

# Man's Dealing With Man

By Paris Reidhead\*

The 15th Chapter of Luke shall engage us for the next few minutes, a tremendously important portion of Scripture. I think it will be better if I read the portion, and give to you thus a Biblical setting. So I will begin with the 11th verse:

And he said, A certain man had two sons: <sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. <sup>15</sup>And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. <sup>16</sup>And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. <sup>17</sup>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! <sup>18</sup>I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, <sup>19</sup>And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>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. <sup>22</sup>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: <sup>23</sup>And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: <sup>24</sup>For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. <sup>25</sup>Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. <sup>26</sup>And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. <sup>27</sup>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. <sup>28</sup>And he was angry and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. <sup>29</sup>And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: <sup>30</sup>But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. <sup>31</sup>And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. <sup>32</sup>It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

It is my conviction that our Lord Jesus gave this parable in order that He might present certain unchangeable truths. Now we could bring a whole series of messages upon the principles that are here, but in keeping with what we saw this morning, namely, that God allows men moral freedom, to make a choice, and He respects the choice that they make; the consequences rest upon them, but the choice is theirs. I think you will see the same principle extended into this portion tonight. A man had two sons, and the first one came and said, Father, let me do what I want to do. I want to take the money that you will one day give me, and I want to spend that money in the manner that I choose, I want to be boss of my life, I want to rule and govern my life, it is my intention and purpose to live my life the way I choose and wish to live it. In other words, this young man had come to that place and point that he felt that he best knew how to insure his own happiness, and his wellbeing, and his fulfilment. And the impressive thing about this is that the father did just that. Now normally you would not expect it to be done. This is a parable, and violates certain usual civic practices. Generally speaking, a father would not take all that he had that was under his custody. And a will is not in effect until the death of the testator. But here it is that He is giving us principle. And whereas the average father today, be he ever so wealthy, would hardly do as this father did, He is illustrating not a relationship between father and son, but He is illustrating the attitude of God toward the free moral agency of man.

After all it was God in His sovereignty that made man, designed him just as he is, so marvelously fitted him to the world in which he lives, and to the purpose for which he was created, that God could have said when He had made man and the world, It is good. He had given to man appetites. And in this world He had given every proper means to satisfy those appetites. But above all, He had given Himself to man, for this was a love relationship. It was to be symbolized by the circle. God's love poured out upon man, man's love returned to God, and in this God's heart be satisfied and man be fulfilled and completed. But you know what happened, and the Genesis record is complete, man's love turned away from God, and others, and in upon himself. And this self-love, this self-will, this self-rule, is as we have said so many times the very heart and essence of sin. This you see illustrated here in the parable. This young man decided that he knew best how to satisfy himself. He had not earned the money, but he had taken what had been provided for him, and used it according to his own fancy and his own whim. And

so God has invested in us great abilities, great capacities and potentialities. Tonight as I drove into the city, I was appalled again as I came through the mouth of the Lincoln Tunnel. And it is a rather oppressive thing that the first thing you see on Sundays when you come through the Lincoln Tunnel is about 35 or 40 men seated on the curb out there in the exit waiting for the doors of the McAuley-Cremorne Mission to open so that they can go in. And here as I drove past and turned the corner, I scanned down. Some of them I have been seeing for several years. But here were men, made in the image of God, and the likeness of God, and somewhere along the line they chose how they were going to please, how they were going to live. If you go among them you will find that 1/3 of them have had College training. This is the case. This is the fact. 1/3 of the men that you find in the Bowery have had college training. I do not know what proportion of them are college graduates. But at least one out of three have been to college. You will find among them doctors and surgeons. You will find lawyers and business men. I remember talking to one man who had been a judge. There was one man on the streets that had been the Rector of a large cathedral in the capital of the United States, a man who has been on the hearts of many of us. Our hearts break as you realize that here are people that by either some debility in their own character, or some pressure of circumstances, or some other calamity in their life, all of it related to sin, they are there utterly failing of all real purpose for humanity. And I had the sickest feeling as I turned the corner and scanned this company of men, seated on the curb, and realized that these are the grotesque distortions, but they are really the picture and the epitome of the human race in its natural state.

A person may have good clothes. A person may have plenty of food and money in his pocket. But unless he understands the reason for which he is created, he is wasted, and he is squandered. And this exactly what God has testified of the race. Every man of Adam's family is represented by this young son that took the potentialities that God invested in him in creation and went out to use them as he would. Here is one person using his intelligence in cruelty, barbarous practices, inventing new means of dishonesty, and cheating, and destruction. Here is another that is using intelligence in order to secure immoral experience. Still another using it to heap up riches. And what are they using? They are using that which was provided by the Father when He made man in His Image and Likeness. He is taking the heritage of intelligence, the heritage of his human possibilities, and prostituting them to some wicked, low, nefarious use. This is the story of the human race. And this is the picture of every man naturally, every man in Adam's family, and it is also the picture of every man outside of Christ.

Now for me, for you to make the inference and say that everyone who isn't a Christian is a bum, would probably be correct, but it's not exactly what I'm saying. I am saying that every person that does not know Jesus Christ is utterly failing to understand the significance of human personality. He is living on the level of a grotesque distortion or what God intended man to be. You were made for God. We were made for fellowship with God. And to take the money that was earned by father in the parable, that wealth that had been accumulated by care, and diligence, and hard work, and then to go out and squander it, to fail the purpose for which it was provided and accumulated is just nothing more than the picture of man, taking the intelligence, the imagination, the potentialities of just basic humanity and using it in the cruel, brutal, immoral ways that we see in the pages of history of man's dealing with man. It is a picture, I say, of what happened when man took his happiness into his hands, and decided that he knew better that God did how he should live and how he should be happy.

God allowed it. God allowed Adam to sin. Have you ever wondered why it was that when Eve was being tempted the Lord Jesus didn't step on the garden path and say, Now Eve, don't. You see, He had so much respect for the person that He had made, that He was willing to allow that person to pursue all of the potentials. He knew that Eve was a morally responsible person, and so He allowed her to fulfill that which He had invested in her. And this of course is what you find in the parable, for the father here has allowed the son to take that which was in a sense his now, because it was given to him at least, and use it as he chose. God could have stepped out onto the garden patch, sent the angel with the flaming sword to have driven the serpent from the garden. And then he could have brought Eve into such bondage of fear that she wouldn't have done that again. But you notice what I said today, this morning, that coerced behaviors hath no virtue to it, and no moral quality to it. And if God had made Eve behave, if she had behaved because He chained her either by fear or by circumstances, her behavior would have had no moral significance to it at all. She would have been acting as a moral automaton, and such behavior could never have satisfied the heart of God. And so just as the father in the parable allows the son to go full limit that he chooses, God has allowed the human race to go to the limit that it chooses. For He has prepared to abide by His determined purpose in

creation. He would rather let men become all that they are capable of becoming in evil, rather than to destroy the nature of man and the possibility of his onetime securing what he wants.

And now there is another thing, lest you should raise a calumny against God. May I say this, that from eternity past, viewing all of time, and you've heard the question asked, If God knew that there was going to be so much sin and cruelty in the world why did He ever make man? Let me postulate it at this point. In the eyes of God in His Omniscience, the creation of man was of such supreme importance to God in the universe that, in spite of all the evil and the suffering that has occurred in the human race, the creation of man was the supreme good that would in the ends of the ages have been demonstrated to have been for the best interest of the entire universe. And not to have made man, would have been a greater evil than to have made him with all the evil that man has committed by exercising his moral choice. So let it be understood right at this point that we hold firmly to the fact that God was acting for the best interest of the entire universe. A, when He made the world for man; B, when He made man just as He did, even though he knew that man was going to do exactly what he has done. The good that is going to come from God's intended purpose and His redeeming grace is so sublime, so supreme, and so glorious, that in the endless ages of eternity it would have been an infinitely greater evil if God had not made man. And so the father allowed the son to go, and He has allowed this to happen in every age, in every generation. He sets no bounds upon the iniquity to which man can descend. The father did not go along, he did not send along a Pinkerton's detective to keep his son out of trouble, he had given to his son his nature and his character, he had given to his son these investments that had been his, and he said, Now, go ahead. Go ahead and do with it as you wish. It is yours.

And He did this with you. God gave to you everything that He has to give to a person, everything that could possibly be for your good and your blessing, and you have had the privilege of going with it. Some of you perhaps in times past, before God in grace found you, found yourself on the street in some sense, perhaps not in the sense that I have described over here on the West Side, but nevertheless you have found yourself down and out. Perhaps God found some of us when we were young people and had the potentialities for all evil, but hadn't had the opportunity for it. Perhaps some of you were up and out. But we are here tonight as Christians. There is a process that has transpired that was effective in us. If I speak to someone here that is born of God, then it is to be understood that the same process has happened with you as happened with this young man. At some point in your experience you had to come to the place that what you had was not enough. This is the first thing. And I am sure that the person that is wildly in love with the things that he thinks are satisfying him is not a candidate for the grace of God at all. You find someone that is sitting out on the street and he is intoxicated, finding his satisfaction in alcohol, and the escape into the numbness that it brings, that this person in that state is no candidate for the grace of God.

When a person comes to me, and I smell alcohol on their breath, I simply cannot take the time to talk with them about the Gospel, because they are utterly incapable as far as I am able to see of any perception of any spiritual truth and reality. There has to come to that person where he is past the place where he is satisfied with the things that have previously been accepted by him as his adjustment to his need. When the alcoholic comes and says, I am an alcoholic, I have no control, power, and I am incapable of doing anything, and I recognize the nature of this, and I have determined that I will die before I will drink again, then you have got something to work with. You have got something there. This young man had come to the place where all the resources that he had that he thought would satisfy couldn't, and the sources to which he would have looked were - had no answer to his need. He was to the place where he knew of no way to satisfy — now you are going to say, food. We are thinking beyond that to the deeper hunger of the human heart. Now I believe that it is part of God's gracious purpose to allow people to go as far as they want to go.

There have been times in my experience when I might have put a barrier up in a person's path and said, No, you cannot do it, and enforced behavior. But you know, I have discovered that when you do that all you are doing is postponing the day of rebellion. That is all. If this father had taken his son to the woodshed, and pulled his belt out, and given him a tanning, he might have kept the boy home for a little while, but when he had reached this age now of adult choice, it wasn't possible for a whipping to do what needed to be done. He had to discover that he was incapable of having his need met by the means that he had thought would do it. And this is where God allows everyone to go. As much as I would like to see a person saved, tonight, I realize that if that person hasn't come to the place that they are aware that nothing can meet their need but Christ, then all that they're going to do is take a chance on Christ. And there is very little result when people say, Well I'll give Him a

try. If He is just one of many possible solutions to their problem, He is no solution at all. It was when this man had come to the place that nothing would meet his need, but he remembered the father's house, and the terms on which he must approach the father: "Father I have sinned." On these terms only could he expect to be received, that he was prepared to go back. Now this is self-awareness, and it is this self-awareness for which we seek in sinners everywhere. And this is one reason why I am so concerned about ministry to children. Now I know that the Spirit of God can convict children of sin, that the Holy Ghost can show to a child that he has the potentiality for all evil even though he has not experienced it. He can take the thievery of a package of gum, and prove that the child has a thief's heart, but remember this that conviction of sin is not a natural function of remembering what we have done. But it is a supernatural work of the Holy Ghost revealing what we are. And you see here the nature of that work.

"Father, I have sinned." And he is identifying himself now with his crime. Just as the publican went down to his house justified had identified himself with it: God, be merciful to me, a sinner. It wasn't that he made a mistake. It was a mistake. It wasn't that he had broken the Father's heart. He had broken the Father's heart. But this chap has come to the place that he has seen that what he did was a crime against the father, against society, against the brother, against all that were involved, and this, I say, is the supernatural work of the Spirit of God on the heart of a sinner, producing in that one an awareness of his true state. And if you can see with me then, you will recognize that we have to expect this from God for the unsaved. We see in the past a proper use of the truth that enables the Spirit of God to produce that state. But right now, I want you to understand that the Father had to let the boy stay there, until the boy came to that place, as much as he wanted the boy home with him. For if he had brought the boy home before the boy had seen what he had to see his homecoming would have been abortive, it would have had no real significance, and it would have been but the prelude to greater tragedy and heartache later, and possibly to a sophistication of the boy's mind, so he would have said, Well there is nothing in father's house to meet my need. The father was standing there with aching heart, obviously watching, obviously yearning, obviously wanting, but there was only one way he could receive the boy, only one way that the boy could with his own inner conscience feel himself prepared to go home, when he identified himself with the crime.

Now this, dear friend, is what we mean by repentance. The boy had chosen what he would do. And he had done it by choice. And he was doing it because he wanted to do it. Now in the light of memory, in the light of circumstances, in the light of an awareness of himself, and of his acts, the boy has had that insight that enables him to identify himself as being personally responsible for his conduct. And this is where repentance gains its foothold, and its foundation, and its grounds. When a person identifies himself with his conduct. To repent is not simply to change your mind about what you have done. It is that. But it actually ought to, if it is to be understood properly, to be a matter of changing one's mind about what he is.

I read a story this summer about New York State in the early 1800's, and it told of a mother making butter and keeping it during the cold winter months so that the butter buyer could come when the snow was off the ground, and bring it to the New York market. And it told how that the butter buyer would come in and find these tubs of butter in the basement, and would take a plunger, and pushes it down into the beautiful butter and bring it up, and then presses the sample out of the tube and have there a cross section of the butter... A very thin little column, a little tube it would be, not large at all. But this would be the proof of the kind of butter that was in the tub, or in the crock.

And so it is that we must understand that the work of the Spirit of God in our hearts is to use the incident to show to us our nature. And you fail to understand the work of the Holy Ghost either as an unsaved person anticipating coming to Christ, or as a Christian dealing with failure and need, unless you recognize that circumstances and actions are to be viewed as but a hole, a port hole by which you can see into your heart.

Repentance is to be basically dealing with ourselves and not our conduct. It is to be basically dealing with what we are, and not what we have done. He only truly repents who changes his mind about himself. This young man as he left home was quite competent to make decisions, quite competent to choose the path best for him, quite competent to insure the happiness of his future. He felt he was enough. Now he has come to the place where he has sinned. And what is the sin? Where did the sin begin? Was it when he said, Father, give me my living, give me my portion? When he said, Father I am leaving? Was it when he went into the place of drunkenness and revelry and immorality? Where was the place of sin? And you will have to come back

to this, that the place of sin began when the boy revolted against the authority of the home and judged himself to be competent, in the matter of choice, and decided that he would do it. It got right back to an attitude. And so basically we have to trace sin back to an attitude of self-competency, self-efficiency in terms of running our lives, and governing our lives, and controlling them. And the sinner has to understand that he is coming on the basis of having renounced any claim to righteousness, and any possibility of being righteous, that the essence of his crime is that he has ruled and governed his own life. This is why we have state that the Gospel is to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as He is presented, a Prince and a Savior, Lord and Christ; and the One whom we invite to come to the Lord Jesus we have to say, Jesus Christ is God, He is eternal God, by whom all things are made, He was born of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, died an atoning death, was gloriously raised from the dead, and now if you receive Him, you have to receive Him as He is presented, a Prince and a Savior. And this is the testimony that we must give to sinners. And repentance is a renunciation of this principle of self-competency in government and the right to rule in our lives.

But I am concerned about it that you Christians should see it, because I recognize that we have tried to pinpoint repentance at the threshold of the Christian life, turn our back on it, and straightway forget what manner of men we were. And because we are forgiven, assume that we are better than before we were forgiven, when the fact of the matter is, A forgiven person is simply a sinner that is forgiven, that is all, but a sinner that has changed his mind if he is truly repented, and he is not forgiven unless he has, about who is to rule in his life. He is no longer feeling himself competent to rule, able to govern, and sufficient to make the choice. Therefore, when you as a Christian, are convicted that you have sinned, what have you done? You have simply repeated the process that is set forth here. You have taken things into your own hands; the Father now has placed you in His family as a child, He has given you the witness of His Spirit that you have been born again, and now you as a child of God with a great heritage have decided how to deal with the situation. Perhaps someone has deprived you of what you think you deserve. And so, your manner of handling this, instead of saying, Thank you, Father, You take care of it, is to say, I am going to get even. And so bitterness has come into your heart, recrimination inditement of another, machinations of mind, how you can get even, how you can hurt in return, and you have gone right down to the same place that we find here. It is the same process. You understand that it is probably not as complete. I am not implying that. But when a child of God sins he has repeated on a limited level the very same thing that was the essence of his crime before he came to know the Lord. I am trying to get this principle in your mind. Now, if you genuinely repent, if you have truly met God, when you discover for instance that there is bitterness, or there is anger, or there is wrath, or there is immoral imagination, or there is gossip, or whatever it might be that grieves God, you are going to see that this is the sample from the butter tub. This is just a cross section of you. And you are not going to have the delusion, for that is what it is, Now, Lord, you know that because I have been forgiven and pardoned I am really better stuff than I was before I was forgiven and pardoned, so if you will forgive me for what I have done, now I have lost my temper, and I have said some things that I shouldn't and I have asked them to forgive me; now Lord I am asking you to forgive me. And everything will be fine then. No, everything won't be fine unless there is repentance. And this is what repentance is, a change of mind, not about what you did, but about what you are. This is an insight into you. This is a porthole into your heart, and every failure in the Christian life ought to be a fresh revelation of our nature, a fresh unveiling of what we are, and repentance therefore on the part of a Christian is to be a fresh view of the inditement that God pronounced against us, not just simply a dealing with the event. Obviously, we must deal with the event. And it must be that it is total.

For instance, if the child of God has sinned, and there is bitterness, but it led to anger, and it has led to wrath and malice, or to anything else, you have got to go back and deal with the whole thing, the whole chain. It is like dominoes that have been set up on edge. You know, as a child we put them up, and we would touch one and watch them all bend around. Well now you will never do that again unless you set all the dominoes up straight again, and so it is with sin, there is a chain reaction in the heart and obviously if a person would say, Yes, I did get mad, but she deserved it, and there is no forgiveness for getting mad, because we have got to go right back to the whole thing. There must be an honest breaking before the Lord.

But it isn't just enough to deal with the sequence of events to enumerate the events. This is not the kind of repentance that God is looking for in a Christian. He is looking for that, but it does not stop there. Everything that God does with us as His children is to reveal to us what we are in the light of what He is, so that we are going to appreciate more of what He has done, and take what He has provided. This is why we have had such an abortive experience in reference to revival in the past. There

has been a great pressure and move, and people have gone to the place of prayer, gone to an altar of confession, and they have confessed what they have done, and I have heard almost everything that the human family has done, confessed in one way and another. I think a Christian; a Christian worker has to be unshockable as well as unshakable. And it is just amazing what happens when a child of God gets out of fellowship with God. But the fact is that this has often been a failure, because the person has dealt with an item, but they have failed to see that this is a window in to the heart.

And this is what the young man saw. "Father, I have sinned." He is now bringing himself under the full glare of memory, the full glare of recollection, the full glare of circumstances and conviction. Here are the spotlights from what he heard from his father, what he learned in the synagogue, what he has been told, what he has experienced, and these converging lights fall down upon this one point, until in the light of all its illumination that comes, I have sinned. Now I know that God will forgive you if you break in confession. I know He will, because we have an advocate with the Father. But I know that if somehow you have failed to have this experience show you yourself, you are simply setting the stage for a repetition of what you have done. And it is going to be an up and down experience.

You have asked the Lord to forgive you, you have been tempted by trait within, and pressure without, led aside by your desires, and you have fallen on your face. You have grieved the Lord. And you don't like that and your hearts is unhappy, and His is, and so you break before the Lord, and you confess it to Him, and He forgives you. And so you are back on the plane of fellowship. But what did you see back here? You saw what you had done, you saw what you said, and you saw what was there. What did you fail to see? Yourself.

So, you are up here in fellowship, but what happens? You go along a little way, and then right down again. And so you have to do the same works again. You have to judge it to be sin. You confess it, forsake it, you are forgiven. And you go along a little bit, and right down again. Why this repetition? Why? The answer is that you didn't see in the valley what you should have seen. You see, you saw what you did. You saw the evil of the action, but you didn't trace it far enough to see that God was allowing the Spirit, this circumstance to be just a sample out of your heart. This is a terrible thing for a person to have to come to the place, God is right about me. Oh, we will fight it; we will argue with Him, we will do anything we can. Who wants to have to come to the place where we say, "In me and my flesh there is no good thing." (Rom. 7:18) This is... We will do anything. Oh, the flesh will fight. We will say, Let me wear sackcloth, let me sleep on a bed of spikes, let me put ashes on my face. It's willing for any kind of sacrifice. If you have any question about that go to India, and see them measuring the continent with their bodies and sitting between fires till their skin turns to leather, sleeping on beds of spike, and walking on beds of coals. Oh, the flesh is capable of just indescribably self-mutilation. But anything, but do not make me have to face myself. And this is what the young man did. He faced himself. And this is what the Apostle Paul did. He faced himself. This is what we mean by the Cross, dear friends.

When we talk about identification with Christ this is what we are talking about, this is what we mean by it. When we come to the realization that we are cross-worthy. Now all of us as sinners knew we deserved to die because of what we have done, and we have received Christ as dying for us. And this was so wonderful that the burden of guilt is lifted, and the weight that pressed us into hell removed, till we just went on rejoicing, We've been saved from what we've done, but you see God's great grace was not content just to enable us to escape from what we've done. He wants to deal with us. He doesn't just want to take us to Heaven. He wants to bring Heaven to us. So, you failed. And you confessed it, asked God to forgive you, and then you failed. And your experience has been like all of ours, an up and down graph of failure, declension and fall, until sometime along the way God gets you in the corner and He just takes the cover off, and He says, Now this is what you are. And that is the appalling thing, because we are just sure that God is going to help us not to be what we - not to do what we did, not to say what we said, and then we will be all right. But that which the Spirit of God is seeking to do for us is to bring us to the place that we see ourselves.

And this young man did, Have you? Have you seen yourself? He is identifying himself now with his conduct. And when you come to that place, then you realize that there is only one place that He can take you, and that is to the Cross with Him, crucified with Him. It's when you have seen yourself as cross worthy, that the Lord can allow you to have that which you seek for, yearn for, and long for. When he came back that they put on the clean garment and the ring, and restored him, so it is that

when you as a child of God come to the place that you have truly seen yourself as worthy to have been crucified with Christ, incorrigible, that self-discipline and change is not going to improve you, and that the place you are going to have to stay at as long as you live is crucified with Christ, then He can clothe you and cover you with Himself, put on all the emblems and symbols of His presence, and of His blessing. This is where He wants to bring us. This is the depth of repentance that is needed in the church today. Not only a change of mind about what we have done, but about what we are. And thus Paul testifies, “I am crucified with Christ.” I am cross worthy, and there is nothing else for me. “I am crucified. Nevertheless, I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” (Gal. 2:20) And 50 years from that time, if he had lived 500 or 2,000, Paul would have had to have said the same thing, because of himself he would have had to have said, “In me and my flesh there dwelleth no good thing.” You aren’t going to get any better. That is the thing that is so difficult for us to understand. We’re not going to improve with age. We’re not going to get any better. We’re always going to be we were. As an old, old man, Paul, with grayed hair, bowed shoulders, says, “That I may know Him, being made conformable unto His death.” (Php. 3:10) And so as Hudson Taylor<sup>1</sup> said in his book, the book Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret, “It’s the exchanged life. Yours to the cross, and Christ’s in you.” And this allows us to see and apply this parable of the prodigal son to ourselves.

Now have you come to that place where you have seen yourself and have been willing to say, Yes, this is me. Everyone that we have asked to come during these weeks, there have been so many, we have sought by God’s help to have them move from the thing that brought them to the person that they are.

Let us bow in prayer. I want a few moments of quiet meditation. What of you? This young man came to himself, and he remembered that there was something better. What of you? Are you in fellowship with Him? Let me give you what is to be the normal Christian experience, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that, you being rooted and foundational in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length and breadth, or depth and height, and to experience the love of Christ that passes intelligence that you might be filled unto all of the fullness of God.” (Eph. 3:17-19) This is what He designs as the normal state and experience of His children. Now to be less than here is to be less than normal. There is something wrong. I do not know how far you have gone from the Father’s house, but if you are any place other than here, you’ve taken a wonderful privilege and you have gone off to spend it as you wish. This is the privilege of the children of God. Are you living there? You can. God wants you to. This is the normal place for us to stay. This does not mean that we are going to necessarily be Moody’s<sup>2</sup> or Finney’s<sup>3</sup>. Mary, the mother of our Lord, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and to our knowledge she never preached a sermon. Matthew was filled with the Holy Spirit, and you never hear of him. James was filled with the Holy Spirit and He was beheaded. Everyone filled with the Holy Spirit won’t be a great Peter or John, but they will be what God intended them to be, and He will get the glory that He desires to have. You see, if God gives us a cup of cold water, that is all He asks us to use. But He wants us; every one of us has the privilege of being filled unto all the fullness of God. Now less than this is somewhere on the way down toward the place of poverty.

Has there been failure? Has there been sin? Has there been battle and conflict in the days past? Where are you? Are you trying to satisfy yourself with something less than Himself? You can’t you know. Has there been that in your life which indicates that you are not having victory? That you are not knowing Him as He desires to be known? Now what are you going to do about it? If you are really prepared to meet Him on His terms, we are prepared to stay with you, and to pray with you. If you see something of what God sees, and you are prepared to face what He shows, then I am prepared to stay, and others with me, as long as we can be of any help. But this is what God is seeking to do. To get some insight, maybe He is using that failure of this past week to show you yourself. This is what you are.

I wonder tonight if you are prepared to say, Yes, I see tonight from this that God is trying to get me to see myself. And I do. And I am willing to break. I am going to deal with everything He shows me, but oh, I am asking Him to deliver me from the body of this death. I want to be delivered into the full liberty of the Children of God. Now if you are prepared to meet Him on these

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<sup>1</sup> James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) A British Protestant Christian Missionary to China and founder of China Inland Mission

<sup>2</sup> Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) An American evangelist and publisher who founded Moody Church

<sup>3</sup> Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875) An American Presbyterian minister and leader in the Second Great Awakening in the United States.

terms, we are prepared to stay with you, and pray with you, and help in every way we can. I wonder tonight if there are those who would say, Yes God has found me out. I am so grateful. He has shown me my heart. I will arise and go back to my Father and home. Will you stand right where are now? Dealing with whatever it is the Lord has shown you. If you are prepared to seek Him and meet Him on His terms. You know that God has dealt with you. Just stand right where you are. Thank you. Yes. God bless you. Are there others? I am only going to wait a moment. You have seen yourself. God has given you insight into your heart and life. Just remain standing. Others? Would you stand. God has spoken to your heart. God bless you. Yes. Are there others? I am only going to linger a moment. This is what I am. Just stand right where you are now. Every head bowed. Every eye closed. Our one desire, if you do not know the Lord Jesus, and tonight you say, Yes, I need to know Him, I want to know Him, you stand; we will talk with you. But you are making known your need and purpose to do something about it, giving you an opportunity to say, Yes, do whatever it is the Lord is showing you. Only going to linger a moment. If you feel a tug and a sense of oughtness as we said today, this is the Spirit of God speaking to you to mind Him now, Don't put it off, and don't wait. Now is the day. Now is the time. Respond to whatever He is saying to you at this time. Only waiting a moment. Are there others? Some of you are going to say. Oh I wish I had gone. God is tugging at my heart. I felt I should, why didn't I. Do it now. Go in blessing. Go having allowed God to work in your life. We are only going to wait just a moment, but oh, we don't want you to miss what God wants to do in your heart and life tonight. (Wilson Chapel)

I want to ask one question before we close. Be honest with your own heart. We are here just to be of help, to let God get glory in your life. If you had done what you ought to have done would you have gone to Wilson Chapel. Everyone that would say yes, I have felt the Spirit of God tugging at my heart.

Think about what we have heard, that the nature of true repentance is not just to see what we have done, but to see ourselves and change our mind about ourselves. Let us stand for closing prayer and benediction.

“Now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and honor, dominion and majesty, now and forever. Amen.” (Jude 24,25)

\* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, September 23, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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