

# “Forgive Tell me about get started with wordness Illustrated In A Parable”

## Lesson 2

By

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**Text: Ephesians 4:31-32**

- 31 *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*
- 32 *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

**Luke 15:11-24**

*11 And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.*

### **Introduction:**

In our study last time we introduced the subject of forgiveness and titled that message “*Forgiveness is a Behavior Not an Emotion.*” However, we saw that the behavior of

genuine forgiveness does affect our emotions. Our study passage was Ephesians 4:31-32 in which we are instructed to “allow the Holy Spirit to put away **“pikria”** -bitter hatred, and **“orge”** -anger that has settled in the mind with a view to taking revenge, and **“thumos”** -a fierce outward manifestation of that anger, and **“krague”**-shouting in a verbal quarrel, and **“blasphemia”** -speech that is designed to injure. These are certainly emotionally based. And we are to participate with the Holy Spirit in becoming **“kind”** (Chraestoi) manifesting a proper orientation to grace, and become **“tenderhearted”** (eusplagch-noi) **“compassionate”** (emotional feeling in the gut.) However, the development of a proper orientation to grace is based on what we think, not what we feel. This transformation is to occur in our heart (right frontal lobe of the brain) not in our kidneys (the seat of our emotions.) So “Forgiveness is a Behavior not an Emotion” but will affect our emotions. Therefore the focus must be on what we think (believe) in order to control how we feel or act.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is an illustration of the various aspects associated with forgiveness. Jesus was fond of using parables in speaking to the multitudes. The word **“parable”** is a compound of two Greek words, **“para”** and **“bolae.”** **“Para”** is a Greek preposition meaning **“along side of”** and **“bolae”** is a Greek word meaning **“throw.”** A parable is an illustration that is thrown along beside a teaching to make the point of the teaching. The apostles asked Jesus why He taught in parables when some of the parables needed explaining. Jesus told them some of the things he taught were only for those who were truly believers and He took them aside on those occasions and taught them the meaning. (Matthew 13:10). Other parables, such as the Parable of the Prodigal Son had a level of teaching that even the unbelievers could understand. Jesus used this parable to teach forgiveness along with some other applications as well.

## I. The Cast of Characters In the Illustration:

Let’s look at the cast of characters in the illustration concerning forgiveness because all of them are a story of applicational principles within themselves.

The Father

Two Sons:

The Younger Son

The Older Son

The citizens of the “Far Country”

The Servants

This parable ministers its message to all the cast and we would do well to see just where we fit in the story.

The Father, in the parable represents God the Father and we are given an illustration of the doctrine of grace and the expression of that grace in respect to being **“kind” (chraestoi) - maintaining a proper orientation to grace.** What better example could we have than that of the Father. But, in addition to that we are given some insights into the emotional aspect of the father in his **“gut”** feeling of **“compassion” (eusplagchnoi).** These are anthropathism’s (human expression to illustrate divine

attributes.) We would do well to learn from the creator Himself that gut feeling of compassion for others.

The two sons reflect the two primary human responses in obedience and faithfulness. Well, let's look at the story....

Luke 15:11-24

**Verse 11:** *And he said, A certain man had two sons:* (As I stated, the two sons are representative of the two primary responses regarding obedience and faithfulness – two responses to right and wrong. We can identify with both responses at different times.)

**Verse 12:** *And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.* (This may seem a bit presumptuous on the part of the younger son to ask for his inheritance before the death of his father, but we must understand the Doctrine of Adoption to see the legitimacy of the request.)

### (The Doctrine of Adoption)

A cultural ceremony in which the fourteen-year-old son is initiated as an adult member of the family with the following rights and privileges:

- Right to Draw from the Family Account
- Right of Inheritance with a Portion Advanced
- Right of Marriage
- Right to Join Military
- Right of a Voice in Family and Civil Affairs

These five rights and privileges are representative of the five spiritual assets given to the believer at salvation as per Ephesians 1:5. This doctrine is addressed here in this parable granting the younger son the right to an advance on his inheritance. The ring given to the son when he returned is the access to the Family Account. In the Adoption ceremony the robe that marked the adolescent is exchanged for the “Toga Virilis” which identified him as an adult member of the family and upon his return the “Toga Virilis” is restored at the instruction of the father to affirm the identity of the son's position in the family has been restored.

**Verse 13:** *And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.* (God the Father has given us freewill and certain latitude to make choices. There are three aspects of God's Will -Directive, Permissive, and Over-ruling. In His “Directive Will” He reveals His plan for us and provides us with direction and resources. In His “Permissive Will” He allows us to make choices that are contrary to what He has designed for us but are within the parameters He is willing to allow. In His “Over-Ruling Will” He intervenes and simply prohibits our doing what we intend to do. God is sovereign and nothing happens apart from these aspects of His will, but He gives us

the right of choice within certain parameters. His Permissive Will is seen here in allowing the action of the younger son. Ah, But God's not through with him. God controls the circumstances that are related to our choices. Do you think it was just "bad luck" that things turned sour for the young man? God is the manipulator of all circumstances through His "Directive Will," His "Permissive Will," and His "Over-Ruling Will." We see that in what follows...

**Verse 14:** *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.* (God is not going to allow us to make bad choices without getting involved in the circumstances to direct us back into behavior that is more profitable for us. The young man "...*began to be in want.*" The Greek word here is "hu-steresis-thai" which means "to come up short" meaning "to be in need." You may notice the similarity with this word and our word hysteria – yeah, they are kin and we might get a little hysterical when we come up short. Look for God in the circumstances when you "come up short.")

#### (Doctrine of Divine Discipline)

Hebrews 12:5-11

*5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. 11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

The divine discipline is evident to us, but this guy is independent, He is a long way from home, so he is not "exercised thereby" and doesn't repent, he gets a job...

**Verse 15:** *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* (It seems to be part of our nature to deny the source of our problems and try to address a remedy ourselves, even if it is contrary to the principles of obedience and faithfulness. Swine are on the list of unclean animals that Jews were not to eat or have anything to do with. But the young man is in need of finances so why not, the job was available. It was almost like God "just dropped it in his lap.")

However, Ah, Yes! There is that pesky "however." We are not told about the salary arrangements, but we must remember, there was "...*a mighty famine in that land.*" However, whatever the salary arrangements where they were inadequate and the young man was hungry.

**Verse 16:** *And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.* (That word “*fain*” refers to an unsatisfactory desire. When we venture out on our own, things can look pretty bleak. Human attempts fail us when we are in that country between God’s Permissive Will and His Over-Ruling Will. Remember, He is the God of circumstances based on cause and effect. But it is when we evaluate our circumstances in light of what we understand of Bible Doctrine we come to ourselves as did the young man.

**Verse 17:** *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!* (Common sense and human reasoning can be the first step in correcting our behavior. “...*when he came to himself...*” is a reference to processing things logically he began to reason how much better things were at his father’s house and he came to a conclusion.)

**Verse 18:** *I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,* (He is on the right track now, restoration and forgiveness begin at confession. “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” I John 1:9

But then, he starts to get off track, the humility is fine, but the doctrine is inaccurate.

**Verse 19:** *And (I) am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.* (When we get out of fellowship our doctrine becomes distorted. “Once a son, always a son.” We are born into the family of God. It is a spiritual birth resulting in eternal life and disobedience or lack of faithfulness does not change that relationship, fellowship, Yes! But relationship, No! But the young man doesn’t just consider going back and confessing, He goes back to his father prepared to become a servant – at least his heart is in the right place.

**Verse 20:** *And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.* (Look at the reaction of the father, “...*when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him...*” We can go one better than that in our spiritual walk because on Father is omnipresent and sees us wherever we are, yet He waits for our return and confession. But notice that this display of compassion is based upon the return of the son not the words of a confession yet to be given.

Several things are worthy of our note here. First there is the father’s “*compassion*” that “gnawing in the gut” we looked at in our previous lesson. This is based on a proper orientation and manifestation of the basic concept of grace -a willingness to assume all the expense and responsibility of maintaining a relationship with someone. This parable is about forgiveness and grace but it is motivated by “*compassion.*”

“...*and fell upon his neck and kissed him...*” (This act itself testifies to restoration. Traditionally, the father’s last kiss would have been at the ceremony marking the

son's standing as an adult in the family. By kissing him upon his return, the father affirms that the son's rights and privileges have been restored.)

But the confession comes...

**Verse 21:** *And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* (No! I didn't interrupt the young man's confession. The father did. The young man confessed, but before he could add, "...make me a hired servant..." the father interrupted him and restored his rights of sonship.)

**Verse 22:** *But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:* (This refers back to the doctrine of adoption, or the placing of a son. As noted earlier, in that culture a ceremony was held when a young man turned fourteen to recognize him as an adult member of the family and to grant him five rights and privileges. During that ceremony, the robe of adolescence was removed and the "Toga Virilis," the robe of manhood, was placed on him to signify his standing in the household. Now that he has returned home, the young man is clothed once again in the "Toga Virilis." The robe publicly signifies the restoration of his rights and privileges.)

(Oh! But that is not all, the father calls for a "ring" to be placed on the son's hand. That ring gave him access to the family account. He had spent that which was his allotted portion, but he is back and once again has access to the family account-from pauper to riches he had been restored. But there is more, "...and shoes for his feet..." The custom of the day required the washing of the feet before putting the shoes on. This is a reference to the Doctrine of Foot-Washing based on Jesus washing the feet of his disciples as an illustration of confession of sin for restoration of fellowship. In the incident recorded in John 13:1-10, Jesus taught that if He doesn't wash our feet we are not able to share the benefits of our partnership with Him. Our means of washing our feet is I John 1:9 *"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just in order to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* The father instructs the servants to provide the son with shoes to enable his walk, welcome him home, and allow him to once again enjoy the benefits of the family partnership.)

**Verse 23:** *And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry.* These must have been Baptist because they can't "fellowship" without eating. I even pastored one Baptist bunch that came to a business meeting with their ice cream freezers packed and ready to be served from when, after failing in an attempt to vote me out, they heard a rumor that I was going to resign if we could not control the situation that night, and they came prepared to celebrate. I didn't disappoint them; I did resign that night along with every person in a position of leadership with the exception of one Sunday School Teacher who was also on one committee. Some forty of us resigned and they unpacked their freezers and began to *"be merry."*

But this was a genuine celebration as the father proclaimed...

**Verse 24:** *For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.* (The reference that this son *was dead, and is alive again* is a reference to temporal death – a believer out of fellowship positionally has eternal life, but is spoken of in scripture as “Temporal Death” because there is no fellowship and there is no production in the life of that believer. The father and the son were reunited “...*he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.*)

What a picture of genuine celebration and what an illustration of forgiveness. No questions asked, no conditions required – the father’s grace orientation in full view. The cleansing provided, the doctrine reaffirmed, the privileges restored, and genuine celebration.)

But not everybody celebrated that night...

**Luke 15:25-28**

*25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. 28 And He was angry and would not go in....*

What happened to the older son? Did he not hear the two commands we heard last week; Allow the Holy Spirit to remove all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking and participate with the Holy Spirit in becoming grace oriented, and compassionate.

I had a similar situation some years ago with a very fine Christian man. He was the music director of the church. We were having an “Old Fashioned Brush Arbor Revival” in the front yard of the Church. We dressed up in the wearing apparel of the 1800’s in an attempt to evangelize those who might stop by or even deliberately attend the services. On Friday night I preached on the prodigal son and one of our own prodigals, a man who had not been in church for more than a year passed by the church on the way to dinner with his wife. When he saw what was happening he stopped across the street and listened to the loudspeakers for a while, he even got out and sat on the trunk of his car for a while. Then he turned his car around to our side of the street and got out of the car and made it to one of the bales of straw that decorated the property just under the edge of the canopy. At the “Alter Call” he came forward with repentance and confession. Mike was an exceptional country gospel singer and in the rejoicing that followed the close of the service some folks asked me if I would have him bring his guitar the next night and sing. When I informed the music director that Mike would be singing as part of the Saturday night service, he became very angry and told me I would have to introduce him because he wouldn’t. He said, he comes back one night, and you let him sing.

There was no one in the congregation that was more dedicated and supportive of the church than this fine gentleman, our music director, a man generous to a fault, but he refused to accept our prodigal back into the fold. He had the same problem as the brother of the prodigal; he refused to treat our prodigal in grace and failed to have compassion for him. He refused to forgive him on the same basis God forgives us, because of the work of Christ. It was because of the sinlessness and substitutionary sacrifice of Christ that any of us are forgiven and likewise it should be because of the sinless substitutionary sacrifice of Christ we welcome home a prodigal even though his or her journey into a “far country” might have been more riotous than our own. We must remember sin is sin and while there may be more severe repercussions to the sins of some, the penalty is the same for the sin of all...

Yes! On that Saturday night I introduced our prodigal and welcomed him back and our fine gentleman, our music director, this man generous to a fault, remained out of fellowship because he judged a man by his actions instead of in the lens of grace. And, Yes! My sermon that Saturday night was “Unrequited Grace As Illustrated by the Prodigal’s Brother.”

That is where we will pick up next time....

Till then we are told in Ephesians 4:31-32, our series text:

*Allow all bitterness, and seething vengeful anger, and fierce expression of anger, and loud shouting quarelling, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And treat one another in grace, with gut wrenching compassion, forgiving one another, just as God because of Christ's action hath forgiven you.*

**But it all begins at Salvation:**

*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God...*

*The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life...*

*With the heart man believes unto righteousness...*

*But with the mouth confession is made unto salvation...*

*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!*

*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

**(Ephesians 4:32)**