

God's Joy, Our Joy

Luke 15:11-32

"The Prodigal Son" is another parable in Luke 15 through which Jesus points to God's joy over the salvation of the lost. We should keep in mind that Jesus is addressing the scribes and Pharisees (15:3) who were His constant adversaries. They tried to discredit Him by attacking Him for associating with the riffraff of Jewish society, the tax-collectors and sinners. That Jesus associated with Satan's people (as they viewed them) instead of God's people (as they viewed themselves) proved, they argued, that He could not be from God.

God's joy in forgiving repentant sinners is brought out in the story of the "prodigal son" by means of three shocking behaviors.

1. Shocking Rebellion, 11-19

- Explain why the younger son's behavior was shocking.
- What parallel is there between the younger brother's actions and those of the prophet Jonah (which were also shocking)? See Jonah 1:3a.
- Can you see a parallel between the son's change of attitude and that of Jonah? See Jonah, chapter 2.

2. Shocking Generosity, 20-24

- In what way was the father's reaction to his younger son shocking?
- What does the father's reaction tell us about God?
- Explain how the older son's attitude in verses 29 and 30 reeks of self-righteousness.
- Explain: "The truth is that the older brother was more profoundly and truly lost than his prodigal, immoral younger brother."

3. Shocking Cold-heartedness, 25-32

- Why is the older brother's behavior shocking?
- How does the older brother's behavior mirror the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees?
- Do you share God's joy in the recovery of lost sinners as reflected in the father's behavior? Why, why not?

Challenge: The Lord wants us to share His joy in reaching the lost. How can you fulfill this? (some suggestions are: pray specifically for the lost; learn how to share the Gospel; share the Gospel).