

The Prodigal: Seven Steps to Ruin

Introduction:

"A man who wanders from the way of understanding Will rest in the assembly of the dead" (Prov. 21:16)

1. [C] Luke 15:11-16. The Parable of the *Prodigal Son* is one of the most well-known parables in the Bible and with it some remarkable lessons. It has been credited for being the "gospel in the gospel."
2. [C, cl] It is actually a part of a triune parable with its part also consisting of three main characters.
3. It matters not what generation or time it is studied, its message vibrates deep in our heart's strings for anyone who has experienced like loss and at the same time, it lifts up the heart in joy and hope when what was lost and broken is found and restored.
4. Our approach is going to be a little different as we will be looking analytically at the sacred text as a staircase that descends into *ruin* and in the next lesson ascend into *restoration*.

Discussion:

I. [C] The first step of self-will (v. 12)

- A. What is the very first step that leads to apostasy from God but self-will? Keywords: "Father give me..."
 1. By Jewish law, the younger son would receive half of what the older son inherits (Deut. 21:17).
 2. What is outrageous is the fact that he asks for this when there is no indication of the father's failing health. The fact that he asked shows he has no concern with his father's welfare but only that of his own ambition. While the father can bequeath his possessions to his children, there is no justification for a child to ask for it. It illustrates that this son has no relationship with his father; he has no desire to be around his father, he has no love or respect for him. It kind of shows that he is already dead to his father and that he wishes his father were already dead to him! He has no use for his father, his house, or the values which his father holds. He, like some young people today, want to get away from values they were raised in to engage in a lifestyle that would not be approved.
 3. [cl] As a concise epitaph of this lesson, Paul explained to Timothy the root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:10). But even the love of money seems to be a symptom of a deep-seated issue—self-will, loving self (2 Tim. 3:1-4).
 4. Let me nail down a little peg while I am over the expression "last days."
 - a) Some envision this as some future time, even thousands of years from the time of this writing when society sinks into peril during some imagined seven year tribulation. Yet the *last days* were when the apostle was writing this letter.
 - b) [C, click x3] Note: present tense in 3:6, "for of this sort are those..." and "these also resist" (3:8). Because Timothy lived in these last days he must continue in the things which he learned (3:13, 14) even as we must also!
 - c) The last days are not *to come* but began with the Lord's descent (Heb. 1:2; 1 Jn. 2:18).
- B. The younger son was self-willed in that he adamantly wanted to be independent of the will of his father. R.C. Trench relates these words, "In a spiritual sense, this request is an expression of man's desire to be independent of God" (Parables of Our Lord, pp. 142-143).
 1. There is an often-asserted expression that we have heard or perhaps even said in characterizing a stubborn person as being "very independent and self-willed." The two terms are often tied together. Pride often blossoms in being independent of God. Eve's deceived notion of being "like God" was likely tied to a desire to know good and evil independent of God and perhaps tied to greater independence from the man (Gen. 3:5, 6, 16).

2. Being self-willed should never be equated as a quality of leadership. Such a trait is absolutely forbidden in overseers of the church (Titus 1:7). Have you thought about why? He must work with the other elders. Further, Christians are to mortify self-promotion (Matt. 16:24).
3. As Christians, we are to trust in daily dependence upon God, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). We are to follow the example of Christ, "I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me" (Jn. 5:30). This is the sin that begins prodigal on the pathway of ruin.

II. [C] The second step of selfishness (v. 12, 14a)

- A. "Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me." I want what falls to me. *Keywords* "give me the goods." Why does he want the goods? Because he wants to leave his father and he wants to do things that he cannot do while living with his father. He is driven by a purely selfish motive.
- B. By his self-will he opposes his father's will. This leads the boy to a subtle, but new low: selfishness. In being self-willed he wants to depart from his father's will. God's will is tightly packaged and stored in oblivion by those who are self-willed. But those who are selfish are obsessed with their own advantage or pleasure even at the expense of others. It was from a purely selfish motive that asked and spent all with no regard to how this hurt his father or anyone else.
- C. [cl] Webster gives two pretty good definitions of selfishness:
 1. *concerned excessively or exclusively with oneself: seeking or concentrating on one's own advantage, pleasure, or well-being without regard for others*
 2. *arising from concern with one's own welfare or advantage in disregard of others*
- D. Selfishness is an extension of self-centeredness. This is why it is inaccurate to assert that God is self-centered for it is out of His concern for others that He pities them even as a father would his son (Psa. 103:13). A father doesn't pity his son from self-centered or selfish motives.
- E. Pictures of self-centered and selfish people abound in Scripture.
 1. **Haman** "So Haman came in and the king said to him, 'What is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?' And Haman said to himself, 'Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?'" (Esth. 6:6). How self-centered is that?
 2. **Cain** "...Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9).
 3. **The thieves, Priest and Levite** worked strictly from pure selfishness (Lk. 10:30-32).
- F. As people of God are to seek out the welfare of others (Phil. 2:19-21; 2:3, 4). Such cuts against the grain of selfishness.

III. [C] The third step of separation (v. 13)

- A. The young man left after "not many days later." The apostasy of the heart often heads the apostasy from life. This young man left his father's house and went into a far country. He didn't want to be close to home. It also tells us the character of the father in this parable: the young son knew he could not behave this way around his father.
- B. The father represents God in Christ. Men will not seek to do evil before God, but under the cloak of darkness (1 Thess. 5:7, 8; Jn. 3:19, 20).
- C. He is separating into the far county, a country where his father does not dwell and where righteousness is not observed. The *far country* is not *God's country*!
 1. "for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica..." (2 Tim. 4:10). Demas went into a "far country." He left the Lord's work to pursue the world.
 2. [C] A person's transgressions, if he is made to feel the effects of his separation from God, become a corrective measure to bring him back (Jer. 2:19). These painful unsheltered consequences the father allowed to help disable him from sin and save his son (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5).

Part 2 Note: Thank you; Last week, seek first, today, invite others into the kingdom. Review 2 charts, lesson on the Prodigal's fall. We will see where sin takes us.

IV. [cl] The fourth step of sensuality (v. 13, cf. understood by the older brother v. 30)

- A. He spends all that he has to get all that he can get. Perhaps he thinks a promiscuous life can fill in the void of leaving his former life. Some mistakenly run to drug use and sexual promiscuity as escapes from reality. They substitute for what should be a loving relationship with loveless indulgences.
- B. [cl] The word for "wasted" (NKJV) or "squandered" is a word that means to scatter like throwing grain in the air. "Then Jesus said to them, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered'" (Mk. 14:27).
- C. He wasted his father's hard-earned inheritance with "prodigal" (NKJV), "loose" (NAS) "reckless" (ESV) living.
 1. The Greek *noun* form of this word is found in three places in the New Testament (Eph. 5:18; 1 Pet. 4:4) and is defined as a compound word that joins the word "not" with a idea of "save." It is *not safe* living but *reckless* living.
 2. [cl] The elder in the church is not to have children *accused* of living such (Titus 1:6).
 3. Thayer speaks of such a person living an abandoned life that *cannot be saved, incorrigible* as a proper alternate expression. The father knew this son was irreformable, unable to be corrected, hardened, incurable.
- D. I mentioned that the older brother defined this as living a promiscuous immoral life and there is nothing in the text to deny this assertion (Lk. 15:30). Remember charges were made against Jesus by an apparent reception of tax collectors and sinners. The parable here is very similar to the parable in Matthew 21:28-32 where the application is made that tax collectors and harlots enter into the kingdom before these accusers would.
- E. It is also important to note, that sin's price is steep; it will take all that you have and not be satisfied. This son didn't just spend some but all (v. 14). It not only took all, but wanted more than he had.

V. [C] The fifth step of spiritual destitution (v. 14)

- A. What follows the spending spree is a famine! The well dries up. The worldly frolic fades into world-weariness. Once the bubble burst and the funds are dried up, the fun is gone and he finds himself "in want." He has not experienced this before. It is something that a child who departs from God must feel if he is going to be saved. Sin is so temporary and so expensive. That is the way sin is. Now hard reality has entered the picture.
- B. The sinner doesn't see his miserable state **for a time**. Sin is too attractive, and its demanding activities kept the prodigal preoccupied with the here and now. Its pleasures are blinding for the moment and it minimizes and thought or discussion or concern of a future torment.
 1. [cl] It takes wisdom to look through the pleasure and see sin's end (i.e. Moses, Heb. 11:24-26). He discovered that any reproach of Christ is better than any relationship or any amount of gold in Egypt.
 2. Moses' example is not a natural response to sin. Pure religion is not always what's *natural* (1 Cor. 2:14). Sin is often pleasurable. But more importantly, sin's pleasure is always passing!
 3. Spiritual destitution is the state of being without God. Spiritual delusion is losing God and thinking you have Him, starving in famine and yet feeling bloated; being naked and believing you are dressed (Rev. 3:17).

4. [cl] James uses four words that stand out to me, "Do not be deceived" (see Jas. 1:16). Do not be deceived thinking that you can journey to the far country and not pay a far-out price (Jas. 1:15).
5. [C] Spiritual destitution is being without three things all of which are interconnected (see 2 Chron. 15:2-4). They were destitute when they were without God, without a teaching priest, and without the law. We have all of these today in the New Testament church or we have none at all. It is either all or none. They stand and fall together.
 - a) [cl] First, in the church, we have law as Paul exhorted to walk worthy of your calling (Eph. 4:1; cf. 5:15-17; Col. 2:6, 7; 1 Cor. 9:21).
 - b) [cl] Second, we have a teaching priest (Eph. 2:14-17; 3:17ff). Jesus was not necessarily personally preaching, but indirectly through His ministers (Eph. 4:11).
 - c) [cl] Third, we have access to God (Eph. 2:18). Where we were once hopeless and without God, now we have access to Him (Eph. 2:12; contrast 3:13).

VI. [C] The sixth step of self-degradation (v. 15)

- A. Sin reduces a person to new lows. Yet many do not come to perceive the hole in which they have fallen. They refuse to soberly appraise their situation through what is real. Hogs are redefined as clean. Mire is no longer muddy. The food of hogs is now an alternative and enlightening option for your diet.
- B. Sin often mocks us and blinds us to our poor condition and decision making. This boy's decision to leave his father's house compelled him to become a servant of a pig farmer.
 1. Please understand, the point, we are not asserting that raising hogs is a sinful activity (my father raised some hogs and my step-grandfather had a very large operation raising hogs). This is a parable and to the Jew, hogs were unclean animals (Deut. 14:8). Gentiles would raise hogs, but Jews were not to join up with Gentiles! This is a picture, that to the original listeners, is shameful.
 2. [cl] The prodigal takes a *fall within a fall*. Instead of going back to his father, he tries to remedy his failed situation by "*attaching himself to one of the citizens of that country*" and adopting an occupation that would contradict his father's values.
 - a) Yet, the hideous stance of the son is evident to the outsider that a son of a Jewish nobleman chose to be a slave of a pig farmer!
 - b) To the Jewish listener, especially the Pharisee, this is a gross and nauseating situation. Gentiles are considered dogs and swine are repulsive. Pride and lust took this young Jewish man from riches to the most abhorrent rags imaginable!
 - c) Lesson: Sin doesn't enter into the door of your heart as a visitor but as a thief or even a landlord, to dominate your house so that you are the tenant rather than the ruler. *The one who ambitiously pursues to dominate the world's pleasures becomes the world's slave!*
- C. [cl] People do the same thing today. Rather than opening up the Bible and becoming a student of God's word, they pursue their own plans and their own substitutions to deal with their situation.
 1. Some cling to worldly pride which elevates their thinking to be better than the wisdom of God. They embrace human psychology, philosophy, worldly wisdom, to soothe their mind and stroke their ego.
 2. Others pursue worldly achievements and advancements to hide and obscure their own poverty. Even if they gain the whole world, they have gained nothing at all if they lose their own soul. "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?" (Lk. 9:25).

3. Like this young man, others join themselves to something foreign, to some citizen of a faraway country by choosing some foreign god or religion such as Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, the Bahai Faith, etc. Others pursue fake clones, cheap and unauthentic imitation-grade facades of Christianity offered in denominationalism. They don't see it as degrading from what is true and real. They don't value what is verifiable.
4. Others cling to excuses (as I've recently spoken on) to justify their working and living in unclean fields. In such a season, when the truth is presented to these, they lash out even as hogs and vicious dogs (Matt. 7:6).
- D. *"God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble"* (1 Pet. 5:5). What will it take then to get this young man to change his course? What will it take for him to humble himself?

VII. [cl] The seventh step of starvation (v. 16).

- A. Seeking the wrong satisfaction results in starvation. The food that beasts eat cannot satisfy the hunger of the soul. Someone once said, *"He who would not be ruled by God, is compelled to serve the devil—he who would not feed on the bread of angels, petitions for the husks of swine."*
- B. *"Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you. . ."* (Jn. 6:27; NAS). Is your soul starving?

Conclusion:

1. What's in your diet? You may already be in this final step and unaware?
2. [C] *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied"* (Matt. 5:6; NAS).

The Prodigal: Seven Steps to Restoration

Introduction:

1. [C] "He who follows righteousness and mercy finds life, righteousness, and honor" (Prov. 21:21).
2. [C] We left the prodigal son in the pit of ruin and starvation. Luke 15:17-24.
3. Now we are going to see him resurrect from ruin and climb the staircase back to his father.
4. The steps that the prodigal takes are steps that we must take if we fall away from the Lord of glory.

Discussion:

I. [C] Realization (15:17)

- A. Before anyone can ever change, they must recognize the state they are in and see it as God sees it.
- B. For the prodigal, he had to come to himself "senses" (NAS). Sin had taken him away from himself. It had transformed him into something unrecognizable to his upbringing, his name, his character, etc.
- C. It was in the unsheltered plains of darkness that light of the distance person he once was that began to shine and awaken his thinking.
 1. I've heard some say that they cannot separate from their wild children, that they must continue to do things with them in the hopes of saving them. If they do not spend time with them, then they will never come back to the Lord. It is exactly that wrong kind of thinking that keeps many sinners sheltered in sin and comfortable in famine. As long as they do not feel the want, they are enabled to camp in sin.
 2. The prodigal was away from his father, away from his father's protection and provision and that forced him to judge himself to return to himself.
 - a) Coming to himself instantly took his thoughts back home—to his father's house. Even those who were mere servants of that house had it better than he had.
 - b) The delusion of sin is now disappearing, and the true and sobering picture of reality begins to settle in.

II. [C] Resolution (15:18)

- A. "I will arise" are the words of an *iron will*. These are not empty utterances of weightless *New Years Resolutions* that so many speak of with vague generalities that lack dedication.
- B. [cl] Not "Someday I need to get back to my father's house."
 1. The word someday is an empty day. Your calendar is not filled with "someday" and you will never find "someday" on God's timeline. No "someday" on calander.
 2. Rather, we live in fixed actual days, hours and minutes. We exist in actual time. A resolution minus a *time constriction* equals an *irresolution*. As long as we say "someday" we mean "not today."
- C. 2 Corinthians 6:1, 2 speaks of times semantics and pragmatics. Time is to be filled with a planned pragma. "Now" gives the meaning for when we can work. *Today* is the day to work, not *tomorrow*. The Bible applies strict time constriction with duty (cf. Psa. 95:6, 7, today; Eph. 4:26, 27; 5:15ff; Jn. 9:4).

III. Repentance (15:18, 19)

- A. The prodigal's resolution was to repent. Repentance is a 180-degree turn. Rather than *leaving*, he is *returning*. Rather than being *self-willed*, he wants to *do his father's will*. Rather than *taking*, he wants his father to "make" him a servant. That is a radical change—"give me" versus "make me."
- B. Some people wrongly confuse sorrow, or knowledge of sins that were committed, or even feelings of guilt with repentance. This man was already sorrowful, he had already come to the sense of understanding he was wrong, but as of yet, he had not repented. His resolution is to repent. Until he fulfills his resolution, he has not repented.
- C. [C] Isaiah describes the condition of people who know but have not repented of sin (Isa. 59:2, 3, 9-12). The reason darkness remains is that they tried to create and define their own light (Isa. 5:20).
- [cl] Repentance is to forsake sin. Notice the shift of direction...*I will arise and go to my father.*
 - [cl] Repentance is to confess sin...*I have sinned* (missed the mark, without a share, wandered from). 1 Jn. 1:9.
 - [cl] Repentance is to adopt a change from the course of sin – *make me like one of your hired servants* (Lk. 15:19; Lk. 3:8-14).
- D. Paul told the Corinthians that "your sorrow led to repentance" (2 Cor. 7:9) and that "godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation" (2 Cor. 7:10).
- This is sorrow *not to be regretted* (2 Cor. 7:10). It is not the sorrow of the world that produces death. What is that kind of sorrow that is to be regretted and produces death?
 - It is a sorrow that I was caught. It is a sorrow of the consequences that I must face for my decisions (cf. Cain, Gen. 4:13, 14; sinners Rev. 16:11, 21, *the punishment is too heavy!*). Contrast Hab. 3:17-19.
 - It is a sorrow that the law is too hard on me. It is not sorrowing that I violated God's word, that I am separated from God, that I took something I had no right to, that I did something terrible, but that I have to suffer for getting exposed.
 - The prodigals sorrow lead to the action of wanting to be made a servant to repay.
 - [C] Living a prodigal life is to live a life that abandons God's ways and is abandoned by God (2 Chron. 15:2; Isa. 59:2). Recall that the noun form of prodigal means *against save, against safe, against well*. Yet repentance is rediscovering a life that can be saved and mended. David prayed, "LORD, be merciful to me; Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You" (Psa. 41:4).
- E. "...Against heaven and before you..."
- We need to see that all sin is against heaven and not minimize it to something that is only against a fellow man (read Ps. 51:3-4). How could David say this? What about Uriah?
 - Answer: Every relation in which man participates with his fellow created man is a manifestation of his fundamental relationship with his creator. What I do to someone in many ways reflects what I am doing to God (cf. Acts 9:4-5, cf. v. 2).
 - Sin is defined as "sin" because of who God is, not by how it makes me or someone else feel. As the Creator, He sets the rules for the created. Every law that is broken by man is therefore against the Lawgiver.
 - Sin is a transgression of God's law, choosing that which God doesn't delight in (1 Jn. 3:4; Is. 65:12).
 - "I am no longer worthy to be called your son" confesses he was not walking like a son.

Title chart, review chart [CX2]. We've seen people come to Christ. We've seen people leave. We've seen people leave and come back and some have left and have never come back. In the young son of our parable, we see a young man turn his back on his father, spend all his strength on sin, fall into starvation and return to his father broken by selfish pride in the hopes of becoming a hired servant. I am happy to be able to preach on a happy ending for this young son. We've seen many who don't have such a happy ending. Let's observe [C].

IV. [C] Return (15:20)

- A. Appreciate the follow-through—he arose and came to his father. He didn't sit in self-pity but returned. He is ready to "face the music" but the music he will face will beat his expectation!
- B. [cl] God promised Israel, "Return to Me, and I will return to you" says the LORD of hosts" (Mal. 3:7b).

V. [C] Reconcile (15:20, 21)

- A. The son no doubt hoped that he could come and become his father's servant, but the Lord sees the returning wanderer from a distance! "LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear" (Ps. 10:17). James 4:8, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. ..."
- B. The compassion of the father. When the father sees his son's return, he is filled with compassion, not *indifference* or *anger*. He doesn't retreat into his house and shut the door. God is described by the picture of this father. We can read out of this response that he experienced personal pain, heartache, and concern. His open reception defied the shame/honor culture of his day.
 1. Ps 86:5, "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You."
 2. Ps 86:15, "But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, Longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth."
 3. [cl] Ps 103:10, "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities."
 4. Ps 103:11-13, "For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him."
- C. What great lengths and great measures God has taken to reconcile sinners to Himself.
 1. [C] *Reconciliation is through His son (Heb. 2:17; Rom. 8:32, 33)*
 2. *Reconciliation is through the death of His Son (Rom. 5:6-11).*
 - a) This is one of the most profound passages that you will find describing the love of God. Recall that when one person of the Godhead acts, it is if all were acting (Jn. 10:30). In giving His Son, God is giving Himself for the weak, ungodly, sinners, and enemies.
 - b) He justified us (Rom. 5:1, 9). Here we are reconciled (Rom. 5:10). Where one is, the other must exist. The word for reconciled means to exchange hostility for friendship.
 - c) Paul has two separate acts in view: One, our reconciliation is through the Son's death and two, our salvation is through His life (v. 10). What does the latter mean? See the divine commentary → Heb. 7:24, 25.
 - d) Positively speaking, reconciliation is about establishing peace between two (Col. 1:20-22).
 3. *Reconciliation is through the ministry of the apostles (2 Cor. 5:18-21).* How important is it to continue in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42)?

4. *Reconciliation is in the body, the church of Christ (Eph. 2:16; 1:22, 23). Whose body? Christ's! Whose church? Christ's! He is the head of it. How important is the church?*

VI. [C] Re-clothed (15:22)

- A. The father calls for the *best robe (the chief, principal robe or outer garment that went to the feet of noblemen)*. When God forgives he removes the old garments of sins and replaces these with garments of honor: the best robe, a ring, and sandals. Remember, "He who follows righteousness and mercy Finds life, righteousness, and honor" (Prov. 21:21).
- B. Remember when Adam and Eve sinned, God did not spare life to cover them with a leather tunic (Gen. 3:21). Adam and Eve desperately needed that covering to stand before God and we do also.
- C. *The best robe that can be given suggests being made just (Job. 29:14), "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; My justice was like a robe and a turban."* The son didn't make himself right, but the father did. The son came to be a hired servant, but his father reinstated him as a son.
- D. [cl] *The ring* could convey that of a signet ring used to seal documents (i.e. Esth. 3:10, 12). This would suggest being welcomed back into the family and authenticated as a son (see Rev. 7:3).
- E. [cl] *The sandals*. Slaves and hired men were often barefoot, but masters and sons wore sandals. This is the work of God to the sinner who repents, to give him everything and reinstate him as a son in *undeserved forgiveness*. Forgiveness is always conditional, but it is also always undeserved. The Pharisees to whom Jesus is speaking this parable did understand this.

VII. [C] Rejoice (15:23, 24)

- A. The celebration is lavish, the fatted calf is killed. This would have been enough food to feed 200 people! The idea is that of throwing a party where all the neighbors in the surrounding region would have been invited (cf. Lk. 15:6, 9). Heaven is filled with joy when only one sinner repents (15:7). We ought to focus on the one also. Is there "one" sinner that you know who needs to come to Christ? Will you reach out to him or her in 2020?
- B. Verse 24 is the point of the chapter.
1. They began to be merry because they understood the dire situation the son was in: *dead and now alive; lost and now found*. This is the condition for every sinner who repents.
 2. Question: Have you contributed to heaven's joy or sadness? It is not engaging in recreational or humanitarian efforts that bring joy to heaven. It is not so much the pain, disease and physical suffering in the world that causes sorrow and deep concern in heaven. It is the spiritual disease of sin because it leads to a place of unending torment and anguish. Therefore, when one single solitary sinner repents and turns to God, heaven erupts in joy. That is the mission of the church.

Conclusion:

1. [C] Are you dead (Eph. 2:1)? Are you lost? Find your way back through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Come to eternal life that is found in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:6). John 6:37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."
2. Have you never been adopted into the family of God? Obey the gospel and be clothed with Christ today by being immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins (Gal. 3:26, 27).
3. Resolve to live faithful to His will (Col. 3:1). This is the story of the redeemed.

The Older Son (Lk. 15:25-32)

Introduction:

1. [C] We've been studying the prodigal son, but he is only one of three persons in this text. This rich piece of Scripture is about three personalities (the father and his two sons) and is part of a larger narrative that has two other pictures illustrating heaven's joy when what is lost is found.
2. Why are these pictures in Luke 15? I am not going to speak so much about the parable in this lesson, but what stems from it and what leads into it.

Discussion:

I. The Value of One

- A. [C] This entire parable should give us pause on how we view growth and what lies at the foundation of growth is a single sinner that turns to God.
 1. We find the *value of one* in these pictures by the joy that erupts in heaven following the rediscovery of one sinner.
 2. A tendency can exist to become fixated with great numbers measuring success by *how many people come to Jesus*. This is what led to various departures from the faith throughout time and to the formation of the megachurch in recent times with attraction-driven evangelism. Quantity is valued over quality. Quality gospel meetings are replaced with a gimmick filled gospel or some kind of seminar with more of an emotional or worldly appeal.
- B. [C] We should never forget that Jesus frequently spent time teaching one person (Nicodemus, Jn. 3; the Samaritan woman, Jn. 4; a crippled beggar, Jn. 5; a woman in adultery, Jn. 8; a blind man, Jn. 9; a demoniac, Mk. 5; a rich young ruler, Matt. 19:16ff; Zacchaeus, Lk. 19; etc., etc.).
 1. [C] There were many times when thousands upon thousands of people gathered to hear Him (Lk. 12:1; Matt. 4:25; 8:1, 18; 12:15; 13:2; etc.).
 2. [cl] Of the myriads that followed Jesus, when we enter the book of Acts, we find only 120 disciples (Acts 1:15). Why? Many of His disciples followed Him no more (Jn. 6:66).
- C. [C] After Jesus ascended, thousands were baptized on the day of Pentecost. However, my bible professor *quantitatively* speculated that over 100,000 Jewish men would have been in Jerusalem for this feast. Regardless, the book of *Acts* speaks *qualitatively* that these were not just Jews, but "devout Jews," (Acts 2:5). Of the thousands that left their homes to make the great journey to Jerusalem 3000 courageously took their stand with the apostles and the crucified Messiah. The number of male converts grew to 5000 (Acts 4:4).
- D. [cl] We read that growth is tied directly to the spreading of the word (Acts 6:7). Without spreading it, we cannot expect growth.
 1. But what is often taken for granted in initial growth and sustained growth is the will of the receiver. Without a receptive heart, preaching is like scattering seed on concrete which will not produce anything. God is always the power of growth as it is His seed that germinates and sprouts in the hearts of sinners who welcome it.
 2. [C] The Bible also forces the mature student to see a sobering picture that can disorient some.

- a) As we have seen in the life of Christ, so the Bible shows not only great moments of numerical growth but afterward the possibility of great apostasy (2 Tim. 1:15). This parallels John 6:66 where stubborn self-will dethrones Jesus from being the hearts.
- b) [c] Sadly, Asia is where the word of God once grew mightily and prevailed (Acts 19:20).
 - (1) Timothy experienced this growth working alongside Paul. It is the test of one's fortitude, not when it is popular, but in controversy, unpopularity, and departure is at hand. One either grows ashamed or remains true to the testimony and to the apostles (2 Tim. 1:8).
 - (2) The root of departure in the formation of denominationalism and apostate churches that are "of Christ" in name only is fundamentally tied to 2 Timothy 1:8.
 - (3) Are you willing to suffer when great numbers leave the Lord or will you meet occasions like this with Peter's view (Jn. 6:67, 68)? Likewise, how joyful and thankful are you when *only one* person repents and turns to the Lord? Do we take for granted the value of one sinner?

II. [C] The Prelude

- A. Now when I first entitled this lesson, I designated it "the 'good' son" with "good" being in quotes because we might be tempted to think of the older brother as the *good son* who stays at home, works the field, and doesn't squander his father's inheritance with ungodly living. Is he a "good son"?
- B. [C] What brought on this parable of pictures, what is the lead-in, *what is the parable's prelude*?
 - 1. Immediately, the Lord is defending Himself against false allegations (15:1, 2).
 - a) "Receive" (marg. *welcomes*. Definition: to admit, to accept as a companion).
 - b) "Sinners" a person devoted to sin. Some were redefining His mission joining in and approving the defiled lifestyles of lowlifes.
 - 2. [c] Some were defaming Him with the worst kind of charges.
 - a) Some insisted He was demon-possessed (Jn. 8:48).
 - b) When He cast out demons, others asserted that he operated through the power of the ruler of demons (Lk. 11:15).
 - 3. [cl, C] A history of adverse criticism (long before Luke 15).
 - a) They complained about Jesus associating with tax-collectors in Luke 5:29-32.
 - b) [c] He was questioned about fasting in Luke 5:33.
 - c) [c] His disciples were charged as Sabbath-breakers in Luke 6:2. His opponents also watched Him closely if He would heal on the Sabbath so that they might find a charge to make against Him (read, Lk. 6:6-11).
- C. [C] The prelude to this parable shows that His accusers are never pleased (Lk. 7:31-35).
 - 1. In the marketplace, men would look for work and all kinds of activity would be going on. Children would also be found reenacting adult scenarios. The Lord views His accusers like immature children who, though very young in age, arrogantly think they can set the tone and message for everyone to follow. What are you reenacting in your life, young man? Are you regurgitating the scenes of agitated adults over the righteous or are you practicing submission to the Lord?
 - 2. When they play the flute, neither Jesus nor John participated in their music. Their response: John has a demon...John's message was somber and accusatory, not comical or fun.

3. When they shifted and began to mourn, Jesus did not mourn with them. Their response: Jesus is a glutton, winebibber, a friend of sinners.
 - a) This was not a benign charge but one worthy of death (Deut. 21:20, 21). They falsely accused Jesus because of their blind prejudice against Him—you know, nothing good can come from Nazareth and surely not an uneducated carpenter.
 - b) [cl] Yet wisdom is justified in her children! There are those who are children of the envious critic who regurgitate dangerous and destructive criticisms and there are children of wisdom who have honest hearts and obey its teaching. Many heeded John and Jesus. These conversions, if you will, vindicated their work. But whose child are you?
 4. To the Pharisees, Jesus appears to be a lone wolf, a scribe who doesn't fit with their mold. He is a renegade that challenges their decisions, violates their traditions and breaks down the fences they have made against others. They are so repulsed with Jesus that they do not even refer to Him by name but rather "this Man" (Lk. 15:2; cf. the reviling of the blind man, Jn. 9:28, 29).
- D. [C] *Why the false allegations?*
1. His accusers are jealous of His success and are hypercritical of Him, seeking to find any accusation that they can affix upon Him. They will eventually crucify Jesus from envy (Matt. 27:18).
 2. [C] Solomon asked a thought-provoking question in Proverbs 27:4, "Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, But who is able to stand before jealousy?"
 3. What these Scriptures prove is that love and envy cannot coexist. One woman observed, "The battle against envy is about growing the kind of heart that rejoices over somebody else's party hat." That is an interesting observation as we get into the older brother who would not rejoice at his father's celebration but was angry and refused to enter the house. Imagine if his first response was "joy" like his father had?
 4. Envy cannot coexist with *love* or *joy* and therefore envy renders every man's tree barren of the fruit of the Spirit! Likewise, a tree that produces the fruit of the Spirit cannot envy others.
- E. [C] This triune parable has a purpose:
1. It is the Lord's defense and definition of His mission. Why did He come to earth? Why did He spend time with sinners? It was to search out and save (Lk. 19:10).
 2. The value of one soul.
 3. The lengths that God will go to forgive all kinds of sinners. Jesus is like the Shepherd who finds the wayward sheep. He is like the woman who searches the house for the lost coin. He is among the sinners, not to approve of their works, but to reclaim that which has wandered away! Yet the religious establishment then did not see themselves as lost, in need of a savior, in need of forgiveness (Lk. 18:9).
- F. In this final, but often ignored section, Jesus will stand his accusers up before His mirror that shows their apostasy of heart. Where the younger brother represents a Jew who wanders from God by external immoral acts, the elder son identifies the one who has religious works but has left the Lord in the heart (Matt. 15:8).
- G. [C] What has set up this final section from the parable itself?
1. *The outrageous request to take his inheritance and walk away with it.*

2. *The outrageous agreement of His father to grant that outrageous request* (that is how the listeners would have judged it).
 - a) He grants it because God will allow you to exercise free will in making outrageous decisions to journey as far as you can from His presence.
 - b) *God will not stop you from living a prodigal life, but He will not follow you there.* He will not provide for you while you are there and He will not approve of you while there.
 3. *The outrageous conduct of the son while away.* He lived an outrageously lawless life and squandered everything. He threw his fortune to the wind by living a life of wicked indulgences.
 - a) In such, the younger son practically threw away being an heir of Abraham. He traveled to a foreign land, lived as a foreigner, joined up with a foreigner, and worked as a slave for a pig farmer. The prodigal becomes so hungry that he is nearly ready to fight the hogs for their own feed. Everything about the prodigal is outrageous and would have made the Pharisees cringe. However, the prodigal returns to himself; he feels remorse and then resolves to return to his father if only to be a servant.
 4. *The outrageous reception by the father.* The Pharisees likely had the expectation that this wayward son would have done time for his rebellion and work as a slave to pay off the riches he squandered. He should do slave labor, be locked away in prison, or have some form of hard punishment placed upon him. However, the father shockingly had compassion for him, runs to his son, falls on his neck and kisses him. He quickly reinstates him as a son. He gives him the best robe, a signet ring, and sandals. The father's reception would have been despicable to the Pharisees and scribes. His celebration was of the best kind, the fatted calf! Yet this would have been judged as *ridiculous* and *reprehensible*.
- H. Now the Lord is directing the point to them in their abusive stance against Christ. They are the older son. We've walked with the prodigal. Are you ready to walk with the older son?

[Title chart] We've walked with the prodigal. Are you ready to walk with the older son? The younger son is a wild and unruly child who wanders from his father, runs to sin, wrecks his life, comes to his senses and repents. The key is that he repented in *word* in *deed* (see Luke 15:18, 19). He no longer was a "give me" (15:12) but a "make me a servant." The Father represents God in Christ who will not tolerate or associate with sin but will plead with sinners to come home and He is merciful and willing to forgive. Now the older son....where is he, who is he, what is he?

III. [C] In the field (15:25)

- A. Now we have noticed that the prodigal went to a far country. We referred to that as a far country of sin. But where is this son? *He is in the field*. It is important to see *where he is not*.
1. He is not in the house but in the field.
 2. He is not with his father but is also separated from him. He may be in his father's field, but his father is not with him.
 3. Further, the divide between him and his father is greater than often found for he was not invited to the celebration. No one came to him and said, "Your brother is back and your father is making a great feast." It is implied that the neighbors were invited (15:6, 9) but this son was somehow uninformed. Why? Because this son is also lost also.
- B. What does this mean?
1. [c] He works but does he love? The bible addresses different kinds of works.
 - a) [C] We read of *works of the flesh* that disbar one from entering the kingdom of heaven (Gal. 5:19).
 - b) We find the failure of *faith without works* in James 2:21-23.
 - c) We find the failure of *works without faith* in Romans 4:2-4. The same Spirit that wrote *James* also wrote *Romans*. Both writers appeal to the very same passage in Genesis 15:6. If Abraham could be justified by *works without faith*, he could boast. There were no grounds for him to boast before God. He knew that everything he received was given to him by God and strove to take out of the mouth of others any claim that they could say contributed to Abraham's wealth (Gen. 14:21-23). The works-salvation condemned in Scripture is not obedience, but boastful works, not of faith by grace, but viewed as works of merit that would somehow make God in debt to a person.
 - d) We find the recipe for success in faith working through love (Gal. 5:6).
 - (1) Faith must work, but it must be tied to love. One can work himself to death in the Father's field, but if it is without love for the Father and fellow man if it is done out of any personal ambition and not simply to please the Lord it is in vain (1 Cor. 13:1-3, notice, "love does not seek its own," v. 5).
 - (2) God's approved minister preaches the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). The love of God, truth, and fellow man, not self-glory.
 - C. [C] The older son lacked love for his father and brother. He represents those who trust in themselves and despise others (Lk. 18:9, 11). This led to an entitlement attitude that is incompatible with discipleship (Lk. 17:10.) He didn't love mercy, nor walk humbly before his father (Mic. 6:8).
 1. "Examine yourselves...Test yourselves" (2 Cor. 13:5).

2. The older son should challenge us to think soberly about self. Did he think more of himself than others? He viewed himself central to his father's estate. What about us? Paul called on some who had an inflated ego to reevaluate their thinking (Rom. 2:17-21a; 11:20, 21; 12:3, 4, 16)? Can brethren really behave this way? Yes. "If it were not for me this church would fold" was a real expression by one man to other men. Every member is equally needed for the health of the body. Even though the younger brother left, his vacancy cried out of his absence.
3. [c] The older son didn't have any interest or love for his younger brother. When he left, he exercised no effort to reach or restrain his brother. When he returned he demonstrated no joy. Yes, he had works; he abstained from immorality; he didn't waste his father's inheritance, but he didn't really love his father, he didn't love his brother.

IV. [C] Drawing near the house (15:25-27)

- A. *Both sons come home but for very different purposes.*
 1. One comes home to confess sin with a resolve to work as a hired servant. The broken is mended and lost one is found.
 2. The other comes home only to criticize and hold contempt. He has criticism for his father and for his brother. Where is the support, encouragement, and forgiveness? Where is the personal reflection of his own crimes?
- B. [C] As the older son draws near the house, he heard the music and dancing. The house is feasting and joyful. Outside the house, the environment is in stark contrast. The elder son is envious and angry (the Pharisees) didn't know how to celebrate over good (recall Lk. 6:10, 11; Matt. 21:15). These were valid reasons to rejoice (cf. Rom. 12:15).
 1. *Music* comes from the Greek word *symphōnia* (süm-fō-nē'-ä) where get *symphony*.
 2. *Dancing* is from the Greek word from which we get *chorus*. The dancing in this environment was not *sensual* nor was it mixed (men and women) but such dancing was strictly men forming a circle with clapping.¹ Using this to justify modern mixed dancing is a gross perversion of the text and the environment of where this dancing went on.
 3. The older brother is confused by these events and notice that he doesn't go inside the house.
 - a) He is not joyful. Why? He was never pained with what pained the father. Rather than running inside the house, he calls for a servant to ask what these things meant.
 - b) Here is a celebration that would have typically taken months to plan and is taking place on the spur of the moment without the older brother being consulted or even knowing what is going on. Why? He doesn't have a relationship with his father.
- C. [C] What did he learn from the servant boy (15:27)?
 1. [c] He learned that his brother returned home. How did he return, to repent and be made a servant? He was not lost and still lost. He was not still dead. But he is found, he is alive!
 2. [C] He learned the cause of the celebration was that the son was *safe and sound*. The expression "safe and sound" is an expression we use today. But here it is from a single word that means well. Go back ten chapters to Luke 5 in a similar context (5:31, 32, "well" versus "sick," calling sinners to repentance makes them well). You see, the emphasis is not on the bodily state as it is

¹ John MacArthur.

the spiritual. John uses this word in 3 Jn. 2. Would you welcome this prayer for yourself or your son/daughter?

3. [C] He learned that his father killed the fatted calf—which would have technically been the older son's calf (recall 15:12).

V. [C] Angry Over Good (15:28, 29)

- A. The Pharisees meet themselves...he became angry. According to the older son, this was outrageous, not joyful. Notice, he was angry (provoked and aroused to anger). What is he angry over?
 1. That his father would cause a celebration over such a lowlife's return. Criticizes father; no respect, cf. his address "Lo" versus "Father (v. 29, 21).
 2. That his father never threw any like feast for him for his years of service.
 3. The older son looked at the return of his immoral brother as something that should never garner any positive or emotional response. He didn't care about his condition of being restored, of being safe and sound! He deemed it as no cause for celebration. This rebel devoured his father's livelihood! He should be punished and placed into the position of a slave to work off his debt. The last thing that should be done for this rebel is to celebrate his return!
 - a) This reminds me of the serious offense it is to become angry with a brother without real justification (Matt. 5:22). Envy, jealousy, wanting to kill the messenger, etc. all stand in this.
 - b) It is ironic that earlier Jesus taught these people that the master of the house was angry with the original invitees who turned down the invitation with excuses to not come to the feast. The master sent his servants out to bring in the outcasts (Lk. 14:21). However here, we see the older son, angry when the outcast actually comes to the feast!
- B. Notice that he would not go in (cf. Matt. 21:31; 23:13).
 1. [C] CLARIFICATION:
 - a) The younger son was an outward rebel, who repented. He is not a person who partially repents today and expects brethren to receive him and give him a handout. Partial repentance and partial obedience are oxymorons and equal disobedience (1 Sam. 15:13, 14, 19, 22).
 - b) [cl] The older son is not the person who is faithful to the Lord's commandments and calls others to obey the word. Some have mistakenly used "pharisee" as a whipping post against gospel preachers who call people to fully trust and obey the Lord. The older son is an inward rebel (Matt. 23:27, 28).
 - c) [C] The older son is proud, pouting, hateful (cf. Jn. 15:18-25), jealous, disobedient, and holds contempt not only for his brother who is in the Father's house but for the father of the house! He may not be ruled by the lust of the flesh, but he is ruled by the pride of life. He seeks *self-promotion* and *self-honor* but not the approval nor the glorification of his father. He defines himself as righteous and doesn't see himself as wretched. He sees himself as not needing to repent (cf. Lk. 15:7). He was pretty much like Saul of old.
- C. [C] *This takes us to the point:* The older brother (the image of the Pharisees) does not understand nor respect divine grace.
 1. There is an appearance of being religious, there is a compass that can identify some wrong...outward and immoral wrong, but is blind to inner dross. Their insides are full of rot, hypocrisy, hatred, self-will, human tradition. They are zealous for their tradition but not for the

- will of the Father. They cannot fathom the forgiveness of a debt. They cannot conceive giving the prominent robe to a sinner that with contrition fully and faithfully repents.
2. To the Pharisee, your past defines your future. Your past is an inescapable written definition of your future's conclusion. It cannot be changed; it is scripted and cannot be altered. The Lord's view is that the sick can be mended. The Lord's view is to call sinners to repentance.
- D. [cl] Notice the father—his father came out and *pleaded* with him (Lk. 15:28). The noun form of this word is *paraclete* of whom the Holy Spirit is called in John 14:26 and is translated, *helper*. It means to beseech, admonish, to console, to call to one's side.
1. The father came out to the son to console and beseech him to come into the celebration.
 2. What love the father demonstrates! Remember when the prodigal came, the father ran to him. Here the father leaves the house to plead with his older son. He loves this son also and wants him in the house too.
 3. This is the picture of God in Christ pleading with self-righteous sinners to repent. But this son doesn't see himself in need of salvation. He sees only the injustice of his father. He is the one crying "foul!" or "it's not fair." Yet it should impress us that God initiates our salvation. He is the one who wants us to be saved (1 Jn. 4:19).
- E. The son is angry over good. Why? He represents some who are angry over God. Rather than discovering unmerited favor, he can only find inconsistency. Rather than the discovery of joy, he reaches for indignation.
1. Some hunt for excuses to not come into the house of God today. They stand outside angry with some accusation:
 - a) God is too hard. God is too distant. His word is too difficult.
 - b) His preachers are too educated or not educated enough.
 - c) The preaching is too complicated or too simple. The people are too cold, too hypocritical, too rich, too poor, too out of touch, etc.
 2. It is ignoring the Father's pleading. While God will plead, He will not push you into the house. You must love and respect Him enough to heed his pleading in spite of whatever perceived shortcomings you have of others. You must enter the house. Or perhaps in a reversed picture, you must open the door of your heart to let Jesus in to cure your tragedy in eternity (Rev. 3:20).
 3. [C and subsequent charts for verses on grace] God's grace brings a gift of salvation (Eph. 2:8). It appears to all men, *but the grace that reaches me is the grace that teaches me* (Tit. 2:11, 12). Grace is never separated from teaching! Grace works not through works that would make God in debt, but through works of faith such as baptism (Titus 3:4-7). To insult the Spirit of grace is to be like the older son and is to prove yourself worthy of divine vengeance (Heb. 10:29). Some were forsaking the assembling (10:25). We might say, they were refusing to come into the house! It is possible to come short of the grace (Heb. 13:9). Stay diligent and faithful.

Sermon Break

The Betrayal in Spirit and Deed (Lk. 15:29, 30).

[C] *The three personalities.* The younger son betrays his father in action but then returns in deed and in spirit. He was an *outward rebel*; he was a prodigal son who turned a productive son. The elder son's protest became a full-blown rebellion. He didn't betray his father so much by works as he does in spirit. He stayed home and worked but his heart was not in it. I label him a proud *inward rebel*. He became angry and refused to enter the house. His spirit of disdain stains the page and represents the disdain the Pharisees have for Christ. The father is God in Christ who seeks to reconcile sinners to Himself. [a future lesson could be designed around the father].

The older brother models:

- I. [C] *Disrespect for parents.* Proverbs 23:22, "Listen to your father who begot you, And do not despise your mother when she is old."
 - A. The older son in Luke 15 doesn't revere his father. "So he answered and said to his father..." This is answering back. It is back-talk. He is arguing with his father.
 - B. Next, he doesn't address him as a father, but rather, "Lo..." which means to *behold* and *consider*. It is like saying, "Look" in a way so as to get one you consider ignorant to open his eyes. He thinks he has the right and the place to school his father in something that his father is severely deficient in. Compare this to the words of his younger son after he came to his senses (15:18, 21).
 - C. [cl] Compare Ephesians 6:1-3. These are children who are old enough to understand what is written in Ephesians yet were still living at home (6:4). Primarily, Paul is addressing Christian children with Christian parents...obey your parents in the Lord. There is obviously a deep reverence for what is "in the Lord." He is the primary object of our obedience. What pleases Him is what is to please children (v. 1) and fathers (v. 4).
 - D. Having *humble respect* for the aged is tied to having a *fear* of God (Lev. 19:32). This doesn't mean that every aged individual lives an honorable life.
- II. [C] *Ingratitude. These many years I have been serving (as a slave to) you.*
 - A. He didn't see his inheritance as a *gift* but as *payment* for service. He didn't count his blessings. An appreciative heart cannot murmur. An unappreciative heart shows not gratitude. His response confesses that he had no delight in the work that he did. He met his tasks with resentment.
 - B. He had an external form of service but also held an inward contempt in the service. His inside was rotten while on the outside he looked the good son. This is once again a trait of those Pharisees that complained against Jesus (Matt. 23:27, 28).
 - C. [C] Notice the admonition from Jeremiah in Lamentations 3:39-41. Since the Lord is behind the calamity and the blessings (v. 38; cf. Eccl. 7:13, 14), there is no justification to complain. In such moments I should search out and examine my own ways for the predicament I face. Turn back to God and lift up not only *hands* but also *hearts* to heaven. This conveys simplicity/sincerity in prayer.
- III. [C] *Self-righteousness.* An amazing self-righteous statement, "I never transgressed your commandment at any time."
 - A. This is what self-righteousness looks like. It is judging myself as right by my self-made standard. It is the pursuit to justify self apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ (recall. Lk. 10:29).
 - B. A person is NOT self-righteous for condemning sin. That is the response by some against others. When they don't want to hear it, they discard it by saying, "He is so self-righteous." That is not what

self-righteous means. When a person preaches divine condemnation, that is not self-righteousness but God's righteousness (cf. Rom. 1:16-18).

- C. Self-righteous is proclaiming your own righteousness. The older son proclaimed his righteousness, he is a know-it-all, but ironically couldn't simply see what was right (15:32).

IV. [C] *Childish complaining.*

- A. Fatted calves and kid goats! Self-righteousness will often lead to the condemnation of God's righteousness! The *poor pitiful me* position charges God with being unfair (cf. Matt. 20:11-15).
- B. Here the older son finds fault with his father—you *never gave me a young goat*. I've slaved all these years and never got a kid goat. Your other son wastes away his inheritance and he gets the fatted calf! All the while he is blind that he is getting a double portion of his father's inheritance and blind to his brother's previous and current state.
- C. Childish complaints grow out of a self-centered life. They attack the father's actions. They place a child's thinking above his father's fairness. This is, in essence, saying, you killed the fatted calf for my scoundrel brother, but you would not even provide a young goat for my service. UNFAIR!! Think of it, he is actually implying that the father has sinned and needs to repent! It is not uncommon for envious sinners to attack God, but even His saints can fall into unproductive thinking.

1. [c] Psalm 73:13, 14.
2. [c] Jeremiah struggled with a similar complaint (Jer. 12:1-4). Do you know the Lord's immediate answer? See Jeremiah 12:5. An American expression would be, "Man Up!"

- D. The self-absorbed are often obsessed with what is "unfair."

1. Ezekiel reminded the house of Judah, in Ezekiel 18:25, "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair?"
2. Paul penned in Romans 9:14, "What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!" What is truly found right is always found in God. It will be a sorrowful scene for many on judgment for many who trusted in themselves rather than relying on the will of our Heavenly Father.
 - a) I can hear them say, "'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'" (Matt. 7:22). They claimed to have many great works, but they were not obedient works.
 - b) Can you hear the Lord's response? "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matt. 7:23). Remember it is he who does the will of the Father, not the one who claims so that is justified (Matt. 7:21).

V. [C] *Disownment.* This is the crown of his fall. Notice: *that I might make merry with my friends*. This is an admission of something. When he makes merry, he wants to make merry with his friends. This implies that his brother and his brother's friends are not his friends.

- A. Classic to the Pharisees was the positioning of being separatists. They took this to extremes. It was a bad policy to engage with outcasts (Lk. 14:12-14). It was even considered unlawful to keep company with a Gentile (Acts 10:28)!
- B. Now this older son disowns his brother who repented, and he disowns his father for being so merciful. It underscores that the Pharisees have no real relationship with God as the Father.
 1. [c X 2] This was the contention that Malachi took against many (Mal. 1:6).

2. Jesus had *made it plain* that they have no relationship with the Father (Jn. 8:19; 42-44, 47).
- C. [C] Bad religion is equally based on a system of an outward appearance but fails God.
 1. My relationship with the Father is based on a willingness to hear and obey Him (Matt. 7:21).
 2. Additionally, my relationship with Him is conditioned upon my relationship with brethren—see, for example, forgiveness (Matt. 6:14, 15).
- D. [C] *This son of yours* underscores his strong disavowal of both the father and his brother. Where the father sees the broken is mended, He can only see injustice. While he shows contempt for his brother, it is really his merciful father he holds in derision.
 1. *As soon...viz.,* without any delay, without any probation.
 2. *This son of yours...*an expression of great contempt. He didn't say "my brother" but your son...underscoring a striking separation from both his brother and his father.
 3. He *devoured your livelihood with harlots, and you killed the fatted calf for him.* The Pharisees in the Lord's audience would be in total agreement with this son. But more than that, they heaped scorn upon Jesus for His interaction with immoral sinners (cf. Lk. 7:39, note irony 7:29, 30).
 4. What the older son failed to see in his father is that *mercy triumphs over judgment* (Jas. 2:13).
 5. [C] He failed to see something else equally significant, all the property that His father owned was viewed by the father as inconsequential to having a penitent son that was now spiritually safe and sound. This is essentially what the entire parable underscores.

Conclusion:

1. So here is a man who has two sons. "Each resents his father and has no love for him. Each wants his share of his father's wealth and feels entitled to it. They take different approaches to get it. One asks for it and the other waits to get it, but each wants his share of the father's wealth. And each wants to do with it whatever he will with whomever he wishes. Each dishonors the father. Each insults the father. Each tries to live in separate worlds from the father, the younger son in a far country, the older son near the house...Each is loved by the father...Each is given the opportunity to receive the father's forgiveness and reconciliation. Each is given the opportunity to repent, be forgiven, enter into the full richness of a genuine relationship and full access to all the father's wealth. But they're different in some ways also. One was immoral, the other was moral. One was away, the other was near. One was publicly scorned and the other was publicly respected. The father reaches out in mercy and grace to both because they illustrate two kinds of sinners; the immoral and the moral, the irreligious and the religious, the blatant and the hypocrite."²
2. In the next lesson that I plan to preach, let Pilate ask my question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" Will you answer that today? What will your answer be?

² *Ibid.*



The Prodigal Son

Seven Steps to **Ruin**

Luke 15:11-16

Luke 15

(3)

Lost Son

Lk. 15:11-32

Lost And
Found

(1)
Lost
Sheep

Lk. 15:3-7

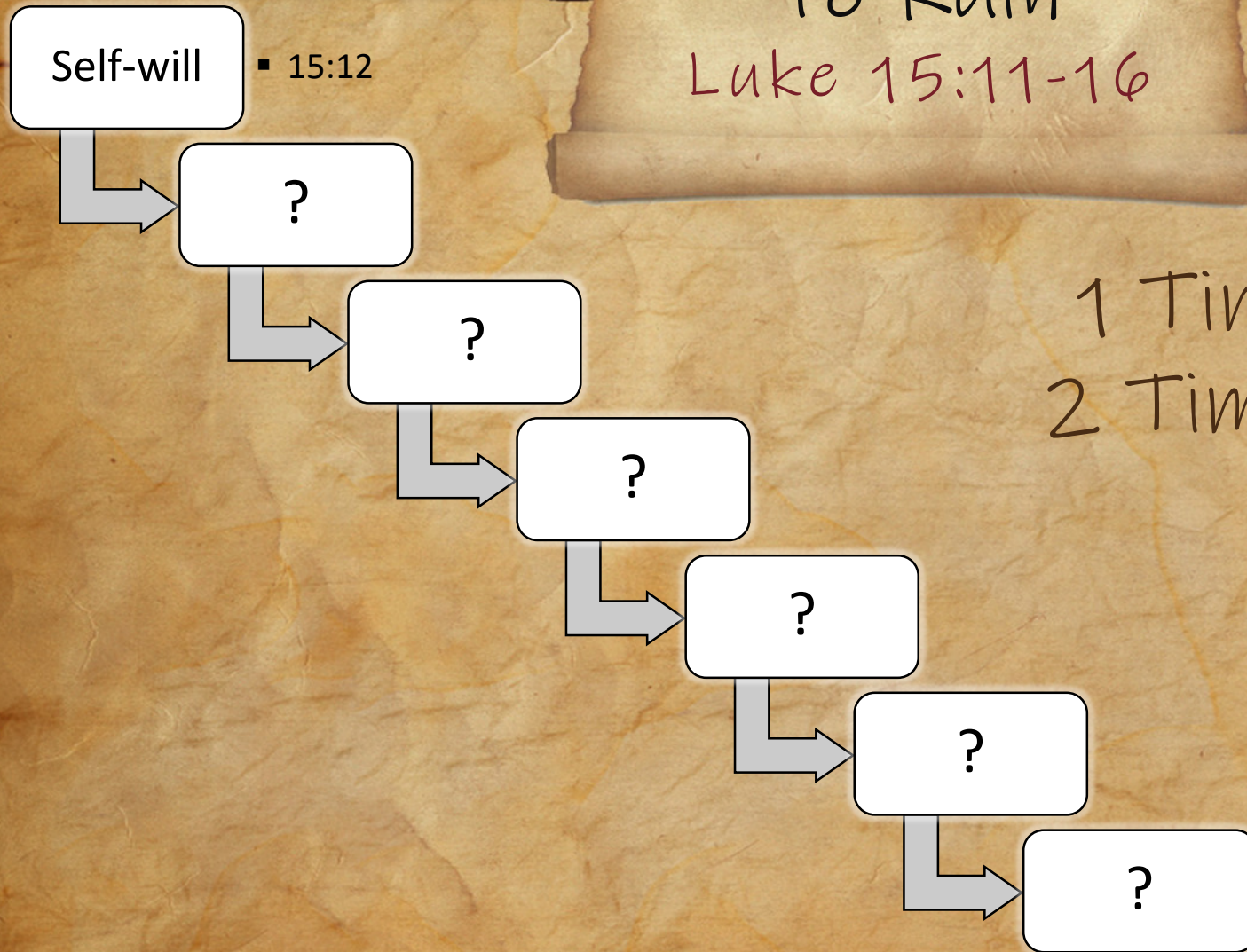
(2)
Lost
Coin

Lk. 15:8-10

lost son
1-the prodigal
2-the father
3-the older
brother

Seven Steps to Ruin

Luke 15:11-16



1 Timothy 6:10
2 Timothy 3:1-4

RUINED!

"last days"
2 Tim. 3:1



➤ "For of this sort are those who creep into households..."
(3:6)
present tense

➤ "Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith" (3:8)

➤ Why Timothy must continue... (3:13, 14)

➤ External: Heb. 2:1; 1 Jn. 2:18



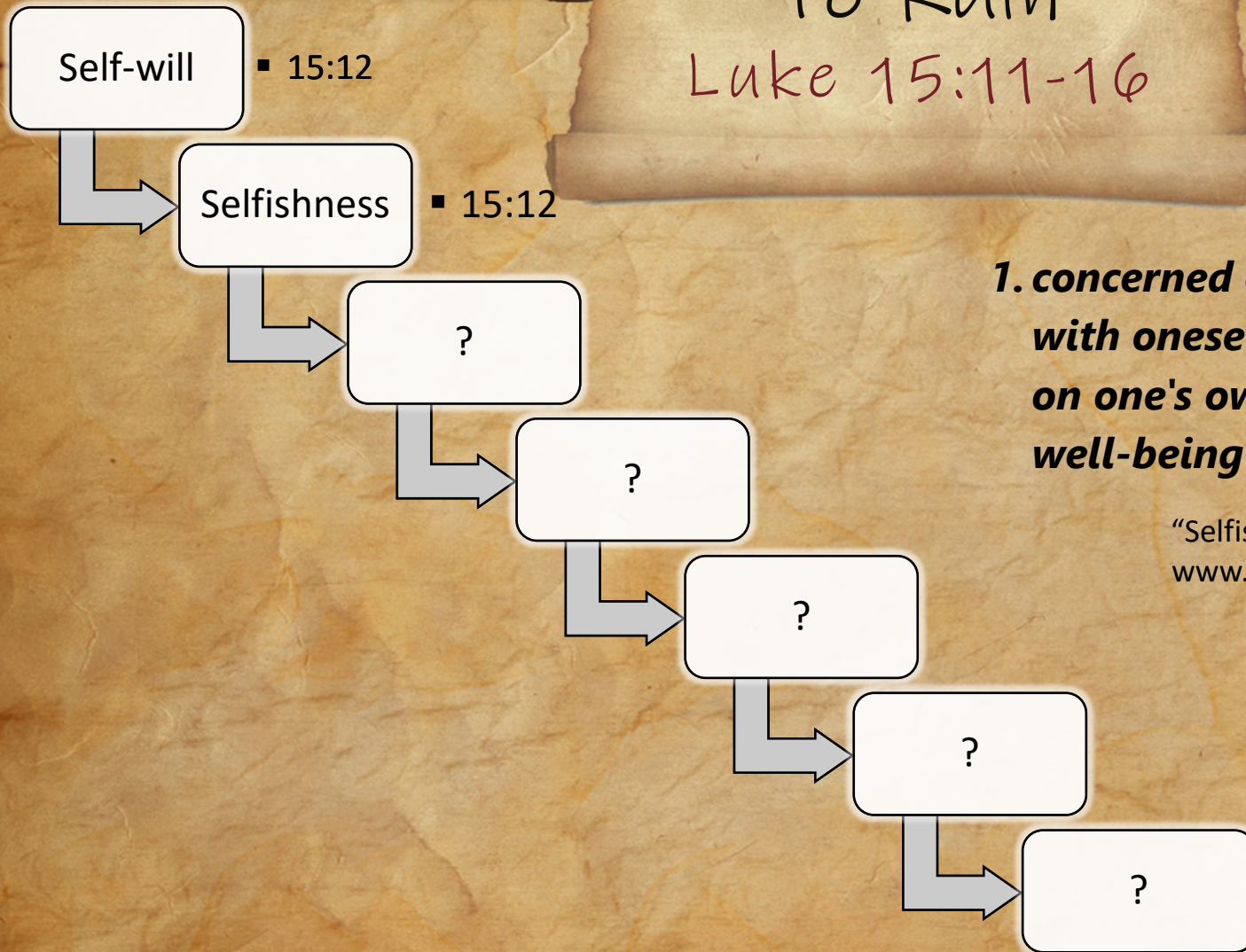
Self-willed

Independence

Genesis 3:5, 6, 16 | Titus 1:7

Seven Steps to Ruin

Luke 15:11-16



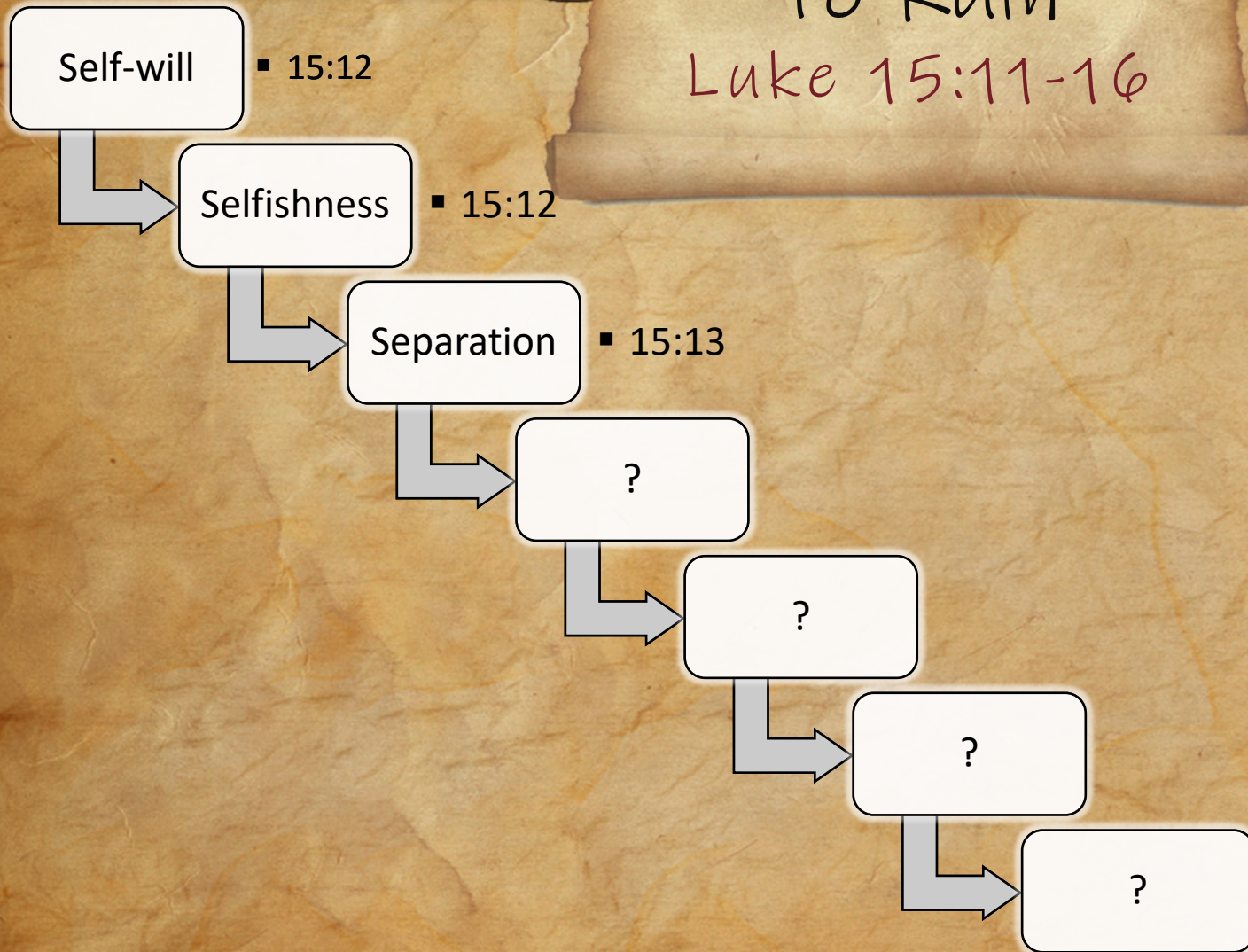
1. concerned excessively or exclusively with oneself : seeking or concentrating on one's own advantage, pleasure, or well-being without regard for others

“Selfish.” Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/selfish.

RUINED!

Seven Steps to Ruin

Luke 15:11-16



RUINED!

Jeremiah

2:19

"Your own wickedness will correct you, And your backslidings will rebuke you. Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing That you have forsaken the LORD your God, And the fear of Me is not in you," Says the Lord GOD of hosts."



The Prodigal Son

Seven Steps to **Ruin**

Luke 15:11-16

Luke 15

(3)

Lost Son

Lk. 15:11-32

Lost And
Found

(1)
Lost
Sheep

Lk. 15:3-7

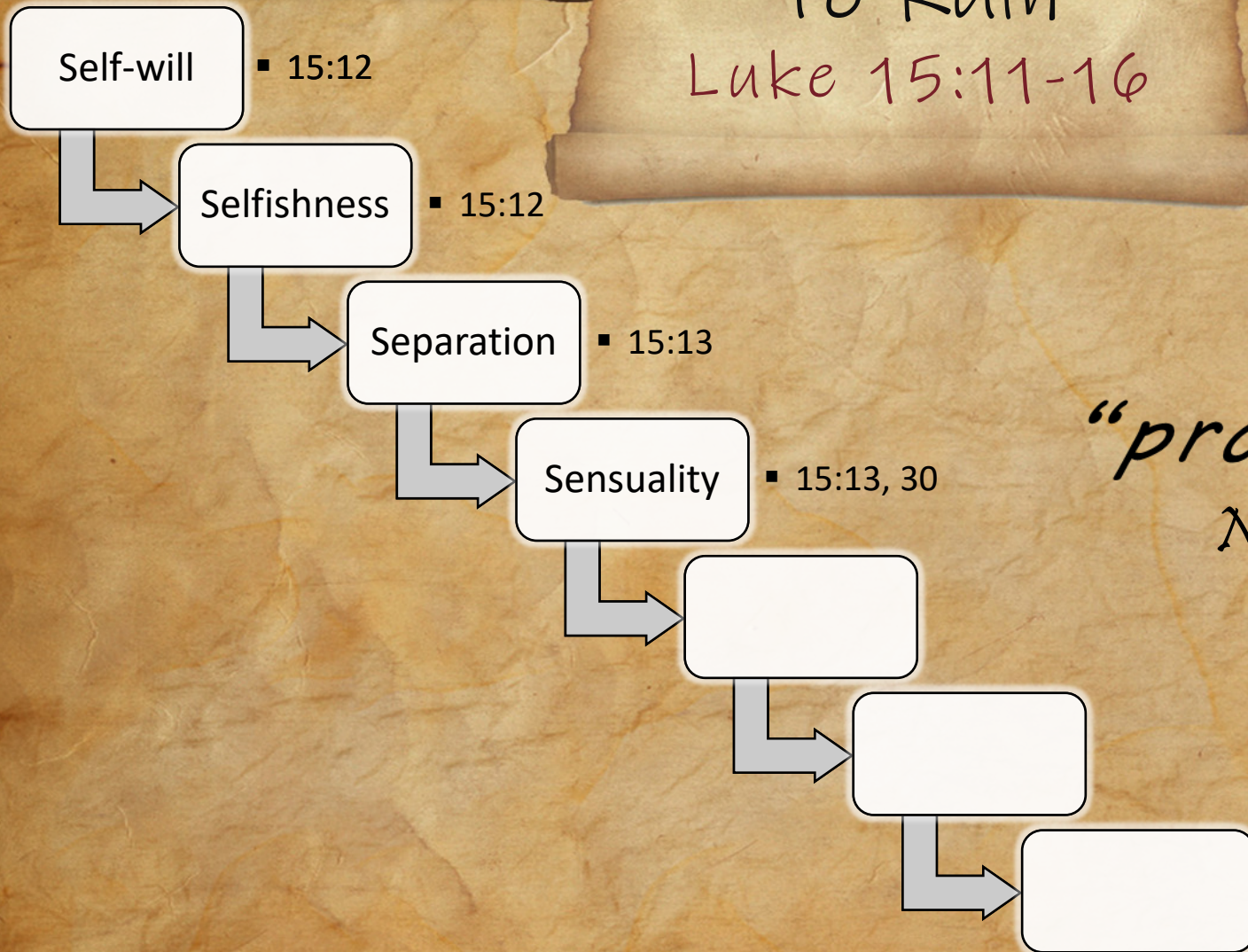
(2)
Lost
Coin

Lk. 15:8-10

lost son
1-the prodigal
2-the father
3-the older
brother

Seven Steps to Ruin

Luke 15:11-16



Mk. 14:27

“wasted”

“prodigal living”

Noun form: Titus 1:6

RUINED!

Seven Steps to Ruin

Luke 15:11-16



James 3:15, 16

Heb. 11:24-26

1 Cor. 2:14

Rev. 3:17

RUINED!

Spiritual Destitution

2 Chronicles 15:2-4
the loss of three

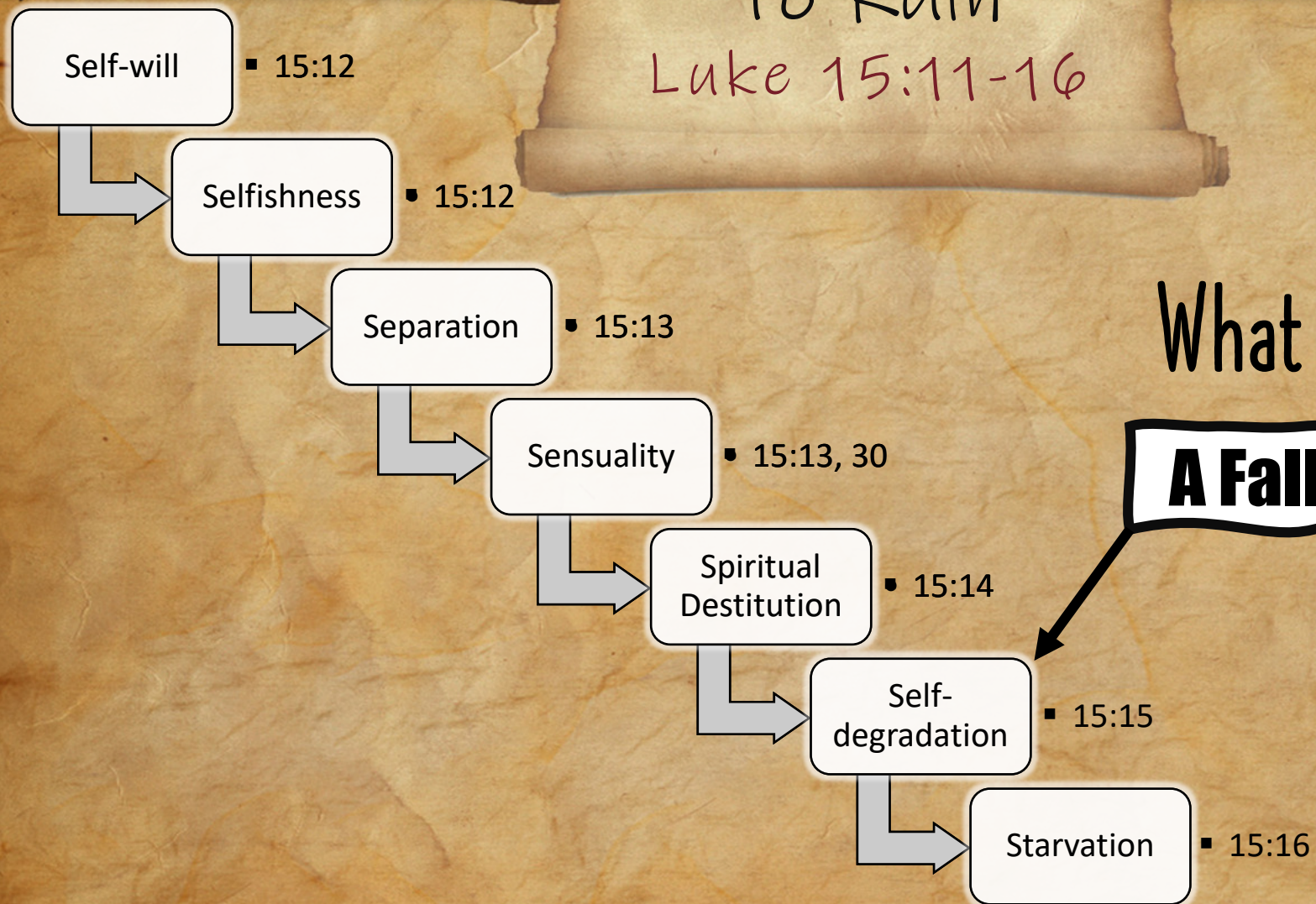
1. God
2. A teaching priest
3. The law

Securing Three Today

1. The law
Eph. 4:1; 5:15-17
2. A teaching Priest
Eph. 2:14-17; 3:17ff
3. Access to God
Eph. 2:18; 3:12

Seven Steps to Ruin

Luke 15:11-16



What About Today?

A Fall Within A Fall

RUINED!

Matt. 5:6 (NASB)

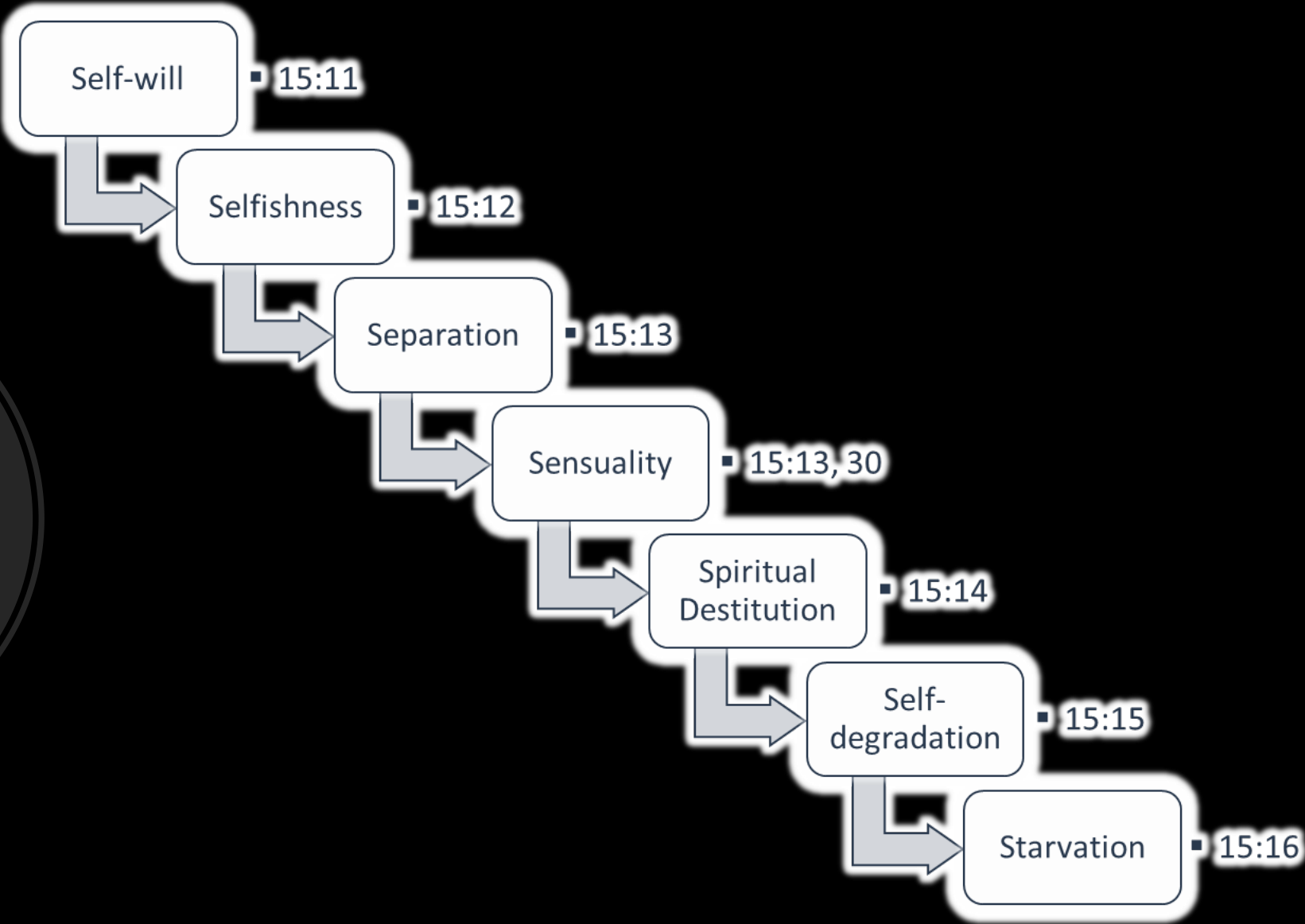
"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied"



The Prodigal Son

Seven Steps to
Restoration
Luke 15:17-24

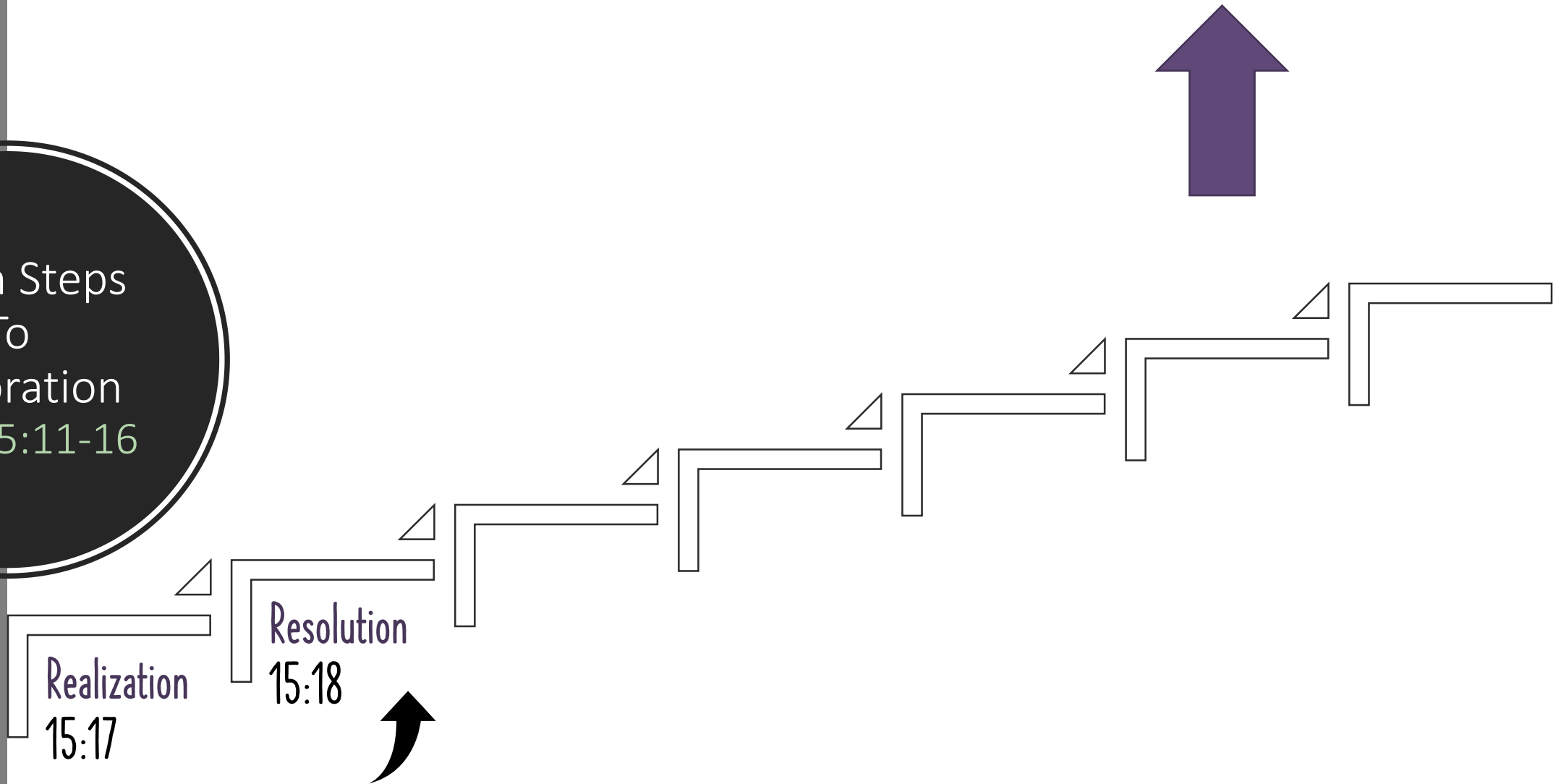
Seven Steps
To Ruin
Luke 15:11-16



RUIN!

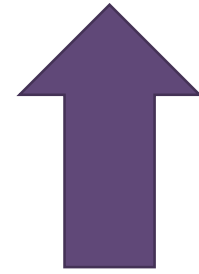
RESTORATION!

Seven Steps To Restoration Luke 15:11-16

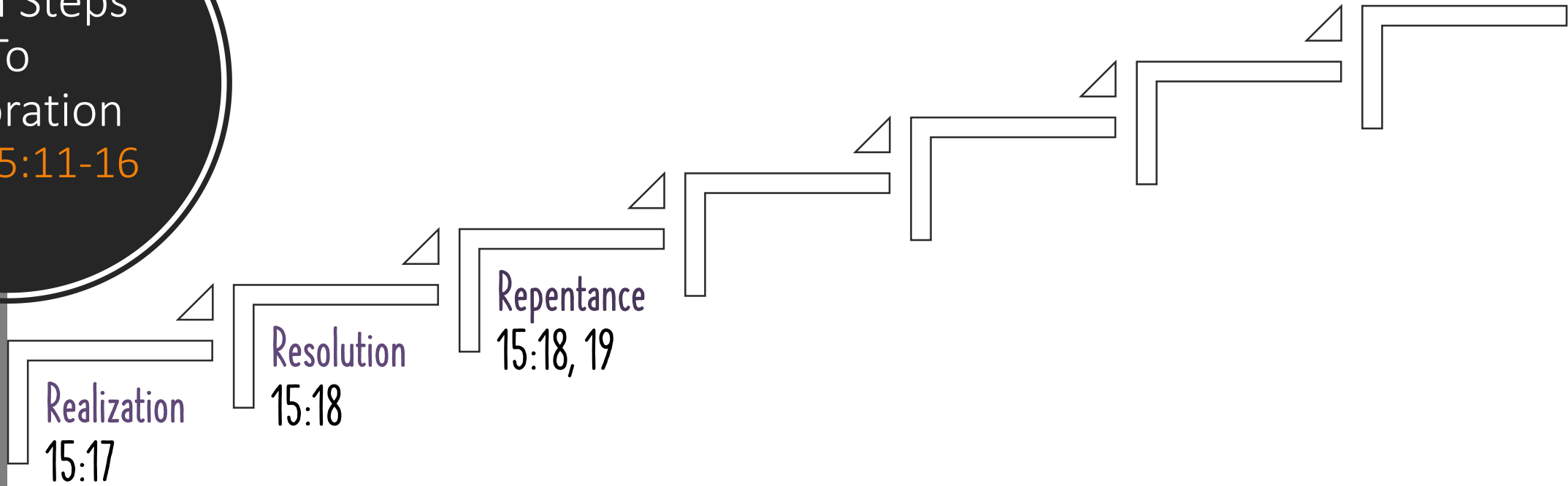


“I will arise” **VERSUS** “I will arise someday”

RESTORATION!



Seven Steps To Restoration Luke 15:11-16



Confusing Repentance

× Repentance ≠ feeling sorry or miserable

× Repentance ≠ limited to a knowledge of sin

× Repentance ≠ limited feelings of guilt



↳ forsakes sin

↳ Confesses sin

↳ Adopts change/bears fruit

Isa. 59:2-12

Matt. 27:3-5

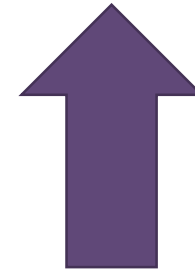
2 Cor 7:9, 10

Lk. 3:8-14



RESTORATION!

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you..."



Seven Steps
To
Restoration
Luke 15:11-16

Realization
15:17

Resolution
15:18

Repentance
15:18, 19

"LORD, be merciful to me; Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You" (Psa. 41:4).

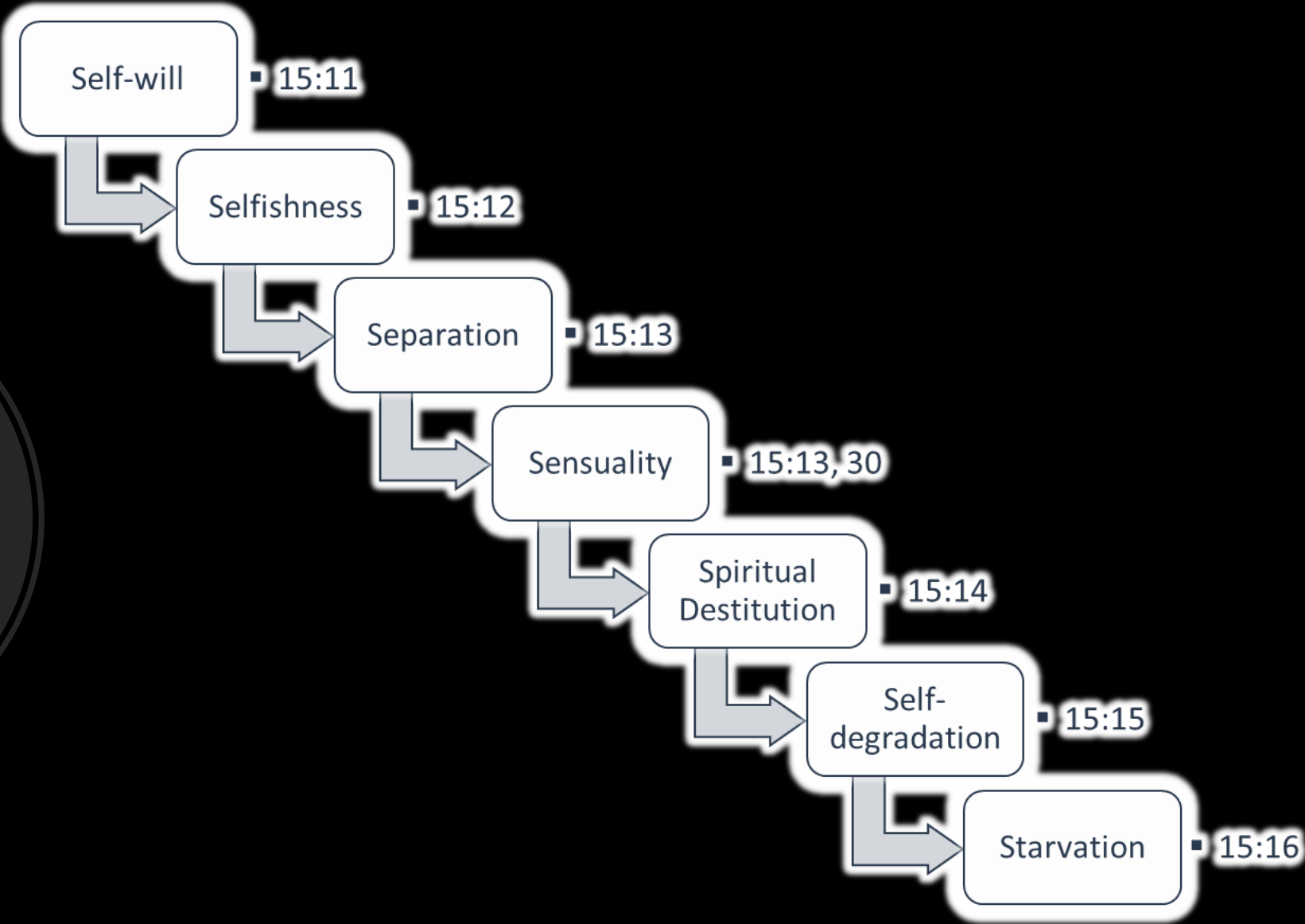


The Prodigal Son

Seven Steps to
Restoration

Luke 15:17-24

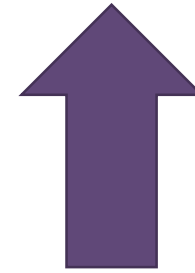
Seven Steps
To Ruin
Luke 15:11-16



RUIN!

RESTORATION!

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you..."



Seven Steps
To
Restoration
Luke 15:11-16

Realization
15:17

Resolution
15:18

"LORD, be merciful to me; Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You" (Psa. 41:4).

Repentance
15:18, 19

RESTORATION!

Malachi 3:7, “Yet from the days of your fathers You have gone away from My ordinances And have not kept [them]. Return to Me, and I will return to you...”

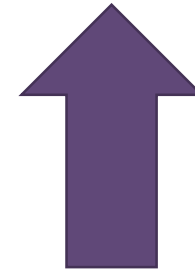
Seven Steps
To
Restoration
Luke 15:11-16

Realization
15:17

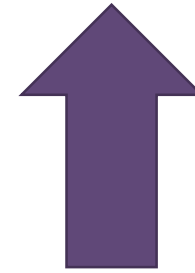
Resolution
15:18

Repentance
15:18, 19

Return
15:20



RESTORATION!



Ps 103:10, “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities.”



Realization
15:17

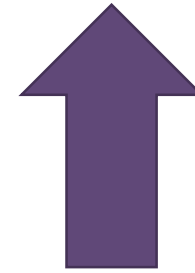
Resolution
15:18

Repentance
15:18, 19

Return
15:20

Reconcile
15:20, 21

RESTORATION!



Reconciliation Today:

- Through His Son
- Through His Son's death
- Through the ministry of the apostles
- In the Son's body, church



Realization
15:17

Resolution
15:18

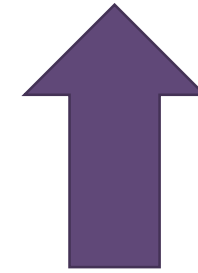
Repentance
15:18, 19

Return
15:20

Reconcile
15:20, 21

RESTORATION!

The best robe
The ring
The sandals



Seven Steps
To
Restoration
Luke 15:11-16

Realization
15:17

Resolution
15:18

Repentance
15:18, 19

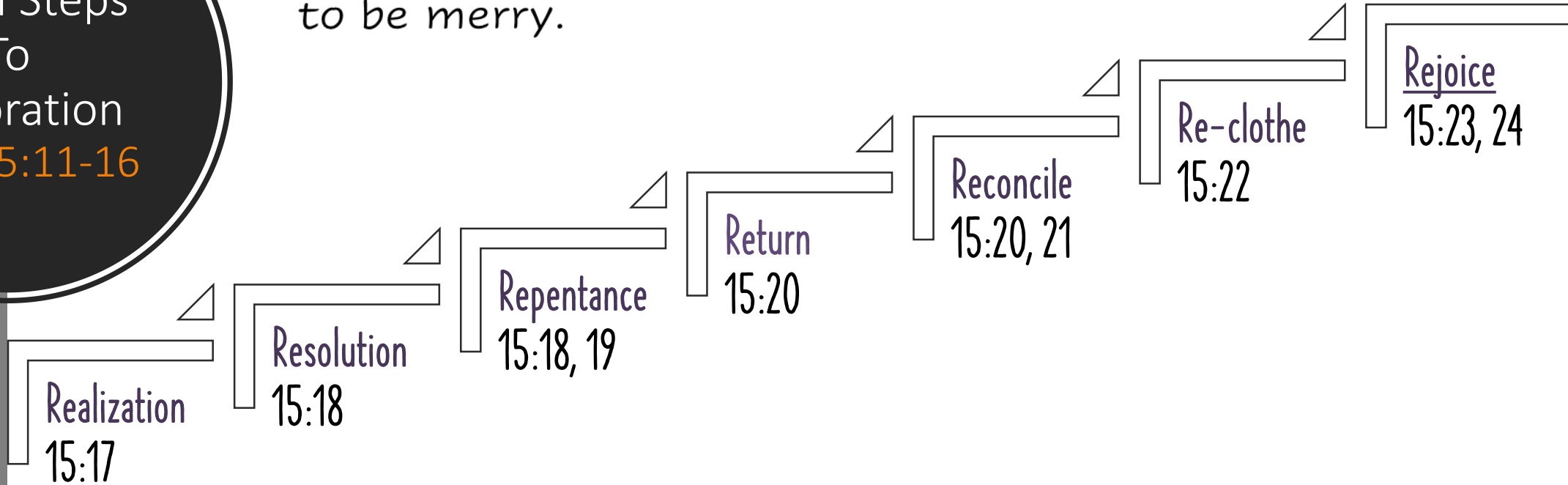
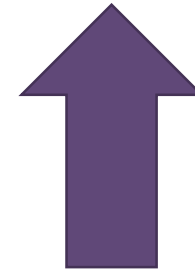
Return
15:20

Reconcile
15:20, 21

Re-clothe
15:22

RESTORATION!

23 'And bring the fattened calf here 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.



*"was dead
and is alive"*

Dead In Sin

- Eph. 2:1



Raised
With Him

- Eph. 2:6



Clothed

- Gal. 3:27



Continue
To Live For
Him

- Col. 3:1

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

THE GREAT VALUE OF ONE SOUL WHO IS LOST OR FOUND:

Luke 15:7, "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."



Jesus With One:

- A ruler, Nicodemus – Jn. 3
- A Samaritan woman – Jn. 4
- A crippled beggar – Jn. 5
- A woman caught in adultery – Jn. 8
- A blind man – Jn. 9
- Etc., etc.



Growth & Reduction During Christ's Ministry

LUKE 12:1

“In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, ‘Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.’”

JOHN 6:66

“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.”

“...(altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty)...”

Acts 1:15

Growth & Reduction After Christ's Ministry

ACTS 2:41; 4:4

“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about **three thousand** souls were added to them.”

“However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about **five thousand**.”

ACTS 6:7

“Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

Growth & Reduction After Christ's Ministry

ACTS 19:20

In Asia → “...the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.”

2 TIMOTHY 1:15

“This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.”

Matthew 7:14, “Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

THE PRELUDE TO

THE

OLDER

SON

Luke 15:25-32



THE PRELUDE

1. "Receives sinners"
2. Defamatory insults
3. A history of adverse criticism

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

THE PRELUDE

3. A history of adverse criticism

- Associates with tax-collectors (5:29–32)
- Doesn't fast (5:33)
- A Sabbath-breaker (6:2; 6–11)

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

THE PRELUDE

No Pleasing Envious Critics, Luke 7:31-35

- “We played the flute...we mourned”
- Do childish messages and emotions set the tone for Jesus and John?
- What message are we reenacting today?
 - insulting or encouraging the righteous?
- Whose child am I? The critic's or wisdom's

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

THE PRELUDE

Matthew 27:18

No Pleasing **Envious** Critics, Luke 7:31-35

- “We played the flute...we mourned”
- Do childish messages and emotions set the tone for Jesus and John?
- What message are we reenacting today?
 - insulting or encouraging the righteous?
- Whose child am I? The critic's or wisdom's

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

Proverbs 27:4

“Wrath *is* cruel and anger a torrent,
But who *is* able to stand before
jealousy?”

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

The Purpose of the Parable

- To defend and define the Lord's mission to come to earth
- The value of one soul (lost or found)
- The lengths that God will go to forgive all kinds of sinners

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

the setup by the
OUTRAGEOUS

- Request of the younger son
- Agreement of the father
- Conduct of the younger while away
- Reception of the father when the son returns

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

IN THE FIELD (15:25)

- Where is he not?
- Working without loving?

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

IN THE FIELD (15:25)

- ~~Works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19)~~
- ~~Faith without works (Jas. 2:21-24)~~
- ~~Works without faith (Rom. 4:2-4)~~
- Faith working through love (Gal. 5:6)

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

FAT EGO | FRAIL LOVE

- Romans 2:17-21; 11:20, 21; 12:3, 4, 16
- Older brother had no sorrow when his younger brother left and no joy when he returned

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

Drawing Near The House (15:25-27)

- Both sons come home for very different purposes
 - One to confess sin and resolve to work
 - One to criticize

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

Drawing Near The House (15:25-27)

INSIDE THE HOUSE

- Feasting
- Celebration

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

- Envy
- Anger

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

Drawing Near The House (15:25-27)

What did the older son learn from the servant?

- His brother returned
- His brother is *safe and sound*
– *Lk. 5:31, 32; 3 Jn. 2*
- His brother's restored state is the cause of the celebration—the killing of the fattened calf

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

Angry Without A Just Cause (15:28, 29)?

- Why throw a celebration for him?
- You never celebrated me?

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

CLARIFICATION

- YOUNGER SON – not the person who “partially repents” or “partially obeys”
 - *partial obedience = disobedience*
-1 Sam. 15:13, 14, 19, 20, 22
- OLDER SON – not the person who calls others to obey the Lord's word

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

THE OLDER SON

- ✓ Is proud
- ✓ Is pouting
- ✓ Is hateful
- ✓ Is jealous
- ✓ Is disobedient to the Father's word
- ✓ Is an enemy to those who enter the Father's house

CLARIFICATION



Misunderstanding Divine Grace

- Hating some sin but not hating all sin
- Belief that the past defines your future, a predestinated and pre-scripted end
- Cannot justify a robe being given to a prodigal
- Scoffs at unmerited favor
- Spurns the Father's attempts to recover the lost (15:28)

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

Salvation is always a “gift of God”

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God” – Eph. 2:8

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

Grace has appeared to all through teaching!

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age”

(Titus 2:11, 12; cf. Col. 1:5-6; Heb. 13:9)

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

Grace works through baptism!

4 But when the goodness and philanthropy of God our Saviour shone forth, 5 he saved us — not on account of works of righteousness which we had done — but according to his own mercy, through the bath of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit; 6 which he poured out on us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7 that being justified by his favor... (Titus 3:4-7, L0)

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

To insult the Spirit of grace is to ask for divine punishment

“Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?” –Heb. 10:29

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

It is possible to fall short of grace

“looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled” -Heb. 13:9

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

BETRAYAL IN SPIRIT

THE

OLDER

SON

Luke 15:25-32

PERSONALITIES

- Younger son – outward rebel, immoral
- Older son – inward rebel, proud
- Father – God in Christ calling sinners

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

Betrayal In Spirit & Deed (15:29, 30)

- **Disrespect**
 - “Lo” (15:29)
 - Ephesians 6:1–3

(1)

**THE
OLDER
SON**

Luke 15:25-32

32 'You shall rise before the gray
headed and honor the presence of an
old man, and fear your God: I *am* the
LORD.

LEVITICUS 19:32

Betrayal In Spirit & Deed (15:29, 30)

- **Ingratitude**

- “...these many years I have been serving you...” (15:29)

(2)

**THE
OLDER
SON**

Luke 15:25-32

38 *Is it* not from the mouth of the Most High That woe
and well-being proceed?

39 Why should a living man complain, A man for the
punishment of his sins?

40 Let us search out and examine our ways, And turn
back to the LORD;

41 Let us lift our hearts and hands To God in heaven.

LAMENTATIONS 3:38-41

Betrayal In Spirit & Deed (15:29, 30)

- **Self-righteousness**
 - “...I never transgressed your commandment at any time...” (15:29)

(3)

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

Betrayal In Spirit & Deed (15:29, 30)

■ Childish Complaint

- “...and yet you never gave me a young goat...” (15:29)
 - ✓ Matt. 20:11-15
 - ✓ Psalm 73:13, 14
 - ✓ Jeremiah 12:1-4

(4)

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

Betrayal In Spirit & Deed (15:29, 30)

- **Disownment**

- “...that I might make merry with my friends” (15:29)

(5)

**THE
OLDER
SON**

Luke 15:25-32

“A son honors *his* father, And a servant *his* master. If then I am the Father, Where *is* My honor? And if I *am* a Master, Where *is* My reverence? ...”

MALACHI 1:6

Then they said to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also."

JOHN 8:19

A relationship with the Father is based on

- a relationship with His will (Matt. 7:21)
- a relationship with others (Matt. 6:14, 15)



Betrayal In Spirit & Deed (15:29, 30)

■ Disownment

- “...that I might make merry with my friends” (15:29)
- “But as soon as this son of yours...” (15:30)

(5)

THE
OLDER
SON

Luke 15:25-32

The Father's Response (15:31, 32)

- Son, you are always with me
- All that I have is yours
- It was right that we should make merry

**THE
OLDER
SON**

Luke 15:25-32