

WHEN WE NEED FATHERLY HEALING

(When We Run Away From God and When We Are Lost In The Father's House)

Luke 15:11-32 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Twenty-eight years ago, God led me to tackle this parable by seeking to preach that Jesus wanted the Pharisees to know not just the down and outers need healing and salvation, but also the up and outers, the religious who are proudly religious, but still lost. I recently thought of this message, so I read what I wrote in 1995. Today, after spending time again in this text, I feel an urging to tackle again this parable Jesus spoke about this father's two lost sons. Many years ago, Gary Smalley and John Trent wrote a wonderful book called, "The Blessing." The thesis of the book is that by withholding the blessing from our children can be the most powerful blow to bring ruin to our children's lives, whereas giving that blessing of love can be the most powerful tool to shape our children into men and women of God.

Without parental blessing, there are seven major results: (1) Some children grow up vainly seeking their whole lives for what they never got. These seekers are often uncomfortable receiving love even from their spouse. **Seekers need healing.** (2) Some children's lives are shattered like broken glass because they were never blessed. They live lives of fear, depression, and often turn to suicide. **Shattered people need healing.** (3) Some children grow up without the blessing to be smotherers. Smotherers drain others dry trying to make up for years of feeling unloved with unmet needs. **Smotherers need healing.** (4) Some children grow up shackled to anger against their parents who withheld their blessing. They never forget or forgive. They keep a chip on their shoulders. **Shackled people need healing.** (5) Some children grow up as sticklers for perfection, workaholics, and never-ending house cleaners. Since they never receive parental blessing, they keep trying to earn the blessing. **Sticklers for perfection need healing.** (6) Some children grow up without the blessing to be stony-hearted and detached. They hold everyone at arm's length, though they are lonely. **Stony hearted people need healing.** (7) Some children without parental blessing grow up to be seducers and succumb to being seduced. They keep looking for love in all the wrong places. They often become addicted to porn, drugs, and alcohol as a cover-up from the deep hurt of their past. **Seducers and the seduced need healing.**

As I have studied this parable this week, the Holy Spirit has shown me afresh how desperately in need of healing these two sons were, both the elder son and the younger prodigal. Sadly, the father's blessing was there for both sons. They both knew and receive their father's love, which is a type of God, our Father's love. The prodigal rejected and spurned his father's blessing, divorcing himself from his father and his father's house to waste his life in a far country. The elder somehow missed the father's available blessing at home, serving his father only out of duty with a self-righteous spirit and an unwillingness to forgive. In the case of both sons, the father's gentle, persuading love is beautiful with both sons. Both sons seemed unappreciative of their blessing and privilege, and both sons went astray. The elder son went astray mentally, while the younger son physically lived out his

dream to run away from his father's love. I don't feel led today to look at this parable in any other way than to find out when each of us need our Father's healing. Just when do you and I need the Father's healing? There are two main answers here, (1) When we are prodigal sons far from home, and (2) when we are elder sons lost in our Father's house. In each case, I was amazed to find each of these brothers illustrate 10 times each, when they each desperately needed healing.

WHEN WE NEED THE FATHER'S HEALING AS PRODIGALS. (1.) This is found in vs.11-24. "Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living." -v. 13. There are ten times this prodigal desperately needed healing. When?

When we long to be free from our Father's care and restraint. (1) We read in verse 12, "And the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me." God provides protective coverings, family and parental love and discipline, marriage covering calling for fidelity, and covering of a local church, where we are bound by accountability to the body of Christ. When a child can't wait to get away from home, or a spouse can't wait to get away from the other spouse on a business trip, or a believer can't wait to be unaccountable to their local church, there is a prodigal desperately in need of healing.

When we demand our rights and lose respect for our Father. (2) In v. 12, we see this in the prodigal's words, "Father, give me what is coming to me." In Jesus' day, a father could not legally refuse this request, but the father could penalize the son for early withdrawal of his inheritance. Yet this father made no protest. The only penalty for the prodigal was to see the look of grief in his father's eyes. When we demand our own rights from our Father, we desperately need healing.

When we make a total break from our spiritual roots. (3) In v. 13, the prodigal left nothing behind to call him back home. He took all his treasures, his father's precious inheritance and split. He "gathered all he had." This prodigal wanted no more rules or accountability. How often our children don't look like prodigals, but like upstanding citizens leaving home, leaving church behind, prayer behind, no reading their Bible, and they build their own support group apart from God. Those breaking with their godly roots when they leave home desperately need healing.

When we waste God-given precious treasures on selfish living. (4) In v. 13, we read that he squandered his property, in reckless living. To be free from obedience to parents or obedience to God is to be bound in chains of sin. This prodigal was chained to selfishness, and in so doing, he also lost his integrity and character. He wasted and destroyed the best that God provided for him. Credit-card addicts have become prodigals, spiritually sick, spending what we do not possess and giving away what we need most—family time, working around the clock to pay off debts so we pass each other like ships in the night. Wasters desperately need healing.

When we find ourselves at the bottom, living an accursed life, miserable. (5) Notice vs. 14-16. When we've spent everything, on top of that there is a famine in

our far country. Money runs out when there is often a round of beer for everyone, When we are at the bottom, we can agree to the most humiliating and repulsive jobs. Some people sell their bodies, and others their soul. This prodigal was starving, eating scraps that he tried to clean off from the hog's slop he was feeding the hogs. How low we can get when we run from God, even digging in garbage cans for part of a leftover meal. People at the bottom desperately need healing.

When we finally wake up and come to ourselves, seeing we are dying in sin. (6)

In v. 17. is waking up to the call of God, which is stronger than any other call. God's calling us back to Himself reaches the lowest pits of despair. What a wake-up call from God when we come to ourselves. When we are away from God, we seldom return until we hit bottom. As long as we are away from God, we aren't ourselves. When we wake up in our sin, we desperately need healing.

When we face our own sin, and long for our Father's house. (7) In vs. 17b-19, this prodigal owning his own sin, longed for home, for God, and for a relationship again with his father to be restored. Even if he had to go home to be a hired man or a slave, that would be vastly better than being a free man living in sin and bound by shame. When in our sin, we long for our Father, we desperately need healing.

When we deserve and expect severe recrimination and punishment for our sin.

(8) In v. 19, the prodigal arrived at the bottom, when the most severe punishment or imprisonment for his sin would be far better than continuing to live in a far country. Do you feel unworthy of Jesus' love and forgiveness? Don't fall into self-pity or turn to suicide. Those needing forgiveness desperately need healing.

When we're on our way home, and preparing our speech with our Father. (9)

Notice v. 20. Was this prodigal wanting to see his father, but fearing to see him? Was he longing for his father's house, but almost afraid to look up from the ground as he got close to the lane going up to his childhood home? What was the prodigal thinking? Would his father still be waiting for him, or would his father not even know him or acknowledge him? Would his dad even believe his repentance story was real? Would his father even see how deep his guilt was, and would he hear his confession? Would His dad notice his self-sufficient pride was gone? Would his dad believe his story? Prodigals going home desperately need healing.

When in our shame, we believe asking for total forgiveness is too much to ask.

(10) Notice vs. 21-23. Who saw who first? As the son was looking down in grief, pain, and guilt, he must have missed that his father saw him first. In pouring out his heart in confession, the prodigal didn't get his full confession out. His father wouldn't hear but a part of his confession. His purpose was to honor his returning son with a robe, a ring, and shoes, giving him again authority in his house. Only the slaves went barefoot. Confessing prodigals desperately need the healing he got.

WHEN WE NEED THE FATHER'S HEALING, LOST IN OUR FATHER'S HOUSE. (II.) This is found in verses 25-32. This is the part of the parable directly aimed at the scribes and the Pharisees. It is also aimed at us as believers, or wanna-

be believers, if we are self-righteous, judgmental, unforgiving, proud, and unwilling to confess our own sins, and also unwilling to rejoice at the return, the salvation, and the restoration of lost prodigals. There are ten stages when we need healing for ourselves. When?

When the sound of the Father rejoicing makes us avaricious, angry, and nervous.

(1) In vs. 25-26, this elder son asked a servant, “What’s going on?” This self-righteous, hard-working son, a workaholic, had no time for music, singing, and dancing. The crop must get in. As self-righteous people, all of us are trying to earn our inheritance. Joy over a brother or sister getting a gift given to them freely can be a blow to our perverse theology. Any openly sinful person getting saved makes us angry, nervous, and unwilling to rejoice with them. Notice, there was no personal investigation of the joy or the cause of it. A second-hand report was enough. When professing believers have no song in our hearts, but rather display our critical spirits, we show that we have no joy or rejoicing when lost people are being saved. Self-righteous believers or Pharisees desperately need healing.

When those we hoped were dead, are found to be alive, and we’re angry. (2)

Notice the father in v. 24 thought his younger son was dead, and so did his elder son. And notice in v. 28, the elder son was angry. This shows the bad temper of this elder son, when he wouldn’t trust his father or join in with his excitement over his brother’s return, and he angrily refused to even go into the house to see his younger brother. Every self-righteous professing believer has a war with God, and a war with welcoming home lost sinners. One of the tell-tale marks of the cults is they deny open sinners can find God, they are repulsed at death-bed conversions, or that hardened sinners can be saved. Those angry with God, desperately need healing.

When we stubbornly refuse to rejoice when sinners are saved. (3)

Notice in v. 28, This elder son refused to go in. Oh, how holier than thou Pharisees need the healing of the blood of Jesus. Do you shun unbelievers for fear of being infected? Are we too good to join in to welcome and celebrate the salvation of clearly lost sinners? Sadly, Christian people by the thousands are often heard to say after a conversion experience, “We’ll see where they are in three years.” Professing believers not rejoicing over lost sinners being saved, desperately need healing.

When we spurn our Father’s entreaties to welcome lost sinners. (4)

Listen to the tenderness of the father in v. 28. But the elder son wouldn’t listen to the father’s pleading, urging, begging, but held his ground, “I won’t join you in the house.” Few people get more begging from the Lord to come home to Him than self-righteous professing Christians. Few people reject the Father’s entreaties more often than proud elder sons. Proud self-righteous religious folk desperately need healing. Don’t ever think God the Father refuses to entreat proud Pharisees.

When we obey only out of duty, and not out of love. (5)

Look at v. 29 – “Look, these many years I have served you, and you never threw a party for me.” Work for God done out of duty only and not out of love, these are dead works. How many of us need spiritual healing on this score? Grim duty—what a sad way to serve Jesus!

And believe me, proud sinners have rotten memories. This elder son said, “I never disobeyed/neglected your command.” God would differ. Sin is so blinding for those who are self-righteous. The older we get, the more prone we are to turn sour and only dutifully go through the motions for Jesus. God forbid it! Dutiful only, professing believers serving without love desperately need healing.

When we in self-pity, accuse the Father of neglecting us, (6) Self pity turns to jealousy, In v. 29, this elder son told the father he was not fair. His words are in essence, “You never once gave me a skinny goat feast, much less give me a fattened calf feast. This turning on God can turn to blasphemy. Have we talked like this in public or private. “So, a rotten sinner gets saved, and they put him on television and ring bells. That fellow was faithless for 40 years, and he gets a party? I’ve served on church boards most of my life, and I’ve never got a gold watch or church applause. Nobody gives me respect; this church couldn’t operate without me. Do I get any repayment? I get a big zero. Am I angry? You bet I am. You would be too if you were in my shoes.” Elder sons desperately need healing.

When we refuse to identify with repentant sinners. (7) Notice in v. 30. “But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!” This is an utter lack of sympathy, empathy, or any identifying with this brother’s lostness. No, he’s not my brother. He’s just your son. When we can’t identify with lost sinners, we are more lost than the vilest sinner. Oh, how desperately holier than thou professing believers need healing.

When we harshly and crudely judge repentant sinners, and inwardly we wish vainly we had lived such a wild life for ourselves. (8) Notice v. 30 as this elder son speaks of this prodigal devouring his dad’s property with prostitutes. This is interesting. Up to now there has been no mention of prostitutes or harlots, but who brought this up? The elder son. Whose mind was in the wrong place? Could it be true this elder son was suspecting and accusing his brother of sins he himself might have liked to commit? Oh, how accusing elder sons desperately need healing.

When we forget all the blessings of our daily sonship in the Father’s house. Notice the Father’s words in v. 31. “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.” Unless all the joy/feasting surrounded this elder son, he was a killjoy for others yet with all the Father’s riches at his disposal. Missing them, he alone was to blame, living estranged from his father, as a slave and not as a son. The father’s riches were unused. His double inheritance was missed trying to prove he had earned his free inheritance. Forgetful elder sons desperately need healing.

When we are unrepentant ourselves, and unable to forgive, which prevents us from sharing joy when a sinner repents. (10) Notice v. 32. When a family member can’t rejoice with another repentant family member, is that angry member acting or being a real part of the family? Unrepentant elder sons desperately need healing. Jesus left a lot in this parable not totally explained. Did the elder son ever repent and come in, or did he die in unrepentance? Did the young repentant son behave obediently afterwards? What a plea to both younger and older sons!!!