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PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

By: Dr. C. D. Cole

I do not know why this is popularly called the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Most sermons ignore the elder brother altogether or say little about him. But I am sure Christ told this parable to focus attention on the elder brother. This will be plain when we notice:

THE OCCASION OF THE PARABLE

Luke 15:1, 2, *“Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.”* The Pharisees and scribes were murmuring as if to say, a man is known by the company he keeps; so there can't be much to Jesus. And so Christ told this three-fold parable to draw attention to the way the Pharisees were acting.

They were acting unnatural and unreasonable. Verse 3, *“And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.*

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.” Verse 8, *“Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.”*

They were not acting like God does. When God sees a sinner repent, He rejoices. Verse 10, *“Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.”* These Pharisees were not acting sensibly nor heavenly. They were putting sheep and silver before the welfare of a human soul.

PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

It is the simplicity and beautiful story of a man who had two sons. The younger became dissatisfied with home life. He did not like the father's restrictions. He wanted to be his own boss and live

his own life. And to do this he asked for his part of the estate. And when he received it he gathered it all up and went away from home; he went in the far country. And for awhile he had a good time. There is pleasure in sin for a season. Sin is a pleasant thing while it is being committed; else one would never sin. It is the after effects that make sin so unbearable. It is the morning-after taste that makes one wish he had not done the thing. In the far country he wasted his substance in riotous living; in having a good time. He finally lost all; he reached the bottom and became desperate. Look at him: away from home where there was a warm bed and plenty to eat; he is now in a far country where there is nothing; no friends, no food, no love, and in rags. In his desperation he hires himself out to feed hogs; the most shameful occupation to a Jew. He tried to satisfy his hunger with the food hogs eat, but hog food is not for human beings, and he finds no relief. He came to himself, he began to realize what he had done and how foolishly he had acted. He reversed his senses and said, why the servants back home have

enough bread and some to spare and here I am dying with hunger. And so he says to himself I am going back home and take the consequences. I am going to say to my father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am no longer worthy to be called thy son. I am willing to take the place of a hired servant. Just anything to be back home. He carried this plan out; he arose and went. And while he was still a great way off, his father saw him and pitied him in his rags and ran to meet him and fell on his neck and kissed him. The father must have been looking down that road day and night. The boy began his speech but did not get to finish it. He must have practiced on it all the way back home. He did get to make his confession. He said, father I have sinned against heaven and in thy site and am no more worthy to be called thy son. And that was as far as he got; he did not get to say, just treat me like a hired servant. The father stopped him and called to the servants, saying, Get the best robe and put it on him and take these rags off; get a ring and put it on his finger; and oh look at his poor feet; bring shoes and put on his feet. And go out and kill the fatted calf, and let us have a happy time around this old place. For this my son was dead and is alive; he was lost and is found. And what a merry time they had.

Out in the field the older brother was at work. On his way to the house for dinner he hears music and dancing. And the first servant he sees he asks what is going on? What is all this ado about? And the servant says, Why thy brother has come home and your father is happy because he is safe and sound. We are having a big party to celebrate his return home.

Now look at this brother. He is angry and won't go in; he simply will not join the happy celebration. The father goes out and begs him to come in. He stays outside and lectures his father. He says, all these years I have worked hard and obeyed thy commandments. But you never made any fuss over me. You never gave me a kid that I might have a party with my friends. But now, that this thy son, he does not say, my brother; this thy son who has spent thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

TWO FOLD PICTURE

In this parable we have a two-fold picture. A picture of the Publicans and sinners in the immoral son and a picture of the Pharisee in the self-righteous son. Instead of rejoicing with the father and the rest of the household, the elder brother sulked and criticized.

In the second son we have illustrated two classes of sins: sins of the flesh and sins of the heart; sins of passion and sins of disposition.

The younger son represents the immoral class of people. He was self-willed, headstrong and disobedient. Morally he went to the bottom. His sins were social, the kind for which men and women are ostracized from polite society. The elder son represents the Pharisee in their sins of pride, jealousy, anger, and harsh judgment. Jesus treated sins of passion with pity. He did not condone or minimize such sins, but met them with mercy. The fallen woman whose accusers was about to stone her, was forgiven and sent away in peace. The younger brother who had wasted his wealth on harlots was welcomed with kisses, the best robe, shoes and a

ring. The hardest words Jesus ever uttered were spoken to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others. He called them hypocrites, whitewashed sepulchers, etc. And only a few of them were saved. Saul was an exception to the general rule. And he always spake of himself as the chief of sinners because in his self-righteousness he tried to destroy the church of Christ.

I have known men and women who were honest in business and popular in society; moral people in the eyes of the world, but who had a terrible temper and sour disposition, and full of envy. I heard of a man who was always throwing a fit at home, and one morning he left home in a rage over nothing much. And when he slammed the door and left mumbling incoherently, his little daughter who saw and heard it all said to the mother, "Mother, we made a terrible mistake when we married daddy, didn't we?"

In this parable there are really two prodigals; one was a prodigal away from home; the other a prodigal at home; one alienated from the father through sins of passion, the other alienated through sins of disposition and temper; one living on the husks of foolishness and the other living on the sour food of a sour and sullen mind.

The so called prodigal found his way to the father's home and heart in repentance and humility; the elder brother would not come in and refused to share in the joy of the father.

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TITHING

By: Dr. C. D. Cole

I Timothy 6:10, *“For the love of money is the root of all evil...”*

Paul tells Timothy that a bishop must not be greedy of filthy lucre. He warns Titus of false teachers who will teach false doctrines for filthy lucre’s sake.

One wonders if more sin has not been committed in the making and spending of money than in any other way. This must be the reason money is called filthy lucre. Money, in itself is not filthy, but it becomes filthy in the way it is acquired and spent.

Covetousness is a widespread sin, but it is an unconscious sin. It is a sin one never hears confessed. A Catholic priest said he had heard thousands of confessions, but never had any confessed to him the sin of covetousness. Is there anybody here who confesses that he is covetous?

CHURCH FINANCE

There are only five methods of church finance: tips, tricks, trash, taxes, and tithes. And every church member practices one of these methods. The tip plan is one in which a person occasionally gives to the church as a person might tip the waiter or red cap. But a person DOES not expect to pay for his meal with a mere tip to the waiter. The regular bill must be paid.

The trick plan is where the pastor uses all kinds of tricks to get his people to give. He might tell a sob story and get people to promise to give while crying. Or he might tell a funny story and get the folks to promise to give while tickled.

The trash method is when a church is financed by bazaars and ice cream suppers.

Some churches have been financed by the tax method. This is the way state churches are financed. One pays church taxes as he pays

school or road or some other tax.

This leaves only one other method, which is voluntary and purposeful tithing. II Corinthians 9:7, *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”*

Now when one gives according to purpose, he must decide what proportion of his income he will give. If he goes to the Bible to guide him, he will find that the tenth is the only proportion ever mentioned in the Bible.

ORIGIN OF THE TITHE

It was given before Moses, commenced by Abraham, continued by Jacob, commanded by Moses, commended by Christ. And who is to cancel it?

It may have begun with Abel. Genesis 4:1f.

TITHE NEGLECTED

It was neglected by Israel in the days of Malachi. Malachi 3:7-10, *“Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me, But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, If I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”*

Neglected by many today. If someone should say that the tithe is not for us today, I would call his

attention to I Corinthians 9:13, 14, *“Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”* Hebrews 7:1-10, *“For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.”*

TITHE PERVERTED

By the Pharisees. Matthew 23:23, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay*

tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”

CHRISTIANIZING THE TITHE

Someone has said that we need to Christianize the tithe. We do not tithe because Moses commanded it, but because Christ commended it. People under grace should do as much as the Jews did under law. They tithed in obedience to law; we should tithe because of love to Christ and His program. They tithed grudgingly; we should tithe cheerfully. Paul quoted Christ as saying, *“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”* Someone has said, *“Receiving is good enough for me.”*

The New Testament emphasizes stewardship rather than the tithe, because stewardship is larger than the tithe. Tithing has to do with money and possessions; stewardship has to do with personalty talent, time and all that I am. Tithing is only a part of stewardship.

I am glad that our churches are doing better by their pastors now than when I was in the pastorate. I can remember when churches did not properly care for their pastors. When Brother Billy Clark preached his last sermon of the year as pastor of one of our churches he said something like this, *“Brethren, if you meant to pay me anything this year, you are behind with my salary.”* It was said for the sake of preachers, Luke 10:7, *“...for the labourer is worthy of his hire...”*

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The one we call the prodigal took his place as a sinner and claimed nothing; the elder brother claimed everything. The prodigal who claimed nothing received much; the elder brother who claimed to be so good got nothing.

This parable illustrates the doctrine of repentance, which is only one side of the coin of conversion. This parable should help us understand what repentance is. It is a return to God in sorrow as a sinner, confessing sin and claiming nothing good as ground of acceptance. It has nothing to say about faith in Christ as the way to the father. It was meant to teach one thing, that salvation is for self-conscious sinners, and to be saved one must take the place of a sinner and claim nothing of merit.