

# 'I Have Sinned' – Sign of True Sonship

## a. How to Get Lost! (15:11-19)

**15:11-13** What are the priorities of the younger son? (Note – you are lost before you think you are! - Eph.2:1-3)

[1] Unlike some of our Lord's parables, it does not convey to us one great lesson only, but many. Every part of it is peculiarly rich in instruction. **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 2 p.181

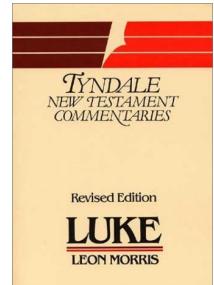
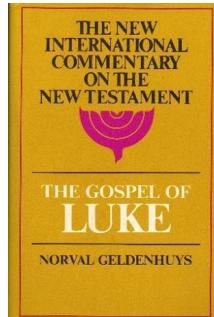
[2] Our Lord shows us a "younger son" making haste to set up for himself, going far away from a kind father's house, and "wasting his substance in riotous living." We have in these words a faithful portrait of the mind with which we are all born. This is our likeness. We are all naturally proud and self-willed. We have no pleasure in fellowship with God. We depart from Him, and go afar off. We spend our time, and strength, and faculties, and affections, on things that cannot profit. The covetous man does it in one fashion, the slave of lusts and passions in another, the lover of pleasure in another. In one point only all are agreed. Like sheep, we all naturally "go astray, and turn every one to his own way." (Isa. 53:6.) In the younger son's first conduct we see the natural heart. **J.C. Ryle** p.181

**15:14-16** When does he KNOW he's lost? (among those as selfish as he is!)

[3] [15:14] The working of Providence is manifested in coincidences. Just when he had spent everything, a famine, and a severe one, arose in precisely that land to which he had gone to enjoy himself, and throughout ... the land. **Alfred Plummer** Luke p.373

[4] [15:15] For a Jew no occupation could have been more distasteful. A rabbinic saying runs, 'Cursed be the man who would breed swine' (Baba Kamma 82b). **Leon Morris** Luke p.241

[5] ... no one of his so-called friends who had helped to waste his life and possessions could or would help him. **N. Geldenhuys** Luke p.407



**15:17-19** How does the son come to appreciate his father's character?

[6] [15:17] Sin is a hard master, and the servants of sin always find it out, sooner or later, to their cost. Unconverted people are never really happy. Under a profession of high spirits and cheerfulness, they are often ill at ease within. Thousands of them are sick at heart, dissatisfied with themselves, weary of their own ways, and thoroughly uncomfortable. "There be many that say, who will show us any good." "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." (Ps. 4:6. Isa. 57:21.) **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 2 p.182

[7] [15:18,19] He recognized that his sin was first against God, *heaven* being a reverent periphrasis for the divine name (unless we take *eis ton ouranon* to mean that he saw his sins piling up on high till they reached heaven, cf. Ezra 9:6). **Leon Morris** Luke p.242

[8] [15:18,19] For he feels that he is not worthy to be called his father's son. Whereas formerly he demanded his portion in self-sufficient pride, he is now quite willing, in his humility, to take the very lowest place and to obey his father's commands. Thus real remorse and the unconditional confession of sin are the indispensable requirements for true repentance. **Norval Geldenhuys** Luke p.408

[9] [15:17-19] Here is faith in its fulness, actually arising, going to God. Faith is not a thought or a desire; it is an act which brings two living beings into personal contact. What an impression must have been produced on the publicans present by this faithful picture of their past and present experiences! But how much deeper still the emotion which awaits them when they hear Jesus unveiling in the sequel, the feelings and conduct of God Himself toward them! **Frederic Godet** Luke p.378

## b. How to Be Found! (15:20-32)

**15:20** As much as he knows about his father, what does he NOT know yet? (John 3:16; 6:32-40,44)

[10] [15:20] The heart of the father had continued to remain true in love for his prodigal son. Great and profound was his grief for his

son in the "far country". But he had never ceased to watch and to wait for his return and that the reason why he saw him so soon ... embraced and kissed him heartily. So inexplicably wonderful is the love of God that He not merely forgives the repentant sinner, but actually goes half-way to meet him and embraces him in His love

### Ryle on multiple meanings in parables

[11] ... I fully admit that it may be taken in a national sense, and that in that sense it makes excellent divinity. The Gentile nations who departed from God after the flood, and reaped darkness, misery, and hard bondage under Satan, by their departure, may undoubtedly be typified by the younger son. Their repentance and return to God, through the preaching of the Gospel after our Lord's ascension, may be typified by the prodigal son's return to his father's house. The envy with which the believing Gentiles

were regarded by the Jews, may be typified by the conduct of the elder son. The parable would then, as is often the case, be a prophecy. The words of our Lord are often so deep that they will admit of a double meaning. So it may be here. The parable may be interpreted both of nations and of individuals. All I maintain is, that the individual personal interpretation of it is decidedly the primary one which it ought to receive. **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 2 p.188

and grace. **Norval Geldenhuys** *Luke* p.408

[12] [15:20] He saw him while he was still at a *distance*, he *had compassion*, he *ran* (which was striking in an elderly Oriental), he *embraced him* ('fell on his neck') and he *kissed him* (cf. David's forgiving kiss of Absalom, 2 Sam. 14:33). This last verb, *katephilesen*, may mean 'kissed him many times' or 'kissed him tenderly'. Even if no special significance is to be attached to the compound form, at least the verb points to a sincere greeting and not to perfunctory politeness. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.242

[13] [15:20] He smothered him with kisses. But he is not clean! That is what the Pharisees were saying about Jesus and the unwashed crowd. Would it not be well if he waited until he is washed? Would it not be well to wait until those rags are removed, and he is decently clothed? Would it not be well to wait, and see how he does, put him on probation, and if he does well, perhaps his father may receive him? That is the vulgarity of our supposed respectability and accuracy that lack God's love. **G. Campbell Morgan** *Luke* p.183

### 15:21-24 Contrast the new attitude of the son with the unchanged attitude of the father

[14] [15:22] [The father said.] Let it be noted that the father does not say a single word to his son about his profligacy and wickedness. There is neither rebuke nor reproof for the past, nor galling admonitions for the present, nor irritating advice for the future. The one idea that is represented as filling his mind, is joy that his son has come home. This is a striking fact. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p.187

### 15:25-30 Contrast the attitude of the older son with the younger's (Matt.20:1-16 - Notice how 'moral' he is! No indication he knows of his brother's change – does he even care?)

[15] While the house is filled with mirth, the elder son is at work. Here is the image of the Pharisee busied with his rites, while repentant sinners are rejoicing in the serene sunshine of grace. Every free and joyous impulse is abhorrent to the formal spirit of pharisaism. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.379

[16] The elder son ... saw himself as always the model son. But his use of the verb *douleuo* 'to serve as a slave' (cf. NEB, 'I have slaved for you all these years') gives him away. He did not really understand what being a son means. That is perhaps why he did not understand what being a father means.... He complains that the father has never given him a *kid* (let alone a calf) for a feast with his *friends* (who would have been respectable people and not like the other boy's associates). The proud and the self-righteous always feel that they are not treated as well as they deserve. ... He speaks of the younger man as having spent the father's money on *harlots*, which goes beyond anything said previously and may be his own invention. **L. Morris** *Luke* p.244

[17] [15:30] The blind and innocent self-satisfaction which forms the heart of pharisaism could not be better depicted than in the words: "neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment;" and the servile and mercenary position of the legal Jew in the theocracy, than thus: "Lo! these many years *do I serve thee*." ... What in reality was his father to him? A master! **F. Godet** *Luke* p.379

[18] With the hard and ill-paid labor of legal obedience he contrasts (v.30) the life of his brother, merry in sin, happier still, if possible, in the hour of his return and pardon. ... in the eyes of pharisaism, as virtue is a task, sin is a pleasure; and hence there ought to be a payment for the first, and equivalent of pain for the second. The father, by refusing to the one his just reward, by adding in the case of the other joy to joy, the enjoyments of the paternal home to those of debauchery, has shown his preference for the sinner and his sympathy with sin. *Thy son*, says the elder son, instead of: *my brother*. ... Do not those sayings which Jesus puts in the mouth of the righteous legalist, contain the keenest criticism of a state of soul wherein men discharge duty all the while abhorring it, and wherein while avoiding sin, they thirst after it? **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.380

### 15:31,32 Is it true that the older son had ALL his father had? (Matt.5:43-48, cf. Lev.19:17,18)

[19] In the episode of the elder son the murmuring of the Pharisees is rebuked, and that in the gentlest manner. They are reminded that they are sons, and that to them of right belongs the first place. ... But self-righteousness and exclusiveness are sinful, and may be as fatal as extravagance and licentiousness. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.377

[20] [15:31] All his riches were and are constantly at his elder son's disposal. If he has not received any real enjoyment of them, he is the only one to blame for it – because he has become inwardly estranged from his father, he has been living as one of his servants and not as his child. He has left unused the riches allotted to him by his father. **Norval Geldenhuys** *Luke* p.410

[21] [15:32] Let us observe the difference between the way in which the elder brother and the father speak of the prodigal son. The elder brother says, "this thy son," as if he was not his own brother. The father says, "this thy brother," to remind him of his relationship. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p.195

[22] Some years ago I heard my friend Samuel Chadwick, say something about this story, with which I am going to close this meditation. When he rose to preach, he said, "I am going to preach on the third Son in the parable of the prodigal son." Then he showed the two, the younger breaking his father's heart, and the elder out of sympathy with his father's heart. Then he said: "Isn't there another Son? Yes there is. He is the Man Who was uttering the parable. He was God's Son, His ideal Son on the human level. He never broke God's heart with His sin, but He was so in sympathy with God's heart that He died to save sinners." That is the third Son of the parable of the prodigal! **G. Campbell Morgan** *Luke* p.184

## Is Jesus Calvinist or Arminian?

[23] In the first two [parables], that which is lost, is sought. In the last one, that which is lost, seeks. The shepherd sought his sheep. The woman sought the silver. The father did not seek the son. The son sought his father. Thus within the sweep of the parable Calvinists and Arminians find their place. Calvinists, in the fine sense of the word, will put their chief emphasis on the first two phases. They had to be sought. They are quite right. But the Arminians will insist that there was nothing done for the boy until he sought his father, and came home. They are quite

right. It is all here. Someone says he cannot square these things. No, you cannot square a circle. The first movement is from God. That is perfectly true; but man will never get the value of that movement until he seek. Divine sovereignty and human free will. We cannot square them. No, we never shall. The arcs constitute a circle, and the Lord sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and upon the circle of every metaphysical problem we are facing. **G. Campbell Morgan** *Luke* p.181