

# Scriptural Truths

## E-Mail Meditations

The Lord Will Come . . . Perhaps Today . . . Behold, I Come Quickly . . . Rev. 22:7

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### The Prodigal's Brother

#### Introduction

In earlier days many children went to Sunday school where they were taught stories and lessons from the Bible. One of the stories was about the prodigal son who came back to his father. It is a simple story and has oft been used by gospel preachers proclaiming the news. They explained that one of the lessons was that no matter how far one has gotten from God, one can still repent and come back to Him. Yet, in all my years I have only once heard anyone speaking about the brother who stayed at home. His story is only six verses, but what is told about him?

#### His Thoughts

When the brother who stayed at home heard his prodigal brother had returned, his response to his father was, "Look at what all I have done, "these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment" (Lk. 15:29). In a nutshell, he was saying, "Look how good I am and the good I do". In so saying, he became the personification of the Pharisees. They were very religious men who in all sincerity sought to win the Father's favour by doing what was right. The son was reminding the father of all he had done, the long hours he worked caring for the property, and scrupulous in doing what the father said. To all appearances, he was a model son.

In this way he was like the Pharisees of whom the Lord said, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). These men were so meticulous in keeping the law and so intent of making sure that no one came close to breaking it. They added hundreds of more man-made commands and traditions. They spent long times in prayer, they fasted, they were intent on keeping the Sabbath, and they were noble people. Putting their character in a nutshell, they were doing their best to gain God's acceptance. The problem was, even Saul, who was "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil. 3:5-6), had to face the fact he could not gain God's acceptance. He wrote, "Yea doubtless, and I count . . . the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" ( Phil 3:8-9). Paul realized no matter into what tribe he was born, no matter what he did, he could never be acceptable to God. It was by faith alone in Christ.

In this, he is like many thousands of millions of people today. They do not want anything to do with God, is opposed to anyone speaking about God, but to be on the safe side they do all they can by good works and hope at the end they will be accepted by God. My grandmother was like this. She honestly was a very good neighbour, ever doing things for others. As she said, when the time comes for judgment God will put all her good works on one scale and her sins on the other and

hopefully the good works would outweigh the sins and she would get into Heaven. Thankfully, before she died she saw the reality that nothing she could do could gain her admittance to Heaven, and like a drowning individual, help had to come from outside of herself. Just as Peter trusted the Lord to save him from drowning, the hand of omnipotence took his, and they returned to the boat. We used to sing an old hymn:

Christ is the only Saviour mighty to save,  
He who suffered once for sins, and sank neath the wave;  
Sing how the wrath of God on Calvary's cross He bore;  
How by death He conquered death and lives evermore.

Christ is the Saviour, He never will fail;  
All hope to save oneself could nothing avail;  
Man is a total wreck, can never reach the shore,  
All who trust in Jesus Christ are saved evermore.

Christ in that hour of darkness, lost ones to save,  
Braved Himself the ocean depths, and battled the wave;  
Though all Jehovah's billows rolled o'er His head,  
Son of Man and Son of God, He rose from the dead.

### What He Did Not Know

Although he was a very good son there were two things he did not know:

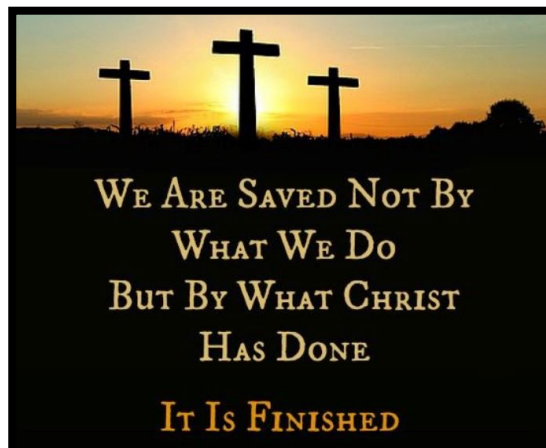
- a) He did not know, he could not gain the father's love.
- b) Neither did he know the fullness of the father's love for the wayward son.

I do not doubt that deep down he wanted to please his father, but he did not know that the father loved him, just because he loved him. The lad did not know the father's love was not a because or an if love. That is, the father did not love him because he cleaned the barns, and neither did he love if he cared for the herd of cattle. It was an unconditional love, not increasing or decreasing with what he did. He could have been a foolish wayward son like his brother but he would still have been loved. Many people are like this spiritually. Perhaps unconsciously, they think of themselves as better Christians than others, consequently, they are more loved because they do the right things.

This is how people are spiritually. They do not know and oftentimes do not care or want to know the love God has for them. They believe, determined by satanic teaching, that if they do the best they can they will be welcomed in Heaven. Paul wrote, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6); "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). God does not love us because we do good things, He loves us because He is love and can do nothing else but love.

Of course, some would say, "If he is the God of love why would he send anyone to Hell?" There are those who would argue that the God of love would never send anyone to Hell. This ignores two matters, God is Holy and judges in justice. He cannot change His essential being and excuse insubordination and rebellion. Humans take His name in blasphemy, mock the reality of His justice, count as worthless the substitutionary sacrifice of His Son, and willfully reject the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. To do this, knowing the consequences, the individual has made a decision. What if someone showed such wickedness to their spouse or child, would they just accept it or demand punishment? Going to hell is a choice the individual makes. By their own free will, such choose to have nothing to do with God, not to go to Heaven and are determined to do their own thing automatically brings the sentence of Hell upon themselves.

. . . . Rowan Jennings



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