

Lost and Found: Luke 15 (2)

The Striving of the Spirit (vv.8-10)

These pieces of silver were likely joined together in a chain and worn on the forehead. They were often given by the husband to seal the marriage ceremony, very much like a ring is given to do the same today. As such, these coins were not of any great financial worth, but of the highest personal value. One piece of silver (or a drachma) was equal in value to one denarius (Roman currency) which was one day's wage for a common labourer (Matthew 20.2).

The 'woman' (v.8) speaks of voluntary submission and is therefore an apt picture of the Spirit of God. *Ephesians 5.22: Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.* The husband and wife relationship is a beautiful picture of Christ and the Church. As the Church submits to the authority and headship of Christ, so the wife voluntarily submits to her husband. Of course, this does **not** imply inferiority or inequality on the wife's part. So, the Holy Spirit is ever the submissive, unnamed servant who seeks to exalt the Person of the Lord Jesus (John 16.13-15).

The Spirit of God is also seen more fully in the woman's actions (v.8). She 'lights a candle' which speaks of the witness and testimony of the Word of God (Psalm 119.105). This dispels the darkness and exposes the dirt of sin. She 'sweeps the house' reminding us of the unseen, private searching of the Spirit of God as He seeks to bring conviction and sweep away the accumulated dust and dirt of Satan's lies (John 16.8). Finally, she 'seeks diligently', a picture of the striving of the Spirit of God (Genesis 6.3, Acts 7.51).

Again, the lost is found with great rejoicing (vv.9-10). Note. When the silver was lost, its position was down in the dust and its monetary value was nothing. When the silver was found, its position was honour and glory and its monetary value was restored. Likewise, believers have been given a position of great glory (Ephesians 2.6) and we can now be of value in God's service. What are we worth in our service for Him today?

The Singing of the Father (vv.11-32)

The Son of God has been represented by the shepherd and the Holy Spirit by the woman. Now the Father is represented by the 'certain man' which had two sons (v.11). These sons speak of the nation of Israel which has already been represented by the sheep (Jeremiah 50.6, Matthew 10.6) and the silver (Exodus 19.5, Psalm 135.4). *Exodus 4.22: And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn. Deuteronomy 32.6: O foolish people and unwise... is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?* One of these sons is **lawless** (the prodigal) and therefore represents the publicans and sinners, one is **religious** in his service and represents the Pharisees and Scribes.

Note the experiences of the lawless son:

- He took his journey into a 'far country' (v.13). The world captivated this son. He wanted to move (morally) as far away from the father's house as he could (cf. Luke 18.13, Acts 2.39, Ephesians 2.17).
- He wasted his substance with extravagant, reckless living (v.13). Likewise, although the nation of Israel had been given many blessings of God (Romans 9.4-5), they had no respect or regard for them.
- A famine arose in the land and he began to be in 'want' (v.14). He was 'perishing with hunger' (v.17). Here is a picture of great spiritual barrenness. No spiritual satisfaction can ever be sought or found in the world. The world could only offer him 'husks' (v.16), the outer shell without the kernel, the outside without the inside. This is the promise of satisfaction, but no real substance (Colossians 2.17). Life can bring no satisfaction unless God is in it.
- He joined himself to a 'citizen of that country'. There is an indication here that the son was looking for a man-made solution to his need. Many seek to do the same today finding refuge in organised religion.
- He 'came to himself' (v.17). A life of sin leads to insanity. He wasn't thinking straight. The world seeks to keep us busy and its amusements will try and prevent people from thinking and facing the realities of life. It wasn't until life's circumstances (feeding swine) brought him to utter despair that he started thinking (v.17) and was willing to repent (vv.18-19).

According to Deuteronomy 21 the stubborn and rebellious son was under sentence of death. *Deuteronomy 21.20-21: And they (father and mother) shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die.* It is therefore remarkable that the response of the father is so **gracious** (picturing God's great grace that receives the lost sinner). The father showed:

- **Concern.** He 'saw him' from a 'great way off' (v.20). This indicates that the father expected the son's return. The Greek suggests that he travelled each day from his house to a place where he could see his son's return at the earliest possible moment. Such is the grace of God who is anxious to receive. The father would not even allow the son to fully rehearse his repentance speech (cf. vv.18-19, 21-22).
- **Compassion.** He 'had compassion' and 'kissed him' (v.20), or literally 'smothered him in kisses'. This signifies something of the love of the Father for us even during our years of rebellion. He has never ceased to love us. This was clearly demonstrated by the Lord Jesus (Matthew 9.36, 14.14, 15.32, Mark 1.41, 6.34, 8.2, Luke 7.13, 10.33). *Luke 7.13: And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.*
- **Communion.** He 'ran' (v.20). The father was so desirous of fellowship with his rebellious son that he was willing to run, something that was considered undignified for an older man (cf. Genesis 3.8, 1 John 1.3).

Not only did the father show great grace in **receiving** his son, but also great grace in **providing** for his son. There was given:

- 'The best robe' (v.22). This was probably the father's and is a symbol of salvation (Isa. 61.10) and righteousness (Revelation 7.14). The rags of our own righteousnesses have been stripped away and we are now clothed in the **righteousness** which comes from God. *Ephesians 4.24: And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*
- A 'ring on his hand' (v.22). This is the pledge of the Father's eternal love and a symbol of **sonship**. Joseph received Pharaoh's ring distinguishing him as a man in authority who acted on his behalf and in his name (Genesis 41.42). This is a position of great dignity and glory. *Ephesians 1.5: He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ.*
- 'Shoes on his feet' (v.22). Slaves walked barefoot. Sons wore shoes. Moses was requested to take his shoes off to stand on holy ground (Exodus 3.5) There is no **standing** before God on the basis of law (Romans 3.20). But, now a rebellious sinner stands before the Father on the basis of divine grace. *Ephesians 6.15: Stand therefore.. putting on.. the shoes of the Good News of peace— a firm foundation for your feet. WEY*
- The 'fatted calf' which was to be killed and eaten (v.23). Here is a picture of **fellowship** as the father and repentant sinner feasting on the same food; that which speaks of Christ. *Ephesians 5.2: And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.*
- **Life.** 'For this my son was dead and has come to life, was lost and has been found' JND (v.24). *Ephesians 2.1: And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*
- **Joy.** 'Began to be merry' (v.24), 'music and dancing' (v.25). The celebrations merely 'begin' as there is no hint of the joy ever ceasing. *Ephesians 5.19: Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. Praise God for all the great blessings He has given us in Christ.*

Note the elder son (vv.25-32). This son represents the religious Pharisees and Scribes. In Scripture, the elder son often illustrates the proud, self-righteous sinner, e.g. **Cain** and Abel, **Ishmael** and Isaac, **Esau** and Jacob. This son is found to be in the 'field', a place of labour. The religious, or self-righteous, often work hard and have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge (Romans 10.2-4). This elder son was 'nigh' to the father's house, but not **in** it. He also did not know or understand the joy of a repentant sinner being received (v.26), in fact there was anger at the thought (v.28). He was cold and formal, being a stranger to the fullness of joy found alone in the divine presence (Psalm 16.11). In response, the father 'comes out' and 'intreats' (to 'call to one's side') him to come in (v.28). See Hosea 11.4, 8, John 1.11, Hebrews 1.1. Despite the compassionate reasoning of the father, the son 'would not' (v.28). *John 5.40: And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. Luke 13.34: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!*

Finally, the elder son speaks the true feelings of his heart, v.29: *And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve (slave for) thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.* Here is the language of a legal mind. We cannot earn our way into God's favour. This is the self-righteous attitude of the Jews (Acts 22.3, 26.7, Romans 9.4). But, worst of all, he desired the 'kid' that he might 'make merry with his **friends**'. He had no use for the fellowship and love of the father. His notion of real happiness was to be away from the Father and in the company of his friends.

The religious son was devoted to his father's law and devoted to his service, but not in tune with his father's heart. This was external allegiance only. He was serving him out of selfish motive, not out of love. What about us? Is our allegiance all external? Do we serve Him for ourselves? Do we have all the external marks of belonging to Christ, but no inward reality?