

# The Prodigal Son

## A Sermon on Luke 15

### **Introduction:**

1. No matter how greatly you have failed in one or many sins, I have a great Saviour to tell you about.
2. No matter how terrible you feel, or others try to make you feel, there is a Saviour that gladly forgives.
3. No matter how others may publicly or privately despise you, there is a Saviour Who will defend you.
4. If you ever feel lost in the universe without anyone that really cares, there is a Friend that really cares.
5. We have the blessed and glorious privilege to recover an excluded member, a brother from the dead!
6. We do not want to get distracted by the phases of salvation, but this is primarily the practical phase.
7. Measured by the holy standards of God's righteous laws under either testament we stand condemned.
8. How can the great King that destroyed the Jews and is coming in judgment receive sinners with joy!
9. The key in one word is joy! In a few words is joy over sinners repenting! Though we may begrudge!

### **The Audience (15:1-2)**

- A. The audience is very important, for it helps give the context for the three parables.
- B. Many publicans and sinners drew near to the Lord Jesus Christ to hear Him preach to them.
  1. Publicans were tax collectors appointed by occupying Rome that were often thieves.
  2. Sinners were not ordinary sinners, but obvious public sinners, often harlots (Matt 21:31).
  3. While some of these might have been sinners of the Gentiles, God does not tell us so.
  4. These were the kind of sinners that Jesus loved (Luke 7:36-50; 19:1-10; John 4:4-42).
  5. There were in the crowd blasphemers, prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, murderers, liars, adulterers, sluggards, drunkards, seditious, despisers of parents, malicious railers, etc.
  6. They did not come out of mere curiosity or to obtain healing – they came to hear him.
  7. For public and obvious sinners to come to hear reproof and instruction was repentance.
- C. The Pharisees and Scribes were the religious crowd that thought they knew the Scriptures.
  1. They knew the letter of the text, but they had no compassion or love for sinners at all.
  2. They were self-righteous hypocrites that polished up their outside lives (Luke 18:9-14).
  3. They despised others for obvious and outward sins, though they were cesspools within.
  4. They murmured against Jesus Christ for receiving and eating with these obvious sinners.
  5. This contradicted God's O.T. doctrine of pleasure in repentance (Ezek 18:32; 33:11).
  6. The publicans and sinners were used to being despised by these pompous religionists.
- D. Jesus Christ did not reject these publicans and sinners: He received them and ate with them!
- E. And He soundly defended and honored them by three parables and rebuked their accusers!
- F. We have two groups of people present, so we will follow two lessons through the parables.
  1. There were the publicans and sinners eating near Him who needed comfort (John 8:1-11).
  2. There were the Pharisees and scribes, the closest antecedent, who needed to be rebuked.
  3. Therefore, he rebuked the Pharisees and scribes by these parables (Luk 14:1-6; 16:14-15).
  4. Though speaking to Simon, He comforted the woman and rebuked him (Luke 7:36-50).
  5. Though speaking to the Pharisees, He comforted the publicans and sinners by His words.
  6. The common people rejoiced when He rebuked their enemies (Mat 7:28-29; Mark 12:37).
  7. But we also have here by the wisdom of God a most simple and glorious picture of grace!
  8. It is a fact every child of God is in both audiences at various times. Receive both lessons!

### **The Lost Sheep (15:3-7)**

- A. Addressing the Pharisees and scribes, the nearest antecedent, Jesus rebuked and comforted.
- B. A parable is an extended proverb, a lengthy metaphor comparing two things for learning.
  - 1. It is not wise to get hung up in the details of a parable, but rather to grasp the main lesson.
  - 2. Fools will spend hours seeking meaning for each detail of sheep or coins for no profit!
  - 3. We want to see the simple lesson: Christ redeemeth and receiveth sinful men! Glory!
- C. “What man of you,” speaks to the Pharisees and scribes, who had compassion for livestock!
- D. It is a true axiom of life that we do not want to lose a single one of precious things we own.
  - 1. If we have a hundred of something, we do not wait until the majority is missing to move!
  - 2. Though 99 of a thing may be safe in our possession, we want to get the missing one back.
- E. The Pharisees and scribes had to admit within that they did indeed treat animals this way!
- F. The publicans and sinners had to admit within that they were the objects of His parable!
- G. Have you ever been like a lost sheep? Leaving God’s protective care to go out on your own?
  - 1. You lost out on the blessings and peace of your Creator and those of His company?
  - 2. You were confused, dazed, and frightened in your folly and did not know how to return?
- H. Observe the great zeal for the lost sheep, which every Pharisee had to admit was true of him.
  - 1. He leaves the ninety-nine that are relatively safe in the wilderness in order to seek one.
  - 2. He pursues the lost sheep until he finds it: he does not give up after just a few minutes.
  - 3. He carries it to the flock on his shoulders, rejoicing, without punishing it for being lost.
  - 4. He is so excited and thankful about finding just one lost sheep that he celebrates big time.
- I. Jesus identifies this action and conduct as resembling His love for sinners that are lost in sin.
  - 1. There is such joy in heaven, where God’s will is supreme, when a sinner repents on earth.
  - 2. The effort put forth and the joy at finding the sheep by the shepherd describes our Jesus!
- J. What are the ninety-nine just persons that need no repentance? Remember the two lessons.
  - 1. We know from the rest of Scripture there is truly no such thing in any practical way.
  - 2. These ninety-nine sheep and men are to be compared to the elder brother (Luke 15:29).
  - 3. They are self-righteous Pharisees (Luke 16:15; 18:9-14; Pr 30:12; Rom 7:9; Phil 3:6).
  - 4. They are also sinners who have not sinned outwardly in heinous ways (Mat 5:20-21,27).

### **The Lost Coin (15:8-10)**

- A. This shorter parable about one coin is to be understood exactly as the one lost sheep above.
- B. “What woman,” speaks to the Pharisees and scribes, who had compassion for pocket change!
- C. It is a true axiom of life that we do not want to lose a single one of precious things we own.
  - 1. If we have ten things of modest value, we do not wait until a majority is missing to move!
  - 2. Though 9 of those things are safe in our possession, we want to get the missing one back!
- D. The Pharisees and scribes had to admit that good women did treat small change this way!
- E. The publicans and sinners had to admit within that they were the objects of His parable!
- F. Observe the great zeal for the lost coin, which every Pharisee had to admit was true of wives.
  - 1. She goes to the pain and expense of lighting a candle in order to aid her important search.
  - 2. She sweeps the house in order to sift through any dust or dirt in her pursuit of the coin.
  - 3. She leaves the nine safe in her purse and uses diligence in her search until she finds it.
  - 5. She is so excited and thankful about finding one lost coin that she celebrates big time.
- G. Jesus identifies this action and conduct as resembling His love for sinners that are lost in sin.
  - 1. There is such joy in heaven, where God’s will is supreme, when a sinner repents on earth.
  - 2. The effort put forth and the joy at finding one coin by the woman describes our Jesus!
  - 3. The angels, the servants of the saints, rejoice at the recovery of a sinner to repentance.

4. The angels, knowing no sinner angels were recovered, rejoice (Eph 3:10; I Peter 1:12).

### **The Prodigal Son (15:11-24)**

- A. Continuing His rebuke of the Pharisees and comforting of the sinners, Jesus tells of two sons.
- B. A parable is an extended proverb, a lengthy metaphor comparing two things for learning.
  1. It is not wise to get hung up in the details of a parable, but rather to grasp the main lesson.
  2. Fools will spend hours seeking meaning for each detail in this lengthy story of two sons.
  3. We want to see the simple lesson: Christ redeemeth and receiveth sinful men! Glory!
  4. Since Jesus does not draw the comparison at the conclusion, we will follow it throughout.
- C. The younger son, in haste, arrogance, presumption, and rebellion, asks for his inheritance.
  1. Have you ever presumed on the grace of your Creator and Saviour and gone your way?
  2. It was not the son's living he took, but rather the living the father had laid up for him.
  3. Note that the father divided his living, his estate, so that both sons received their share.
  4. Remember that the elder son received the proper share of his father's living as well (v31).
  5. God gives us grace and liberty in this life to make choices, but we should guard each one!
- D. Once the younger son had his father's living in hand, he followed his foolish heart to leave.
  1. After giving his son the goods he had earned and saved, the son impudently leaves.
  2. Have you received good things naturally and spiritually and yet run to do your thing?
  3. He went to a far country, without regard for the father's presence or choice of location.
  4. Have you ever gone very far from God so that your life looked nothing like your Father?
  5. The prodigal wasted his father's dear living, not in bad investments, but in riotous living.
  6. Have you ever presumed upon the grace of God and lived in wild excess of worldly fun?
  7. Notice, there was no thoughts of his father or home while with the harlots and gluttons.
- E. When he had spent all and got in deep trouble, he stubbornly tried to bail himself out (14-16).
  1. As with all sins, there will come a day of reckoning in which you hate them (Ps 36:1-2).
  2. Instead of quickly confessing his error and returning to his father, he held out in pride.
  3. Then he went to a citizen of that country to see if others in the world could help him.
  4. But the world does not truly receive sinners, so the prodigal was sent out to feed swine.
  5. He was hungry enough to eat the pig food, but there was none for him: he wished he could have the contentment of the worldlings around him, but he was vexed in his soul!
- F. When he came to himself by the grace of God, he was able to reason clearly again (17-20a).
  1. No man comes to himself and reasons clearly again without God's gift (II Tim 2:25-26).
  2. As the poorest in his father's house were better off than he, so the church to sinners.
  3. Returning to his father is as turning to God, plain confession of sin (Job 33:27; I Jn 1:9).
  4. Repentance worthy of God is shown by a humble and broken spirit (Ps 51:17; I Pet 5:6).
  5. He did not just think about what he ought to do – he did it! – He went to his father!
- G. The response of the father is God's response to sinners and should be our response (20b).
  1. The prodigal's father was looking for him, saw him a great way off, and went to him.
  2. He went with compassion, not with haughtiness or vengeance; and he ran to meet him.
  3. He fell on his neck with hugging and kissed him – overtures of affection and forgiveness.
  4. What a precious lesson the Lord gives us to induce us to lay down our sins and go home!
  5. It is important to observe and remember that we are dealing with true repentance here.
- H. The son did what he knew he should do – he did not fail to do it – he confessed fully (21).
  1. With the father's warm overtures, many sinners would have dropped their repentance.
  2. They would have presumed on the goodness of the father without giving their rights up.
  3. You have the same encouragement to confess your sins and return to your Father.

- I. The response of the father is God's response to sinners and should be our response (22-24).
  1. Instead of letting his son be a servant to extract a pound of flesh, he honored him highly.
  2. As men rejoice over sheep and coins, this father rejoiced over his son coming back home.
  3. Here is joy for sinners repenting ... to bring repentance, and to rebuke the self-righteous.
  4. There is every reason for a father to celebrate in such a way for a truly repenting prodigal.
  5. There is every reason for angels in heaven and saints on earth to love repenting rebels.
  6. It is important to observe and remember that we are dealing with true repentance here.
- J. It is the custom of our church to confirm our affection and forgiveness with such merriment.
  1. We know the apostolic instruction for recovering an excluded member (II Cor 2:6-8).
  2. And we do it in style by killing the fatted calf and buying a set of clothes and a ring.
  3. While we appear harsh to some by excluding, our recovery dinner is unknown to them.

### **The Righteous Son (15:25-32)**

- A. The elder brother represents the proud Pharisees and scribes in despising sinners (25-30).
  1. It is only pride and envy caused by pride that would resent such a glorious occasion.
  2. Instead of the older brother being at the front of the line, he threatens to ruin the event.
  3. The words here are the same as the proud words of the Pharisee's prayer (Luke 18:9-14).
  4. He digs deep to make his little brother look as bad as possible by mentioning harlots.
  5. He makes his father look like the stingiest father around for overlooking perfect conduct.
- B. The father reminds the son that their relationship is fully intact and he has a full inheritance.
  1. Son, we have a full relationship between just us, and all my remaining goods are yours.
  2. "It was meet" – it was appropriate, proper, right, and suitable – that we honored him.
  3. He had not been literally dead, but it was the same as if he had been to a loving father.

### **Conclusion:**

1. What hinders you from coming to the Lord Jesus, confessing your sins, and causing joy in heaven?
2. Can you remember these parables and their lesson in the days of folly and death that may come?
3. Can you learn this lesson in order to be able to comfort sinners and rebuke the self-righteous?
4. The depraved and profane old man in every saint despises sinners and envies joy in their recovery.
5. The key in one word is joy! The key in a few words is joy over sinners repenting! Get excited!
6. Do you know that the Lord of heaven has such an interest in you personally that heaven rejoices?
7. The difference here is repentance, for Corinth shows us many sinners weak, sickly, and even dead!
8. The one recovery example we have in the New Testament epistles is of an incestuous fornicator, which is designed to comfort those with sins less depraved and profane. Take hope, sinner! Repent!
9. Consider David, Manasseh, Paul, the thief on the cross, Mary Magdalene, the woman of Samaria, etc.
10. Christian love rejoices in the truth, which is loving others doing right, not living in sin (I Cor 13:6).

### **For Further Study:**

1. The sermon outline, "[Jesus Loves Losers](#)," gives the examples and doctrine from the Bible to comfort sinners.
2. The sermon outline, "[Jesus Came for Sinners](#)," deals at length with Paul's faithful saying from I Timothy 1:15.

## **Christ Receiveth Sinful Men!**

Erdmann Neumeister 1671-1756

Sinners Jesus will receive;  
Sound this word of grace to all  
Who the heavenly pathway leave,  
All who linger, all who fall.

*Sing it o'er and over again;  
Christ receiveth sinful men;  
Make the message clear and plain:  
Christ receiveth sinful men.*

Come, and He will give you rest;  
Trust Him, for His Word is plain;  
He will take the sinfulest;  
Christ receiveth sinful men.

*Refrain*

Now my heart condemns me not,  
Pure before the law I stand;  
He who cleansed me from all spot,  
Satisfied its last demand.

*Refrain*

Christ receiveth sinful men,  
Even me with all my sin;  
Purged from every spot and stain,  
Heaven with Him I enter in.

*Refrain*