

## THE PRODIGAL SON

### Luke 15:11-24

Our text described the experience of a young man who went astray but was induced by pangs of suffering and affliction to return to his source and his lost position and privileges in his father's house. This parable was the third of a series which allegorically described God as a common Father to all mankind "*For in him we live, and move, and have our being; ... we are also his offspring.*" **Acts 17:28**. It celebrates the riches of the Gospel, and God's keen interest in the conversion of sinners no matter how great their sins are and His readiness to receive and bless them. These stories serve as motivation to direct and encourage all who are far away from God and are lost to come back to Him. Through these three parables of lost things we learn a lot about God and about lost humanity.

They revealed God to us as a loving forgiving, unchanging and trustworthy Father. He is ever willing and ready to heal the broken and restore lost men to physical, social, psychological, emotional and spiritual state and privileges of close relationship with Himself which they by sinning lost. Men by sinning lose significance, hope, peace, happiness, dreams, and prospect of life with God and eternity. Jesus came to restore all these and more. We see in these parables how God feels about people who messed up, who are broken and damaged and to what length He will go to get them back on their feet. This is very important in a world and at a time in which rate of attrition, failure or percentage mortality in life's processes are admissible and appears normal. In this context God is different from man.

God wanted all to be saved, whether one in a hundred or one in a ten or one in two. Jesus' parable makes a statement that every sheep, every coin, and every son counts. God wanted a full house and total recovery. We should not give up easily on anyone who falls through the cracks. The Lord will not want us to give up on any one sheep, coin or son. Therefore, and in this regards, the doctrine that that salvation is for a selected few or for an elect individual or group shows its falsehood. The Lord wanted everyone saved. He is ready and has offered necessary sacrifice for the return and salvation of all.

We shall consider three subtopics:

1. Journey to a far away country
2. Peril of prodigal choices and living
3. Celebration of the return of the penitent

#### 1. Journey to a far away country

Luke 15:11-13, Proverbs 21:16, Psalm 73:27, 2 Peter 2:21, Judges 14:1-3, Genesis 13:10-13

According to Jesus, there was a man who had two sons. One day, the younger one demanded his share of his father's wealth or estate. In response, the man divided his property between them. Not long after receiving his share of inheritance, the younger son gathered all he had and set off to live in a distant country where he squandered his wealth in wild loose living. About the time he had squandered all, a severe famine began to ravage the country. He began to be in want. To mitigate his suffering, he glued himself to one of the citizen of that country who sent him to his piggery farm to feed them. Gladly would he have fed on the rations given to pigs to satisfy his hunger but he was closely monitored and was not allowed to do so.

This young man's story described the diminution in value, depravity and degradation in virtues and morals of all who wander away from God. Sin degrades and depreciates a man's worth. The longer a man continues to live in sin and far away from God, the more he continues to depreciate. Those who have late conversion actually are not worth much but they will be welcomed and blessed like everyone else if they do not despair about returning to God and gave their best or their all when they return.

By this young man's foolish decision, he abandoned home and family relationship. It is clear to some extent that those who abandoned their families like the prodigal son are living in fool's paradise and have lost their mind. We can say the same about abandonment of relationship with those in an edifying household of faith, where holiness and love is central in Christian living and relationship. Family life is one of the most beautiful social institutions that God created and allowed to exist on earth.

A time always come when everyone in the world is compelled to recognize that family is the most important relationship on earth and that lack or loss of it is a great loss. This commonly happens when all the chips are down and when one is compelled to grapple with the challenges that come with being brought to ground 'zero' of life either by reason of health, age or misfortune. Some people in this world are so isolated from others as to have no one with whom they can initiate conversation and pour out their minds, which in itself is therapeutic. Like every gift from God, men often take family relationship for granted until they discover how much they need it and begin to make amends. That was the case with this prodigal son.

## **2. Peril of prodigal choices and living**

Luke 15:13-16, Philippians 3:18-19, Proverbs 29:3, 13:15, Ecclesiastes 11:9

Bible scholars and commentators called this son who went astray the "*Prodigal Son*". The parable is the story of a typical rebellious adolescent or impatient youth who went astray. The word "*prodigal*" can nowhere be found in the story. It is English label for extravagant, wasteful, careless, restless and reckless spending, loose, wild living. Interestingly, it is not only young unmarried persons that can be prodigal. Actually, a adult male or female, a family, community or nation can be prodigal too. Besides, those spending their life and time on anything other than expansion of the kingdom of God and preparation to spend eternity with Christ in heaven are prodigal people also; it is

only that many of them may not realize it. While the prodigal son regained his lost senses and took steps to make amends, many people like him whether young or old may not be able to do so in the gospel way without self-discovery and illumination by the Holy Spirit.

The decision of this prodigal son to glue himself to a citizen in the country he went to overcome famine does not seem to give him a fair deal advantage or any better benefit in the relationship, it never improved his condition. We have been warned against unequal yokes. It seems as if instead of the citizen he entered into partnership with seeing him as an equal peer or partner in business, he saw him as a beast of burden who could increase his wealth for little or meagre fare. He was working but his wages were not enough to feed him. He desired to be fed on pig meal or ration but no man would extend to him even the courtesy and care that animals freely enjoyed. Then he woke up.

It occurred to him that while at home even the servants his father hired had more than sufficient to eat. It dawned on him that he must have lost his mind to bring himself low to such a deplorable condition as to desire to be fed with animal ration; a prince from a great house. Those who are in league with Satan in order to solve life's problems will by him be brought to such humiliation in life and in eternity that will make the state of animals enviable.

This prodigal son eventually came to his senses. By this he acknowledged that he had lost his mind by wandering away from home. At what point did he lose his mind? He lost it at the moment he went to his father and wished him dead. It was not a norm for inheritance to be transferred in the lifetime of the owner of the property. Asking for inheritance while the owner of the property is still alive implies desire for a permanent end to a parent-child relationship i.e. a desire for the death of that association and relationship. It means this younger son no longer wanted to have anything to do with his father. It was evidence that he had lost his mind because no normal child or individual will do that.

A normal individual doesn't want their parents to die even when these parents are very old. He lost his mind the moment he began to think that his father's loving-care and protection which he viewed as restraints is over-bearing and that his father's control over him was too much. Lastly, he lost it immediately he left home and separated himself from family.

### **3. Celebration of the return of the penitent**

Luke 15:17-24, Psalm 32:5, Acts 3:19, 2 Peter 3:9, 1John 1:9, Zephaniah 3:17, Luke 15:7, 10, Revelation 5:8-10

When the prodigal son came to himself the first thing he realized was that he had sinned. What are his sins? They include arrogance and pride, love for ease and pleasure, wasting of family resources, separation from home and abandonment of family and

family responsibility, disgraceful conduct, dragging the family name into the mud, self will, lusts and betrayal of trust.

He acknowledged them. "*I have sinned*" is probably one of the greatest expressions for humble acknowledgement of one's error and sins that heaven always delight in hearing from the mouth of one who missed his way. The blessings of repentance and confession including forsaking of confessed sins are tremendous if it comes from a sincere and humble heart and with the right attitude. The prodigal son when he returned did not blame anyone for his waywardness and for leaving home. He took personal responsibility for his actions. That is what every sinner who wanted forgiveness from God is expected to do. Luke 19:10 Jesus came to the world to save sinners but the sinner who wanted salvation must confess his sins, be willing to forsake them and accept Christ as his Saviour.

When his father saw him coming from afar he ran to meet and welcome him. He kissed him and embraced him. The father's running contravened the norm of the time regarding the sobriety, dignity and authority of such a man at that time. His love made him lay aside all that momentarily. This was what Jesus did. The father of this younger son celebrated his safe and sound return as in the other two parables of recovery of what was lost. The celebration party itself was a reflection of what makes God and heavenly host happy. It pointed to the fact that when lost humanity eventually become restored to God through the sacrifice of Christ and the kingdom of God is eventually fully set, there will be great celebration and partying of a wonderful reunion and the consummation of God's plan for humanity.