

A wild son and a wonderful father – Luke 15:11-32

Basil Howlett - Carey Baptist Church – 6 July 2008

This young man persuaded his father to give him now the share of the estate which would be his one day. As soon as he got the money, he went as far away as possible. Free from all the restraints of home, he lived an abandoned life. His money soon ran out and his friends ran away. There was a famine and he was in desperate need. He realised what a fool he had been and he returned home to his father, who forgave him and restored him.

Some hard-line, self-righteous people called the Pharisees condemned Jesus for trying to help sinful, fallen men and women, so he told them this story to show them that God was not harsh like them but full of compassion toward sinners. Just like the father in this story.

We can only appreciate the greatness of the father's compassion, when we realise the gravity of the boy's condition. Similarly, we can only appreciate the greatness of God's compassion when we realise the seriousness of our condition.

A. The son's grave condition.

- It was a life of wickedness. He grabbed his father's money but treated his father like dirt. That's just how we treat God if we are not Christians.
- A life of wastefulness.
- A life that was dangerous. (verse 17) *'I am starving to death.'*
- A life of hopelessness. (verse 16) *'No one gave him anything.'*
- All this is true of everyone who is not a Christian. The prodigal son *'came to his senses'* (verse 17). Have we? If so, we are ready to hear about the father's great compassion.

B. The father's great compassion.

In spite of all our sin God, loves us and is willing to forgive us and have us back. That's the bottom line of this story! Although the son had been so wicked and wasteful and had gone down to the depths, his father was willing to forgive him, and even lavish presents on him. Not only is God willing to forgive. He is able to do so through the person who told this story! God sent his own perfect Son, Jesus, into this world and allowed him to die to bear the punishment of our sin. To experience this forgiveness, we must return to God just as this young man returned to his father (verses 17, 20). What exactly does that entail?

- We must humble ourselves and confess our sins to him (verses 18, 21) .
- We must turn our backs on sin (verse 20).
- We must acknowledge that we deserve nothing from God ((verses 19, 21).
- We must plead with him to forgive us and receive us (verse 19).

C. This is hard so we need a few encouragements.

- We will find him ready and willing to welcome us (verse 20).
- We will find that God has been thinking about us for a long time (verse 20).
- We will be forgiven.
- We will receive many other gifts as well (verses 22, 23). The peace of knowing that we are right with God: of realising that God knows all about us but still loves us. The joy of knowing God's presence. The privilege of knowing that we are in his family for all eternity. The certainty that when we die we will go to heaven.

It may not all be plain sailing. Some self-righteous, religious people like the Pharisees (the elder brother) may be bitter and complain but, *there will be rejoicing in heaven*. The wild fellow, the rebel, the lost son, the wandering sheep has come home.

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