

Luke 15

by Robert F. Adcock

The sermon explores the theme of self-will and its consequences, as well as the father's love and sovereignty in the face of his son's rebellion, encouraging us to recognize God's sovereignty and to repent and turn back to God.

Duration: 39:04

Scripture: Luke 15:11

Topics: "Lost Sheep", "Forgiveness", "Parental Love"

Description

Robert F. Adcock explores the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, emphasizing the themes of self-will versus strong-will and the unconditional love of a father. He illustrates how the younger son, driven by self-will, squanders his inheritance and faces dire consequences, ultimately leading him to return home in repentance. Adcock highlights the father's compassion and readiness to forgive, symbolizing God's love for His children. The sermon encourages parents to maintain hope and love for their wayward children, reminding them that the door is always open for reconciliation. Adcock concludes with a call for all to recognize their need for Christ and to return to the Father.

Transcript

Time after time I went searching for peace and some hope. Our scripture reading this morning is found in Luke's Gospel, Chapter 15. This is one of my favorite passages of scripture.

It starts on a rather sad note, and then there's time for rejoicing, and then the latter part of this story ends on another real sad note. I'm not going to touch on that. I'd like for us to read from verse 11, Luke 15.

Our Lord Jesus said, A certain man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto him his living.

Not many days after that the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be unwanted. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into the fields to feed swine.

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husk that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many of my father's hard servants have bred enough unto

spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

Make me as one of thy hard servants. And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.

Bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. For this is my son who was dead, and is alive again. He was lost and is found, and they began to be merry.

Our Father in Heaven, we ask thy blessing upon the reading of thy word, and we pray that you will grant to us that understanding that you can provide, things that we can glean from this thy word that will encourage our own hearts, bless our souls. In the name of the Lord Jesus, we ask this, amen. In Psalm 103, in verse 13, we read these words, As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who respect him.

The word compassion there indicates the tenderest of love, and I think that is significant, to make a comparison between a father's love for his children. You don't usually associate men with having tenderness in that way, but believe me, ladies, even all that hard exterior that you sometimes see in the lives of men, underneath there, there is a tender love for our children. And it is even compared with that tender love that God has for those that respect him.

Proverbs 1.8 says, Listen, my son, to your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching. The fourth of Proverbs says, Listen, my sons, to a father's instructions, pay attention and gain understanding. Tenth chapter of Proverbs, a wise son brings joy to his father.

You know, fathers learn a lot about their children. As a young father, you soon learn that children are different. This father that we are reading about this morning, he had two sons, at least two sons, and they were so different in many ways.

But they were so alike in a very special way, and I would like for us to think about that particular aspect of how they were alike this morning, because it's the source of the problem here with the practical. The father learned, how soon, I don't know, that this younger son, he had some problems. I trust that it's not like some woman that she spoke about her son and some of his misgivings, and she said, He's just a strong-willed boy.

I don't believe this father said this about this son. No, this boy was a self-willed boy, and her son was a self-willed son. Let me read for you how this son was described.

He does pretty much the way he pleases to do. He comes and goes when he wants. He spends his allowance on baubles and things that catch his fancy.

He cannot wait to be gratified when he desires something. This is an almost complete definition of self-will, and yet she called her son strong-willed. A self-willed person has a weak will.

This is his son. It also applies to the other son that we're not even going to read about. In a sense, he has no will at all.

He is driven willy-nilly by every appetite, every desire. And in terms of that, maybe it's just a cliché, his appetites control his will, and his will dictates his reason. A strong-willed person operates exactly the opposite way.

His reason directs his will, and his will regulates his appetite. A strong-willed person can postpone the satisfaction of a present need in order to gain a higher and more permanent satisfaction at a later date. A strong will can withstand frustration and cope with it.

Self-will is spurred by frustration into a premature action or reaction. A strong will can accept the limitations of reality and live within them. Self-will is always manipulating and destroying reality to conform to some wish or fantasy.

I hope you're getting the picture, the difference between being self-willed and being strong-willed. This is not a strong-willed person that we've read about. He is obsessed with a self-will.

Self is the center of this young fellow's being. I know every honest person can identify with the title. Now, self wants to assert itself, wants to be recognized.

In thinking about someone that was a strong-willed person, who comes to mind? I think about George Washington. This was a man that set goals in his life. Indeed, he was strong-willed.

The father of our country, a great general, a great leader. He was strong-willed, not self-willed. He had goals, he had ambitions.

He was a strong-willed person. Strong-will does not do what it wants to do, but what it perceives must be done. A self-will does not possess the inner freedom to make this choice, but is forced by its own neediness to satisfy an immediate hunger.

Something I want is always urging on that self-willed person to make foolish decisions and to act foolishly. This young man has made a foolish decision. It's the product of a self-will.

And having read this so many times, for a long time I didn't understand why the father would indulge a son that was possessed by a self-will. I couldn't understand that. But here's a father that trusted God.

And you may not, fathers and mothers, you may not want to turn loose of those sons and daughters. You recognize something there. You see they possess a self-will, but you've got to let them go.

You'll have to let them go. You say, but I know they're going to mess up. I know they're going to do things that ultimately will result in hurt, not only to them but to me too.

You've got to let them go, got to let them go. The father divided unto him his portion of his inheritance, knowing all the time exactly what his aims were, knew exactly what he was going to do. He knew that it wouldn't be long before he would pack up and he'd be gone.

He wanted to assert himself in the world. He wanted to do what he wanted to do. He left a broken-hearted parent.

The father was broken-hearted. But he had to let him go. You know, life is filled with those sort of experiences, broken-hearted so often, because of what we see in the lives of those that we love so much.

And yet we're helpless to do anything about it, aside from turning our faces heavenward and say, God be merciful, God have mercy upon them. And you soon discover that though this son was so self-willed, so foolish, bound for trouble, the father recognized that his son must go away if he's ever to learn the difference between being self-willed and strong-willed. This person doesn't possess those qualities of character that will make him a person that can cope with life.

This is a life out of control. Every life that is controlled by self is out of control. It takes discipline.

And most of all, it takes the control of God over our lives. God created us for Himself. Not for us to go doing every little old willy-nilly thing we want to do.

When the God of this Bible says, I beseech you, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, that's a God that indeed expects something out of us. And once we have recognized the love of God, the grace of God, and what He has done for us, we respond gladly. We feel within our souls a deep sense of satisfaction in knowing, I'm doing what pleases God.

I was created for a purpose to glorify God, and He wants me to live my life in a way that glorifies Him. This life is out of control. This is a selfless, selfish life.

And all of the things that we've read that happen as a result of self having control, it will happen in every life that is controlled by self. Out of control. Other hearts broken.

And we believe that the Son of God grieved over those that have lost control. The Father recognizes His Son has to go away if He is to ever learn the difference between the two. He lets Him go.

But not with His blessing. He doesn't say, Lord, bless my son. You don't read anything about that, because God couldn't bless His Son.

This is a disobedient child. One that is not heeding the instructions of His Father. One that is turning thumbs down on everything that He has been taught in the Father's household.

I believe a prayer went with that son. I believe there was a broken heart, a prayer that, Oh God, you will bring my son back to me one day. Oh, there are so many broken hearts in this world today.

Scripture says in the last days there will be perilous times, distressing times. The hearts of parents broken today because of children that have made choices, and they are from the wrong source. I think it is so significant that God had a Son.

He only had one Son, only one begotten Son. And that Son, Jesus Christ, said, My will is to do the will of my Father. I doubt if any human being could ever say that.

That my life, I decided from my youth, the earliest remembrance that I have of my youth, I decided that I would do the will of my earthly parents. Most of us have to hang our heads and say, No, I rebelled. Rebellion was in my heart, folly was in my heart.

I rebelled against the authority of my parents. I went contrary to their will. I think it is so comforting to know at least someone has walked the face of this earth that did the will of God perfectly.

I think we know the reason why. He was perfect. He was without sin.

We are talking about the person of Jesus Christ, God's Son. I can tell you this before we get to the bottom line. This Son doesn't know his Father.

Most children, I think they know their parents. When you are young, you think you know everything. Oh, you just know it all.

And then a little later on you discover Mom and Dad, you used to think they were so simple minded, they didn't know anything. And finally you begin to give them credit, just a little credit. Well, they have got a little sense, they know a little.

This Son doesn't know his Father. Most of us don't when we are children. We don't know our parents.

We don't know the longing, the desires in their heart for us. As Christian parents, so often your heart just breaks for your children. You want to see them live their lives for the glory of God.

You want them to be able to say, for me to live is Christ. I have heard so many parents say, it matters not to me in the course of life whether my children really prosper by the standards of this world or not. But one thing I desire for them is that they might be enriched through their experience in knowing Jesus Christ.

They might be men and women that are filled with the Spirit of God, and the fruit of the Spirit of God is being produced in their lives. I ask that, and that alone for my children. The longings of a parent's heart for their children.

Children don't understand this. Not saying this critically. None of us did, none of us did.

We just didn't understand the love of our parents for us, the desires of their heart to see us as young boys and girls grow up and mature and give honor to God in our lives. Children still don't understand that. Takes the maturing, takes the maturing.

The son doesn't know his father, but he will, he will. I'm not going to read over this resume of things as he goes downward, but after all of the folly and the defeat, he's finally reduced. And this is what it's all about.

This is a divine, sovereign work of God in reducing a person down that is flying so high. The self-willed person, he's bringing him down to a point where he can get his attention. Hasn't gotten his attention yet, but when all of his resources are gone, then he can get his attention through some of the things that are very important, like hunger, not having enough to eat, feeling abandoned and lonely.

Through all of these emotions, he's going to get his attention. And he did get his attention. He brought him to a place where he's still, he's quiet.

And now he can think about things. Now the Spirit of God can speak to him. He couldn't hear him before.

The music was too loud. The booze was running freely. And you know when you're high on booze and you're taking dope and you're just kicking up your heels and you're just, man, you're just living it up.

Spirit of God has a hard time breaking through that kind of opposition. But when all of that is gone and things are quiet and you've hit bottom, praise God for hitting bottom. Because sometimes if you don't hit bottom, you haven't got a chance.

As long as you can hang on to some semblance of respectability in this world, wrapped up in sin, you haven't got a chance. Thank God that he is able to reduce poor sinners down to the point where this is the bottom. This is the bottom.

I'm on the bottom. You know, you have to look back. This is a retrospective look back.

You don't say that while you're going through this experience. You're crying the blues. You say, like Jacob of old, all these things are against me.

Oh no, all these things are working for your good. And in that process of bringing you down, God has a purpose in all that. He's going to bring this young man to the end of himself.

What does he say? Scripture says, he came to himself. He finally began to see the light. And you know, that's a shattering experience.

When first you begin to see the light, and you learn that you've been wrong, and you discover just how foolish you've been, it's a little embarrassing. But it's good. It's good.

It's good. It's a good sign. Deep repentance in your soul, coming to your senses, being made aware of something more important than having your own way.

He woke up. Just that simple. He woke up.

Oh boy, back home. Wow. Down here in a big pen.

Oh, back home. He could just close his eyes. Back home.

Oh, that nice bed that I could sleep in. All of the provisions of the Father's household, they were mine. Back home.

One, but one thing he wasn't sure of. I said he didn't know his father. He wasn't sure of Dad.

He really wasn't sure of Dad. You see, he misjudged Dad. I said he didn't know his father.

He didn't know what was in the heart of his father. Most kids don't. They don't know what's in the old Dad's heart.

That tender compassion that we read about in Psalm 103, that's so important. Well, let's thank God he had a father back home. Let's thank God that he had a father back home that loved him.

A father who in faith believed that all that instruction that he had given him along the way, and about the way, that God would honor that. How many parents have held on to this promise from the Word of God found in Proverbs 22, verse 6? It says, And I tell you, Mom and Dad, hold on to that one. Don't you ever let that one go.

That's a promise from God. And Tommy and Billy and Harry and Mary and all the rest, they may go into the far country. They may be prodigals in the truest sense of the word, but I believe God will bring them home if you've been faithful.

Don't you ever stop reading the Word of God and having family devotions with your children. Pray well of them, and don't be afraid to tell them you love them. And just pray that if they ever do go to the far country,

they'll always know there's a parent at home and that the door is wide open, is wide open.

I don't know how many, many times that I've talked with parents and their prodigals that are away in the far country, and they've said only if they only knew that the door was wide open that they could come home. But because of pride, you know, the devil, he is a, he is a stinker, that's what he is. You know, he'll come to a poor old prodigal down in the far country, and he'll tell him, they have no time for you.

You've disgraced your family. You've broken your mother and your father's heart, and there's no place for you at home. You're going to have to make the best you can of what this, this whole mess is.

That's the devil speaking. That's Satan working. Oh, but the Spirit of God for those children that have heard the Word of God, many boys and girls that have trusted Christ.

Don't you think that boys and girls that trust the Savior don't go off and become prodigals? Don't you think for a moment that a true child of God can't go down to the far country and play the fool? Don't you think for a moment that can't happen? It does happen, and they need to know deep within their souls, my mom and my dad love me regardless of what I've done. Regardless, the door is open. Daddy don't ever close the door.

I heard an illustration a long time ago, a brother preaching the gospel, and he told a story about this prodigal, and he went off to the far country. He ended up in jail, spent some years in prison. Of course, back in his little hometown, everybody knew that he was in jail.

He was a criminal, he was a thief, that's what he was. But you know, God spoke to him one day. He remembered, he remembered at his mother's knee that he had listened to his father read the Word of God and pray and mention his name.

And he wrote a letter home after he was released from prison, and he said, I would like to come back home, but I don't want to embarrass you further, I don't want to hurt you anymore. I'll tell you what I'm going to do. Railroad track goes right by the back of our old house there, the old farm place, and I can remember how you used to hang the clothes on the line, that old apple tree out there in the back.

I'm going to be passing there on the train. If I'm welcome home, if I can come back home again, I'm asking you, if you will, just to hang an old bed sheet or something out there on the apple tree, and I'll see it. I see the bed sheet, I'll stop, I'll get off the train, I'll come home.

If I don't see it, I won't stop. Well, he came along that way when he got to the point where he had to turn and look to see. He was hoping he'd see the old bed sheet, but what he saw was a white cloud.

Every tree, every bush was covered with a white sheet or a towel or something. And I'll tell you, dads and moms, when they get away, always let them know the door is wide open. I love you, and by the grace of God, we'll work it out some way, somehow.

There's one thing significant about this, there's a number of things about this whole story, it's a little amusing. But the old man, the father, so many fellows call their dad the old man, you know, my old man. Well, when the old man saw him coming, he couldn't restrain himself any longer.

I don't know if he did any walking, jogging, or trotting, or anything, but it might have been a strain on his heart, but he took off running. Here's an old man running down the road, he sees his son coming home, he

can't wait until he gets there. You've got to let him know, he's welcome.

Oh, this is my son that was lost, that was dead, he's coming home. This whole scene, everything about it, it just sends rejoicing throughout your soul. I think you can relate to this.

It's so beautiful, so beautiful. He wanted to receive his son. Self-will has been dealt with, self-will has been conquered.

You know what conquered it? The love of God, the grace of God. God won a victory. God wins victories every day.

No all's not lost. Not all is despair. There are prodigals coming home every day, and they'll keep coming home every day until Jesus comes.

They'll keep coming home because they know that there are fathers and mothers that love them. And I'd encourage you again, father, mother, don't ever let them forget you love them. And regardless of what happens, the door is open.

The application of all of this is very simple. Anyone, anyone, old or young, and you know you haven't trusted Christ as your Savior. You know that you've never had that experience of saying, Oh God, be merciful to me, a poor sinner.

Well, in God's sight, you're a prodigal. You're away from the fold. You're away from home.

You need Christ as your Savior. Very simple. You've been operating on that principle of self-will.

You need to have your will broken. You need to say, I want His will done in my life. Oh Lord, a poor sinner, poor prodigal, I want Jesus Christ, your Son, as my Savior.

I'm so thankful I can tell you this morning. I can tell you with joy in my soul. You know that the gates of heaven are wide open.

Man is wide open. The grace of God and the love of God says, Who's love will become? Thank God those gates are not closed yet. One day they will be.

But you forget that one day, this day of grace will be over. Don't you forget that. Oh, we think we can play around with God, and we've got plenty of time.

I wouldn't put too much faith in that. Don't know. Today is the only day that we're really sure.

Today if you hear my voice, if you've heard the voice of God by His Spirit speaking to your soul today, you're a prodigal, you're away from God. You're a Christian and you're away from the Lord, and you want to come home as we pray. You make that decision in your own heart.

I'll receive Christ today as my Savior. As a prodigal, as someone that's been away from the Lord, I'm confessing, Lord, I have sinned. I won't come home.

Our Father in Heaven, we do thank thee and praise thee for the comfort that this word brings to our souls. Oh, we can rejoice today because in this room we have those whose hearts have been touched by the Spirit of God. We have those in this room that have responded and received Christ as their Savior.

They're rejoicing in your great salvation. There are some in this room, perhaps, that know the Savior and they're sad, and they know that they're disobedient, and they've allowed something to come in and break the communion and fellowship with thee, O Lord. Thy Spirit speak to their hearts.

Let them know the door is wide open. So just confess you're just and righteous to forgive, cleanse from all unrighteousness.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/7/SID7897.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/robert-f-adcock/luke-15/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net