

THE LAVISH FATHER & HIS FOOLISH SONS



God's idea of sonship far exceeds the norm. In the Scriptures, a certain man had two sons, the younger commonly referred to as prodigal.¹ That son begged his father to give him his inheritance. He wanted to leave his father's home and go out on his own. What is of note is the request did not equate to something as simple as saying, "Daddy, give me my money." To request his inheritance while his father was still living was a grave thing.

Dishonoring the Father

According to Dr. Brad H. Young, in the Jewish culture, the father would have been shocked by the request as the younger son was, in effect, asking his father to die.² The younger son had to have considered his father as dead for him to presume that he had an immediate right to his inheritance. Nevertheless, the father honored the younger son's wish. In the NKJV version of the Scripture it says the

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father gave his inheritance to them, both sons. Although only one asks, the father divided his wealth among his two sons.

Living as a Hungry Orphan

The prodigal son struck out on his own to live the life he had envisioned. For a time, he wasted all his inheritance partying and spending it as he pleased without any consideration of the consequences. One day he realized he had nothing left on which to live. Compounding the problem was a famine in the land.

Destitute, the prodigal son came to know hunger in a way that he had never known before. With no other immediate options, he chose to join himself to a citizen of that country. He actually worked as a servant and one of his duties was feeding the unclean swine.

My wife tells the story of how that, as a child, she visited her maternal grandparents' farm in the 1960's. It was self-sustained in that they grew a great deal of what they needed: cotton, strawberries, elderberries, fruit and nut trees, as well as other vegetables. They also had cows, chickens, and pigs.

One of her fondest memories is that of feeding the pigs. Her grandmother would give her the bucket filled with the scraps from the table, including the corn husks. She hurriedly and as she put it, excitedly poured the "slop" into the feeding trough. Then she anxiously waited for the pigs to come toward the trough. She was anticipating hearing the sounds they made as they ate the horrible concoction.

It made her let out a big laugh every time!

Conversely, the prodigal son ached with hunger and felt great despair each time he fed the swine. Scripture says, "he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, but no one gave him anything to eat." He desperately desired what the swine ate; however, no one considered or even slightly cared about his predicament.

For the prodigal son, this was as low as it could get. Why? Consider his background, culture. As a Jewish man, he had been instructed not to eat the swine because God called it unclean.³ However, he proved moments of weakness in dire circumstances drive some people to make choices they otherwise would not.

A Servant, Remembers He's a Son

"But when he came to himself, he said, How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare and I perish with hunger!"⁴ He had the bright idea that, even if he couldn't resume his former life, it would be better for him to work as his father's servant than to remain in his present predicament.

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So, he wasted no time; the prodigal son made haste to get home as fast as his feet would take him. When he was a distance from home, his father saw him from afar and his heart melted with compassion for his younger son. He ran out to greet his son as fast as he could, he fell on his neck and kissed him.

A Father Loving Beyond Offense

Just as the prodigal son had previously rehearsed, he immediately began apologizing and repenting. He said, "Father I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son."

His father said nothing to his younger son. Instead, he instructed his servants to "bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." Wow!

When he says "son"⁵ here, he is talking about a mature inheritance possessor. God considers the son who, despite his mistakes and shortcomings, understands his free gift of righteousness, by grace alone, and depends wholeheartedly on Him for preservation and restoration, as a fully grown, mature son.

The father was overjoyed to see his younger son restored to his place of authority and prosperity. He and his servants partied with great joy, so much so his older son heard and wondered why all the commotion. As soon as the older son learned of the cause for the merriment, he voiced his disdain. His father asked him to come and rejoice with him, but the elder son was too angry to oblige. His deepest feelings surged to the surface and he responded, "Lo, these many years I have been serving you...and yet you never gave me a young goat that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came...."

A Son, Acting Like a Servant

His father replied, "Son,⁶ you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. Note here the father used a different word for "son." This time he said "child" because his elder son did not discern their relationship. Instead of seeing himself as a fully entitled son, he related to the father as a servant. Thus, the lavish father spoke to his elder son as though speaking to an immature child because failing to avail himself of all his father had freely provided exposed his deep level of immaturity. In other words, in a loving manner the father was informing his elder, but immature son that if he was lacking or missing out on anything, it definitely wasn't because he (the father) had not provided it.

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Growing Up to Maturity

Now, we have been given the authority and ability to become sons and daughters of God. What God wants us to do once we get an understanding of who we are and where he has placed us, is to walk in and take possession of it. God wants us to grow up, to mature and learn how to dominate from our God-given position of authority. Ephesians 4:13b-16 states, "...till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect (mature) man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine... but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head— Christ— from whom the whole body ... causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

The Image of a Beloved Son

Father God wants you not only to get saved, but to hear the Word of the Lord such that it goes deep in your heart, into your spirit, and mind so that it flows out to every area of your life, ultimately changing you into a person who is conformed to the exact image of His Son. Your Father God expects you to approach Him with the confidence of a mature son and live in the earth as a person who is an heir to all Jesus possesses. Then you're to act as His ambassador, rendering a righteous verdict in every situation,

dispelling lack and loss, while representing and exhibiting the very character and nature of Almighty God. It's time to rise to the occasion.

Sonship is what It's all about. Grow up and take your rightful place! Shalom!

End Notes

¹ (Luke 15:11-32)

² Young, Brad H. Jesus the Jewish Theologian. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995.

³ Leviticus 11:7, 8

⁴ Luke 15:17

⁵ Greek: Huioi – Strong's Concordance #5207

⁶ Greek: Teknon – Strong's Concordance #5083