

# Redemption

## APPLICATION

A certain king had two sons, v. 11. It is not said: "A certain king had two subjects"; or "A certain master had two servants." Sin is not merely treason against a sovereign, or disobedience to a master, but is, above all, ingratitude towards a Father. We cannot find language too strong to express our condemnation of the conduct of Absalom towards David. (2 Sam. chap. 15, etc.) Yet every sinner is, in God's sight, guilty of the same wicked ingratitude and disloyalty. There is no one of us to whom the words do not apply: "I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me." (Isaiah 1: 2.)

"Father give me the portion.... And he divided unto them his living. God sometimes grants our foolish and ignorant requests in order to convince us by our experience of our folly and wickedness in asking. When the Israelites in the wilderness cried to God for supplies, we are told that "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul." (Ps. 106: 15.) Again, when the tribes desired a king, he gave them Saul, that through their sufferings from the arbitrary and capricious tyranny of that monarch, they might be shown how foolish and wrong their desire was. God gives to us the portion we desire, and allows us to go, as the father in this parable permitted his son to leave home, that we may learn our lesson in the hard and bitter school of experience.

And there wasted his substance in riotous living, v. 13. Sin is the great waster. It wastes money. It turns bodily strength into weakness. But worse than all else, it wastes manhood. It robs the sinner of intellectual strength. It destroys the moral nature. Sin weakens the will; sears the conscience; hardens the heart. A Scottish wife once said of her husband, who had yielded to the power of strong drink and had been led away by evil companions: "He used to be a firm and manly fellow, but he is a bairn noo." Alas! such have all the weakness, but none of the innocence of children.

To feed swine, v. 15. The progress of the prodigal began with riotous joy; the next

stage was want; and the end was bondage. Sin deceives by making fair promises to lure us on to our ruin. Detectives have sometimes captured a criminal whom they have tracked down, by pretending to be his friend and so gaining his confidence, until some day they have persuaded him to try on a pair of handcuffs as a mere jest, and then snapping the spring that locked them have taken him an easy prey. In like manner sin ministers to the enjoyment of its victim and then, when he is thrown off his guard, readily enslaves him.

And when he came to himself, v. 17. As long as we are living away from God we are not acting out our true self. The man who lives in sin is beneath himself. No honest work is beneath us, but every kind of wrong-doing is. Gareth was not beneath himself when he served in the kitchen of King Arthur's palace, but he would have been beneath himself if he had joined in the low conversation and ribald jests of his fellow-servants. Work never degrades, sin always does. Sin keeps us living in a dark and dismal cellar, when we ought to be enjoying the brightness and beauty of the upper rooms in the palace of life. We come to our true self when we forsake sin; until then we are beneath ourselves.

I perish with hunger, v. 17. It is our need that brings us back to God. A man will not go to the physician until he feels that he is sick. We will not seek the Saviour until we see that we are lost sinners. This parable does not tell us how men come to see that they are sinners and that without Christ they must perish; but we learn elsewhere that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to show us our guilt and danger. (John 16: 8.) Until He comes to open our eyes, we keep on believing the devil's lie that we shall not perish though we live in sin. But He convinces us that as sinners we must either repent or perish.

I will arise and go to my father, v. 18. After all, we have the power of choice. We can resolve to forsake the service of sin and return to our true position as sons of God.