

# The Prodigal Son

by C.I. Scofield

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*The parable of the prodigal son reveals the loving and accepting nature of God the Father towards sinners.*

**Scripture:** Luke 15:20, John 3:16, Romans 8:17, 2 Corinthians 7:10, 1 John 3:4

**Topics:** "Gods Love", "Repentance"

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## Description

C.I. Scofield delves into the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-24, emphasizing the father as the primary focus of the lesson, showcasing the essence of sin as rebellion against the Father's will, and highlighting the universal truth that self-will leads to suffering. The sermon explores the theme of a backslider's repentance and the immense joy of God the Father over a returning child. The heart of the lesson reveals a profound revelation of God's character through the father's unconditional love and forgiveness towards both the wayward prodigal and the self-righteous brother.

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## Transcript

(Luke xv:11-24.)

### I. The Analysis.

1. The father, not the sons, the primary object of the lesson (verses 11, 12, 20-24).
2. The essence of all sin, insubordination to the will of the Father (verses 12, 13).--The implication here is evident. The younger son preferred independency to authority. It is the core of all sin (1 John iii:4, R. V.). The "man of sin" (2 Thess. ii:3) is, literally, "the lawless one."
3. The universe is not arranged to make self-will result in happiness (verses 14-16).--The father does not follow his lawless son, but leaves him to the inevitable operation of the universal law, which rivets together sin and suffering. It is only grace which rivets together suffering and glory (Rom. viii:17; Luke xxiv:26).
4. A backslider's repentance (verses 17-19, 21).--It should be remembered that the son here is a type of the backslider, rather than of the unrenewed sinner (2 Cor. vii:9-11).
5. The joy of our Father God over a returning son (verses 20-24).--What a picture! It may be commended to all backsliders for their encouragement, and to all theologians who, in a misplaced zeal for the authority of God, have de-fathered Him for their condemnation. What is our God and Father like? Like this father in the parable.

## II. The Heart of the Lesson.

This is but a half lesson. We habitually speak of Luke XV:11-32 as "the parable of the prodigal son," but the Bible says it concerns "A certain man who had two sons." The emphasis falls neither upon the prodigal nor upon the prodigal's brother, but upon the "certain man." The two sons in their different ways bring out what is in the father's heart.

So considered, the heart of the lesson is the most surprising and altogether astounding revelation that Jesus Christ ever gave to humanity. It is only our familiarity in a superficial, often half sentimental, way with the form into which Jesus cast the revelation which blinds our minds to the wonder and unexpectedness of it. We are possessed to think only of the boy who went away into the far country.

Take a proof. Every one has seen either in the original or in one of the numberless reproductions the remarkable picture by Vibert of the prodigal son. It will be remembered that it is a triptich. The great central third is a picture of the prodigal wasting his substance in the far country. It is a revel. Beautifully habited, the boy, holding aloft a wine glass, is the central figure, about whom are grouped the dancing girls and revellers. The picture at the right is still of the boy--now in his degradation and misery. Finally, at the left is a picture of the return, in which, though the father appears, the prodigal is vastly the more prominent. It illustrates the strange and all but universal misconception.

But our Lord's purpose made God the Father the subject of the parable. Let us think about this.

Remember, first of all, that the primary purpose of the incarnation was the revelation of God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him" (lit. "led Him forth," John i:18). Even the cross, and the complete atonement there accomplished, is but the supreme revelation of God in His altogether infinite love (John iii:16; 1 John iii:16). But there is something dazzling in the rays of the cross. Such love is too high for us; it overwhelms us. We feel as John did when he looked first at the throne. He could not describe Him who sat there. His description is like that of one who saw an insupportable radiance and who gropes for words--"like a jasper and a sard--like unto an emerald" (Rev. iv:2, 3). A poor account of the glory! It reminds one of most theories of the atonement. And so our Lord will paint one picture of the Father in such wise that we may forever know what our Father God is like. Think of it, Jesus paints a portrait of God, and we poor stupid word painters, and pigment painters, imagine He was giving us a portrait of a boy!

What, then, is the Father God like? He is "like a certain man who had two sons," one of whom in utter selfishness left the father's home and broke the father's heart in the indulgences of a base sense-life, and had to be whipped by his very vices and their inevitable results into even thinking of the home he had left. And then he did not think of his father, but only of the misery of the far country, and the abundance of the father's house. He was like the ass who only knew his master's crib--just a picture of every sinner who has preferred the life of the senses to the fellowship of the Father, till the life of the senses has palled and brought insupportable misery upon him.

Now the question is: What will the Father God do with such a sinner coming with such a motive? The Father God will see him a long way off, and will run to meet him and kiss him. That is one portrait of the Father. Think of the other. It concerns a son who is outwardly correct and obedient, who has

"Never strayed from the beaten path,

Nor ever squandered his portion of gold,"

but whose heart is adamant. Living in the house with the Father, he has been farther from him than the senses and passions ever carried the poor prodigal--as far from the Father's heart as hell is from heaven. There is no character so ineffably and hopelessly vile as that of a snug pharisee. What will the Father God say to him? "Son, all that I have is thine?" And the heart of the lesson is that this is our Father.

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