

Scott's Thoughts -- The Loving Father

Written by Scott Evans

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Luke 15:11-24 is probably one of the most commonly known parables that Jesus taught. It is commonly referred to the parable of the prodigal son. However, I recently read this passage of scripture and like is often the case, God revealed something to me and it was like I was reading it for the first time.

Of course, I always know this was an analogy of the sinner coming back to Christ after committing a sin. However, what I focused on in this particular reading was how loving the father actually was in this parable!

In the parable, the son rebelled and that was where the trouble began. What caused this rebellion? Well, it was a variety of things. He valued things more than people. He valued pleasure over everything else. He failed to see the blessings that he had at home, preferring to search in a distant land. These reasons are pretty much the same reasons that we as humans commit sin. That "distant land" that the son was seeking, exists in each one of our hearts. We must remember that the son made a willing choice that broke his father's heart. We, as Christians, make that same willing choice when we choose to sin and there is no doubt that it breaks God's Heart when we sin.

The parable continues in verses 17-20 where the son realizes his sin and repents. In those verses the Bible says *"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.'* So he got up and went to his father."

I have mentioned before in other articles that line

"When he came to his senses."

That statement indicates that he had really not been himself. The very definition of repent is to change one's mind. So, in reality, what the son did is change his mind and admit and confess his sin. Repentance is a change of the mind but it is also a change of will and even emotions.

Acts 11:18 says

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When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life."

Repentance is the work of God!!!! The best part of this part of the story is that the son got up and went to his father! As Christians, these are the steps we must take when we repent from sin. We must come to our senses, change our mind, attitude, emotions and heart, go to our Father and confess our sin.

Verses 20-24 in this passage of scripture tells of the moment when the son reached his father. One thing I noticed here that I had never noticed before is that the father cut the son off in mid confession! In verse 21 and 22 we read *"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against*

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heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. 'But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."

If you read back in this passage, the son had said he was going back and he was going to tell his father he would be a servant. The son never got those words out! The father forgave him on the spot and the celebration began! The father was filled with compassion. Is this not exactly how God treats us when we confess our sin to Him? He does not allow us or force us to come back as a lesser Christian than we were before! He fully restores us into the fellowship! Our God is filled with mercy, grace and compassion!

The end of this passage talks about the reaction of the older son. He was not happy! Oftentimes you will find that if you sin as a Christian, there will be naysayers when you come back to Christ. Other Christians will not be so quick to forgive and forget as Christ is. That is a shame but we must remember that we are all still human. As long as you know that your heart is right with God, I encourage you to continue on your journey and follow God's plan. It is not always easy when others are holding a grudge or talking about you behind your back but you must press on! God is still in control and He has His plan working perfectly!

I now call this passage of scripture "The Parable of the Loving Father." Our Heavenly Father loves us more than anything and He is so willing to forgive us of our sin. If you have wandered away from Him, "come to your senses" and confess that sin to Jesus Christ! Friend, He will forgive you and His forgiveness is the only forgiveness that matters and you truly need!