

Will God Run?

- As children we are born innocent. We become “prodigal” when we understand the difference between good and evil and chose evil. When we become Christians many also become “prodigal” when returning to the sinful lives they were once cleansed of. This lesson applies to both.

Luk 15:1 Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. 2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

Luk 15:11 And He said, A certain man had two sons:

- When we look at the first two verses of this chapter we find those to whom Jesus was directing this parable. The “publicans and sinners” in this story are represented by the “younger” of the two brothers (*v. 1*), while the “Pharisees and scribes” (*v. 2*) are being represented by the elder brother. The scribes and Pharisees were the ones who made note of the fact that Jesus “receiveth sinners, and eateth with them”. The setting then is to be understood as being from two opposing religious standards; the one represented by the young man being irreligious yet able to be molded, while the other, highly religious to the point of being unbending in their own doctrinal positions.

Luk 15:12 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.

- Under the inheritance customs, even before the Old Testament was established with Moses, when portions were divided among heirs, the oldest son’s portion was double the amount of the rest because he was his father’s first born son. What was once customary to the rest of the world became law to Israel because of the land promise and the fathers’ names remaining a permanent heritage throughout the generations to come.

Deu 21:15 If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, *both* the beloved and the hated; and *if* the firstborn son be hers that was hated: 16 Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit *that* which he hath, *that* he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, *which is indeed* the firstborn: 17 But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated *for* the firstborn, by giving him a **double portion** of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn *is* his. (*Emp. Added*)

- Thus it was with Abraham in giving his inheritance to Isaac over the rest of his children.

Gen 25:1 Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name *was* Keturah.

Gen 25:5 And Abraham **gave all that he had unto Isaac**. 6 **But** unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country. (*Emp. Added*)

- Even if a man died without having an heir, his brother was to take his widow for his wife, thus his brother’s name would not be lost from the genealogy. The punishment for not doing such was strictly enforced.

Gen 38:6 And Judah took a wife for Er (*pronounced "ayr"*) his firstborn, whose name was Tamar (*pronounced "taw-mawr"*). 7 And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him. 8 And Judah said unto Onan (*pronounced "o-nawn"*), Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. 9 And Onan knew that **the seed should not be his**; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled *it* on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. 10 And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also. (*Emp. Added*)

- In this parable Jesus was addressing the Jewish people who understood this concept of who an heir was and what his portion was.

Luk 15:13 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.

- It must have taken little time to get his affairs in order while contemplating what he was going to do once he reached his "freedom" from having to earn his keep, among other things. Planning his agenda was the last thing on his mind. Once away from his father's oversight he would be free to do whatever he wanted, without being hindered by conscience or rules. But "the pleasures of sin for a season" (*Heb 11:25*) usually always cost more than what we're willing or even able to pay.

Luk 15:14 And when he had **spent all**, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he **began to be in want**. (*Emp. Added*)

- Nothing on earth can satisfy the appetite of sin's lust-filled inner hunger. Once fed and thought satisfied, it only craves more. No amount of money can bring happiness or fill the void of want either. We may think it could, but really, how much would be enough? What would it take to pay off past regrets from pursuing wealth and possessions or to buy back time lost that should have been spent on the important things in life, if it were even possible to do so? Could such time lost ever be redeemed once gone? What would fill the emptiness?

Amos 8:11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: 12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find *it*. 13 In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.

- History repeats itself. Even today there are many, if not most, who pursue wealth on different levels. But the day will come when people will cry out for a return to a moral law.

Luk 15:15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed (*Gk.1006- to pasture*) swine. 16 And he would fain (*Gk.1937- to set the heart upon, that is, to long for*) have filled his belly with the husks (*Gk.2769- pod of the carob tree*) that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

- According to Thayer, a carob tree contains a fruit "*that is 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*". Obviously the swine were only eating what was discarded and not

what was saved for human consumption. After all, there was a famine in the land. And Jesus was just illustrating how low this younger son had gone. Jews were forbidden, at that time, to eat, or even touch for that matter, anything swine related.

Deu 14:8 And the swine, because it divideth the hoof, yet cheweth not the cud, it is unclean unto you: ye shall not eat of their flesh, nor touch their dead carcass.

And since there were no unions to plead for him on the matter of benefits or working conditions, he had to fend for himself; even when it came to his basic needs, food being one of them. The “citizen of that country” would have been a Gentile since, because of the Mosaic law, practicing Jews were not permitted to raise swine. Thus his treatment. But...

Luk 15:17 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! (*Emp. Added*)

- What or how much does/would it take to cause an erring brother or sister to come to their senses? Sadly, there are many where it would take an awful lot, if it ever **was** to occur anyway. Pride can be an insurmountable object and returning on an impulse might not be sufficient enough to hold their yearnings in check. But notice when that time did come to this son and hopefully it **will** come to those we love and hold dear.

Luk 15:18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

- The one person he knew in life that he felt would take him in, even if only as another employee, was his father. A parent's love carries with it such power when handled righteously. Especially when their children understand the limits to where they will go when it comes to teaching them important life lessons concerning good and evil. Whether we want to believe it or not, children know, by experience, the boundaries set before they are even established.

Luk 15:20 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. (*Emp. Added*)

- He was in a “far country” and had multiple opportunities to change his mind on his return trip. He didn't arrive back home immediately. It took time. Like repentance. Something thought about after a lot of disappointments. What he thought he would find away from home only turned out to be an empty life with no fulfilment.

But notice what happened. His father must have been scanning the horizon for him since the moment he went away. What a sight to see his son return. He didn't notice the odor emanating from his son after having mingled with the swine. Or the filthy garments he wore. He was so glad to see his son returned to him safe and sound that he seized him with a passion that only a loving father would in such situations and greeted him with a kiss while embracing his unwashed neck. But notice, HE RAN! He didn't just walk, stroll or mount a mule to get to him. He left all other thoughts behind because he was so focused on getting to his son.

Luk 15:21 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.

- A truly humble confession names no other as co-conspirator in acts of wrong. It's never "well so-and-so caused me to do it".

Rom 14:11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. 12 So then every one of us shall give account **of himself** to God. (*Emp. Added*)

The Father knows when a heart is truly repentant. And only He is able, and willing, to wipe the slate clean.

Psa 103:11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. 13 Like as a father pitieth *his* children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him.

Luk 15:22 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:

- Immediately interrupting and forgetting all about the unshaven, disheveled, filthy and rank smelling individual that stands before him, the father didn't ask the servants to fetch soap and hot water so his son could clean up a bit. He has only gladness in his heart that his younger son made it home safely. He only wanted to cover his son with "the best robe" because he had already forgotten that the stench even existed. The ring and shoes are what separated the land owners from their servants. Servants didn't wear either. They were either barefoot or shod with something less.

Luk 15:23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it*; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

- To kill the fatted calf was a sign that someone important must have been coming over for dinner. Some big party, either to celebrate or to show hospitality to an important stranger.

Gen 18:1 And the LORD appeared unto him (*Abraham*) in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; 2 And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw *them*, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, 3 And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in Thy sight, pass not away, I pray Thee, from Thy servant: 4 Let a little water, I pray You, be fetched, and wash Your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: 5 And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. 6 And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead *it*, and make cakes upon the hearth. 7 And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a **calf tender and good**, and gave *it* unto a young man; and he hastened **to dress it**. 8 And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set *it* before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat. (*Emp. Added*)

Knowing this the elder son noticed that such had to have been going on when he looked toward the house.

Luk 15:25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27 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. 28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.

- This is the son that did everything his father told him to do, without wavering. And not that that's wrong either. But when his question was answered concerning his younger brother and his father's actions since his return home, he was **indignant!** He was a staunch supporter of his father, even to the point of doing **more** than asked. He was all about obeying his father's rule of law but knew nothing of his father's grace. But his father was impartial because he loved both of his sons. So he went to his elder son when he refused to rejoice in his brother's return.

Luk 15:29 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:

- “You could have at least given me a **goat** for all my service to you, couldn't you have?”

Luk 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

- There are those who have no desire for gain. They would rather remain in the shadows knowing their reward will come soon enough. But not this son. He was in a pout. (*Now be honest. Have you ever been in a pout when you may have thought you were in the right but didn't get your own way?*) He was the one Jesus was referring to when referencing the proud Pharisees and they were probably so proud that they didn't get it. He felt that if his brother had taken his inheritance and squandered it away why should he then return and be treated in a way that he himself never experienced? Was he secretly envious? Would he have committed the same acts of wanton disregard were it not for his being such a “self-control freak”? But this is where the “sheep” are separated from the “goats” (*Mat 25:33*). And he was a goat not understanding the love his father had for them both. As a Father, God seeks all His children's love, but especially of those who are lost that He desires to be found.

Luk 15:4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? 5 And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

- It's not that God loves His faithful any less either. We should all rejoice with Him, along with the Heavenly host when one of our brethren return to the fold. They are still our brethren! Our attitude toward such reveals what's on our hearts.

Luk 15:30 But as soon as this **thy son** (*he didn't even want to be considered related to this embarrassment of a brother*) was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. (*Emp. Added*)

- Now there's nothing wrong with receiving an "Atta-boy" every once in a while, but to refer to his **own brother** as "thy son" reveals the true nature of his argument. He was jealous. And in his mind, any amount of encouragement he might have received from his father was made null and void the moment he heard about his brother's return.

Luk 15:31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

- As stated earlier, the eldest son received double the portion of what the others received. This son wasn't satisfied with what was still coming to him. Did he also want the coat, ring and shoes that covered his brother's tired, worn out body? His younger brother's return did not affect his inheritance one shekel. Just as with us. If we don't appreciate the inheritance we've received from the Father through sending His "only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (*I Jn 4:9*), we end up having the same attitude as this elder son.

Luk 15:32 It was meet (*Gk.1163- necessary*) that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother (*reminding him that he shares the same DNA and that he was more like him than he would have wanted to admit*) was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

- Our attitudes over the return of one lost brother or sister should tell us where we stand with regard to our attitude toward God's grace and who is to be considered worthy of receiving it. In such cases we make ourselves the judge. Their return won't lessen our own personal inheritance one bit. It may even enhance it if we rejoice in it.

Luk 15:10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

- So how does this parable fit in our lives today? How do we make application? Of course God here is depicted as the "father" and we as His "sons"; it's about how we react to each other when we are faced with decisions that even the disciples of Christ were troubled with.

Mat 18:1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

- Jesus knew their hearts and that they were yet to be truly converted so He taught them a very valuable lesson. One that we need to hear even today.

Mat 18:2 And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, 3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

- Conversion begins with a humble heart. Without such true conversion will never take hold. So do we care when one of our number, especially a "younger" Christian, has "gone into a far country" to tread the path of sin? How do we react when a lost brother/sister

“was lost, and is found”? And what of this “best robe”? Do I feel they deserve to be clothed in such after having returned from their rolling in sin? Well, the robe represents our Lord and Savior Jesus and the blood He shed on Calvary to cover the stench of being exposed to a sin mired world. All the faithful have been covered by it.

Gal 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

- Have you put Christ on? Are your sins covered? Will God run to you? To answer the third question, yes! You can believe He will run! He’s patiently scanning the horizon for your return. But please don’t keep Him waiting. “It’s never too late until it’s too late!”

#1. You need to hear

Romans 10:14 ... "how shall they believe in Him **Whom they have not heard?**" (*Emp. Added*)

#2. You need to believe

Heb 11:6 ... "for he that commeth to God **must believe that He is...**" (*Emp. Added*)

#3. You need to repent

Act 3:19 ... "**Repent** ... be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..." (*Emp. Added*)

Rom 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

#4. You need to acknowledge Christ as the Son of God, Who alone can save you

Joh 14:6 I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.

#5. You need to have your sins washed away

Act 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

#6. Once you’ve done all these things, you need to remain faithful

Romans 6:4 “...we also should walk in newness of life.”

#7. You need to resolve to keep growing

2Pe 3:18 But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him *be* glory both now and forever. Amen.

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