

Prodigal Son

No. 81

Introduction.

I. On one occasion tax-collectors and sinners were drawing near to Jesus to hear the words of eternal life. Seeing this the Pharisees and scribes began to murmur against Him saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

A. These men were very self-righteous. They would not even speak to such men; much less eat them, and they thought Jesus was sinfully overstepping Himself by doing such.

B. In response to their sharp, scathing criticism Jesus uttered a parable saying. (Lk. 15:11-32).

11 And He said, "A certain man had two sons; 12 and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' And he divided his wealth between them. 13 "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.14 "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be in need.15 "And he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.16 "And he was longing to fill his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.17 "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!18 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men. "' 20 "And he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him, and kissed him.21 "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; 23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry; 24 for this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' And they began to be merry. 25 "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came

and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 "And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things might be. 27 "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' 28 "But he became angry, and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began entreating him. 29 "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you, and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a kid, that I might be merry with my friends; 30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with harlots, you killed the fattened calf for him.' 31 "And he said to him, 'My child, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 'But we had to be merry and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.' "

II. This parable, we have just read, is one of the most familiar and best loved parables of Jesus. For centuries it has been known as “the pearl of parables” and has led countless thousands to Christ. Many people have called it “the most beautiful story ever told.”

III. **I know of no better way to begin this new century than by telling this old, old story.** It has been needed in every century and it will certainly be needed in this one. There are several things that stand out in this parable.

I. **Terrible Condition Of The Son** - The first thing that stands out in this story is the terrible condition of the son who left his father’s house.

A. The son came to his father and demanded his share of his father’s estate. According to the law one-third of his father’s estate belonged to him. After receiving his share of his father’s riches, he thought he had plenty of money and nothing but pleasure and good times were ahead for him. He went into a far country where he wasted his substance in riotous living. According to his brother he spent it with the harlots. For a time all was good and he enjoyed the pleasures of sin, but then misery came to him. When he was out of money, there arose a mighty famine in that land and he began to be in want. He was too proud to return to his father; so he joined himself to a citizen of that country who sent him into the fields to feed swine. This was one of the most humiliating and distasteful jobs for a Jew. Jews were not allowed to keep and eat swine who were classified as unclean animals. But this man had reached the point he would do anything to stay alive. It is said that he would have filled his belly with husks the swine ate, but even this was not available to him.

B. **This is one of the blackest pictures of sin found in all the word of God.** It is a vivid picture of the misery and disgrace sin brings to one’s life. Here is a man that thought sin would be eternally fun, but soon found himself in the hog pen! It found himself in utter disgrace and misery!

C. I submit to you that sin will do the same to us. It will bring us pleasure for a season, but after it has us in its power it will put us in the hog pen in this life and in hell in the life to come.

1. **There are some laws that cannot be changed.** One of them is we will reap what we have sown. (Num. 32:23; Gal. 6:7, 8).
2. **One time I read a story told by a woman who was expecting her third child.** She was waiting for her turn in the doctor's office and got to visiting with another woman who was also expecting her second or third child. They were both happy married and were eager for their new arrivals. As they visited they overheard 2 teenage girls, both expectant mother, talking. Neither was married. The woman telling the story said her heart went out in pity as she heard one of the girls sadly say to the other, "It wasn't worth, was it?"
 - a. These girls found they could not escape the bitter consequences of sin.
 - b. "The way of the transgressor is hard." It is hard in this life and even harder in the life to come. The wicked will cry out in hell, "It wasn't worth it, was it?"

II. **Repentance Of The Son** - A second thing that stands out in this story is the repentance of the son.

- A. In the midst of the hog pen, "he came to himself." He realized that even the hired servants of his father had plenty to eat, but he was perishing with hunger. He decided he would return to his father saying he had sinned and was not worthy to be called a son any longer. He would ask his father to make him as one of his hired servants.
- B. With this thought in mind he headed home. He was resolved to do something about his wretched condition. He was determined to be back with the father.

III. **The Son's Return Home** - A third thing that stands out about this narrative is the son's return home.

- A. While he was yet afar off, his father saw him coming. Evidently he was looking for his son. When he saw him coming, he was moved with compassion and ran out to meet him and fell on his neck and kissed him. His son then confessed his unworthiness. The father told his servants to put the best robe on his son and a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. He also commanded them to prepare a fatted calf for they were going to celebrate the return of his son who had been dead but now was alive, who had been lost but now was found.
- B. **This is a picture of God's attitude toward the lost.** He is willing to receive with open arms those who will repent and come home to Him. He want all to be saved. He wants none to perish. (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

IV. **Attitude Of The Elder Brother** - A fourth thing that stands out in this story is the attitude of the elder brother.

- A. He was not happy to see his lost brother return home. He complained because he had served his father faithfully for many years and his father had never given a celebration in his honor.
- B. The elder brother here was a picture of the Pharisees and scribes who had no sympathy for sinners and criticized Jesus for receiving them.
- C. **There are some like the elder brother today.** They are not happy when a sinner confesses his sins and comes home to God. They would be happy if sinners would remain in the hog pen because they do not want to associate with such and they say, "We don't want people like that in the church." God

will condemn a person for this wicked, abominable, unmerciful attitude. Judgment is without mercy to him that has shown no mercy. (Jas. 2:13).

Conclusion.

I. In a few moments we are going to sing the hymn "God Is Calling The Prodigal." When we sing this hymn, if you are in the far country of sin, why not come home to the Father? If you will come to Him, He will receive you with loving arms and make your life beautiful and happy and meaningful. He will forgive you of all your sins. (Heb. 8:12).

II. **Myra Brooks Welch** has written these words about what God can do with a sin filled life.

<p>'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer Thought it scarcely worth his while To waste much time on the old violin, But he held it up with a smile; "What am I bidden, good folk?" he cried, "Who'll start the bidding for me? A dollar-one dollar-then two, only two- Two dollars, and who'll make it three? Going for three' - but no- From the room far back , a gray-haired man Came forward and picked up the bow; Then wiping the dust from the old violin, And tightening the loosened strings, He played a melody sure and sweet As a caroling angel sings.</p> <p>The music ceased and the auctioneer, With a voice that was quiet and low, Said, "Now what am I bid for the old violin?" And he held it up with the bow; "A thousand dollars-and who'll make it two? Two thousand and who will make it three? Three thousand once-three thousand twice- And going-and gone," cried he; The people cheered, but some of them cried, "We do not quite understand; What changed its worth?" Quick came the reply, "The touch of a master's hand.</p>	<p>And many a man with his life out of tune, And battered and scarred with sin, Is auctioned cheap to a thoughtless crowd, Much like the old violin; A mess of pottage-a glass of wine, A game-and he travels on; He's going once-and going twice- He's going-and almost gone! But the master comes, and the foolish crowd Never can quite understand The worth of a soul, and the change that's wrought By the touch of the Master's hand.</p>
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III. We urge you to come to the Father now. Confess your sins and be baptized. Come to the Master as we stand and sing.

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