

# The Prodigal (Birmingham Conference)

by David Wilkerson

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing our acceptance in Christ and appropriating the fullness of God's love and promises to overcome unbelief and experience rest, quiet, unassuming, reassuring, childlike faith.*

**Duration:** 23:27

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Mark 9:24, Luke 15:11-32, Acts 9:10-12, Romans 8:38-39, Ephesians 2:18, Hebrews 4:3

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

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a heart-to-heart talk about the story of the Prodigal Son from the Bible. He emphasizes the importance of knowing and walking in the love of God, as it is the essence of our faith. The preacher admits that he himself was once a prodigal, even as a pastor, because he struggled with fear, self-pity, and unbelief. He highlights that unbelief is the greatest sin in the eyes of God and urges the audience to trust in the love of the Heavenly Father.

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## Transcript

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. It's all about you, Jesus.

You promised you would come, and you have come to these meetings. Where you sit, just raise your hands and love Him. Just raise your hands and love Him.

The Lord is here. Oh, Jesus. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Oh, Jesus. Help us.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

May I talk to you for a few moments as a father, just a heart-to-heart talk, because God's been dealing with me in a simple little story from the Bible, the prodigal. I don't have any notes for this. I don't have a sermon.

There's four little words from the Holy Spirit. I want to talk to you about alienation first. You see, when you talk about the prodigal son, we picture a sinner.

We picture a young man that has a yearning to go out in the world and spend himself in lust and sin, and we picture him as the drug addict, the alcoholic. If it's a female, the prostitute, someone going out, giving themselves to sin and lust in the world, and winds up in alienation from the Father. But what if we're missing the greater meaning? Yes, it has to do with sinners.

It has to do with backsliders coming back to Jesus, coming back to the love of the Father. But suppose we're missing the deeper meaning. Suppose he's a pastor.

Suppose he's the Christian sitting here now that somehow developed a concept of a hard father. You know, the man who hid his talents said, I knew you, you were a hard man, so I hid. He ran from his responsibilities.

What if it's somebody whose inheritance is salvation? That's all of our inheritance. And suppose it's a pastor sitting here. Suppose it's the pastor of Times Square Church, because this is how the Holy Spirit has been dealing with me.

Suppose we're missing the greater truth in the revelation of a grieving father who is giving this story, the whole story, having to do with unbelief. Unbelief. If you're going to totem pole sins, don't talk just about drinking, alcoholism, drugs, sensuality, pornography.

Don't talk about that because the number one sin in the face of God is unbelief. Unbelief. And you talk about eating the husk.

You talk about spending your life in riotous living. What could be more riotous? What could more be a husk than fear, self-pity, unbelief, the fear of man, fear of a heavenly father, never having somehow... This man that I see got so discouraged, he could not, in spite of all of the reassurances from his father, in spite of everything the father said and revealed of himself to this young man, he could not really believe and trust in the love of his father. And he developed this hard feeling in his heart toward his father.

There's a hardness and there's an unbelief. He cannot believe and trust in that. And when that happens, everything in the father's house becomes a task.

Everything becomes unbearable because we're not living in the gracious love of God. And there are many here, and I've felt the hurt of the heavenly father here today, of those that are here and you're alienated. You see, this boy is still under the love of his father.

He's reconciled. He can come at any time. The alienation is self-inflicted.

God's not mad at father. He's not mad at him. He walked out and said, all I need is mine here.

And all I really want to do is get to heaven at the end. And you see, you can be sitting here as a pastor right now and be totally alienated from the love of God. You've heard it.

You may have even preached it, but you can't bring yourself to believe that God truly loves you, that God truly has embraced you, that you are to him everything in the world. You're his love. You're the very desire of his heart.

And he rejoices over you. Could that be that I can be a pastor of a church and successful and still not know the fullness of his love? I've been there for years, never feeling truly loved by God, trying to work so hard to please him. And then when it gets so hard and you don't feel like you're pleasing him, there's

something inside says, I can't go like this.

I just, I want to be saved. Yes. I'm not going to, in my heart will be for him, but I can't, I just can't sense his love.

And that alienation comes. And there's another word is called access. This is the simplest little talk I've ever had in my life.

But you see this boy has access. The Bible says we have access to the father through Jesus Christ, his son. But you see, even though we have access to the father and what Jesus is talking about is the same access that he had with his father.

You see, he had times when he prayed, he'd go to the mountain, he'd get alone. Yes. There are times that you have to go in the secret closet.

You have to pour your heart out to God. You have to be, be intense. And you have to be like the woman who said, I'll not let you go.

You can wrestle with God. There are times for that, but you see, there's access into the throne room. There's access into the very presence of God.

And you have to get up one day and say, he has promised me access. We have access to the father. And what that means to me that any time of the day, even though yes, there are, I should have a time when I'm alone with God, I seek him with all my heart.

I intercede. But I come out of that with a relationship. I come out of that with a peace in my heart that I can speak to him at any time, because if I am in Christ Jesus, if I am seated in Christ and this body of mine is the temple of the Holy ghost, then he's available to me all waking hours and even guarding my sleep thoughts, my subconscious mind.

I can pray that God cover my subconscious mind because I have access to the father. But this boy has to come from his point of alienation and he has to say, I have access. So he gets up and he goes to the father knowing that he has access.

He's no doubt heard that his father has been looking for him. His father has sent word out and he grieves over you. He wants you.

And I don't think anything grieves the heart of the Lord more than our unbelief. And somewhere a measure of faith comes into his heart. I have access.

I can go to the father. We will never conquer this sense of alienation until we lay hold by faith of our access to the father. See, even though Jesus went alone to pray with the father, he didn't have to run away to a secret closet.

He didn't have to go a mountain top when he's face to face with the devil, when he's face to face with the lame and the blind and the halt of the Pharisee, there was an instant word that came. And that's what access is all about, that finally you come in, you know that there's a place of communion. And he's going back to a place of communion.

He's lost communion. He's lost that closeness with his father. Folks, has it ever dawned on you the meaning of access, that the father desires of us this constant faith that no matter what I face at any hour of the day, no matter what comes against me, that I can hear from the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit in me will speak and guide me and give me a word. But that requires faith. And we have unbelief in our hearts.

We don't believe God speaks to us like he did to the apostles, that he did in the early church. We don't believe that the Lord can speak and say to a man, there's a brother named Saul, and he's at a street called straight, and he knows your name, and all the details and the addresses and everything that God spoke because of access. I believe that more and more at my age.

Total dependency on this access that we have with the heavenly father and that the Holy Spirit abides. Folks, if you're going to say that we're seated at the right hand of the father, where is that? I don't have to go into the heavens. I don't have to go off this earth.

My Bible says, I'll manifest myself in you. God, the father, God, the son, the Holy Ghost lives and abides right here. He's available at any time.

And I believe that God is bringing the church, the place where men and women step out by faith and lay hold of their access with God. There's another word called acceptance. You see this, this young man gets up and he leaves the point of alienation and he is on the road of access.

And the father, you know, the story comes and embraces him and kisses him. Not one pointed finger, not one word of rebuke, not one word of, I told you so, not one word, not one word of about his sins, no rebuke, but a tearful father embracing an unbelieving son. And you see, you can have access and you can know it and you, you can go to God and you can say, Lord, thank you for embracing me.

Thank you for forgiveness. But folks, some people go that far and they go no further. If all you have is you have moved away from the unbeaten.

See, we compartmentalize our, our faith. We'll have faith in this compartment for salvation, maybe over here for healing. And folks, some people never, even pastors never get beyond heaven and forgiveness.

But until you know you're accepted, you're still in unbelief until you take advantage of your acceptance. Now he stands outside the father's house and the father says, no, he's standing out. I'm unworthy.

You don't know what I've done. I've sinned against light. I've sinned against, I've sinned against such truth.

I'm not worthy. I've come to be your servant. I'm not coming in the house.

Of course, you know, the robe of righteousness was put on him and his ministry was restored because that's the gospel of peace. He has new shoes in. But the Lord, the father says that's not enough.

You have to believe that you're accepted, accepted in the beloved, that there's no controversy. And the Lord says, no, I'm not going to have you as my servant. You're my son.

You've always been my son. You were a son when you were in the worst unbelief. And now that you're coming, I'm going to ask you to take the ultimate step of faith.

Now, I want you to believe that I have accepted you. There is no controversy. You are truly loved.

But I want you in the house. And not only do I want you in the house, I'm going to have a festival. And folks, there's not one out of a hundred believers ever get to the festival.

And that's a spirit of rejoicing. And so the father says, no, kill the padded calf, get the orchestra. We're going to sing and we're going to dance, because I have accepted.

And he is not in acceptance till he's in the house, convinced of his father's love, till the joy begins to flow. And you, do you really believe that you're accepted before the father, accepted in the beloved? For years, I labored under this. I think sometimes in my early days, especially my messages got very hard because I was going through something with the Lord, trying to find that place of acceptance to the father.

Forgiven, believing in forgiveness. But you see, the real issue of unbelief is my relationship with the father, how I view God. I can preach about his attributes.

I can preach marvelous about what he has done in giving salvation to the world. I've preached to drug addicts and alcoholics, the love of God. I've been on street corners around the world and told them how much God loved them.

I would kneel with Nikki Cruz and Israel and all these boys and weep and pray with them saying, God loves you, even though they had done everything, including murder some of these drug addicts for years. And they go home and feel unloved. And so God, I'll work my fingers to the bone.

I'll do anything. But it's this sense of never having come into this glory of acceptance. But there's another word.

And even though I believe I'm accepted, there's another word, it's called appropriation. And that's when the father says, now, remember that everything I have is yours. Now take advantage of it.

Appropriate. I want you to rejoice now. I want you to forget your past.

I'm not going to dig it up. I'm not going to let anybody expose you. If you will come now in acceptance and cast aside your unbelief.

And folks, that's what the Holy Spirit told me to do today to come against this unbelief that I am accepted in this unbelief that hinders us from appropriating the fullness of God and the blessings of Jesus Christ. So we walk around, we walk around and say like, David, why am I cast down? You don't say that now because David didn't have a crucified Savior. He saw him in the future.

But we have a crucified, risen Father. And we are accepted as much as, listen to me now, as much as the Father accepts Christ as Son. I am accepted in the same power and majesty.

God only sees one man now. He doesn't see but one man. And this was the covenant that God made.

There will be one man. I'll send a Redeemer and I will see one man and his seed. And we are the seed of Christ and we are in Jesus Christ.

We are, our position is in Christ. That's what God views of us. When the blood has come and I'm accepted by that blood, I'm accepted by that blood.

I'm blessed and I appropriate that by faith. I'm telling you that God sees me just as he sees his own Son. Righteous, holy, unblameable, not by any works that I've done, but I have appropriated by faith the promises of God.

God doesn't want you to leave this meeting with the unbelief and the fear, and the fear of man. He wants you to leave this place with that steady, quiet faith. And when I say rejoice, it's getting up in the morning and suddenly feeling a sense of unworthiness come upon you, a sense of despair, or a sense of depression, or the blues.

And there's no reason for it. You don't know where it came from. But folks, there's such a thing as appropriation where you appropriate by faith and say, there is no controversy.

I am in Christ. I don't have to take this. I don't have to prove anything to anybody.

No, folks, the end result of appropriating the fullness of Christ and all of his promises and believing in our acceptance is that you get up and say, I don't have to prove anything to anybody. I am his and he is mine. I am seated with Christ in a heavenly place.

And my Bible said he sings over his people. He rejoices over his people. And what I'm talking about in appropriation is a spirit of rejoicing that you allow to spring forth by faith.

And that spirit of rejoicing will cast out every downcast spirit, everything that comes out of your flesh or out of hell. The only antidote I know, the only victory is to stand up and say, I rejoice in you, Jesus. I glorify your name.

You start worshiping him and rejoice in the Lord. He said, rejoice and be glad. And the only reason we don't have this spirit of rejoicing is because of unbelief.

37th Psalm, there's a scripture that says we rejoice because we trust him. If I'm not rejoicing, it's because of unbelief. Now, we've talked a little bit about pornography.

We've talked about prayerlessness. We've talked about some of these things. But now this, before I close at the heart of the issue, it's unbelief.

Now, folks, I've not arrived, but I've got the secret now. I know, I know I have access. I know I'm no longer alienated from his love.

I walk from day, every waking hour, I walk in the love of God. I have to remind myself about it. The enemy will come and attack that.

That's one thing he wants you to jettison. Get out of your life. This sense of being totally loved by the heavenly father and that Jesus Christ abides is the essence, the love.

This is my last statement to you. The evidence of faith is rest, quiet, unassuming, reassuring, childlike faith. I want you to stand.

Lord, speak to us. Help us to be honest. Lord, I was the prodigal son even though I was a pastor because I

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