

## Love for the Lost

Joe Slater

**“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved”** (Jeremiah 8:20).

September is upon us; autumn will arrive before we know it. Any fall crops still in the field will be harvested.

Jeremiah, “the weeping prophet,” lamented the condition of the immoral idolaters in Judah by comparing it to a crop failure which would, of course, result in famine. Jeremiah’s people had ignored innumerable warnings. Now it was too late. The prophet envisioned invasion by the Chaldeans and the unspeakable suffering and destruction it would bring.

True to his calling, Jeremiah had thundered God’s judgments against His rebellious people. Nevertheless, as he contemplated the impending bloodbath coupled with the misery of the survivors, it broke his heart. *“Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”* (Jeremiah 9:1).

Paul echoed Jeremiah’s spirit as he wrote, *“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved”* (Romans 10:1). Unbelieving Israel’s lost condition caused *“great sorrow and continual grief in my heart,”* he wrote in Romans 9:2. Like Jeremiah, Paul had faithfully proclaimed God’s word to his fellow-Jews; and he had paid the price for it as they persecuted him.

Do you understand that every responsible person outside of Christ is lost? Does it bother you? Do you love the lost enough to speak the truth of the gospel of Christ to them?

*“How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?”* (Romans 10:14).

Think about it!

## No Letdowns from Jesus

**“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age”** (Matthew 28:20b, ESV).

Hank Williams Sr. sang an old love song, “If You loved me half as much as I love you.” One of the lyrics says, “You’re nice to me when there’s no one else around; You only build me up to let me down.”

We live in an imperfect world. Most of us have numerous friends, many of whom will let us down. Don’t get me wrong, there are friends who will *“stick closer than a brother”* (Proverbs 18:24), who will stand by us and uplift us as much as humanly possible. But there are others who will let us down.

We can expect both results from those whom we consider to be our friends. On the other hand, there is one friend who took on human form but is, in fact, deity. This is the one true friend who will never, ever, let us down. This friend, Jesus Christ, is the one friend so dedicated to humankind that He died for us. *“For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die, but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:7-8).

We are to love one another, even our enemies. But our love is sometimes shallow and often fails to meet the test of true love. Howbeit, we still strive to grow and mature in our love. That love will, in turn, be manifested in our actions, *“Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth”* (I John 3:18).

As we strive to grow and mature in our love actions, may we never forget that Jesus is our example. The example that He left is that He will never leave us nor will He ever let us down. There are no letdowns from Jesus.

--Roy Allen Crutcher (Mt. Carmel, IL)

## Face the Changes

**“One generation passes away, and another generation comes; but the earth abides forever”** (Ecclesiastes 1:4).

A dear friend (now deceased) brought to my attention a song lyric that had never registered with me. In the song “Changes,” David Bowie discusses how people attempt to transform the world around them. Bowie compares their efforts to waves of water, relating how he “watches the ripples change their size but never leave the stream of warm impermanence.” In spite of effort and energy, earthly changes last only momentarily and fail to make a permanent impact.

Just think of all the phrases people use to express their hopes: “I’m gonna make my mark on the world.” “Look out world, here I come.” “People are gonna notice me.” One of my high school buddies often stated that “The future’s so bright, I gotta wear shades.” I remember having the same excitement when I graduated from high school. As time went by and the excitement faded, I began to realize that I was just another person in society.

King Solomon faced a bright future and had fame, fortune, and wisdom. Rather than using God’s blessings wisely, Solomon allowed sin to intervene and wreak havoc in his life and his kingdom. He later described his efforts as *“vanity and grasping for the wind”* (Ecclesiastes 2:11). The problem exists to this day. Being successful in life and making ripples that go beyond the stream is fine, but true success is found through obeying God and allowing Him to guide the direction of the waves. Let us not forget this.

--Kenny Westmoreland (Celina, TN)

**If you think Nicodemus is a patch to help you quit smoking, you might need to stop sleeping through the sermon.**

--Jeff Foxworthy