

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

# THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

✝ THE BOOK OF LUKE

## WHAT WE MOST ASSUREDLY BELIEVE

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, ASSOCIATED

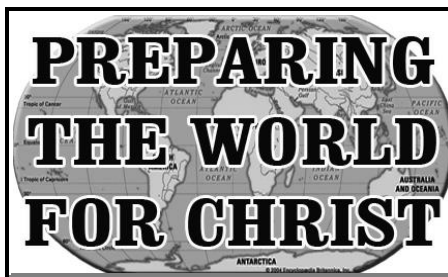
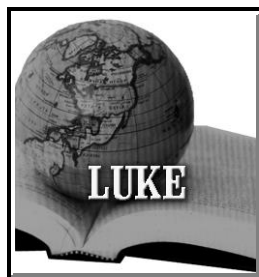
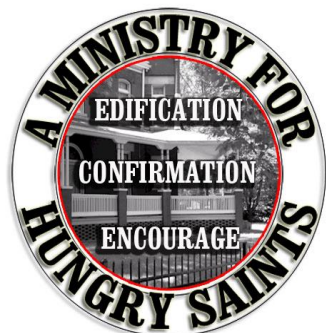
*An overview of the Gospel of Luke, by Given O. Blakely*

LESSON NUMBER 50

COMMENTARY ON: 15:11-32

### THE SON WHO LEFT HOME

Here is a parable of remarkable depth and detail. A representation of the Lord Himself is provided in the father of these two sons. Two different kinds of sons are made known. The transgression of waywardness is made known, together with its senselessness and futility. The awakening of a slumbering soul is revealed, and the role of circumstances in that awakening. We see the changing of an obstinate and selfish mind to that of a subordinate. The boldness of repentance is set before us, together with the stilted thinking of the legalist. The Lord makes known that there is a way that leads a person to serve God while taking no real advantage of what is available to the individual. The attitude of the Lord toward true repentance is made known, as well as the abundance He lavishes on those who come to Him. What a rich resource we have here.



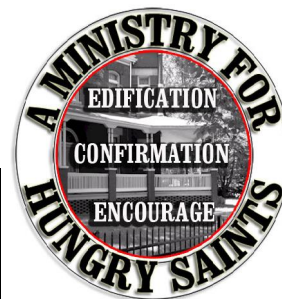
Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ





## The Book of Luke, 2/3/17

### Lesson Number 50



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

#### 54 VERSIONS OF THE ENGLISH SCRIPTURES

ABP=Apostolic Bible Polyglot m(1992); ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005); AMPLIFIED=Amplified Bible (1965); ABP=Apostolic Bible Polyglot with Greek Interlinear (2003); ASV=American Standard Version (1901); BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949); BRENT=Brenton's English Septuagint; CEB=Common English Bible (2011); CEV=Contemporary English Version (1995); DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899); EMTV=English Majority Text (2002); ERV=English Revised Version (1885); ETH=Etheridge Translation (1849); ETRV=Easy to Read (1999); ESV=English Standard Version (2001); GENEVA=Geneva Bible (1599); GNB=Good News (1966); GSNT=Goodspeed (1923); GWN=God's Word (1995); IE=International English (1973); NIRV=New Int'l Readers Version (1998); ISV=International Standard Version (1967); JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917); JUB=Jubilee Bible (2003); KJV=King James Version (1611); LITV=Literary Translation of the Bible (1976); LEW=Lewis Translation (1896); LIVING=Living Bible (1971); MESSAGE=The Message (1993); MGI=Peshitta Translation (2006); MIT=Idiomatic Version; MKJV=Modern KJV (1962); MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001); MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852); NAB=New American Bible (2002); NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977); NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995); NIB=New International Bible; NIV=New International Version (1984); NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985); NKJV=New King James Version (1979); NLT=New Living Translation (1996); NOY=George Noyes Bible (1869); NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989); PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962); PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595); ROT=Rotherham Bible (1999); RPTE=Revised Patriarchal Greek Orthodox New Testament; RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952); TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985); WEB=Webster Bible (1833); WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903); WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937); TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526); WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382); YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862)

#### GREEK LEXICON LEGEND

FRIBERG; LOUW-NIDA; LIDDELL SCOTT; THAYER; VGNT GREEK DICTIONARY; GINGRICH, DANKER,

PERSUADED OF THE NECESSITY OF KNOWING THE CERTAINTY OF THE THINGS WE BELIEVE, LUKE MAKES US MORE FIRM BY BUTTRESSING OUR FAITH, AND CONFIRMING WE HAVE NOT EMBRACED FABLES.

**DISCLAIMER:** The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

# THE SON WHO LEFT HOME

Luke 15:11 "And He said, A certain man had two sons: <sup>12</sup> And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. <sup>13</sup> And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. <sup>14</sup> And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. <sup>15</sup> And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. <sup>16</sup> And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. <sup>17</sup> And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, <sup>19</sup> And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. <sup>20</sup> And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, Bring forth 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 hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: <sup>24</sup> For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. <sup>25</sup> Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. <sup>27</sup> And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. <sup>28</sup> And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. <sup>29</sup> And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: <sup>30</sup> But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. <sup>31</sup> And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. <sup>32</sup> It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." ..... Luke 15:11-32

## INTRODUCTION

### A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

Here is a parable of remarkable depth and detail. A representation of the Lord Himself is provided in the father of these two sons. His grace, thoughtfulness, wisdom, love, and responses are made known throughout this remarkable parable.

Two different kinds of sons are made known. Both were very real sons, but by no means had the same traits. The transgression of waywardness is made known in one of them, together with its senselessness and futility. The awakening of a slumbering soul is revealed, and the role of circumstances

in that awakening.

We see the changing of an obstinate and selfish mind to that of a subordinate, the determination that accompanies that change, and the action that takes place. We must not hypothesize about such matters.

A PARABLE OF A SON THAT LEFT HOME, AND ONE THAT STAYED HOME; AND BOTH ACTED IN ERROR – Given O. Blakely

## CONTENTS

- ▶ **INTRODUCTION**
- ▶ **A CERTAIN MAN HAD TWO SONS (15:11)**
- ▶ **THE YOUNGER SON (15:12)**
- ▶ **HE GATHERED ALL TOGETHER AND TOOK HIS JOURNEY (15:13)**
- ▶ **WHEN HE SPENT ALL THERE AROSE A FAMINE (15:14)**
- ▶ **HE JOINED HIMSELF TO A CITIZEN OF THAT COUNTRY (15:15)**
- ▶ **NO MAN GAVE UNTO HIM (15:16)**
- ▶ **WHEN HE CAME TO HIMSELF (15:17A)**
- ▶ **THE HIRED SERVANTS OF HIS FATHER (15:17B-20A)**
- ▶ **WHEN HE WAS A GREAT WAY OFF (15:20B)**
- ▶ **I HAVE SINNED AGAINST HEAVEN (15:21)**
- ▶ **BRING FORTH THE BEST (15:22-24)**
- ▶ **HE HEARD MUSIC AND DANCING (15:25-28)**
- ▶ **THOU NEVER GAVEST TO ME A KID (15:29-30)**
- ▶ **THOU ART EVER WITH ME (15:31-32)**

In assessment, determination, and action, the boldness and effectiveness of repentance is set before us. We also see the stilted thinking of the legalist. There is extensive instruction in both of these sons – things that bear directly on the matter of salvation.

The Lord makes known that there is a way that leads a person to serve God while taking no real advantage of what is available to the individual. The effect of such a service is also made

known – and it is not good.

The attitude of the Lord toward true repentance is also revealed, as well as the abundance He lavishes on those who come to Him. What a rich resource we have here.

### WHAT MOVED JESUS TO DELIVER THIS INTRIGUING PARABLE?

Great multitudes had been following Jesus, and seeing them Jesus told them what was required to be one of His disciples, or followers and learners (Lk 14:25-35). Having apparently heard this, rather than turning away from Jesus, *"Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him"* (Luke 15:1).

Because the Pharisees and scribes had not perceived Jesus as a Savior from sin, they murmured among themselves saying, *"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them"* (Luke 15:2). They completely ignored the gracious works He did, *"doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the devil"* (Acts 10:38). Their approach to religion allowed for them to vaunt themselves, and present themselves as better than anyone else – even though in heaven's estimation, they were among the worst of all.

- ⇒ They totally missed what Jesus said, *"For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me"* (John 6:38).
- ⇒ They could not correlate the publicans and sinners drawing near to Him with what he had said earlier: *"No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent*

*Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day"* (John 6:44), and *"Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father"* (John 6:65).

- ⇒ They completely missed what John the Baptist said of Him: *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29).
- ⇒ They could not see Jesus as One being *"sent"* into the world by God (John 5:24,30).
- ⇒ They were ignorant of the fact that He came to DO the will of the Father, which involved receiving sinners (John 6:38).

These are realities that are hidden from those with stony hearts. The real mission of Jesus is deliberately hidden to them. They have no alternative but to oppose Jesus, and make every attempt to prove Him to be an imposter. However, all of their efforts will fall to the ground.

When people minimize, or even reject, who Jesus is, and what He has accomplished, they become His opponents. Forewarning them of their fate, Jesus said to these Pharisees, *"Did ye never read in the scriptures, The Stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the Head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this Stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder"* (Matt 21:42-44). That solemn warning is still in place. Jesus cannot be ignored with impunity.

## A CERTAIN MAN HAD TWO SONS

Luke 15:11 *"And He said, A certain man had two sons."*

Over the years, I have frequently heard would-be preachers refer to this parable as "The parable of the prodigal

father." Some, who are even more unlearned, say the elder son was the "prodigal." The word "prodigal" means tending to spend or use something without thinking of the future. CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY  
wastefully extravagant, lavish OXFORD It

ought to be abundantly apparent that this does not refer to either the father or the elder son. If you want to use the word "prodigal," in this text it can only apply to the younger son. Further, the truth Jesus is embedding in this parable

can only apply to the younger son.

## TWO DIFFERENT KINDS OF SONS

These were two different kinds of sons. The Jews should have been familiar with this scenario – two sons in the same family, but radically different. They had the same father, and the same mother.

- ⇒ Sons of Adam and Eve: Cain and Abel. Cain was born first (Gen 4:1), Abel was born second (Gen 4:2) . Abel was accepted, Cain was rejected (Gen 4:3-5).
- ⇒ Sons of Abraham: Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael was born first (Gen 14:15), Isaac was born second (Gen 21:3). Ishmael was rejected (Gen 21:10, and Isaac was accepted (Gen 21:12).
- ⇒ Twin sons of Isaac: Jacob and Esau. Esau was born first (Gen 25:24), Jacob was born second (Gen 25:26). Esau was rejected (Heb 12:16), and Jacob was accepted (Mal 1:12; Rom 9:13).

## THERE ARE ALSO OTHER PAIRS

- ⇒ There are two covenants having to do with men and God. The first is called “old” (2 Cor 3:14; Heb 8:13), and the second is called “new” (Matt 26:28; Heb 8:8,13). The old was first (Heb 8:7; 9:1), and is rejected (2 Cor 3:7). The new was

second (Heb 8:7; 10:9), and is “better” (Heb 7:22; 8:6) and is accepted (2 Cor 3:9-11).

- ⇒ Every person in Christ owns two identities: that which is “born of the flesh” (John 3:6), and that which is “born of the Spirit” (John 3:6,8). That which is born of the flesh is rejected (Rom 8:12-13). That which is “born of the Spirit” is accepted (Gal 5:16,26).
- ⇒ Under the New Covenant, each person in Christ possesses two men – “the old man,” and “the new man” (Eph 4:22-24). The old man was first, and is rejected (Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22; Col 3:9). The new man is second, but is accepted (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10).
- ⇒ Each person is determined to have two bodies: the fleshly body, and a resurrection body. The fleshly body is first, and is rejected (Rom 6:12; Phil 3:21). The resurrection body is second, and will occupy eternity (1 Cor 15:52-53; 2 Cor 5:1-5).

## A DIVINE METHOD OF TEACHING

Here we are exposed to a Divine method of teaching – that of presenting things that contrast with each other. That deals with the nature of things, and the character of people – opposite things that are contrary to each other.

- ⇒ Faithful and unfaithful servants (Matt 24:45-46; 25:26).
- ⇒ Good and evil servants (Matt 25:21; Matt 24:48).
- ⇒ Those who bear fruit and those who do not (John 15:2).
- ⇒ Those who walk in the Spirit and those who do not (Gal 5:16; Rom, 8:1,4).
- ⇒ Those who believe and those who do not believe (Mk 16:16).
- ⇒ True prophets and false prophets (Eph 4:11; 2 Pet 2:1).
- ⇒ Temporal and eternal (2 Cor 4:18).
- ⇒ Christ and the Law (Rom 8:3).
- ⇒ The truth and the lie (John 8:44; 1 John 2:21).
- ⇒ Heaven and earth (1 Cor 15:47).
- ⇒ Christ and Belial (2 Cor 6:15a).
- ⇒ Believer and infidel (2 Cor 6:15b).
- ⇒ Temple of God and idols (2 Cor 6:16).
- ⇒ Above and beneath (John 8:23).

It is in this kind of environment that God is working in men, both to will and to do of His own good pleasure (Phil 2:13). It is the framework within which we “perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord” (2 Cor 7:1-2) – a framework of competing influences.

This circumstance requires wisdom, discernment, vigilance, and making proper choices. All of this will be revealed in this parable. Those who desire to be saved must discern what Jesus is saying in this unique parable.

## THE YOUNGER SON

<sup>12</sup> And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.”

## GIVE ME THE PORTION OF GOODS

“And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. . .”

Other versions read, “my share of the estate,” <sup>NIV</sup> “the share of the property that will belong to me,” <sup>NRSV</sup> “that part of your property which will

be mine,” <sup>BBE</sup> “my share of the inheritance,” <sup>CEB</sup> “my division of the goods of thy house,” <sup>ETH</sup> “I want my share of your estate now before you die.” <sup>NLT</sup>

I am not sure the words “goods,” “Property,” and “estate” are accurate. The word translated “goods,” has the following lexical meaning: <sup>ö</sup>property, possessions, estate (A. V. *substance*), <sup>ö</sup> <sup>THAYER</sup> that which exists as property and wealth, <sup>ö</sup> <sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> one's substance, <sup>ö</sup> <sup>LIDDELL-SCOTT</sup> and <sup>ö</sup> <sup>GINGRICH</sup> wealth. <sup>ö</sup> It seems to me that the goods must have been converted to

some form of money – something that could be “spent” or “wasted.”

Note that the request was not made by the older son, but by the younger one – the least experienced, and the least matured. It was apparently made prematurely, for ordinarily the inheritance was divided at the discretion of the distributor (Gen 49:1-28; Deut 21:17). The father could even give an additional portion to the son of his choice, as Jacob did Joseph (Gen 48:21-22). But this son was not willing to wait.

## HE DIVIDED UNTO THEM HIS LIVING

*" . . . And he divided unto them his living."*

Other versions read, *"his livelihood,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"his wealth,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"his goods,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"his estate,"* <sup>CEB</sup> *the property,"* <sup>CJB</sup> *"the assets,"* <sup>CSB</sup> *"his substance,"* <sup>DOUAY</sup> and *"his living."* <sup>ERV</sup>

Jesus did not say the man distributed all of his wealth, but only the portion that he had reserved for each son. Further, he distributed the portions reserved for both sons – not just the one who made the request.

This parable will reveal two different kinds of responses to receiving an inheritance, and neither one of them

is commendable. Ordinarily, men would consider the one giving the inheritance, but Jesus will emphasize how the inheritance was handled. On a broad level, the parable will comment on the Jews and the Gentiles. On the individual level, He will show how a person can respond to the benefits given by God Himself. In this parable we will see man's character.

## HE GATHERED ALL TOGETHER AND TOOK HIS JOURNEY

<sup>13</sup> *"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living."*

### NOT MANY DAYS AFTER

*"And not many days after . . ."*

Other versions read, *"not long after that,"* <sup>NIV</sup> and *"A few days later."* <sup>NRSV</sup>

The younger son did not wait very long before deciding to leave the house. His thinking and manners did not fit into that environment. He was fundamentally self-centered, and this house gave service to his father. His will was at a variance with that of his father, and so he did not wait long to leave.

This is what takes place in all backsliders, who return to the pit from whence they were dug. There comes a time when their thoughts are not God's thoughts, and their ways are not God's ways (Isa 55:8-9), and so they depart from the faith (1 Tim 4:1). They may say their departure is owing to people having a bad attitude toward them, or because they think the "Christian thing" just did not work. But the truth of the matter is that they were at a fundamental variance with God, Christ, the Spirit, and the Gospel. They were a *"servant of sin,"* and thus no longer belonged to the house. It is not possible to satisfy or pacify such a person with kind words and thoughtful deeds. There comes a time for such people when it is

no longer reasonable to remain in the house that makes no *"provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof"* (Rom 13:14).

### GATHERED ALL TOGETHER

*" . . . the younger son gathered all together . . ."*

Other versions read, *"got together all that he had,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"convert his share into cash,"* <sup>CJB</sup> *"collected together all that fell to him."* <sup>MRD</sup>

This may have taken considerable time and effort, but the backslider does not think of the extensive effort that is required to *"depart from the faith."* There is such a strong desire to satisfy the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, that there is not an extended thought about what is being left behind. From what he says later, his father's house must have been commodious, and characterized by abundance.

### THINK WHAT ONE DEPARTING FROM THE FAITH IS FORFEITING

- ⇒ Fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9).
- ⇒ Access to the Father (Eph 2:28;3:12).
- ⇒ Cleansing from all sin (1 John 1:9).
- ⇒ The intercession of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26-27).
- ⇒ Access to the throne of all grace (Heb 4:15-16).
- ⇒ The leading of the Holy Spirit (Rom8;13).
- ⇒ The whole armor of God (Eph 6:10-17).

- ⇒ Spiritual weaponry suitable for spiritual battle (2 Cor 10:4-5)
- ⇒ The teaching of the grace of God (Tit 3:11-13).
- ⇒ Being strengthened with might by the power of God in the inner man (Col 1:11).
- ⇒ The accompaniment of a way of escape with every temptation (1Cor 10:13).
- ⇒ Being kept by the power of God (1 Pet 1:5).
- ⇒ The fruit of the Holy spirit (Gal 5:22-23).
- ⇒ Being conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom 8:29-30).
- ⇒ Being changed from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18).
- ⇒ Walking in the light and not stumbling (John 11:9).
- ⇒ Growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15).
- ⇒ The ability to be edified (Eph 4:12,16).
- ⇒ The comfort of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31).
- ⇒ The comfort of the Scriptures (Rom 15:4).
- ⇒ Being made partakers of Christ (Heb 3:14).
- ⇒ Joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Pet 1:8).
- ⇒ The power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13).
- ⇒ The communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14).
- ⇒ The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:19).
- ⇒ The renewing of the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:54).
- ⇒ The sanctification of the Spirit (1 Pet 1:2).



- ⇒ All things being worked together for one's good (Rom 8:28).
- ⇒ The promise of eternal inheritance (Heb 9:15).
- ⇒ Peace with God (Rom 5:1).
- ⇒ Access by faith into the grace of God (Rom 5:2).
- ⇒ Hope in Christ (1 Cor 15:19).
- ⇒ The treasure of God in an earthen vessel (2 Cor 4:7).
- ⇒ Redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7).
- ⇒ A Great High Priest (Heb 4:14).
- ⇒ The intercession of Jesus (Heb 7:25).
- ⇒ A good conscience (1 Tim 1:5; Heb 13:18; 1 Pet 3:16).

Outside of the "household of faith" (Gal 6:10), none of these things can be possessed. When you leave the house, you leave all of these things behind. Those who leave are fools of the lowest and worst rank.

### TOOK HIS JOURNEY TO A FAR COUNTRY

*" . . . and took his journey into a far country . . . "*

Other versions read, "into a distant country," <sup>NIV</sup> "far-away country," <sup>BEB</sup> "a land far away," <sup>CEB</sup> and "went abroad to a far country." <sup>YLT</sup>

The word translated "far" means "remote, distant." <sup>THAYER</sup> The emphasis here is not the geographical location, but the fact that it took a long time to get there. Liddell and Scott's lexicon points out that the journey was not

only "long," but "tedious" as well.

This younger son wanted to get away from his father's house as far as he could. He thought nothing of any memories of his father, the house, or the benefits of being in that house. He was so absorbed with his own will, that he thought nothing of what he was leaving. That is something of the involvements of departing from the faith and returning to the world from which the individual was once delivered.

### WASTED HIS SUBSTANCE

*" . . . and there wasted his substance . . . "*

Other versions read, "squandered," <sup>NASB</sup> "dissipated," <sup>DARBY</sup> "scattered," <sup>YLT</sup> and "wasted his fortune." <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

To waste, or squander, means to spend generously without getting anything substantive in return; "to use something valuable you have in a limited amount in a bad and foolish way . . . dissipate, fritter away, profligate, throw away" (Cambridge Dictionary).

This does not speak of a mere bad investment, for even a bad investment is an attempt to gain something substantial. Rather, it is like a drunkard spending all of his money on liquor, and gaining nothing from it but poverty and illness.

There lusts, or desires, so strong, that a person will give everything they

have to obtain what is desired, even if it will only yield ruin. Some of these things include liquor, drugs, entertainment, immorality, trying to purchase friendship, etc.

### RIOTOUS LIVING

*" . . . with riotous living. "*

Other versions read, "prodigal living," <sup>NKJV</sup> "loose living," <sup>NASB</sup> "wild living," <sup>NIV</sup> "dissolute living," <sup>NRSV</sup> "foolish living," <sup>BEB</sup> "extravagant living," <sup>CEB</sup> "reckless living," <sup>CJB</sup> "living in debauchery," <sup>DARBY</sup> and "reckless and loose [from restraint] living." <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The meaning of the word translated "riotous" is *ōdissolutely* [immoral] profligately [wasteful], *ō* <sup>THAYER</sup> *ōa* wild, abandoned manner recklessly, riotously, loosely, *ō* <sup>FRIBERG</sup> and pertaining to senseless, reckless behavior; to live without thinking' or 'to live without being concerned. *ō* <sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup>

Think of the things that are joined together in "riotous living": immorality, recklessness, foolishness, wildness, senselessness, looseness, thoughtlessness, and without concern. That is the kind of life the younger son began to live.

This is what "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes. And the pride of life" does to a person. These are not simply things you should avoid, because they are wrong. These are the composite of the world that Satan uses to enslave people, putting them at a distance from the Lord that eventually cannot be bridged (Heb 6:1-6).

## WHEN HE SPENT ALL THERE AROSE A FAMINE

*"<sup>14</sup> And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. "*

### WHEN HE HAD SPENT ALL

*" And when he had spent all . . . "*

The younger son squandered all that he had, wasting it. He did not procure anything with the sources that he had, but spent it all on things that

yielded no return. He was in no way bettered or advantaged by the things on which he spent all his living.

This is a trait of fleshly appetites: they bring no advantage or refurbishment to the individual. Such things only take from the individual, strength, health, capacity to reason, etc – to say nothing of spiritual depletion, so that the things of God cannot be

discerned, grace cannot be obtained, and a greater distance forms between the individual and the God who made him.

In a hedonistic society, where youthfulness and pleasure have captured men's hearts, there is a deterioration of everything man possesses. In such indulgences the persons spending the wasted the goods

and services is in no way advantaged. The procurement of them was in vain. This precisely why, throughout history, when pleasure was elevated to a place of prominence, moral and spiritual deterioration inevitably took place.

Particularly in Christ Jesus, genuine and lasting advantage is eagerly sought. To live otherwise becomes unreasonable. Jesus Himself reasoned, *"For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"* (Luke 9:25). Paul also reasoned concerning his choice of suffering with Jesus, *"If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die"* (1 Cor 15:32).

While everything associated with *"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life"* (1 John 2:15) deplete the soul, and never give, replenish, or grant genuine advantage, everything in salvation brings advantage, and no part of it is vain.

### THERE AROSE A MIGHTY FAMINE

*" . . . there arose a mighty famine in that land . . . "*

Other versions read, *"severe famine,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"great famine,"* <sup>RSV</sup> *"was no food to be had,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"a severe food shortage,"* <sup>CEB</sup> *"a violent famine,"* <sup>DARBY</sup> *"a great dearth,"* <sup>GENEVA</sup> *"the whole country ran low on food."* <sup>NIRV</sup>

Why did the *"mighty famine"* arise in that land? Is it possible that it was because of this profligate son? Can one

evil person cause many to be impacted? The anger of the Lord was once kindled against Israel because of one man. It is written, *"But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel"* (Josh 7:1).

Nearly two million people were forced to wander in the wilderness for forty years because of the evil report of twelve men and the people who believed them (about 601,000). Those believing the report were the military men, twenty years old and upward. Those 601,000 died in the wilderness (Josh 5:6), yet when Israel came out the renewed count of the militia was 601,730. Those forced to wander were everyone under twenty years of age, all of the woman, and all of the people over fifty years of age. Joshua and Caleb were also in the number forced to wander. As they journeyed, all of those born were also included. All of these wandered because of punishment of those who believed twelve men.

Once, in the days of David, there was a famine in the land for three long years. It is written that David went to inquire of the Lord concerning its cause. God told him, *"It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites"* (2 Sam 21:1).

It is possible for many to suffer because of only a few; and that is not to mention the effects of Adam's sin (Rom 5:15-19).

### HE BEGAN TO BE IN WANT

*" . . . and he began to be in want."*

Other versions read, *"began to be in need,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"began to feel the pinch,"* <sup>CJB</sup> *"he had nothing,"* <sup>CSB</sup> *"began to experience poverty,"* <sup>MIT</sup> and *"began to be impoverished."* <sup>NAU</sup>

*"The way of transgressors IS hard"* (Prov 13:15). The God who gives us our *"daily bread"* (Matt 6:11), can also withhold it, and make it exceedingly difficult to obtain. Seven times the Lord says He will send a famine (Jer 24:10; 29:17; Ezek 5:16,17;14:13,21).

There have been famines God's people were able to escape, going into another area to find bread (Gen 12:10; 26:1; Ruth 1:1) Once, in the days of Elisha the prophet, the Lord *"called for a famine" that would last "seven years."* Elisha told a woman whom God had blessed through him, *"Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the LORD hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years"* (2 Kgs 8:1). The woman found a place, and *"arose, and did after the saying of the man of God: and she went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years"* (2 Kgs 8:2).

No special word was delivered to this younger son, now destitute during a time of famine. Yet, God would see to it that he would come to his senses about his wicked manner of life. Jesus, however, just tells what happened, and we are expected to learn from it.

## HE JOINED HIMSELF TO A CITIZEN OF THAT COUNTRY

<sup>15</sup> *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine."*

### HE JOINED HIMSELF TO A CITIZEN OF THAT COUNTRY

*"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country . . . "*

Other versions read, *"So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"put himself into the hands of one of the people of that country,"*

<sup>BBE</sup> *"he persuaded a local farmer to hire him,"* <sup>NLT</sup> *"clave to a citizen of that same country"* <sup>TNT</sup> and *"So he went and forced (glued) himself upon one of the citizens of that country."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The word *"joined"* is translated



from a word meaning, ὀglue, to glue together, cement, fasten together; to join or fasten firmly together; to join one's self to, cleave to.ῶ<sup>THAYER</sup> This picture is of this younger son camping out, so to speak, at the citizen's house, refusing to leave his property. Like some vagrants of our time, they simply stay where food is thrown out, so they can find something to eat.

### HE SENT HIM INTO THE FIELDS TO FEED SWINE

*" . . . and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. "*

One versions read, *"who sent him to his fields to feed pigs,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"he sent*

*him into his fields to give the pigs their food,"* <sup>BBE</sup> and *"he sent him to his farm, to feed swine."* <sup>PNT</sup>

In a display of mercy, or perhaps just to rid himself of the aggravation, the man sent him to feed his swine.

One might wonder how it was that this man had something to feed the swine – after all, it was a time of famine. Unlike the younger son, this man had not squandered his goods, but had laid up supplies for difficult times. It does not say that he paid him, and it appears that if he did, it was not enough to subsist on. In announcing the Babylonian captivity to Israel,

reference is made to their practice of storing commodities: *"Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD"* (2 Kgs 20:17). At any rate, there is a plausible explanation for this man having provisions.

The circumstances had certainly changed for the young man. He could have been working for his father with plenty to eat, good surroundings, and the prospect of being an heir. But he is eating the fruit of his doings. It is imperative that men learn there is a penalty for a wasted life.

## NO MAN GAVE UNTO HIM

*" 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him."*

In this parable, Jesus is not only showing the mercy of God, but the total vanity of attempting to live only to gratify self.

### HE WOULD HAVE FILLED HIS BELLY

*"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat . . ."*

Other versions read, *"would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods*

*that the swine ate,"* <sup>NJKV</sup> *"longed to fill his stomach,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"would have been glad to take the pigs' food,"* <sup>BBE</sup> and *"eat his fill from the carob pods."* <sup>CSB</sup>

The word *"fain"* is translated from a word meaning, ὀto have a desire for, long for, to desire; to lust after, covet.ῶ<sup>THAYER</sup>

The words *"husks"* is translated from a word meaning, ὀthe name of the fruit of the *Ceratonia sillqua*, or *carob tree* having fruit shaped like a horn and has a sweet taste; it was (and is) used not only in fattening swine, but as an article of food by the lower classes.ῶ<sup>THAYER</sup> While these were a fitting food for swine, they were suitable only for the lower and poorer

class of men – in which class the younger son now found himself.

### NO MAN GAVE UNTO HIM

*" . . . and no man gave unto him. "*

Other versions read, *"no one gave him anything,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"no one was giving anything to him."* <sup>NASB</sup> The Amplified Bible suggests that he did eat these *"husks,"* but they could not satisfy him: *"but [they could not satisfy his hunger and] nobody gave him anything [better]."*

I do not think he ate them, or that the owner of the swine would have let him. He probably knew he could derive no satisfaction from them.

## WHEN HE CAME TO HIMSELF

*" 17A And when he came to himself, he said. . . "*

Other versions read, *"came to his senses,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"returning to himself,"* <sup>DOUAY</sup> *"began to think objectively,"* <sup>MIT</sup> *"began to think clearly again."* <sup>NIRV</sup>

The literal translation is *"came to him."* I do not care for the MIT version

(Idiomatic Translation) – *"think objectively."* That is too philosophical, and does not take into account that man was made in the image of God. There is such a thing as a *"right mind"* (Mk 5:15), that has to do with being sober-minded, or sane. This is a mind that can process things pertaining to this world in a profitable way. In Christ, a *"sober mind"* is elevated to take into

consideration things that are above, redemption, God, and Christ. That however, is not the kind of mind involved in the young son coming to himself.

Those who are absorbed with pleasing self, indulging fleshly appetites, being wasteful, and the likes, have stooped down to the level of the

beasts of the earth, who are void of the ability to reason. Man was made with the capacity to be considerate, thoughtful, civil, and helpful.

Carnal pleasure, and unlawful forms of indulgence, if not curbed, thrust one into a state where proper

thought is not even possible – as illustrated in this younger son. To be indulgent and wasteful constrains one to live only for the moment, and with none but self being considered. That reshapes the totality of thought.

Now, the younger son comes to

himself, and begins to think outside of the perimeter of self. He will consider his father, his father's house, his father's servants, and the supplies available at his father's house. As long as he was squandering his goods, none of these things were considered, but came into his mind.

## THE HIRED SERVANTS OF MY FATHER

*"<sup>17B</sup> How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, <sup>19</sup> And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. <sup>20A</sup> And he arose, and came to his father."*

As soon as the younger son "came to himself," he began to think differently. He assessed his father's servants, and himself, correctly. He no longer thought of wasteful living, or indulging in deviate living. Although he had been enslaved by corrupt appetites, now he did not need counsel on living properly. He did not need to find someone who had developed a plan of recovery for one in his condition. His right mind enabled him to immediately terminate a life of indulgence and commence a life of serving someone else. A "right mind" will still draw such conclusions. The recovery of this young man in no way depended on the counsel of someone else. When he "came to himself," he knew what to do, and had no trouble setting out to do it – yes, even accomplishing it.

### THE HIRED SERVANTS OF MY FATHER

*"How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare . . ."*

Other versions read, "more than enough bread," <sup>NASB</sup> "abundance of bread," <sup>DARBY</sup> "abound with bread," <sup>DOUAY</sup> "have plenty to eat," <sup>MIT</sup> "a superabundance of bread." <sup>YLT</sup>

And to think, when he was at home, he was far better off than them. However, now he did not think of the position he occupied when he was living in his father's house. He did not think of what HE was before. He did not think of his father, and the wealth he had possessed. Rather, he thought of the lowest of his father's house – his servants. He knew he had fallen to a state that was worse than the lowest people in his father's house.

All of his father's servants not only had "bread enough," they had bread left over – to spare. He had less than he needed, and his father's servants had more than they needed.

### I PERISH WITH HUNGER

*"...and I perish with hunger! . . ."*

Other versions read, "I am dying here with hunger," <sup>NASB</sup> "I am starving to death." <sup>NIV</sup>

What a contrast – and this is what sin and an indulgent life does to a person. Even so, it takes a remarkable work of grace for such people to come to themselves, or have a right mind. Sin is not kind to its victims.

### I WILL ARISE AND GO TO MY FATHER

*" . . . I will arise and go to my father . . . "*

Other versions read, "I will get up and go to my father," <sup>NASB</sup> "set out and go back to my father," <sup>NIV</sup> "I'm going to get up and go back to my father," <sup>CJB</sup> "I will leave this place and go to my father." <sup>NJB</sup>

Remember, this was not a jaunt across the street. He had taken a "journey into a far country" (Lk 15:13). The way back would no doubt seem longer than the way to the "far country." However, he was not thinking of how far away it was, or how long it would take to get there.

Determination, particularly godly determination, resolves a lot of otherwise unsolvable problems. It seems to me that any valid endeavor for the Lord must be preceded by determination.

- ⇨ When the brethren in Judaea were suffering from a great drought, the disciples "determined to send relief" to them (Acts 11:29).
- ⇨ When the saints in Antioch confronted a problem they could not solve, "they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question" (Acts 15:2).
- ⇨ When Paul desired to be as gentle with the church in Corinth as was expeditious, he wrote, "But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness" (2 Cor 2:1).

Many backslidden Christians have not returned to the Lord simply because they have not "determined" to do so. They have not said within themselves, "I will arise and go to Jesus!"

### I WILL SAY TO MY FATHER

*" . . . and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more*

*worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. . ."*

The son knew he would have to say something when he faced his father again. He certainly could not charge his father with any fault concerning his condition. He determined to say the truth – and it will set the tone for every prodigal that is returning home.

### HE AROSE AND CAME TO HIS FATHER

*" . . . And he arose, and came to his father."*

Notice, there is no reference to the following.

- ⇒ What was involved in severing the relationship to the swine-owner.
- ⇒ If he had any provisions for the lengthy journey.
- ⇒ Any inconveniences associated with leaving.
- ⇒ Any hardships along the way.

The quest was to get back to his father's house, whatever it took, and any of the circumstances surrounding that return were merely incidental. He was determined to return!

That is also the way it is when a soul properly returns to Jesus. There is no reference to how difficult it was to return, or what befell the person on his way back. The all-consuming desire to return to the Lord dwarfs everything else. That is a proper perspective.

## WHEN HE WAS A GREAT WAY OFF

*" 20B But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."*

Jesus is revealing the Divine view of a returning soul – one that has exited from an unacceptable life, and the squandering of one's resources. We will find that what he WAS, when repudiated, is no issue with the Father in heaven – even though it may remain a grievous issue to the one returning.

### HIS FATHER SAW HIM

*"But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him . . ."*

First, note that the returning son had safely negotiated a rather lengthy journey. During his travel he may well have encountered some of the difficulties Paul confronted in his travels: *"perils of waters, in perils of robbers . . . perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness"* (2 Cor 11:26-27). He may have appeared easy prey for malicious men, but the Lord protected him like he did Jacob and his family: *"And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob"* (Gen 35:5).

Although not mentioned here, it is

to be noted that any penitent soul making his way back to God will be protected on the way. Angels will, be dispatched to see to it the journey is not in vain, even as it was with Jacob, of whom it is written, *"And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim"* (Gen 32:2). So we say to every returning soul, Fear not!

Notice that the father was looking for the son to return. He did not see him when he was at the door, so to speak, but while he was *"a great way off."* Other versions read, *"a long way off,"* NASB *"still far off,"* NRSV *"yet at a great distance,"* RSV *"still at quite a distance,"* MIT and *"yet far distant."* YLT

I do not know if the son was looking ahead to see the outline of the old homestead, or if he was traveling with his head hanging down. But the father was looking. He espied the form of his son a great way off, and knew who it was, and what he was doing.

I will pause here to say that any person returning to the Lord might not be able to see clearly what he is approaching. The response of the Father may not be clear in the mind of such a person. But that has no real bearing on the matter. The Father sees, and about that, there is to be no doubt, even though the prodigal does not see it.

### AND HAD COMPASSION

*" . . . and had compassion, and ran . . ."*

Other versions read, *"felt compassion for him, and ran,"* NASB *"filled with compassion for him, he ran,"* NIV *"was moved with pity for him and went quickly,"* BBE *"his father's heart welled up within him. Running to meet him,"* MIT and *"filled with tender love for his son. He ran."* NIRV

This parable is revealing the heart of the Lord for those returning to Him – like the *"publicans and sinners"* who had drawn near to Jesus (Lk 15:1).

Let it be clear to every soul, *"The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit"* (Psa 34:18). And again, *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise"* (Psa 51:17). And yet again, *"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones"* (Isa 57:15). And still again, *"For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word"* (Isa 66:2).

What a message we have for fallen ones who have been convicted of their sin, and desire to make their way back to God. God will focus His gracious attention upon such a soul. His mercy will be in abundance.

#### AND KISSED HIM

*" . . . and fell on his neck, and kissed him. "*

This speaks of a tender and assuring embrace – a holy welcome. The prodigal son would not have to make the last leg of the journey alone! He will be accompanied by his father. He will experience comfort and assurance during the last of the journey.

Whether every returning soul knows it or not, as they near the

Master, then He joins with them as Jesus did the two on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:15). Jesus continued walking with them until they arrived where they lived, and then went in with them (Lk 24:16-29). Even so, in returning to the Savior here is a certain Divine accompaniment, illumination, and comforting that takes place – before the prodigal is fully returned.

## I HAVE SINNED AGAINST HEAVEN

*"<sup>21</sup> And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. "*

These are the exact words the son had purposed to say before he commenced his journey (Lk 15:18-19). They were true words, and about that there can be no doubt. There was one thing, however, the son had not counted on – the mercy of his father. He knew that such mercy was not deserving, but he did not know the father would show it anyway.

#### I HAVE SINNED AGAINST HEAVEN

*"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven. . . "*

Other versions read, *"to the heaven."* <sup>YLT</sup> All other versions that I have (64 of them) read the same way – *"against heaven."*

The word translated *"against"* means *"into."* <sup>THAYER</sup> The idea is that the reality of the transgression has entered into heaven, and is known there.

⇒ It is said of Babylon the great, *"For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities"* (Rev 18:5).

⇒ When some of Israel slew their enemies in a rage, God sent a prophet to them who said, *"Behold, because the LORD God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand,*

*and ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven"* (2 Chron 28:9).

⇒ Ezra prayed for Israel in these words: *"O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens"* (Ezra 9:6).

⇒ Jeremiah said concerning Babylon, *"We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies"* (Jer 51:9).

#### AND IN THY SIGHT

*" . . . and in thy sight . . . "*

That is, in his father's sight. He knew his father saw what he did, and was fully aware of the nature of his departure.

There is, of course, a parallel in sin. It is surely against God Himself, and it also reaches into heaven.

⇒ When God appeared to Abimelech in a dream, after he had taken Sarah to be one of his wives, He said, *"Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning AGAINST ME: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her"* (Gen 20:6).

⇒ In deep repentance and contrition of

heart, David prayed, *"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest."* (Psa 51:4).

⇒ The sin of Sodom reached into heaven: *"And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me; and if not, I will know."* (Gen 18:20-21).

⇒ When Joseph rejected the immoral advances of Potiphar's wife he said, *"There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* (Gen 39:9).

⇒ Under the Law, when addressing the matter of a trespass offering, the Law said, *"It is a trespass offering: he hath certainly trespassed against the LORD"* (Lev 5:19).

⇒ When sent by God to David to convince him of his sin against Uriah and his wife Bathsheba, the prophet said, *"Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised Me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife"* (2 Sam 12:10).

⇒ God commanded Jonah concerning Nineveh, *"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me"* (Jonah 1:2).

⇒ John reported concerning the vision he received on Patmos, *"And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath"* (Rev 16:19). At this point, judgment will be rendered.

You see, then, the extent of the conviction of sin. *Transgression involves sinning against God Himself*, just as surely as the prodigal son sinned against his own father. Until a sinner realizes this, it is not likely he will repent. It seems to me that our day finds many who do not know this.

#### AND AM NO MORE WORTHY

*" . . . and am no more worthy to be called thy son."*

Other versions read, *"no longer good enough to be named your son,"*<sup>BBE</sup> *"no longer fit to be called your son,"*<sup>NIRV</sup>

*"I no longer deserve to be called your son,"*<sup>NJB</sup> and *"I no longer deserve to be recognized as a son of yours."*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Although any returning sinner knows well this perception and feeling, it must be noted that the final word on this is that of the father, not the wayward son. Worthiness and unworthiness are both established by the one who has been offended, not the one who has caused the offence.

Those who have returned to the Lord have good reason to give thanks for this.

## BRING FORTH THE BEST

*"<sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, Bring forth 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 hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:<sup>24</sup> For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."*

#### THE FATHER SAID TO HIS SERVANTS

*"But the father said to his servants . . ."*

The father does not reply to the son, but proceeds to demonstrate his love and concern for his son – not to mention his ecstatic joy because of his return home.

When the father thought of his youngest son, he did not think of how he asked for the goods that were to be bequeathed to him, or how he left home and squandered them all. Rather, he thought of his son as returning home, where he belonged. As far as he was concerned that return outweighed whatever else he may have done. The fact that his son was grieved over what he had done, had properly assessed it, and was willing to take a lower seat, confirmed that his return was driven by an altogether proper attitude. There was no need to interrogate him.

#### BRING FORTH THE BEST ROBE

*" . . . Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet . . ."*

The son was probably clothed with tattered rags, but his father had no desire to see his returning son so attired. He will clothe him with *"the best robe"* – the robe reserved for the most favored person, on the best occasion. The son's repentance and humility had awakened these expressions of joy and honor. Such qualities are still honored by heaven.

#### BRING HITHER THE FATTED CALF

*" . . . And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry . . ."*

The *"fatted calf"* was one that had been fed and raised for a festive occasion. It is the kind of calf Abraham had prepared when the Lord appeared to him in the form of three men (Gen 18:7). This was a demonstration of the genuine joy induced by the return of the younger son, and it confirmed the great love his father had for him.

#### THIS MY SON WAS DEAD, AND IS ALIVE AGAIN

*" . . . For this my son was dead, and is alive again . . ."*

While the son was away, leaving in preference for another place, it was no different than if he was dead. His father was deprived of his presence, and the conditions under which the son departed in no way promoted gladness in the heart of the father. Note, the father describes the return of the son as miraculous – like being raised from the dead.

#### HE WAS LOST AND IS FOUND

*"...he was lost, and is found . . ."*

Other versions read, *"he had gone away from me, and has come back,"*<sup>BBE</sup> *"was lost and has been found,"*<sup>DARBY</sup> and *"A missing person, he has been found."*<sup>MIT</sup>

Jesus does not say the son was lost, but found his way back. He did not say he left, but now is returned. He rather said that he had been *"found."* This was a revelation of what was intended by a future statement the Lord would make: *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10).

The boy had been *"found,"* a depiction of how people are really saved. Jesus finds them (Lk 15:6). The Holy spirit convicts them (John 16:8). The Father draws them (John 6:44,65). Doctrinally, Jesus is the *"Author and*

*Finisher*" or our faith (Heb 12:2), Alpha and the Omega (Rev 1:8), "First and the Last" (Rev 1:11) and "Beginning and End" (Rev 22:13). The Lord is described as *"He which hath begun a good work in you,"* who *"will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"* (Phil 1:6). In the fullest sense of the word, as illustrated in this parable, *"salvation is of the Lord"* (Jonah 2:9). It is initiated by Him (John 6:44,65), consummating in a new birth by Him (1 Pet 1:23), carried forth by the Lord to perfection (Heb 13:21; 1 Pet 5:10), or sanctification (1 Thess 5:23) of the individual , being raised from the

dead (John 5:28-29), and experiencing an *"abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (1 Pet 1:11). All of that is wrapped up in being *"found,"* which involves much heavenly activity.

#### AND THEY BEGAN TO BE MERRY

*" . . . And they began to be merry."*

Other versions read, *"began to celebrate,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"were full of joy,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"began to rejoice,"* <sup>ETH</sup> *"So the party began,"* <sup>NLT</sup> and *"began to revel and feast and make merry."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Jesus had already said that there is *"joy in heaven"* when one sinner repents (Lk 15:7), and that there is joy *"in the presence of the angels"* during such an occasion (Lk 15:10).

If there is joy in heaven over the return of a sinner – in heaven, where salvation is initiated, perfected, and consummated, ought not joy to be in the earth also? But the Pharisees were not rejoicing over the fact that the Publicans and sinners drew near to Jesus to hear what He had to say. They were rather critics of those coming to Jesus.

## HE HEARD MUSIC AND DANCING

*"<sup>25</sup> Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. <sup>27</sup> And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. <sup>28</sup> And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him."*

#### THE ELDER SON DREW NIGH

*"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. . ."*

Obviously, the older son was not accustomed to such a display of joy. It was different, and he apparently could not think of any reason for such a festive occasion taking place.

As Jesus develops this parable, it is obvious He is unveiling the effects of a legalistic spirit upon those possessing it – like the Pharisees. Such a spirit promotes a joyless and critical spirit. This is because such an approach excludes faith and hope, both of which are filled with joy – the *"joy of faith"* (Phil 1:25), and the *"rejoicing of the hope"* (Heb 3:6).

#### HE WAS TOLD WHAT WAS TAKING PLACE

*" . . . And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. . ."*

The servant spoke in the family language – *"thy brother"* and *"thy father."* The servant obviously thought it was a joyful occasion, and that the elder brother would be glad to get the news. However, that was not the case.

Remember, Jesus is exposing the heartlessness of the Pharisees' approach to living under the Law. Thinking that they were fulfilling the Law, they had given attention only to outward form, totally ignoring the inner part of man. By way of comparison, this younger brother had experienced an inward working that caused him to be ashamed of his wasteful and profligate conduct. He had experienced repentance, which causes all of heaven to rejoice.

#### HE WAS ANGRY AND WOULD NOT GO IN

*" . . . And he was angry, and would not go in . . ."*

Other versions read, *"he was angry, and was not willing to go in,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"he was angry and refused to go in,"* <sup>NRSV</sup> *"was furious and didn't want to*

*enter in,"* <sup>CEB</sup> and *"was angry [with deep-seated wrath] and resolved not to go in."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Note the contrast between the heavenly response to repentance and the attitude of the older son. This was his own brother, yet his thinking could only be against him. It made him angry that there was any recognition of him when he came home. Remember, this is a most vivid depiction of the attitude of the Pharisees to whom Jesus was speaking. They were like the elder brother, and the *"publicans and sinners"* that had pressed in to Jesus to hear His word, were like the returning younger son.

#### HIS FATHER ENTREATED HIM

*" . . . therefore came his father out, and entreated him."*

Other versions read, *"pleaded with him,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"made a request to him to come in,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"begged him,"* <sup>CEB</sup> and *"besought him."* <sup>DARBY</sup>

Surely the older son will be moved by his father's pleading with him – but he is not. He has been hardened, and there is no ability to reason left in him. This is how the Pharisees had become. Their approach to religion, the outward display of what is believed, had left them cold, insensitive, and unable to rejoice in one who repented.



## THOU NEVER GAVEST ME A KID

*"<sup>29</sup> And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: <sup>30</sup> But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf."*

The elder son will now expose his father to his heart, confirming how unlike his father he really was – even more unlike his father than his younger brother.

### THESE MANY YEARS

*"And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee . . ."*

Other versions read, *"I have been serving you,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"I've been slaving for you,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"I have been working as a slave for you,"* <sup>NRSV</sup> *"I have been your servant."* <sup>BBE</sup>

The elder son does not even speak to his father as his father, but as a thoughtless master, or slave-driver.

Jesus once delivered a word to those who *"trusted in themselves that*

*they were righteous, and despised others."* He said two men went up to the Temple to pray: one was a Pharisee, and the other a publican. He said the Pharisee *"stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican"* (Luke 18:11). Notice, he did not address God as *"Father."* He did not come humbly, but in pride, citing how he was superior to other men, especially the publican that was also in the Temple. That is the attitude reflected in the older son of this parable. He also cited what he had done. In fact in pride he added, *"neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment . . ."* He did not view his father's word as the head of the household, of which he was a member, given the privilege to work with his father. Instead, he thought of him only as delivering commandments to be obeyed.

### THOU NEVER GAVEST ME A KID

*" . . . and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends . . ."*

Now he affirms that he has never had the privilege the younger son is now enjoying. He depicts himself as one who has been deprived of the

pleasure of having a feast with his friends.

### BUT AS SOON AS THIS THY SON WAS COME

*" . . . But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf."*

Again, he does not view his brother as one who has repented of his waywardness, and returned home, quite willing to be a servant – as his elder brother thought himself to be. Upon returning home, the older son says, the father immediately – *"as soon as thy son was come"* – did for him what the father had never done for the older son – at least that is what he thought.

Driving the point home, he reminds the father that the younger son had *"devoured"* his father's *"living with harlots."* He had apparently forgotten that his father had divided the younger son's inheritance to him, meaning that the prodigal son had squandered his own inheritance. Surely this would be an unanswerable argument, and proof he was neglected. How will the father respond to his disgruntled son?

## THOU ART EVER WITH ME

*"<sup>31</sup> And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. <sup>32</sup> It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."*

The father will now reason with the older son. He will show him that he had the advantage all along – but did not take avail himself of it.

### THOU ART EVER WITH ME

*"And he said unto him, Son, thou*

*art ever with me . . ."*

Others versions read, *"you are always with me,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"you have always stayed by me."* <sup>NLT</sup>

To be at home with the father gave the elder son all of the advantage. That is where all of the resources were. He did not have to wander, or seek gainful employment. All of his needs were being met.

Beside that, he had his inheritance with him, for when his father divided

the inheritance, *"he divided UNTO THEM his living"* (Luke 15:12). Each one received their goods at that time.

### ALL THAT I HAVE IS THINE

*"...and all that I have is thine. . ."*

This suggests that he, as the Law specified, perhaps received a double inheritance. By saying *"all that I have is thine,"* the father was saying the older son had access to all that was his.

In other words, he could have had a feast with his friends any time he

wanted – even with great frequency. But, this is not how he was thinking. He thought as a servant, not as a son. Everything he needed to have a feast was there, and he had every right to have frequent and extensive feasts whenever he wanted.

### IT WAS MEET THAT WE SHOULD MAKE MERRY

*" . . . It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."*

Other versions read, "It was right," <sup>NKJV</sup> "we had to be," <sup>NASB</sup> "we have to celebrate and be glad," <sup>NIV</sup> "it was fitting to make merry and be glad," <sup>RSV</sup> "it behooves us," <sup>ETH</sup> and "It was appropriate." <sup>NET</sup>

The father now tells the older son that it was appropriate to have a feast upon the return of his younger son. There was a compulsion here, but it was not the compulsion of law. Rather, it was the irresistible impulse of insight and understanding.

The younger son *"was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."* He had been recovered, and that means much to his father, who loved him, and was patiently waiting for him to return.

### THE BONDAGE OF THE LAW

The intent of this parable reveals the bondage of attempting to serve God under a system of law – a law of restraint. The Spirit makes much of this, insisting that we learn from the example of Israel, who was the covenantal answer to the elder son.

Israel was at home, so to speak – living in the promised land, having access to the Law and the Prophets, and having a religion that centered in a God-given Law. However, instead of promoting liberty, it promoted bondage. Paul illustrates this in a most poignant way in the epistle to the Galatians. He uses Sarah, the wife of Abraham, and Hagar, a slave of Sarah's, to illustrate his point.

*"Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar [Hagar]. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Gal 4:26). The Old Covenant is likened to "a yoke of bondage" (Gal 5:1; Acts 15:10). The reason for the enslavement promoted by the Law is that unregenerate man has a bent to sin – and that is what the Law dealt with, bringing "the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20). It stirred up sin, like a broom stirs up dust. The flesh, being rebellious, resists the commandment, and the Law keeps sounding the commandment, making the situation even worse, until they fall backward are taken (Isa 28:13). Speaking of his tenure under the Law Paul wrote, "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Rom 7:9).*

The New Covenant came from heaven, not Sinai. It liberated, and did not enslave. First, it dealt with the dilemma of sin, doing so effectively so

that God could say, *"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"* (Heb 8:12). This circumstance freed us from the Law as a Covenant, so that *"the righteousness of the Law"* could be *"fulfilled in us,"* instead of being violated by us (Rom 8:4). Thus Paul writes, *"Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God"* (Rom 7:1-4).

When we were buried into Christ's death (Rom 6:3-4), we became *"dead with Christ"* (Rom 6:8; Col 2:20). That death freed us from the condemnation of the Law, for the Law has no condemning power over a dead man – and those in Christ are "dead." In Christ, we identify with the prodigal who came home, was received by his father, and enjoyed a feast with his friends. Those who continue to live under the Law will continue to be our critics, but we will enjoy the feast.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 2/17/17. In our next lesson, we will continue our series in the Gospel of Luke. The fiftieth lesson will cover verses 1 thru 13: "A STEWARD WHO WASTED HIS MASTER'S GOODS." In this parable the Lord elaborates on the seriousness of handling the goods of another – which is what ever person in Christ is doing. He will tell of a steward who wasted his master's goods, and how it caused an accusation to be registered against him. The Lord draws several indispensable conclusions that must be discerned, and upon which every believer must act. He relates our faithfulness in this world, with our status in the world to come – a most arresting consideration. We will begin our meeting at 6:30, which will be followed by a time of refreshments and fellowship.