

A Father and an Older Brother

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of becoming like a father, who loves and forgives, rather than a teacher, who criticizes and judges, and encourages listeners to ask God for His grace to become true fathers to others.

Scripture: Luke 15:11, Galatians 6:1, 1 Timothy 2:1, 1 Peter 4:8, Revelation 12:10

Topics: "Gods Love", "Repentance"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15, emphasizing the depth of God's love for those who stray and exploit His goodness. He contrasts the attitudes of the older brother and the father in the parable, highlighting the difference between a teacher-like spirit and a father-like spirit, urging believers to strive for the latter. Poonen challenges Christians to move from being critical 'older brothers' to compassionate 'fathers', reflecting God's nature of forgiveness and love towards repentant sinners.

Transcript

From the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15, we can learn something of the depth of God's love for those who backslide from him and even exploit His goodness towards them. There we learn so much about the Divine nature - and that is the nature that we are to partake of.

We see in that parable a striking contrast between the attitude of that wayward boy's older brother and his father. That is the contrast between a teacher and a father too. The older brother was an upright person. But he had no love or concern for his younger brother. He only found fault with him. That is how many Christian leaders are too. They are quick to lose their temper and to criticise and scold their brothers and sisters.

But look at the father in that story. What a different spirit he had. That is a picture of what God is like. And when we partake of God's nature, we too will become like that. The older brother remembers all the evil that his younger brother has done, and delights in exposing it all. The father however, doesn't even want to think of it.

To be converted from being an unbeliever to a believer is one thing. But if we are to be servants of the new covenant, we need a second conversion - from being "an older brother" to being "a father", from being "Pharisee-like" to being "Christ-like".

Is there a brother who has rebelled against your authority as a servant of God, and who has spoken a lot of evil against you, even though you have done him only good for many years? What is your attitude towards him now? Is it the attitude of a teacher or of a father? We are not tested through the good and wholehearted brothers in the church as much as through the rebellious ones. One or two rebellious brothers can show us our true spiritual condition more than a hundred spiritual brothers - because those difficult brothers have a way of bringing into the light, the lusts that are hidden in the nooks and corners of our flesh. That is why we are exhorted "to give thanks for ALL men" - and not just for the wholehearted believers (1 Tim. 2:1). Everyone we come across helps towards our sanctification in some way or the other.

Here you are, living for years under the deception that you are a spiritual father. And then a difficult brother arises in your church. And in no time at all you discover, through your attitude towards him, that you are really a teacher and not a father! That difficult brother enabled you to see your true condition in a way that all the wholehearted brothers in the church could not show you for so many years. Shouldn't you be thankful for such a brother who saved you from deceiving yourself forever?

When we find it difficult to bear with brothers who rub us the wrong way, it is good to recognise that we ourselves must have caused inconveniences and problems for others in the same way too, without our even being aware of it. They too must have found it difficult to bear with us! None of us are perfect. We all have a flesh. And everyone who has a flesh has to bear with others who have a similar flesh. Others who are more mature than us can see un-Christlike areas in our behaviour, which we, in all sincerity, are unable to see ourselves. You may imagine that even though you have a difficult wife, you are still bearing with her and loving her and having no complaints against her. You may even be secretly congratulating yourself on your "Christ-like" behaviour. But you may not realise that your wife probably feels the same way about you! She may be feeling that she has a difficult husband to live with and bear with!! And so it is good for us to dwell in low thoughts about ourselves always. It is good to recognise that we have faults that we cannot see.

The prodigal son's behaviour brought out the goodness of his father's heart in a remarkable way. If he had always been a good boy at home, he would never have seen his father's tremendous goodness.

Whenever a similar problem crops up in our assembly (or in our home for that matter), with some brother (or family-member), we should think of it as an occasion when God wants to bring out His father-heart through us, towards that erring person - whether that person be a brother, or wife, or son, or daughter. How disappointed God is in such situations, when we manifest the heart of a teacher instead. Has someone taken your goods, and gone away, and ruined your name and the good name of your assembly by his conduct? What will you do, if he comes back repentant, one day? How are you going to receive him? Will you put him in the servant's quarters for a few months on probation, to find out if his repentance is genuine? Or will you rejoice like the prodigal's father and run up to him and embrace him, and give him a warm welcome home? It all depends on what you are - a father or a teacher. A teacher may also receive a prodigal back, but it won't be with a warm heart!

There's joy in heaven over every soul who repents. If we cannot share in that joy, something is seriously wrong with us.

The older brother of the prodigal had the spirit of a teacher. He said to his father, "See how I've lived all these years. I've done nothing wrong. I've been wholehearted and zealous. I've been working for you

faithfully. But see how this son of yours has behaved." A teacher is always comparing his own goodness and faithfulness with the failures of the carnal ones in the church. He is occupied more with the shortcomings of his brothers than with the riches of God's grace. That was the primary characteristic of the Pharisees in Jesus' day. All those who have the spirit of a teacher are Pharisees.

There was some truth in what the older brother of the prodigal said - that his younger brother had indeed "devoured his father's wealth". But who told him that the money had been "spent on harlots"? That was an assumption. And that is characteristic of a teacher. Whenever he is against anyone, he always assumes the worst and believes the worst about him. He also delights in exposing the sins of an offender to put him to shame.

When we accuse another, it is no use saying that our facts are 100% right? Our spirit can still be 100% wrong, because it is in fellowship with the Accuser of the brethren (Rev.12:10). When Satan accuses God's children to Him, you can be certain that his facts are all 100% right. He wouldn't dare tell lies to God. But his spirit is still the spirit of accusation. That can be true of us too, if we are not careful. So let us not find any comfort in saying that we have carefully verified all the facts and found them to be true. Our spirit can still stink of Hell.

On the other hand, if we are fathers, we will cover the multitude of sins that a brother has committed, and rejoice that he has now repented. We will "kill the fattened calf and rejoice". This is a great height to attain to. But we must press on until we reach there. Let us not deceive ourselves imagining that we have attained to it already.

Let us ask God for His grace to be true fathers to others.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/a-father-and-an-older-brother/>

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