

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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OF THE
DIVINE TRINITY
IN SAVING
SINNERS

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THE LOVE OF THE DIVINE TRINITY IN SAVING SINNERS

In Luke 15:1-32 the Lord Jesus spoke three parables unveiling and depicting how the divine Trinity works to bring sinners back through the Son by the Spirit to the Father. The Son came in His humanity as the Shepherd to find the sinner as a lost sheep and bring it back home (vv. 4-7). The Spirit seeks the sinner as a woman seeks carefully one lost coin until she finds it (vv. 8-10). And the Father receives the repenting and returned sinner as a certain man receives his prodigal son (vv. 11-32). The entire divine Trinity treasures the sinner and participates in bringing him back to God.

It is important for us to understand why the Son is mentioned first in Luke 15. The reason the Son is first is that in God's salvation the One who comes, practically speaking, is the Son. The Son comes to accomplish redemption, which is the first need, because redemption is the foundation of our salvation. The redemption accomplished

by Christ's death on the cross is the base of God's salvation. Once this foundation has been laid, we can build upon it. In order to accomplish redemption, the Son, portrayed in [Luke 15](#) as the good shepherd, comes first.

Now that the Son has accomplished redemption, the Spirit comes to find us. The book of Acts indicates this. In the Gospels the Son came to accomplish redemption. After the accomplishment of redemption by the Son, we see from the book of Acts that the Spirit comes to seek us and find us. Because of the Spirit's finding us, we repent and come back to God the Father. Then, according to the third parable in [Luke 15](#), the Father is waiting for us to come back.

What a wonderful sequence we have in [Luke 15](#)! The sequence here is not according to the Persons of the Trinity; the sequence is according to the steps of God's salvation, the salvation based on Christ's redemption. God's salvation is by the Son, through the Spirit, and unto the Father.

THE PARABLE OF A GOOD SHEPHERD

[Luke 15:4](#) says, "What man of you, having a hundred sheep and having lost one of them, does

not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?” What is the wilderness into which the Son as the Shepherd came seeking the lost sheep? The wilderness signifies the world. In the sight of God the world is a wilderness, a wild, desolate place where it is easy to get lost. The Son came in the wilderness to seek us, the lost sheep. The shepherd going into the wilderness to seek the lost sheep indicates that the Son has come to the world to be with men ([John 1:14](#)).

Now we need to ask in what way the Son as the Shepherd came to seek us. In contrast to the Spirit signified by the woman with the lamp, the Son does not seek us by enlightening us. His way to seek us out is to die for us. In [John 10:11](#) the Lord Jesus says that He is the good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep: “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” The work of the Shepherd is to die for us. If He did not die for us, He would not have a way to seek us out. His way of seeking us is to die for us.

THE PARABLE OF A SEEKING WOMAN

In [Luke 15:8](#) the Lord goes on to say, “Or what

woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek carefully until she finds it?”

The lamp signifies the word of God ([Psa. 119:105, 130](#)) used by the Spirit to enlighten and expose the sinner’s position and condition so that he may repent.

According to [Luke 15:8](#), the woman sweeps the house and seeks carefully until she finds the lost coin. The word “sweep” indicates the searching and cleansing of the inside of a sinner. The Son’s finding in [verse 4](#) is outside the sinner, completed at the cross through His redemptive death. The Spirit’s seeking here is inside, carried out by His working within the repenting sinner.

The Spirit’s work is to enlighten us inwardly. As this seeking woman, the Spirit enlightens our inner being little by little in a fine, careful way. The Spirit enlightens our mind, then our emotion and will, and then our conscience and our entire heart. It is in this way that the Spirit “finds” us.

As the result of the Spirit’s finding us through enlightening us, we wake up and come to ourselves and realize how foolish it is to stay where we are. We do not wake ourselves up; on the contrary, we are awakened by the enlightening of

the seeking Spirit. This seeking, enlightening, and finding of the Spirit takes place neither in the wilderness nor on the cross; it happens in our heart. This results in repentance, which is a change in our mind that produces a change in the direction of our life.

The fact that the Spirit's finding us takes place within the "house" of our being reveals that we were lost in ourselves. We were lost in our mind, will, and emotion. We were not merely lost in the wilderness—we were lost in ourselves. Christ died on the cross to bring us back from the wilderness of the world, yet we remain lost in ourselves. Therefore, the Spirit finds us in ourselves. We can testify of this from our experience. When the Spirit enlightened our mind, emotion, will, conscience, and heart, then we began to repent.

This repentance resulting from the enlightening of the Spirit is altogether an inward matter. No human being and no angel is able to do such a subjective work in us. This can be done only by the penetrating Spirit, for the Spirit is able to penetrate the depths of our being to enlighten us and expose us. Then we realize how foolish we are, we repent, and we decide to come back to the Father.

THE PARABLE OF A LOVING FATHER

In 15:11-32 we have the parable of a loving father. If we read carefully the parable of the loving father, we shall see that while the prodigal son was still squandering the father's riches, the father was waiting for him to come back. When the son came to himself and decided to go to his father, he prepared what he would say to him: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants" (v. 18-19).

This indicates that the prodigal son did not know the father's love. A fallen sinner having once repented always thinks of working for God or serving God to obtain His favor, not knowing that this thought is against God's love and grace and is an insult to His heart and intent.

To the prodigal son's great surprise, "While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion; and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him affectionately" (v. 20). The father's seeing the son did not happen by chance. Rather, the father went out of the home to look for his prodigal's return.

When the father saw his son, he ran to him and fell on his neck and kissed him affectionately. This indicates that God the Father runs to receive a returning sinner. What eagerness this shows! The father's falling on his son's neck and kissing him affectionately shows a warm and loving reception. The prodigal son's return to the Father is due to the Spirit's seeking (v. 8); the Father's receiving of the returned son is based upon the Son's finding in His redemption.

Verses 21 and 22 continue, “And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. 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.” Verse 22 begins with “but.” What a word of love and grace! It counters the prodigal’s own thinking and stops his nonsensical talk.

The father told his slaves to quickly bring out the best robe and put it on his son. The word “quickly” matches the father’s running (v. 20). The definite article “the” used with “best robe” indicates that a particular robe had been prepared for this particular purpose at this particular time. Literally, the Greek word translated

“best” means first. The best robe here signifies Christ the Son as the God-satisfying righteousness to cover the penitent sinner ([Jer. 23:6](#); [1 Cor. 1:30](#); [Phil. 3:9](#); see [Isa. 61:10](#); [Zech. 3:4](#)). Hence, putting the best robe on the returned prodigal signifies justification in Christ. As those who have Christ as the best robe, we are justified by God. This best robe, which is the first robe, replaced the rags ([Isa. 64:6](#)) of the returned prodigal.

According to [Luke 15:22](#), the father also told the slaves to put a ring on his son’s hand and sandals on his feet. This ring signifies the sealing Spirit as the God-given seal upon the accepted believer ([Eph. 1:13](#); see [Gen. 24:47](#); [41:42](#)). This ring is a sign that a repentant sinner receives something divine, the very Spirit of God Himself. The ring signifying the sealing Spirit indicates that the returned prodigal belongs to the Father. It also indicates that whatever the Father has as an inheritance belongs to the returned son. Sandals separate one’s feet from the dirt of the earth and strengthen him for walking. The sandals put on the son’s feet signify that God’s salvation separates us from the world and unto Him so that we may then take His way. Both ring and sandals were signs of a free man. The

adornment of the robe on the body, of the ring on the hand, and of the sandals on the feet makes the poor prodigal match his rich father and qualifies him to enter the father's house and feast with the father.

In Luke 15:23 the father goes on to say to the slaves, "And bring the fattened calf; slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry." The fattened calf signifies the rich Christ (Eph. 3:8) killed on the cross for the believers' enjoyment.

In this parable we see that God's salvation is of two aspects, the outward aspect and the inward aspect. The outward aspect is Christ as our righteousness to justify us, and the inward aspect is Christ as our life and life supply to satisfy us. After coming back to his father, the prodigal son enjoyed all the riches of God's provision in His salvation. He enjoyed Christ as his outward righteousness, he enjoyed the Spirit as the seal indicating that he belongs to the Father and that the Father and all His wealth belongs to him, he enjoyed the power of God's salvation separating him from the world, and he also enjoyed the inner Christ, the Christ who is his life and life supply. Therefore, he could become a very happy person. With his father he

could eat and be merry. What a pleasant picture this is!

In Luke 15:24 the father explains, “Because this son of mine was dead and lives again, was lost and was found! And they began to be merry.” The word “dead” here is significant. All lost sinners are dead in the sight of God (Eph. 2:1, 5). When they get saved, they are made alive (John 5:24; Col. 2:13).

Luke 15:25-32 describes the conversation in this parable between the father and the older son. Verse 25 tells us that “his older son was in the field.” The older son signifies the Pharisees and scribes (v. 2), representing the unbelieving Jews who pursue the law of righteousness (Rom. 9:31-32) by their work, signified by “in the field.”

In verse 29 of Luke 15 the older son said to the father, “Look, so many years I am slaving for you, and I have never neglected a command of yours.” The Greek word translated “neglected” may also be rendered “transgressed.” The word “slaving” in this verse signifies slavery under the law (Gal. 5:1).

THE FATHER’S HOUSE

Luke 15:25 refers to the father’s house. What

is signified by the father's house here? Christians may interpret the father's house as signifying a heavenly mansion. According to this interpretation, when a sinner repents and comes back to God, one day God will receive him into a heavenly mansion. This understanding of the father's house is not logical. It is not logical to say that we have come back to the Father and He has received us and yet we are still not in His house. Where, then, are we? Luke indicates in this parable that the prodigal son was received into the house immediately after he returned, and in the house there was a place to prepare food and a place to dine.

The father's house in the parable does not refer to heaven. If this house signifies heaven, then where are we who have been saved and who have been received by the Father, since we are not yet in heaven? Actually, the father's house here should signify the church.

The word “church” is not mentioned in the Gospel of Luke. But in at least two parables there are hints pointing to the church. In the parable of the good Samaritan recorded in [chapter ten](#), the “inn” signifies the church. In the parable of the loving father recorded in [chapter fifteen](#), the father's house signifies the church. While we are

on our journey, the church is an inn where we may stay temporarily. But in another sense the church is not an inn; the church is a house, both our house and the house of our Father.

Praise the Lord that we have received Christ as our righteousness, the Spirit as the seal, salvation as the separating and strengthening power, and Christ as our inner life and life supply! Now we are no longer in the wilderness and no longer in the “house” of the self—now we are in the Father’s house, the church.

THE ENJOYMENT OF THE JUBILEE

Everything in the Gospel of Luke from [chapter four](#) ([vv. 17-21](#)) onward is related to the jubilee either directly or indirectly. This is true of the parables in [chapter fifteen](#). The enjoyment experienced by the returned prodigal son was actually the enjoyment of the jubilee. The ring on his hand signifying the sealing Spirit points to the recovery of the birthright, the recovery of the right to enjoy the Triune God. Both the ring and the sandals are signs of a free man. A free man is one released from bondage, released from slavery and captivity. On the negative side, the prodigal is released from bondage; on the positive side, he begins to enjoy the riches of the

Father's inheritance. When we put these matters together, we have a picture of the real jubilee.

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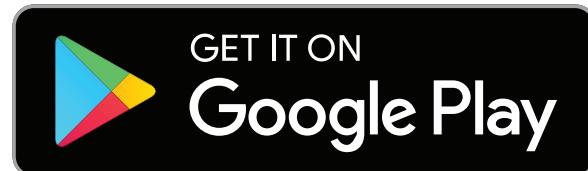
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