

are really brethren, Rom. iii. 29. The elder son represents the Jews, and especially the Pharisees; the younger the Gentiles, particularly the publicans and sinners. Sometimes sons got their portions during their father's lifetime, Gen. xxv. 6. *Give me.* Evidently he was a kind and indulgent father to his children, and yet he might have refused this undutiful son such a demand. *Gathered all.* Changed it into money, and went far away from his father's eye or control.

### II. The absence, ver. 14-19.

The prodigal spends all in eating, drinking, dressing, and bad company; forgets his soul, his father, and his home.

Poverty drove away his companions, and now he must either work or starve. He hired himself to feed swine, a most abominable trade to a Jew. His master did not give him sufficient wages, and famine reduced him to starvation, so that he envied the swine their food. *Husks*, signifies the fruit of the carob tree, a coarse production used to feed swine in Palestine.

*He came to himself.* As if hitherto he had been out of his reason. He remembers his father's goodness, his own sins, and resolves to return.

### III. The return, ver. 20-32.

He immediately does what he resolved. Describe his journey; barefooted, hungry, ragged, with a heavy heart, begging for food, he retraces every step, a long weary way. His father sees him; recognizes his long lost son; runs and embraces him; prevents his confession; has no syllable of reproach; loads him with kindness, restores him to his place. *The best robe:* The robe for festivals. *The ring:* His authority in his father's house again recognized. *Shoes:* Servants wore none. *The fattened calf,* Gen. xviii. 7. All rejoice over him as one alive from the dead.

The elder brother will not rejoice; reproaches his father and his brother; yet his father answers him kindly.

#### APPLICATION.

1. *God is a kind Father to all.* He creates and preserves all. He opens His hand liberally, Psalm cxlv. 16. Feeds the young ravens, the young lions, the sparrows, Psalm cxlv. 9; Matt. x. 29. How much more will he care for a child, Matt. vii. 11. Even to wicked children He is most kind, Isa. i. 2. He hears with them, Exod. xxxiv. 6. His sun shines on all—it shone on Cain—on the murderers of Jesus. All they have is from God, Matt. v. 45; James i. 17.

2. *God welcomes a returning sinner.* He watches for his return—longs for it, Ezek.

xviii. 31. Reproaches him not, James i. 6. Forgives him, Neh. ix. 17. Clothes him with righteousness, Isa. lxi. 10. Raises him to his rank, 1 John iii. 2. Rejoices over him, and fills heaven with joy.

3. *How the sinner treats God.* He has you have, such a Father, and you take all from His hand—every breath—and yet you forget Him, do not love, obey, or pray to Him. Your heart has left Him, 2 Kings v. 26; Matt. vi. 21; Isa. xxix. 13. You spend all He gives you, health, strength, money, and life, in pleasing yourself, without God, and without His blessing, Psalm iv. 6; Job xxi. 14. Beware, Luke xii. 19. Belshazzar, Dan. v. 2-6.

4. *What the sinner should do.* What you should do. Return to God. Let your thoughts, your heart, return to God. Down on your knees. Confess your sins. Sin no more, Psalm li.; Hosea xiv. 2. God will pardon love, and bless you evermore, Hosea xiv. 4. Heaven will be glad. Will you do so?

5. *Beware how you treat a penitent.* Despise him not. Many see no faults in themselves, many faults in their brethren, Luke xviii. 11. They have no love to souls, do nothing for them, they have no joy in their salvation. Jonah.

#### SUBORDINATE LESSONS.

1. How foolish to hate the restraints of a father's house, or seek to leave it, Prov. i. 8; v. 12.

2. Begin by sinning against your parents, and you will end in woe, Prov. xxx. 17.

3. A sinner is "beside himself," Act. xxvi. 11.

4. They that indulge their evil passions are feeding swine.

5. How blessed to be driven to God, though by sore suffering and want, ver. 18.

6. Fellow-teachers! pray for a compassionate heart towards the lost.—*Edin. S. S. Lessons.*

There is no religion in the Bible—no hope if there are any reporters here, that they will wait until I finish my sentence before they run to the — paper—any more than there is a road upon the guide-board. The Bible is the rule, the direction, by which man is to work out his own salvation, as the guide-board is the direction by which he is to walk out his journey. Religion is *in the man*, or it is not anywhere.—*Beecher.*