sinners, then finds it an easy matter to tumble them into the pit of perdition. Who but a Pharisee or a devil would find fault with the shepherd who endeavors to rescue his sheep from so much danger and ruin!" (Adam Clarke)

**<sup>5</sup> And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. <sup>6</sup> And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'**

- Parable of the Lost Coin: Luke 15:9-10 <sup>9</sup> And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' <sup>10</sup> Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."
- Parable of the Prodigal Son: Luke 15:22-24 <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, <sup>23</sup> 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. <sup>23</sup> And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

**<sup>7</sup> Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.**

- This is NOT a story of Jesus leaving the 99 church members or 99 believers in Jesus to go find the 1 wayward, backslidden believer...or the 1 lost person.
- This is the contrast between the 1 that is lost vs the 99 who believe they are already righteous and do not need Jesus.
- **Isaiah 53:6** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way;
- **Romans 3:9-10** <sup>9</sup> Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin. <sup>10</sup> As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous—not even one.
- **Romans 3:23-25** <sup>23</sup> For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. <sup>24</sup> Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. <sup>25</sup> For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.
- **Ephesian 2:1-6** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,