

Sunday, April 12, 2024 | The Road to Redemption

Week 24 | Luke 15:25-32 | "The Elder Prodigal Son"

Last week, during our AWANA Sunday celebration, Pastor Bob covered the first half of the parable of the Prodigal Son. And as he pointed out, **there is great joy when the lost come to the Father in repentance.** Even wayward children need not fear coming home. The Father is looking for repentant children and welcomes them with open arms.

Today, we'll delve into the other half of Jesus' parable about the prodigal son. It's important to note that the younger son wasn't the only prodigal; the elder son, despite never leaving home, was just as lost as his little brother. He was not lost physically, but spiritually, as we'll discover. His story is a crucial part of this parable, shedding light on the dangers of self-righteousness and the importance of forgiveness.

One can live a righteous life and yet be consumed with self-righteousness. This is a dangerous path to tread. A surefire way to determine when we've crossed into legalism is to gauge how we respond when the truly wicked genuinely repent. Do we welcome them home with open arms? Or do we become puffed up, thinking that they'll never be fully accepted into the household of faith because of their past? Let us reflect on our own attitudes and ensure we are not falling into the trap of self-righteousness.

I want you to notice **two** things:

- i. **The elder brother was angered by the celebration for his brother.**

READ: Luke 15:25-28a (ESV)

²⁵ "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' ²⁸ But he was **angry** and **refused** to go in.

Notice that, unlike the younger brother who abandoned home, the elder son remained at home and was hard at work in the field when his younger brother returned.

Jesus says the elder brother "**was angry and refused to go in.**" One can think they're an insider, but due to their own choices, they can make themselves an outsider. And often, our reaction to things betrays our heart, whether it is one in step with what is correct or more aligned with

what is wrong. The elder brother's anger proved that, though he worked and lived with his father, he was as much a prodigal son as his younger brother.

Anger is not wrong in and of itself. The *validity* of our anger is determined by its *cause*.

For instance, throughout the O.T., we're told that God became angry for various reasons. In fact, the first time we're told explicitly that God was angry, **he was furious with Moses**. In Ex. 4, God told Moses to return to Egypt, reassuring him that he would return in the power of God himself. The Lord even performed miracles for Moses to reassure the stubborn prophet (e.g., burning bush, staff to a serpent; hand became leprous and restored). **Yet, Moses refused to obey five times** (cf. Ex. 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13), and, in response to the man's pigheadedness, the Lord was angered (Ex. 4:14).

In the N.T., we're told that **Jesus** was also angered when confronted with the **lack of compassion and legalism** of the religious leaders (cf. Mar. 3:5). In Mark 10, the Lord was **angry with the disciples** when they kept children from coming to him (cf. Mar. 10:14). And while the word "anger" is not used, **we can safely assume the Lord was angry when he drove the "money-changers" out of the Temple in Jn. 2:13-17.**

Thus, as an emotion, it is not sinful to become angry. Otherwise, both God and Jesus would've sinned. As mentioned before, the issue is *not* that we become angry; instead, **the validity of our anger is determined by the cause of our anger**. We sin when we become angry for the *wrong reason*.

Anger becomes sinful for several reasons:

For example, if we become bitter and resentful toward whoever has angered us instead of forgiving them, rest assured that your anger, **even if justified**, has caused you to sin (cf. Eph. 4:26-27). The forgiven must forgive; otherwise, they're likely unforgiven themselves (cf. Mat. 18:35).

If we're too *quick* to become angry—i.e., **short-fused**—that anger is almost certainly wrong (cf. Jam. 1:19-20). Proverbs 25:28, **"A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls."**

If our anger causes us to become quarrelsome, jealous, hostile, slanderous, gossipy, conceited, and so on, just assume your anger is unjustified (cf. 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20). Jesus said, **"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry**

with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire" (Mat. 5:21-22).

Lastly, and particularly applicable to our passage today, **if we are angry when our enemies repent**, our anger is most assuredly sinful (Jonah 4:9-11).

The elder brother, though he was hard at work in the fields and even though he never abandoned his father, **was like *Jonah***; he cared more for his own *comfort* than his father's *compassion*. When we're so focused on ourselves and what we *wrongly* assume is owed to us, we become angry and, in doing so, we sin. **Because, as we'll see, self-righteousness causes us to be upset about things that cause God joy.**

ii. The elder brother was angered by the celebration of his father.

READ: Luke 15:28b-32 (ESV)

His father **came out** and **entreated** him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served **you**, and I never disobeyed **your** command, yet **you** never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of **yours** came, who has devoured **your** property with prostitutes, **you** killed the fattened calf for him!'

³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this **your brother** was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'

The elder brother wasn't just upset that a celebration was held in honor of his younger brother; he was also angry because it was his father who threw the party! The issue is the tension between one brother who has been faithful and another unfaithful. The elder brother has "served" his father for "many years" and "never disobeyed [his] command," and yet never did his father throw such an elaborate celebration for him! **In other words, the elder brother was complaining about fairness. How can the father be just if he would shower blessings on such an unsavory person?** According to the elder brother, the father hadn't even given his eldest a young goat, the least important of the farm animals, that he "might celebrate with [his] friends."

But the elder brother is wrong to say that the Father did nothing for him. As a reminder, when the younger of the two sons demanded that his father give him his inheritance, **the father gave both sons their inheritance.** Luke 15:12 says, "And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property

between *them*." So, when the son is complaining that his father "never gave [him] a young goat, that [he] might celebrate with [his] friends," it is the sort of thing that only a greedy and self-centered person would say. This is why the Father gently reminds his elder son that he is the *primary* heir of all he has when he says, "You are always with me, and all that is mine is yours." What is one fatted calf in comparison to the elder son's holdings? The firstborn owned the whole herd!

So, what's the takeaway?

Stressing law at the expense of love makes us resentful toward the remorseful; it makes us criticize what God celebrates.

READ: Matthew 9:11-13 (ESV)

¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹² But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

An over-fixation of rules and regulations is the hallmark of a legalist. This is, of course, not to say there are no rules and regulations. Let everything be done decently and in order. Biblically speaking, there are things we ought to do and things we ought not to do. Our conduct matters, and when we do something we shouldn't, cross a line, break a rule, or disregard one of God's regulations, we ought to repent. And should someone motivated by love call us to repentance, we should not condemn them. They are simply trying to help. It is we who are in the wrong, not them.

However, on the other hand, it is entirely possible to be so focused on rules and regulations that we will have no love, forgiveness, or mercy for those who break those rules and regulations. As we said two weeks ago, though we might claim to "hate the sin and love the sinner," some believers find it far easier to hate both. And should that happen, we will have little love for them should they repent.

God is THE judge, and we will all have to give an account someday. But until that day, let mercy, not law, guide your interactions with sinners. May you love the remorseful and not resent them.

In my time as a Christian, a youth pastor, and now as a lead pastor, the unhappiest Christians I knew were those who were overly concerned with rules rather than relationships. They focused

too much on preferences rather than principles. They were quick to talk about what was proper rather than what was loving.

Video Description:

The Road to Redemption | Week 24 | "The Other Prodigal Son" (Luke 15:25-32)

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

Today, we'll delve into the *other* half of Jesus' parable about the prodigal son. It's important to note that the younger son wasn't the only prodigal; the elder son, despite never leaving home, was just as lost as his little brother. He was not lost physically, but spiritually, as we'll discover. His story is a crucial part of this parable, shedding light on the dangers of self-righteousness and the importance of forgiveness.

One can live a righteous life and yet be consumed with self-righteousness. This is a dangerous path to tread. And a surefire way to determine when we've crossed into legalism is to gauge how we respond when the *truly* wicked *genuinely* repent. Do we welcome them home with open arms? Or do we become puffed up, thinking that they'll never be fully accepted into the household of faith because of their past? Let us reflect on our own attitudes and ensure we are not falling into the trap of self-righteousness.

Pastor's manuscript can be found here:

Grace Pointe Baptist Church

12029 Eastern Ave.

Baltimore, MD 21220

Contact: info@GracePointeLife.com

Website: <https://www.gracepointelife.com>

Give here: <https://www.gracepointelife.com/give/>

Podcast Details:

Season 38 | 24