

A forgiving Father

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[0 : 00] I'd like now to turn your thoughts to the passage we read in Luke chapter 15 and the words that we have from verse 21. 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. Father, I have sinned. But this passage that we read, especially from verse 11, it tells us about a father who was so willing to forgive his erring son. And the picture that it gives to us is a picture of the Lord. The one who is so willing to forgive. No matter who the person is and no matter the sin that they may have committed.

It's true to say that today the world is crying out for forgiveness. The world is in that state where it doesn't realize that only God can forgive.

Not long before she died, that was in 1988, Margarita Lasky, and she was a secular humanist.

[1 : 39] And this is what she said. What I envy most about you Christians is your forgiveness. I have nobody to forgive me.

And what we should remember is this. There is one who is able to forgive us. One who is longing to forgive us.

One who is able to cleanse us from all sin and from all unrighteousness. And when you think of this, forgiveness is God's answer to the sin question.

Why is it that individuals don't seek the forgiveness of God? God is the one who is able to forgive and especially the guilt that is felt by so many.

He forgives. And when he forgives, he removes that awful guilt. Now there are three men mentioned in this story from verse 11.

[2 : 55] First of all, you have a rebellious son. And then you have a remarkable father. But then in the part we didn't read, you have a resentful brother.

And what I want us to notice first of all, with regard to this younger son, he was resistant. Now, whether it was that he didn't like the restrictions of the home, Or maybe he didn't like the religion of his father.

Or maybe he was looking for something that was better than what he experienced at home. Maybe he was looking for a kind of reality.

But you know, it seems, as you read the story, That he had no respect for his father.

And what you find is this, that he gets what he wants. And then he's away. And somebody put it like this. He wanted what the father could give him.

[4 : 11] But he didn't want the father. And there are so many like that in the world today. They want what God can give them.

But they don't want God himself. So this young lad, he got what he wanted. And he leaves home. And we are told that he lives a careless life.

A life that leads to ruin. It's the story of a wasted life. Somebody said, I'm sure you've heard it, All that glitters is not gold.

But somebody else said, Sin will take you further than you want to go. Sin will keep you longer than what you want to stay.

And cost you more than what you want to pay. This young lad, he ended up feeding the pigs.

[5 : 22] How low this Jewish boy went. He ended up with a ruined, wasted life.

He ended up with nothing. Now maybe today, You might feel to a degree Like this young lad.

Maybe you have resisted the calls of the gospel. Or resisted the way of life that was in your own family.

Going to church, taking the books and so on. And you wanted to get away. And you wanted to just do your own thing. And maybe you're in the place Where you want to come back to that.

But more than that, Where you want to come back to the God of your people. And that's the story you find here.

[6 : 27] And that's why this young lad is saying, I have sinned against heaven And before you. He knew the wrong that he did.

He knew that he wronged God. And he knew that he wronged his father. So, you see that this led to ruin. But then, there's a second thing I want us to notice about him.

That while he is feeding the pigs, He begins to reflect. Reflection is good. And here is this young lad, And he's reflecting on the past.

What I had. He's reflecting on the present. What I don't have. And I'm sure he's beginning to reflect upon the future.

What prospects has he? And as he is sitting there, Watching the pigs eating, And longing to take these pods, He is reflecting. And to go back to what I said earlier, You can imagine him saying to himself, What a mess.

[7 : 35] What a mess I've made, And what a mess I'm in. Oh, he had a good time. But, He could have said the words of another, I tried the broken cisterns, Lord, But ah, the waters failed.

Even as I stooped to drink, They fled, And mocked me, As I wailed. You see, The land of wine, Women, And song, Became the land of weeping, Worry, And sorrow.

And the person that said that, Sums it up. And sums up the life, Of this prodigal son. So he began to reflect. And those reflections that he had, I believe, They led, To regret.

And as he is regretting, All that he has done, Then, There's something else that happens. He begins to make, A resolution.

He resolves. And you can imagine them saying, Look, I've had enough with this. I want to get back home. I want to be where I will be accepted.

[8 : 59] And he begins, To resolve. And that resolve, Led, To him, Returning home.

Maybe, Today, You know that you're still a stranger, To God and to his grace. But maybe today, You have made, A resolve.

And you're saying to yourself, I want to get back, To God, That I want to know God. I want to know his blessing. I want to know what my, All my people knew, About the Lord.

In other words, You're making a resolve. But are you, Returning? Are you seeking, After the Lord? So here is a lad, That is resistant. But then also, Here is a lad, That is returning home. You see, It wasn't enough, To make, The resolution.

[10 : 06] He still, Had to come home. That, Was the only remedy. How many folk have said, Well, If I turn over, And you leave.

If I live a better life, Surely that's enough. And here is this guy, And he's returning home. Why? Because he's fed up with the past.

It didn't meet his need. What his soul was crying out for, He didn't find it, In this far of land.

In other words, His prosperity, Had let him down. And now he is left, With nothing. And he feels so awful, When he thinks, About that.

So, He wants to return. But it's not just, That he's fed up. But I believe, That he wants, To be right, With his father. His estranged father.

[11 : 12] Now, It's interesting, The way, This story, Pans out. His father. Why is he thinking, About his father?

And I believe, It is because, Of the example, That he was given, In his father's house. When he lived in the house, Or in the home.

Even when he left home. And I believe, That that enabled him, To return home, When he thought, About his father.

And then the embrace, That his father gave, When he was, Near the house. I believe, That that enabled, This young lad, To relax. But it helped him, To repent as well.

So, What you find is this. He wants, To get back. He has to admit, That he's failed. He has to admit, That he's just made, A mess of things, That he is a fool.

[12 : 22] He has to admit, I'm finished, With the past. But also, He has to accept, That there is no, Other way, To find, Peace.

And he wasn't going, To be prevented, Or he could have waited, He could have wasted time, He could have gone, And got himself, Cleaned up, But he didn't.

And here he is, On his way back. But I want you to think, About something else. That as he was, He was making his way back, There were thoughts, Coming into his mind, Thoughts, I believe, That he would have ignored.

I wonder, Was he thinking to himself, I might die, Before I get home. He could have died, Of some illness, He could have died, Of hunger.

You know, Many folk think, That they're going to live forever. But I believe, There are those, Who are, What we would say, Under concern. And maybe you're afraid, That you don't make it.

[13 : 37] Afraid that you don't make it. But remember this, No one who truly, Seeks the Lord, Will be failed, By the Lord.

Or he could have been killed, On the way home. That would be a thought, In his mind. But there was something else. You can imagine, This young lad, Thinking to himself, What if the demon, That drew me away, From the home, And from my father's house, What if that demon, Tries to bring me back again?

I wonder today, Are you trying to get rid, Of a demon? And the word of God, Reminds us, There is only one way.

And that is the power, Of the gospel, Of our Lord and saviour, Jesus Christ. But then, Maybe there was another thought, In his mind.

What if my father, Doesn't want me? And the father, Would be justified, In saying to this young lad, Are we back, To where you came from? And you can imagine, The devil putting the thought, Into his mind, There is no chance, Of you being accepted.

[15 : 00] There is no hope, Of your father, Taking you in. You know, Lots and lots of people, And they are seeking, To make their way, Towards God.

And the devil, Is saying to them, You are not going to make it. There is no chance, That you are going to be accepted. There is no hope. But think of this, If any of us, Were ever to say, God, Won't, Accept me.

You are thinking, Of the kind of life, That you may have lived. And you might think, That you have gone down, To rock bottom, Or you had gone down, To rock bottom, And you are thinking to yourself, God would never, Accept me.

Then remember this, You are making, God, A liar. Because God said, That whoever would come to him, And when we come in all sincerity, Looking for his blessing, Looking for his forgiveness, He would never, Turn us away.

Or this young lad, He could have feared, His father's displeasure. And maybe that could have prevented him, From coming home. But it didn't. There is one other thing, That I think, That may have been in the mind, Of this young lad.

[16 : 30] What if my father says to me, Right, You are home, But for the next month, For the next few months, Or for the next year, You have got to live up, To a standard.

As if he was being put, On probation. And he says, Maybe I am going to be put, On probation, Before, I am fully accepted. But I think he ignored, All these things.

And here is this young lad, That was so resistant, Of his home, And his father, He now returns, And he returns, With repentance.

You see, It was not enough, To reflect. It was not enough, To have regrets.

It was not enough, To resolve, That he was going home. He had, To return home. But that was not enough. He had, To repent.

[17 : 38] Repent. Now when you think, Of this word repentance, I am just going to mention, The four things. When somebody, Is repenting, They want, To be rid, Of their sin.

They want, To be right, With God. And when someone, Is repenting, Then, There is a, There is the removal, Of a barrier. The barrier of sin, Is taken away.

And there is a, Restoration of fellowship. That is repentance. And I believe, That is what was happening, To this young lad. He repented.

But then, Moving on, I want us to notice, How he was received. His reception. And what we are told, Is this first of all, His father recognized him.

And even though, He was a long way off, His father recognized him. And just think of this, The father, Still, Loved, His son.

[18 : 44] And I am sure, That the father, Longed, For this son, To come home. And I am sure, There were, Other days like this, When the father, Would be standing out, Looking to see, If there

was any, Sight, Of his son.

You see, In spite of everything, He wanted him home. You might be, In this situation today, Where, To use that, An expression, That we often use, Maybe, You have backslidden.

Maybe, Maybe you are not, What you once were. And maybe, You realize, That I need, To get right, With God, I need to be rid, Of this sin.

I want this, Awful barrier, Removed. Then, Realize this, God is the one, You could put it like this, Who is looking out for you, And he is waiting for you, To return, And he is speaking to you, I will come to that, In a moment, But he is speaking to you, Through his word.

So, The father recognized him, But a second thing, That the father did, Was this, He ran to him, Now, This was the action, Of a father, Who cared.

[20 : 11] Old men then, They didn't run, But, He ran to him. Why? Because he was filled, With compassion, Towards him.

That's why he ran to him. And we are told that, He threw his arms around him. Why? He wanted to show his son, And he wanted to show the neighbors, That his love, For this son, Had not changed. But there is also something else, He ran to him, He embraced him, And I believe that in doing that, He wanted, To shelter his son.

Now just think of this for a moment, In Deuteronomy, Chapter 21, Verse 18, According to the law, The law of Moses, The neighbors had the right, To stone, The rebellious son.

That was the law. But if you imagine the picture, The father has embraced him, And if these neighbors, Began to, Fire the stones, Then, They would be hitting, The father, First.

[21 : 46] All the blows, All the, All the stones, Would have in all probability, Hit the father.

He deserved, To be punished. He deserved, To die, According to the law. But the father, Was so willing, That he would be, Saved, And that he would be, Forgiven, That he was willing, To throw his arms around him.

You think, Of what Christ did, On the cross. The blows, That we should have received, The punishment, That was due to us.

That was taken by him, And as we are reminded, On his own body, On the cross, Or on the tree. He took that, Instead of us.

And that is the wonder, Of the gospel. You see, The father, Wanted, To show, His love, For the wayward son.

[23 : 00] So, When he was being received, The father recognized him, The father ran to him, But there is something else, The father received him, He didn't turn him away. He didn't turn his back on him, But he took him in.

And then there is something else, The father, Reinstated him, As a tremendous thought, When you think of it, As if, He had never, Been, Been, Away, Or put it another way, As if he had, Never done, Anything wrong, Now, That is how you could sum up, Justification, When God forgives, And when we experience, His blessing, Then there is justification, And as Professor Finlayson, Once put it, Justified, Never sinned, Justified, And that is what you find here, The father reinstated him, And when we come to believe, And trust, Then, As if we had never, Been away, As if we had never, Committed sin, Because our sins, Have been dealt with, They have been forgiven, They are never going to be, Brought again, To our minds, They are going to be, Cast, Into the sea, Of God's forgetfulness, God is not going to, Remind us of our past sin, We might do that ourselves, But God doesn't do it, We're not meant to be, You might say, Digging up the sins, Of the past, Because they have been dealt with, They have been, They have been forgiven, And that is, That is what justification is, That is what happened, He was reinstated, And no wonder, That there was rejoicing, And I like the words, That there is rejoicing in heaven, Now in one version, Amongst the angels of God, Is it God that is rejoicing, Just God, I believe it is heaven, Heaven rejoices, When one sinner returns, And maybe today, You could be that one, Maybe there are more, But you could be that one person, And you're causing heaven, To rejoice, Because, To use this expression, You, Have come home, See, They rejoice, Because he was no longer dead, But alive, And what a reunion that was, For the father, And the son, The last thing, That I want us to notice, Now we didn't read this part, But, You think of this young lad's, Rejection, You see, The, We are told about the elder brother, He resented, He resented, What the father was doing, And he resented the fact, That the son had come home, Resentful,

You see, Up to this point, This older lad, Was respectful, To his father, And he makes that so clear, I did all that you wanted me to do, I kept this, And I kept that, But now what is happening, He is showing his real character, And maybe you're saying to yourself, I keep the commandments, I don't do this, And I don't do that, And I never did that, But maybe there is something happening, And you're beginning to show, Your real character, Because you think, That just keeping the laws, Is sufficient, And then it is pointed out to you, That that is not the case, That you must believe, And turn, And the other thing is this, He refused, To join in with the rest,

[27 : 21] And you can imagine the father, Coming out to this older boy, And saying, Oh come on, Come in, Your younger brother has come home, Maybe there are others, The members of the staff, And they would have been, Preeding with him, What made this, This elder brother think, That he was better than the others, And therefore, He thought to himself, I'm not going in, I'm going to stay where I am, You see, God forgives, And that is the picture, That is given to us here, He forgives all sin, He cleanses from all, Unrighteousness, He brings us, Into his family, He makes us, His sons, And his daughters, We become, Heirs, And joint heirs, With Christ, The one who is, Our elder brother, The one,

Who is not resentful, The one, Who will rejoice, When the sinner, Comes home, I wonder then today, Where do you think you are, Spiritually, Are you, Like this, Like this younger lad, And you've just gone your own way, You've kicked over the traces, You've gone your own way, And maybe today, You've realized, What a mess you have made, And you want to come back, You want to return, You want this forgiveness, Then let me tell you, That forgiveness is there, God, Is so willing, To forgive, But then, Maybe, You are, The expression I used earlier, Maybe you are the backslider, And you've fallen away, You can, Return,

You can find, You can find, You can find, You can find, You can find, You can find, You can find, Forgiveness, Maybe today, You're not interested, In being, In the family of God, Maybe you're thinking to yourself, I'm okay as I am, Remember, There's a heaven to gain, There is a hell, To shun, And no matter, What you think, You're going to stand, Before God, And you're going to give, An account to him, And you can't turn, And say to God, Lord, I've lived a good life, And the Lord will say, But I never, View you, Maybe today, You're in this place, And I hope that most of you are, All of you in fact, That you're believing, And trusting, In the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, Then, Think, Of the wanderers,

Think of those, Who are still, Outside the kingdom, And be praying, Be looking, For them, To come in, To the kingdom of Christ, God, As well, I have sinned, But he found, Forgiveness, Amen, May the Lord add his blessing, To these few thoughts, Upon his word, We're going to bow our heads, In a word of prayer,