



NEW LIFE

BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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"For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9)

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Dear Readers,

A FATHER'S LOVE FOR A REBELLIOUS SON

In Luke 15:11-24 our Lord Jesus related a parable about a reckless son who obtained his portion of inheritance from his father, and then squandered it all away in a far country. Reduced to living like a beggar, he decided to return humbly to his father, perhaps expecting a stern rebuke and severe punishment from him. The father however was much overjoyed with the son's return, and made a great celebration for him.

This parable, which is commonly known as "The Parable of the Prodigal Son," provides a wonderful picture of God's love for sinners. The father in the parable represents God Himself. And the lost son represents sinners who recognise their own helpless state, and turn to God in repentance of their sins. And God receives them joyfully and saves them to the uttermost.

As we look at the description of the father and the lost son in the parable, we can find three striking contrasts between them that teach us vital spiritual lessons on our relationship with God. The first contrast is:

God's Kindness vs Man's Selfishness (vv.11-13)

In the first part of the parable we are told that in response to the son's request, the father graciously divided his property and gave the younger son his inheritance. He had every right to say to him, "Son, I am not even dead yet. How can you ask for your inheritance? How can you be so unkind to your father as to treat me as if I am already dead!" But this father was kind enough not to deny the son's request. Although the parable does not state it, he was probably very grieved at his son's selfish and rebellious attitude.

Dear Reader, do you know that God is also grieved with you if you are still unsaved? Nevertheless He still blesses you with many good things in life! He is kind enough to give you a life to live in this world. He is gracious enough to provide a home and family to nurture you. He also gives opportunities for you to grow and prosper. What wonderful kindness God has shown to you! But do you acknowledge His kindness to you?

Many of us are too interested in seeking our own glory and pursuing our own selfish ambitions to care about God. We are rebellious children. Some of us may know how painful and difficult it is to have rebellious children. Parents are grieved to see their child becoming like that – they give him the best upbringing they can give, and yet the child rebels against them, rejects the values they have painstakingly inculcated in him, and gets into trouble with the Law. When a child rejects parental authority it is often not long before he also rejects other kinds of authority. To make matters worse, much of what is aired in the media today encourages such a rebellious spirit.

But we cannot put all the blame on the media. The prime cause is still the rebellious and selfish sinful nature that is found in every man, woman and child. That includes us as well, when we are still unsaved. The lost son in the parable aptly portrays us in this state of sin. What made his...

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actions so utterly unreasonable were the selfish attitudes he had.

The tone of speaking to his father was not one of humble pleading. He said, *"Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth unto me."* He demanded what was 'rightfully' his. Actually, no parent is obligated to bestow any inheritance on his children. An inheritance is a gift, and gifts are not our right to demand. The demand of the son in the parable reveals something about his selfish spirit – it filled him with greed for personal gain.

As we live in a materialistic environment, we are sometimes tempted to follow the same covetous spirit that drives many people – the desire to get rich quickly, and to demand things from people and even from God. Dear Reader, are you driven by such a covetous spirit?

The selfish attitude of the prodigal son produced another result: It made him despise his father. All that he wanted was his inheritance, and his father stood in the way between him and that inheritance. Do you know that you are no less selfish when you regard God merely as a means to an end? To seek God merely for all the manifold benefits that you can obtain from Him is to despise Him. Let us be seeking God with pure motives: because He alone is God, deserving of all glory, honour and worship.

The parable specifically mentions that the son went to a far country. This also shows how much he despised his father: He wanted to put as much distance as he could between him and his father. He did not want his father to come to look for him. He wanted to cut himself off from him! How aptly this describes the lives of many today who are trying to live their lives without God. Dear Reader, have you been running away from God?

Furthermore, when the son left his father's home, he indulged himself freely in riotous living. The word "riotous" describes a profligate life style, totally abandoned to senseless and reckless immoral behaviour. He freely gave in to his passions and lusts, and indulged in wine, women and song. Such symptoms of rebellion against God should not be found in us. It is utterly unreasonable to respond to God's goodness like this.

God's Abundance vs. Man's Emptiness (vv.14-19)

This can be seen in what happened to the son after he had spent all he had. According to v.17 the father still continued to live in the comfort of his own home with hired servants, and more than enough food to spare. Although the loss incurred to the father by the son's claim may have been substantial, he continued to prosper materially through wise, temperate living.

In contrast to this, the prodigal son's decadent lifestyle left him utterly desolate, destitute, without money, friends or any help. Whatever transient pleasures he enjoyed were all gone like a dream. Now came the awful reality of facing the consequences of his recklessness. Two things stand out in this pitiful picture of man in his state of rebellion.

Firstly, it had deprived the son of all that had once been his to enjoy, before he left his father: A comfortable home, a supportive family, and sufficient good food to eat. Now the only family he had was a herd of pigs. He lived with them in their pig-pen, and he ate the husks which the pigs ate. And the worst part was that he had been the cause of his own deprivation. His own rebellion had robbed him of all that he had!

In the same way, sin has robbed man of all the glorious things God had bestowed on him before man sinned: Man was created by God perfect and upright, to exercise dominion over all creatures, and to enjoy close fellowship with Him. But man rebelled against God, and now finds himself deprived of these gifts. He wallows miserably in the miry clay of his own sins.

The second thing that stands out in this pitiful picture of man is that he is depraved. We see this particularly in what he planned to say to his father in v.18 – *"Father I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son: make me as one of Thy hired servants."* The son now saw himself and his father quite differently. Instead of despising his father, he had a very high regard and respect for him. He would even be glad if he could just be his...

father's servant.

What caused this change? Was it not his great loss and failure that had humbled him and opened his eyes to see the truth about himself? Dear Reader, this is also the truth that your eyes must be opened to see. Perhaps you too have been overestimating your own worth, thinking more highly of yourself than you ought to think. It is only when you are willing to admit your sinfulness, depravity and utter helplessness that you are ready to return to God. Those who refuse to see this will only continue to live in rebellion against God.

God's abundant blessings are reserved only for those who recognize that they are unworthy of them. If you think that there is something good in your life that would cause God to look upon you with favour, please think again! Your salvation is undeserved, because all sinners are unworthy of God's grace and favour.

God's Amazing Grace vs. Man's Pressing Needs (vv.20-24)

In this section of the parable, we see how magnanimous God is to sinners. It is reflected in the way the father received his son back. A father with less love would perhaps have disowned the prodigal son and expected him to come begging and pleading for some time before he relents and reinstates even a small measure of the privileges he had forfeited.

Let us consider 3 points about this father's amazing love and grace. Firstly, we see the father's desire. He saw his son coming home, while he was still a great distance away (v.20). This implies that he had been watching the road and hoping for the day when his lost son would return home. And one fine day as he looked out as usual, there upon that road was his son all tattered and torn. We can imagine the tears of joy that welled up in the aged father's eyes as he ran as fast as his legs could carry him, to embrace his lost son! This accurately depicts God's earnest desire to see sinners turning to Him. *"As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"* (Ezekiel 33:11)

Such desire, when fulfilled, brings delight. This is the second point about the father's love – it made him delight in the return of his lost son. He shared his joy with the rest of his household by having a great feast. In the same way, God takes great delight in receiving sinners who return to Him. Jesus said: *"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."* (John 6:37). Nothing brings greater delight to God than this! In the two parables before this, Jesus had already stressed that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth (Luke 15:7,10)! Dear Reader, will there be joy in heaven today over your repentance?

The third point about the love of the father in the parable is his deliverance of his son. He restored to him all the blessings that he had lost. This means that he had forgiven him for all the grief and pain he had caused him. In v.24 the father said, *"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."* What an apt description this is of sinners who are delivered by God – they are no longer dead but alive, and no longer lost but found.

However, there is one important difference between the father's restoration of the prodigal son and God's restoration of sinners: The restoration of the prodigal son did not cost the father anything. It was only after the son had returned that the father sacrificed the fatted calf to celebrate his return. In contrast to this, God had to sacrifice His only begotten Son in order to bring sinners back to Himself. It is only through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary that God can forgive us for our sinful rebellion against Him. God cannot simply overlook our sins and deliver us without the death of Christ.

Dear Reader, a tremendous price has been paid to deliver sinners from sin and eternal death. If you are a prodigal child, please stop running from God. Come out of your aimless roaming in the darkness of sin and strife, and return now to Him! *"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."* (Isaiah 55:7)

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON
CHURCH THEME: STRIVING TO LIVE ABOVE OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS
IN CHRIST (Ephesians 1:3)

Our worship services begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm.**

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

Worship Services			WELCOME
Morning	Today: 13/08/2006	Next Week: 20/08/2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day morning.
<i>Chairman:</i>	Seetoh Yoong Chiang	Jonathan Kim	
<i>Speaker:</i>	Rev Lim Chee Boon	Rev Lim Chee Boon	
<i>Message:</i>	Christ's Foreknowledge	Christ's Assurance To Believers	
<i>Text:</i>	John 13:21-38	John 14:1-14	
<i>Organist:</i>	Yanning	Anthony	
Evening			
<i>Chairman:</i>	John Poh	Jeff Pun	
<i>Speaker:</i>	Rev Lim Chee Boon	Rev Lim Chee Boon	
<i>Message:</i>	The Suffering for the Faith	The Sufficiency of Grace	
<i>Text:</i>	1 Peter 1:1-9	2 Corinthians 12:1-10	
<i>Pianist:</i>	Anthony	Ming Yann	
Other Duties			NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
	Today	Next Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to pray for those who are sick: Rev Lim underwent a check-up during the TIA appointment. Pray that the results will be made available as soon as possible. • Pray for journey mercies: For those who are currently travelling, especially during this period of heightened security. Mok and Carol are currently in Malaysia, he will be preaching at Evangel BP church. • Areas of Service: For those who are interested to serve (as ushers, Sunday school teachers, pianists, organists, ...), please see Jonathan or Daniel. • Maasai Mission: Continue to pray for the settlement of the land issues. Pray for Sis Pui Meng – for God's protection and blessing in her clinic ministry to the Maasai.
<i>Ushers</i>	John/Jonathan	Jeff/Ming Yann	
<i>Sunday Sch:</i>	Joyce	Esmeralda	
<i>Lunch:</i>	Maureen Poh	Maureen Poh	
<i>Washing-up:</i>	YAF Group 1	YAF Group 2	
<i>Bible Study:</i>	DHW – Genesis 26	DHW – Genesis 26	
Appointments of the Week			
Wed 16 Aug	7:30 pm	Mid Week Prayer Meeting: C'man: Rev Lim	
Fri 18 Aug	7.00 pm	Young Adults Fellowship: Led by Rev Lim (Book of Daniel)	
Sat 19 Aug	4.00 pm	Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Spkr/C'man: Yoong Chiang	
Last Week's Worship Service Collections			
Offering:	£643.99	Book Sales:	£4.00
YAF:	£67.30	Lunch:	£31.21
Church Renovation:	£100.00		
<u>The Lord's Prayer</u>			
<p><i>Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen</i></p>			
<p><i>Hold Thou my hand; so weak I am, and helpless, I dare not take one step without Thy aid; Hold Thou my hand; for then, O loving Savior, No dread of ill shall make my soul afraid.</i></p>			