



## Prodigal Son

The parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15 illustrates how to confess sin biblically. A man had two sons when the story begins, when the story ends, and in between. This is a parable taking an analogy between being born into the earthly family and being born into the heavenly family. In Luke 15:11, “a man” was the sons’ father representing God the Father. “Had two sons” refers to the father’s two sons who were both believers. Once a son, always a son - regardless of behavior pattern. Jesus Christ is a Son. Church Age believers are permanently in union with Christ and shares His sonship. Both brothers are saved, but both are out of fellowship at this point.

*"And He said, 'A man had two sons. ' (Luke 15:11, NASB)*

In Luke 15:12, “give me the share of the estate” is analogous to God providing His unlimited grace resources to be used in the believer’s spiritual life. This includes the filling of the Holy Spirit, faith-rest, confession of sin via 1 John 1:9, etc. “So he divided” actually means that the father divided all his wealth between his two sons as their inheritance.

*"The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. " (Luke 15:12, NASB)*

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9, NASB)*

In Luke 15:13, “went on a journey into a distant country” refers to the younger brother taking his inheritance and all that he then owned and left for a faraway country. The younger brother remained out of fellowship and by analogy, now out of the geographical will of God. The older brother was now back in fellowship. Both sons still retain their permanent relationship with their father as all believers always retain their permanent relationship with God after salvation.

*"And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. " (Luke 15:13, NASB)*

In Luke 15:14, a severe famine hit the faraway country. The famine is a picture of God administering divine discipline to believers who have decided to turn away from God. The younger son was being disciplined by the Lord. God disciplines His own children to get them to return to Him. The younger son was suffering in his poverty. He was in want and he was broke. Was he still his father’s son? Yes.

*"Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. " (Luke 15:14, NASB)*

In Luke 15:15-16, he deteriorated as a believer does when they get out of fellowship. He was so desperate for food that he wanted to fight the pigs for some slop in the feeding trough, but the men wouldn’t let him.

*"So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. " (Luke 15:15-16, NASB)*

One day he came to his senses and admitted that he was out of fellowship with his father. This is analogous to the believer confessing their known sins to God the Father and being restored to the filling of the Holy Spirit. He evaluated his situation and decided he was going home to get back in fellowship



with his father. Luke 15:17-18.

*"But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;'" (Luke 15:17-18, NASB)*

The younger son returned and confessed his sins to his father. He indicated that he was not worthy to be called his father's son, which was true, but he still was his father's son. Note that this is the attitude of a believer who confesses sin biblically with God's grace restoration of the carnal believer to fellowship. No Christian can serve Christ in the spiritual life without routinely confessing known sin to God the Father. God always responds faithfully in His grace to restore the believer to fellowship as 1 John 1:9 promises.

In Luke 15:19, we have the principle of "once a son, always a son." The younger son became oriented to his father at this point, but because he had been away so long, he felt he was not worthy to be called a son. By analogy, he has been out of fellowship for so long in reversionism that he had forgotten the Bible doctrine he had learned. "Make me as one of your hired men" means all he could think of was how can he could earn back his father's favor. He was thinking human viewpoint and human works.

This is like the believer thinking that their sins are so horrible that God will not take them back. God is forever faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. God the Father can do this because Jesus Christ paid for all the sins of mankind already on the Cross. The only issue for the believer is their temporal relationship with Him.

*"I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men." (Luke 15:19, NASB)*

In Luke 15:20, "his father saw him" means that God always "sees" us no matter where we are. "Felt compassion for him" by analogy, refers to God the Father's attitude of grace and compassion toward us when we confess our known sins to Him in prayer.

*"So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him." (Luke 15:20, NASB)*

In Luke 15:21, we have the confession of the younger brother. He was now back in fellowship with his father. Cursing had been turned to blessing. By analogy, the carnal believer has been restored to fellowship and the cursing of divine discipline is now converted to blessing. Heb. 12:11.

*"And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'" (Luke 15:21, NASB)*

*"All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." (Hebrews 12:11, NASB)*

In Luke 15:22, the father interrupted the confession of his son. The son was going to repeat his thinking from Luke 15:19 where he felt he was not worthy to be called a son. The "best robe" is a picture of experiential righteousness or being in fellowship with God. "A ring" refers to his father's signature on the checkbook. A signet ring meant he could draw on his father's account for whatever he needed. "Sandals on his feet" represents service. He was clothed with righteousness, walking in the light and with the signet ring can once again draw on the father's account.

*"But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;" (Luke 15:22, NASB)*



In Luke 15:23, “the fattened calf” refers to fellowship with God and “celebrate” means to be relaxed. In Luke 15:24, “for this son of mine was dead” refers to, by analogy, the believer’s temporal death where they are out of fellowship and their soul is controlled by their old sin nature. “Was lost” refers to, by analogy, the believer’s operational death or being dead to Christian service.

*“and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;” (Luke 15:23, NASB)*

*“for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate.” (Luke 15:24, NASB)*

In Luke 15:25, “was in the field” represents the believer being out serving the Lord in the spiritual life. In Luke 15:28, “he became angry” represents the older brother sinning and getting out of fellowship. By application, one believer should never be angry because God treats another believer in grace.

*“Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.” (Luke 15:25, NASB)*

*“But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him.” (Luke 15:28, NASB)*

In Luke 15:29, “I have never neglected a command of yours” is an exaggeration on the part of the older son as he forgot that he had been in carnality many times earlier.

*“But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;’” (Luke 15:29, NASB)*

In Luke 15:30, “devoured your wealth with prostitutes” refers to the older brother maligning his younger brother. The older brother didn’t know if he had lived with prostitutes. He assumed this because his money went quite quickly. When a person is out of fellowship, it brings out their bad qualities. In this case, the older brother had the tendency to get into other people’s business. The Bible doesn’t say that the younger brother lost his money that way. Furthermore, it was none of the older brother’s business because the sins of the younger brother had been forgiven.

*“but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.” (Luke 15:30, NASB)*

The key principle here is that we are to never penalize anyone for their sins. We are commanded to mind our own business. Live your own life before the Lord. You do not want to get between God and the divine discipline He is administering to the carnal believer. Rom. 14:4; Matt. 7:2.

*“Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.” (Romans 14:4, NASB)*

*“For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.” (Matthew 7:2, NASB)*

In Luke 15:31, “all that is mine is yours” represents the believer being able to appropriate all that God has for us when we are in fellowship. As the passage closes, the older brother was still out of fellowship.

*“And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.’” (Luke 15:31, NASB)*

In Luke 15:32, “was dead” represents the believer’s temporal death when they are out of fellowship.



“Has begun to live” represents the believer’s return to temporal life where they are again filled with the Holy Spirit. “Was lost” represents the believer being lost to Christian service and “has been found” represents the filling of the Holy Spirit as the only means of performing service in the spiritual life.

*“But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.”” (Luke 15:32, NASB)*

The application of the parable of the prodigal son is to first confess known sins to God the Father using 1 John 1:9. Step two is to forget the sins you remembered and confessed. Step three is to isolate the sins. Step four is to move on in the spiritual life with your focus on the consistent intake and application of *epignosis* Bible doctrine. Phil. 3:13; Heb. 12:15.

*“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9, NASB)*

*“Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,” (Philippians 3:13, NASB)*

*“See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;” (Hebrews 12:15, NASB)*