

The Parable of the Prodigal Father

- *INPFSS*. Dear prdgl sons/dghtrs of gres Fr. Today we have before us in Gos what I consdr: my fav prbl. Some've called it greatest prbl J ever told. Called Prbl Prdgl Son. Don't know when got that name or how got that title. Wrđ prdgl not found anywhere in this text; but smwhr along line, wrđ prdgl just became assctd w/this prbl. Know what wrđ prdgl means? Pretty uncommon wrđ; we rarely use it; in fact, probly only time use it: when talkng re this prbl. Wrđ prdgl means be reckless w/wlth; make lavish prchss, extrvgnt expndtrs; spendng \$ like crazy. Good/bad sense: you're extrdnrly genrous or profoundly wasteful. Prdgl: giving away wlth, don't even care; complete oppst stingy – what wrđ prdgl means. And you can easily see how this yngr son cld be called prdgl – blew thru Fr's inhrtnc; wasted Fr's wlth. Good reason called prdgl son.
- Hwvr, this prbl: not re 1 son but 2 sons. 2nd half prbl: all re older son – one who was upset at dad for forgvng & welcmng back waywrd yngr bro. And even these 2 sons: not main chrctrs in this prbl. Main chrctr: fr – gres/compssnt fr who loves both his sons: waywrd/prdgl son & resentful/order son. So makes me think: this prbl not so much re runaway child, prdgl son. This prbl: re gracious fr, who is reckless w/love, lavish w/mrcy, extrvgnt w/forgvnss, gives grace like crazy – a fr you perhaps might even call prdgl.
- **Vs. 3, 11-13.** 1) Back then, didn't get inhrtnc before dad died; just didn't hap; not way thngs done. Still uncommn today; back then, unhrd of. 2) For son to ask fr for inhrtnc early = "Dad, to me you're as good as dead; care nthng re you; way more intrstd in \$ than you. Patntly waiting for you die, but just keep hangng on; don't want wait any more." 3) This inhrtnc: some currncy; but mainly land/cattle. So for son to later leave twñ w/wlth means must've qckly liqdtđ assets; must've promptly sold off his portion of fam farm, right after receiving it, while dad still living. This: same acreage fr'd plowd/plantd/harvstd entire life; now under new ownrshp, along w/lvstck. Like saying, "Dad, thanks for prprty; hope like new nghbrs." 4) **"Sqndrd wlth in wild living."** Young man, lot/\$, lot/immtrty, not lot/respsblty. And he just lets go: sex, booze, drgs, parties, older bro mentns prostrts; whtvr: just lets go. So let me ask: like this guy? Or want punch/face? J sets up prbl to make your bld boil, so that your inevtbl reactn to this fool: can't stnd him & don't feel bad when this haps:
- **Vs. 14-16.** 1) \$ gone; not just getting down there; all gone! 2) Famine; bad ecnmy; hard find job. 3) Jew. For Jew, most unclean/detstbl anml on planet: pig. Now only job can find: working with pig filth & pig food. 4) So hungry, pig food looks good. This: rock bottom; can hardly get worse than this.
- Not told how long living like this; but evntlly J: **vs. 17a.** Stop/tell: when in HS, in home cong, I: teen Bible class; we had lay leader in ch who tght. I remem we studied this prbl. Tchr used illstrtn I still remem to this very day. If you're a boxer, if box in boxing ring, and get punched so hard get knckd unconscious, what wrds we use for when regain consciousness, when wake up fr being knckd out? Say: "Come to." This son, who'd been knckd unconscious bec sin & wretchd effects his sin – we're told he "came to." **Vs. 17-20a.** And here, J tchng re repntnc. Repntnc: 2 thngs. 1) Coming to senses & seeing sin. Law/God always shows sin; smtms takes hitting rock bottom to see how badly broken God's law, how guilty actly are. 2) Coming to senses & turning to God. This guy makes no excuses; just turns to fr, begs for mercy, asks be one/slaves. That: repntnc – comng to senses when sins've knckd you unconscious; recognzng magnitude/guilt & begging God mercy.
- Now remem, this: prbl – one most imp prbls J ever told. And I think we miss point/prbl if fail see selves as this prdgl son. J tells this prbl in order show all/us how our sins've driven us away fr God. And maybe you can: relate to this prdgl son in very persnl way; think back, time in life, when you really did run off & let go; recall darker days/youth, days spent in wild living, dining w/pigs. Maybe in your hrt/hrts: ashmd of former lifestyle, bec know it was wrong; or present, bec know is! Or perhaps, right now, you: just beginning come to your senses. And even if your life's nvr been quite as dramtclly rebellious as this prdgl son's, J still wants us/all: to relate to this runaway renegade; to see how destitute lives are apart fr hvnly Fr; to know that we all have: sqndrd riches/God's grace, broken Fr's hrt, run away fr his embrace, and sinned vs God.
- But now fr steps in. **Vs. 20b, 22-24a.** Here's why J wants us relate to this prdgl son: wants us see love of our Prdgl Fr. Remem: prdgl means reckless w/wlth, extrvgnt w/spndng, freely givng, absltly oppst stingy. I think shld call this Prbl Prdgl Fr. Look at this extrvgnt grace, this recklss love. He's freely forgvng, absltly oppst stingy. This worthlss son desrvs nthng, receivs evthng. This fr shld've screamd at, punshd, forskn, disownd. Instd, runs to him – this eldrly/wlthy/dignfd noblmn w/property/servnts runs & embraces son that wishd him dead! Clothes him in finest clothes; kills fattnd calf (probly been reserving for very occsn). This: extrvgnt, outrageous, reckless grace. This: a Prdgl Fr. And this: our Fr! – fr who runs to runaways like us, clothes us w/Xp's rightsnss, celbrts in hvn over us. J wnts us relate prdgl son so can undrstnd outrageous grace Prdgl Fr.

- This: my fav prbl; one reason: how extrm it is! We have this: extrmly rebellious son; extrmly gracious father; and extrmly clear pic of God's extrm love for rebellious chldrn like you/me. And so, to ppl like you/me, this prbl simply screams: "You are the rebellious/prdgl child! But you have a gracious Prdgl Fr!"
- But so did older son. Haven't talkd at all re him yet. **Vs. 25-30.** 1) This part/prbl really tugs at sense/fairness; we think: "Know, he's got point! Why: runaway be rewardd, not faithful son. Not fair. What'd be fair: youngr son at least be treatd as 2nd class; older son at least be acknwdgd for faithflnss to fr." 2) J spoke to Phars. Remem intro: **vs. 1-2.** So J spoke this prbl to bunch older sons, to Phars who felt: their faithflnss to God shld at least be acknwdgd; these runaway tax collectrs shld at least be treatd as 2nd class. For J to teach that these prdgl were God's forgvn chldrn too – didn't seem fair. 3) Prbl told only in Lk; in Lk 15, "*Lost Ch of Bbl*," – not bec any parts missing, but bec contains 3 prbls re God rejoicing when lost are found. So in Lk 15: 1st, Prbl Lost Sheep (99 safe; 1 runs; shprd finds), "**In same way there'll be more rejoicng in hvn over 1 sinner who rpnts than over 99 righteous prsns who do not need repent**" (7). Then, Prbl Lost Coin (woman has 9 safe; 1 missing; cleans house to find), "**In same way... there is rejoicng in presnc/angels of God over 1 sinner who rpnts**" (10). Finly, Prbl Lost Son (who rebels vs fr, comes to senses, repents). So, this whole "*Lost Ch of Bbl*" is all re how God seeks/forgives lost sinners who repent.
- Older bro did not want fr seek/forgive lost bro who repentd. Phars did not want J seek/forgive lost tax collectrs who repentd. And if honest, deep down, part/us that dsn't want God seek/forgive lost sinners who repent either. Deep down, esp if Xian whole life, part/us that says: "I'm better they; I've worked for God/Fr my whole life; I'm a faithfl, lifelng Xian; & I deserve more than jonny-come-lately newbie Xians just comng to faith & joining ch now." Deep down, esp if Xian whole life, part/us that thinks just like: Phars; older bro.
- So to that part/us, God Prdgl Fr: **vs. 31.** Holds nthng back fr self-righteous son; and us either! "Evthng I have/own, all my love/grace/forgvnss, all/hvn itself – all yours. Always been yours & alwys will be; I'm alwys w/you." That's what our Prdgl Fr says to us, even when we resent his genersty to others. He's still: generous to us; reckless w/grace; lavish w/love – even when we are loveless. Still forgives & says **vs. 32.**
- And that's where prbl ends. We don't hear how older bro respndd. And maybe reason this is my fav prble: J leaves end/story up to us. Will we: rejoice when a young bro, who was lost, is found; celebrate like they do in hvn over 1 sinner rpnts & is forgvn by God? Or not? Will we: see in selves a prdgl/waywrd/runwy sinner who's sqndrd God's wth w/wild livng & deserves eat nthng but pig food; crawl back to God in repntnc & ask only we be his slaves? Or not? Will we put faith in our Prdgl Fr, who is reckless w/love, lavish w/mercy, extrvgnt w/forgvnss, gives grace like crazy – wthr we're acting like youngr/wastfl son or older/resentful son? Will we trust in our Prdgl Fr, who sent real Son JC to live/die/rise to save wrld, inclndg me, but not limitd to me? Will we embrace grace of hvnly Fr who truly is, in strict sense/word, prodigal? Or not?

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

¹Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ²But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³Then Jesus told them this parable: ¹¹"There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²²"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

²⁵"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

²⁸"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours [doesn't call bro] who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' ³¹"My son," the father said, "you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."