

SCRIPTURE READING: 2 Samuel 13:37-39; 18:5, 31-19:1.

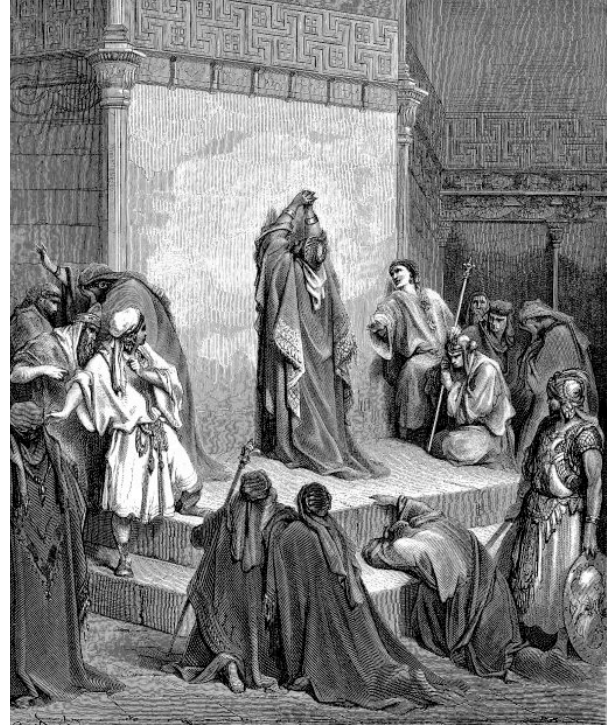
INTRODUCTION:

3 John 3:4. The opposite is equally true. In Scripture there are many parents of prodigal children – Manoah had Samson, David had Absalom. In Luke 15 Jesus spoke of a father whose younger son journeyed to a far country and wasted his possession with prodigal living. We could go on and on, but God clearly understands the grief and bitterness of prodigal children. Proverbs 17:25.

Thankfully, I don't personally relate to parents of prodigal children. Frankly, I don't ever want to relate. I am a child of a prodigal parent, but not the parent of a prodigal child.

While I don't relate, many of you do and God certainly does. I've been asked to preach a lesson from God's word that will help parents of prodigal children find peace. I hope this sermon meets this pressing need.

While this lesson is specifically for parents of prodigals, the principles will also help children, siblings, friends, and brethren of prodigals.



DISCUSSION:

1. **Believe that you can find peace even though you are a parent of a prodigal child.** Matthew 11:28; 2 Corinthians 7:6A.
2. **Mourn your loss.** Matthew 5:4.
3. **Forgive your prodigal child.** Mark 11:25.
 - A. But what about Luke 17:3? Mark 11:25 and Luke 17:3 don't contradict each other. We can't pick one or the other to obey. We must reconcile their meaning and honor the teaching of both.
 - B. The context of these passages is different. In Mark 11:25, the focus is on what an offended person must do for himself. I sometimes call this "Stage One" forgiveness. In Luke 17:3, the focus is on what the offended person must do for the person who offended him. I sometimes call this "Stage Two" forgiveness.
 - C. "Stage One" forgiveness is unconditional. No matter what people may or may not do after they sin against us, we must unconditionally quit brooding over the hurt and dredging up old hurts; wishing them evil; being bitter, wrathful, angry, contentious towards them; speaking evil of them; keeping ourselves completely distant from them; etc. In other words, we must let the hurt go. If we have forgiven in this sense of the word, we no longer hold people's sins against them.
 - D. "Stage Two" forgiveness is conditional. Forgiving a person as per Mark 11:25 doesn't mean we can just ignore what he has done. We must still confront him with his sin (Matthew 18:15-17) in hopes of moving him to repentance. In this case, however, we are not remembering his sin *against* him. Rather, we are remembering his sin *for* him.
4. **Forgive yourself.**
 - A. Did you make mistakes as a parent? Certainly. All parents do.
 - B. Did you make so many mistakes as a parent that Proverbs 22:6 doesn't apply to you?
 - 1) Perhaps so. But, what good is done now by beating yourself up for mistakes you made then? None. In fact, it just makes matters worse.
 - 2) Perhaps no. Prodigal children sometimes come from the best of homes and faithful children sometimes come from the worst of homes.
 - C. When it comes to the mistakes you made as a parent, you must: realize, repent, reconcile with God and yourself, learn, and move on.

5. **Don't dwell on negative things beyond your control. Rather, give your children to God, don't take them back, and focus on positive things *within* your control.** Philippians 4:6-9.
6. **Accept and live consistent with the truth that the best way to influence your prodigal child is to live a genuine Christian life and that includes finding peace in spite of his behavior.** 1 Peter 3:1-6. While you should talk to him about both, you should talk with your prodigal child far more about the blessings of Christ in your life than you do about the problems you have with his sinful behavior.
7. **Make it as easy as possible for your prodigal child to come home to God.** Luke 15:11-13, 17-24. This doesn't mean you ignore the problems you have with his prodigal living. If you never discuss them, you make it *harder* for him to come home to God. But, we do need to wise about what we say, when we say it, and how we say it. We should even think about who should say it. Sometimes a parent isn't the best person to say something that needs to be said.
8. **Reach out to other parents in your position.** 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

WORDS OF ADVICE TO PARENTS OF YOUNGER CHILDREN:

1. **Take your responsibility as parents very, very seriously.** Don't think it could never happen to you. You don't have any time to waste.
2. **Next to genuinely loving God, one of the best things you can do for your children is to love your spouse, i.e. their other parent.**

CONCLUSION:

1. **Don't give up.**
2. **Find peace now.**
3. **We will peace at peace in heaven.** Revelation 7:13-17.