

Grace for the Prodigal

“Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus” (Acts 3:19)

“And he said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, “Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.” And he divided his property between them. 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. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.

And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.” (Luke 15:11-24)

The prodigal’s path of sin...

1. Foolish.

“For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him” (Rom. 1:21)

Knew God

- Creation
- Conscience
- Communication (Bible)
- Christ
- Christians

“but they *became* futile in their thinking”
(Rom. 1:21)

“and their foolish hearts were darkened.”
(21)

- Process of turning out the light - dimmer switch.
- Growing accustomed to the dark.
- Loving the darkness.

“Claiming to be wise, they became fools...”
(Rom. 1:22)

“A fool takes no pleasure in understanding but only in expressing his opinion.” (Prov. 18:2)

A Fool?

- Believe or act like there is no God. (Ps. 14:1)
 - Slow to believe. (Luke 24:25)
 - Destitute of reason; folly; empty pursuit.
- “...fools despise wisdom and instruction”
(Prov. 1:7b)

“...a fool is reckless and careless” (Prov. 14:16b)

2. Selfish.

“...there he squandered his property in reckless living.” (Luke 15:13)

To “scatter” - throw into the wind.

“But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by *his own desires*.” (James 1:14)

“Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.” (15)

3. Rebellious.

“...Father I have sinned *against* heaven and before You.” (James 1:15)

Prodigal’s Rebellion

- No longer wanting to be under his father’s authority.
- Demanded his inheritance now!
- Dishonored his father.

“Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.” (Ps. 51:4)

A rejection of God’s plan is a rejection of God Himself.

The core problem is a problem of the heart - hard toward God.

“...and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.” (Rom. 1:25b)

- Set aside the Creator for the creation.
- Don’t want Him - want the stuff He made.

The prodigal’s path of grace...

1. Wake up call with consequences.

Andrew Palau

Drunk, high, crazy, hit bottom. Began kicking a homeless man. Someone asked him -

“Are you a believer? In Satan?”

- **Natural.**

“And when he had spent everything...”

(Luke 15:14)

“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

(Gal. 6:7)

God allows natural cause and effect to happen.

- **External.**

“...a severe famine arose in that country and he began to be in need.” (Luke 15:14)

“sent into his fields to feed pigs” (15b)

“...and no one gave him anything.” (16b)

“I perish here with hunger.” (17b)

- **Internal.**

“And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate...” (Luke 15:16)

“I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” (19)

“We cannot find Him, unless we know we need Him.” -Thomas Merton

When we hit bottom, flat on our backs - we look up and see Him.

2. Wisdom based on God's truth.

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice." (Prov. 12:15)

"But when he came to himself..." (Luke 15:17)

"And when He [the Holy Spirit] comes"
(John 16:8)

He will Convict the World Concerning...

- sin: God's perspective, based on God's Word of right and wrong.
- righteousness: "right" relationship with God.
- judgment: God's conclusion or ruling on what has been said or done.

3. Willingness to repent.

"I will arise and go to my father and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.'" (Luke 15:18)

A Decision...

- to leave his situation.
- to end his "running away."
- to return to his father.
- to confess his sin against God and his father.

"Repent, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19)

"that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (20)

"that God granted repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11:18)

4. Washed clean by the Father's grace.

From starvation, feeding pigs, eating the leftover pods, alone, without shoes...

Jewish Pattern - to Maintain Family Honor

- Initially refuse to see him.
- Require him to sit outside city gate for days in sackcloth and ashes.
- Work off loss to family estate.

To the Embrace of His Father (20)

- "the best robe" (22). For highest ranking family member.
- "a ring on his hand" (22). Family signet ring (not mere jewelry); symbol of authority.
- "shoes on his feet" (22).
- "fattened calf" (23). Whole village invited; no public shame, but instead, celebration.
- "let us celebrate" (23). Music, dancing (25)
- Dead - and now alive! (32)
- Lost - and now found! (32)

Washed clean!

"Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." (Ps. 51:2)

"...the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7b)

"Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." (Isa. 1:18)

"There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15:7)

"There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:10)