

The Prodigal Son

Key Verse: *“For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”*
—**Luke 15:24**

Selected Scripture:
Luke 15:11-32

THIS PARABLE SPEAKS mainly about the younger of two sons, but it is evident that the elder brother’s reaction to the father’s decision plays an important role at the conclusion of this narrative. In relating this scenario, Jesus indicated a certain man of means

gave an inheritance to the younger sibling who went his own way and engaged in riotous living, wasting all he had been given.—**Luke 15:11-16**

In his miserable condition, the prodigal finally began to realize his rebellious attitude and lack of gratitude for the abundant provision that he had previously enjoyed at home. He then resolved to repent, seek mercy by returning to his father, and petitioning that he might serve as a hired hand.—**vss. 17-19**

Although he was still far from home, his father seeing him in the distance, ran to greet and receive him with a loving embrace. Furthermore, his servants were directed to outfit the prodigal with the finest of robes, put a ring on his finger, place sandals on his feet and celebrate his return with a feast. (**vss. 20-23**) Our Key Verse illustrates the great joy the father experienced in having his wayward son reconciled to him.

The elder son, hearing the festivities, became wroth since he had not gone astray, yet was never honored as

was his brother who had sowed his wild oats before returning home. His father acknowledged that fact, but also said it was appropriate to receive his lost son back into the fold. This did little, however, to assuage the anger of the older brother.—vss. 25-32

In this parable, the father is a fitting picture of Jehovah, our exalted Creator, just as the elder son might depict the scribes and Pharisees who outwardly appeared to keep the Mosaic Law. The younger son could represent the common people during Jesus' ministry who were not so religiously strict as to their ideals. As members of the nation of Israel, they had perhaps wasted their opportunities for godly service because of self-gratification and were now desiring to seek Jehovah. It was to just such characters that Christ gave encouragement by saying "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matt. 11:28

Some among this latter group returned to God and were abundantly pardoned and granted special manifestations of divine favor through the Holy Spirit after Pentecost. However, the Jewish religious leaders as a whole failed to embrace the hope of the high calling thus losing the privilege, as prospective members of the body of Christ, of being instrumental in helping to bless all the families of mankind.—Luke 12:32; 13:28

How grandly the father's welcome describes the love of God! The best robe and the other attentions given to the repentant one well illustrate the provision the Heavenly Father has made through Christ for all who return from the ways of sin. The robe and all the blessings are provided as a covering for the imperfections of the fallen nature. The fatted calf represents the bountiful feast which God has provided for the penitent class. In his kingdom "shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things ... full of marrow."—Isa. 25:6-8; 55:1,2

■