

The Elder Brother

Introduction:

1. No doubt, all of us are familiar with the parable of the prodigal son, Luke 15:11-25. Truth be known, I think all honest persons can relate to the prodigal son, who requested and received his portion of his father's estate, and then took his journey into a far country, and wasted everything in riotous living. In some respects, most of us (perhaps all of us), can look back to times in our own lives in which we had more in common with the younger son than we want to remember.
2. Last Sunday night we heard an outstanding sermon dealing with the prodigal son; I do not want to say anything to detract from that sermon, preached by bro. Hardin.
3. As I heard that sermon, it dawned on me that a proper sequel to a lesson on the prodigal son would be a follow-up sermon on the elder brother.
 - a. We need to exercise caution to make sure that neither son represents us!
4. Title of Lesson: The Elder Brother, Luke 15:25-32.

Discussion:

I. The Contextual Background.

- A. Publicans and Sinners drew near to hear Jesus, Luke 15:1.
 1. Jesus did not turn them away; He could not have in keeping with both His nature and His mission: Luke 19:10.
- B. The Pharisees and Scribes murmured:
 1. *"Saying, this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them,"* Luke 15:2.
 - a. They should have been glad!
 - b. But this was a common complaint of the Pharisees against Jesus. Matt. 9:9-11; Lk. 7:34; 15:1.
 - (1) Note the fact that Jesus taught such people did not mean that He condoned their life style; He required repentance on the part of His hearers. Matt. 4:17
- C. Jesus then spoke three parables:
 1. The Parable of the lost sheep, Luke 15:4-7.
 2. The Parable of the lost coin, Luke 15:8-10.
 3. The Parable of the lost boys, Luke 15:11-32.
 - a. The younger brother, Luke 15:11:25.
 - b. The older brother, Luke 15:26-32.

II. The Elder Brother was not all bad; he had his good points.

- A. Outwardly, he was loyal to his father.
 1. He stayed home with his father, while his younger brother wasted his substance with riotous living.
- B. He was industrious.
 1. This is a good quality. Gen. 2:15; 3:19; 2 Thess. 3:10; Eph. 4:28.
 2. He was *"in the field"* when his younger brother returned home, Luke 15:25; the indications being that he was in the field working.
- C. He was outwardly faithful.
 1. *"Lo, these many years do I serve thee..."*, Luke 15:29.
- D. He was outwardly moral in his conduct.
 1. *"Neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment,"* Luke 15:29.

III. The Sins of the Elder Brother.

- A. Unjustified Anger, Luke 15:28.
 1. There is such a thing as righteous indignation. Mark 3:5; Matt. 21:12-13.
 2. It is possible to be angry and not sin, Eph. 4:26.
 3. But this man was angry because his father had a forgiving heart! Angry when he should have been rejoicing! Prov. 29:22.
- B. He was self-willed.
 1. He *"would not go in,"* Luke 15:28.
 2. 2 Peter 2:10; Titus 1:7.
- C. He was self-righteous, Luke 15:29.
 1. *"Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment,"* Luke 15:29.

2. Like the proud Pharisee in Luke 18:10-14.
- D. He was Envious and Jealous.
 1. *"Yet **thou** never gavest **me** a kid that I might make merry with **my** friends,"* Luke 15:29.
 2. Envy is never good! Matthew 27:18; Prov. 27:4; James 3:14-16.
 3. Truth be known, he had received more than his brother!
 - a. The father divided *"unto them his living,"* Luke 15:12, so he had already received his inheritance.
 - b. Under the Law, the first born son received a *"double portion"* of the father's inheritance, Deut. 21:17.
 4. Yet the older brother is complaining that the father had killed a baby goat for his brother!
- E. He rebuked his father for show mercy!
 1. Luke 15:30: *"But as soon as this **thy** son was come, which hath devoured **thy** living with harlots, **thou** hast killed for **him** the fatted calf."*
- F. He was unloving toward his brother.
 1. Show no joy when he learned his brother returned home.
 - a. He should have demonstrated his father's concern; they were a part of the same family!
 2. Instead he showed anger; he showed no "brotherly love!"
 - a. In fact, he refused to call him his brother. Note "this thy son...which has devoured thy living," v. 30.
 3. Rom. 12:10; Heb. 13:2; I John 4:20; John 13:34; I Peter 1:22.
- G. He was unforgiving.
 1. His brother was very, very penitent, Luke 15:15-17.
 2. Matt. 6:15; Matt. 18:21-22; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13.

IV. What the elder brother really had were true riches:

- A. He had his father!
 1. *"Son, thou art ever with me,"* Luke 15:31.
 2. In today's world, many children don't even know who their father is; in other instances their father has deserted the family. But not so with the elder brother!
 3. If we are Christians, **God** is our Father in a very special sense! Rom. 8:14-15; Gal. 4:6-7.
- B. He still had his inheritance.
 1. *"All that I have is thine,"* Luke 15:31.
 - a. Yet he was complaining about the father killing for his brother a baby goat!
 2. If we are Christians, we have a rich inheritance awaiting us! I Peter 1:3-5.
- C. He had his brother back home!
 1. Apparently he didn't value a relationship with his brother.
 2. We should be careful lest we make the same mistake! Rom. 12:10; Heb. 13:1; I Peter 1:22.

Conclusion:

1. In this parable there were really two lost boys; one lost away from home, the other lost at home.
2. The good thing about the prodigal son; he came home; he was fully penitent; he was received with open arms; there was forgiveness, feasting, and rejoicing.
3. But the parable ends without any information given regarding the response of the elder brother!
 - a. In this case, it was intentional, for the elder brother represented the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus gave this parable largely for their benefit. And only their response would reflect the final response of the elder brother.
4. But there are lessons in this for us!
 - a. We have no problems recognizing the sins of the younger brother.
 - b. But on a personal level, we sometimes fail to make proper application of the message to the elder brother.
 - (1) We need to make certain that this congregation could never rightly be called "the church of the elder brother!"
5. Finally, the father in this parable represents God. God loves us. He wants all to be saved! 2 Pet. 3:9; Matt. 11:28.

--Bobby Witherington, April 10, 2016