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Lifeline



THE PARABLE OF THE FATHER'S HEART

There was a wealthy Jew in Palestine who had a great household with olive yards and vineyards, sheep and camels and hired servants. He had two sons, who had all the father's provisions available in that wealthy home. However, the younger son being sick of living with his loving father chose no longer to be under his authority. He brazenly demanded his share of the inheritance and his father refused him not. "He gathered all together" and cutting every tie with his father, took his journey to a "far country", to a world of sin and mirth, away from God and the eyes of his father. The rebellious act of the young man has characteristics of Isaiah's prophetic portrayal of sinners, "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way..." (Isaiah 53:6).

Soon he spent all and became penniless. To make matters worse, a mighty famine ravaged the land and he began to be in want. His dire situation forced him to join the citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed the swine, a great disgrace that could happen to the son of a wealthy Jew. The swine was an unclean animal under the Levitical law (Leviticus 11:8), which kept reminding him that he was a lawbreaker and under the judgement of God. The ration provided to the prodigal was scanty that he longed to fill his stomach with the swine feed, but even that was not available, and none pitied him. Running away from the presence of his loving father has brought him to a most shameful and disgraceful experience of feeding the swine.

We see in this narrative, God's amazing kindness and mercy, for the extreme misery brought the prodigal to his right senses. Earlier he was "beside himself", but now "came to himself". Then he said, "how many hired servants of my father's house have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" He composed a

statement of repentance (Luke 15:18, 19). Genuine repentance is not confined to shallow words, but to action. In his extremity, there was genuine repentance in his heart. This is of prime necessity for the salvation of every sinner who walks the road of the prodigal.

The prodigal is under the sentence of death just like the older brother is who holds a pharisaic attitude. The words "...when he was yet a great way off..." speak eloquently about the father's heart, reminiscing about the Love of God, our Saviour. The waiting and watching and yearning of the father focuses our attention on the incredible bounty and generosity of the father, which is the powerful portrayal of the heart of God, our heavenly Father towards the prodigals, you and I (Genesis 3:8, 9).

The father, casting aside his dignity of a wealthy Jew, having had compassion, unashamedly ran, reached his wayward son, embraced him and kissed him tenderly, which reminds us of the Son of God coming on the earth & suffering humiliation and torture and dying on the cursed cross as a criminal for you and for me, prodigals. The prodigal was arrayed with the best robe, the garment of salvation which our heavenly Father clothes us with (Isaiah 61:10; Revelation 7:14), the ring on his hand, signifies an unending relationship to our heavenly Father and shoes on his feet, as a mark as a free man, privilege to stand in His blessed presence in absolute forgiveness and acceptance. The fatted calf is a prize animal reserved for a feast in honour of a special guest.

In the mind of our heavenly Father, there could not be a joyous occasion than when a lost son is found (Luke 15:7). Dear readers come home to God, our Saviour with a repentant heart and bring joy to the heart of God!

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