

Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes

The Prodigal Problem Part 1

Scripture Readings Luke 15.11-32, 1 John 2.12-29.

We all probably have those in our family and friends who once made a profession of faith and happily walked in the way, took part in the local fellowship, but as days went by their zeal began to flag, their love grew cold, their commitment became spasmodic, and then their interest fell to zero. What is their state and how can we best encourage them to again walk with the Lord? This study introduces that theme.

First, know that those who have truly come to Jesus Christ are His.

We may have this confidence, we are saved by faith, by simply taking God at His word. He has promised to receive all those who come to Him, having accepted His offer of forgiveness for sin by the offering of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary, once for all, and simply taking Him at His word. This is saving faith. If you, dear reader, have any problem with this proposition, then read in your own Bible these few verses. John 1.12, John 3.16, Romans 8.5-11, Ephesians 2.1-10. Reaffirm your faith. Believe God. Accept His offer. Take Him at His word.

When this happens God forgives us of our sin He no longer sees us as sinners, but as those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ. This reconciliation is not an emotional experience of ours. It happens in His mind. See, 2 Corinthians 5.19, Ephesians 2.14, Colossians 1.19-22. When this happens, the Spirit of God takes possession of us as resident with the purpose of revealing in us the nature and character of Jesus Christ. Look up for example, John 14.16&17, John 14.20 & 15.5, John 17.22, Galatians 4.6, 1 Corinthians 2.9-12. When this happens we receive eternal life in Christ Jesus. 1 John 5.10-13, Romans 8.14-17, 2 Timothy 2.19. The word 'everlasting' used in John 3.15, and 'eternal' in John 3.16 are from the same Greek word meaning of 'indeterminate duration, without beginning or end'.

When this happens God accepts as His sons. This is true here and now,

but will be fully realised at the coming again of Jesus and believers dead and alive are gathered to meet Him. See 1 John 3.2, Romans 8.16-23, & 2 Corinthians 5.1-8.

This is just the beginning; but some falter in their walk with the Lord, and their heart grows cold. It seems that their life shows no evidence of that vital fellowship with their Lord. How can these things be?

Second, know that not all who once professed faith, have been really regenerated.

Therefore they are not children of God, even though they were part of a church or fellowship of believers, because they never were born again to begin with. 1 John 2.19. Read and think this passage through using this outline:

TRUE & FALSE CHRISTIANS.

First, this Message is for All. This is an extended metaphor, referring to our stage of Christian maturity.

Those new to faith. V12. Here the word for 'little children' is the same as in v1, a tender term of family relationship describing those whose sins are newly forgiven.

Those elders with years of experience. V13 The word 'known' infers knowledge gained by experience and it is in the perfect tense. This well rounded experience enables them to care for others.

Those victorious in service. V13. 'Overcome' is also in the perfect tense indicating a victory which is complete. The term 'wicked one' is literally 'the pernicious one', he who drags others in to his evil.

Those learning about God the Father. V13. The word for children in this verse is different to that in v12, here meaning 'one under discipline'.

Disciples. Especially the experienced and valiant. Amazingly,, these are to two classes at risk.V14.

First, the Appeal of the World.

Love for this world indicates a dead heart. V15. The word 'If' indicates a hypothetical case, which the perfect tense in the Greek grammar confirms. The love of the world is 'agape' love, (As in John 3.16) meaning a love of the heart for the object of love, and excludes all else. Philo: "It is impossible for love to the world to co-exist with love to God, as it is impossible for light and darkness to co-exist."

This world has a deadly appeal. V16. The Good News Bible paraphrases this verse, "Everything that belongs to the world- what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are so proud of, none of this comes from the Father, it all comes from the world". The 'world' is the 'kosmos', this earth of men with all its systems.

This world and all in it are dying. V17. The verb is passive which indicates that its systems are in deterioration. There is no future here.

Second, Some Were Against Christ;

The hour of opposition, V18. The words 'the last time': the original has no 'the' and must not be made to mean the great tribulation, See a similar usage in James 5.3, an hour when things culminate. Antichrists simply means all those against or denying Christ, The first reference is not to the character of 2 Thessalonians 2.3, we wrongly call 'the antichrist'. He is a pseudo-Christ as he takes the place of Christ. It

was their hour of trial at the hands of the world. This world is anti Christ. Some departed, because they never belonged. v19. Pulled by the world, pushed by persecution and without an anchor of anointing. It was a time of sifting and refining in the Church. 'They' here refers to the anti-christs who have come out against the Lord in their life choices.

Third, the Test for True Christians;

Those who are true will know what is right; V20&21. The word 'all' is nominative which means 'All believers know what is right because they are anointed with the Spirit of righteousness;' and not 'Believers are "know-alls"'

Here is the test of life and lip. V22&23., "Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ." NIV. That is the lie. That is the test. It does not come out well in any of the translations, but the Greek grammar makes this lie habitual in life, not than an isolated act.

Know this. We cannot live a lie. We will either live to the world and its appeal consistently, or live in harmony with the knowledge that God sent his Son to cleanse us of sin and redeem us from the evil that surrounds us in this world.

They will continue, V24. "But as for you, let ..." NASB is the correct rendering (Wuest). We have now finished with our hypothetical case and return to the condition of the true Christian.

They have eternal life, V25. The Holy Spirit will constrain them when tested, V26&27. This is anointing of the Holy Spirit at work. The Holy Spirit is in residence in the life of the believer.

Last, How True Christians Respond: Consistently. V28. Confidently. V29.

In our next study we consider the Christian who has been eclipsed from God. See verse 28.

Welcome

Glen Park Gospel Church

Lower Road, Eltham North

Sundays 10.30 am

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