

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

Volume 13, Issue 7

July 2015

A Son is a Son

Introduction

Lately there has been a fair amount of discussion among several of my friends that are from varying spiritual heritages about law and grace. These discussions all quickly polarize between keeping rules (law) and receiving all grace. Each side fully convinced that they are correct and that it must be “my way or the highway”. However, as a point of fact, this issue is like free will and predestination—they are both true and are maintained in proper balance if understood correctly. I would like to focus on that for this issue of Present Truth Teaching Letter.

First, let's get a good working definition of “grace”. The most common understanding of grace is “the unmerited favor of God”. While this is certainly true it is simplistic in application. A broader definition that I prefer is “God doing what you are incapable and unable to do”. It is this broader definition that I will be using in this Teaching Letter.

The Two Sons

In Luke 15:11-32 Jesus tells us the story of a man who had two sons. We commonly call this the parable of the prodigal son; however, that nomenclature can cause us to miss the point of the story for it is truly about two sons and not just one.

(Luke 15:12 NASB)

"The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them.

You should notice that the father gave BOTH sons the apportioned inheritance not just the “prodigal” one. We have all heard it preached about how the prodigal took his inheritance and squandered it.

Luke 15:13-14 NASB

- (13) *"And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.*
- (14) *"Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he*

began to be impoverished.

Now, I would like to ask you a question. At this point in the story how many sons does the father have? Two, of course. One is on the homestead of the father doing the work necessary to maintain their holdings and the other is in a far country squandering everything that he had received. However, they are BOTH still sons.

Under the pressure of circumstances, there came a time when the “prodigal” had an epiphany—he came to his senses.

Luke 15:17-19 NASB

- (17) "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!
- (18) I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;
- (19) I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."

This epiphany caused him to return to his father's house with all humility as one not worthy to be called a son but maybe at least the father would receive him as a hired hand; that is, a servant.

Now for another question. When he was in the pigpen and starving was he still a son? Of course he was even though he didn't think that he deserved the title of “son”.

When he returned home he was embraced by his father before he had time to make his confession and appeal. The father immediately placed on him the robe, the ring, and the sandals. The robe demonstrates the honor of the household, the ring presents the authority of the family name, and the sandals shows him to be a son because only sons of the household wore shoes; the slaves went barefoot..

The “prodigal” had taken his inheritance and blown it all on wine, women, and song ending in abject poverty. However, in spite of his lack of wisdom, his self-serving pleasures and improper conduct, and his squandering of all that he had received; his status as a SON never changed. He was a son in his father's house and he was a son in the pigpen/

While his sonship status didn't change when he left his father's house, the benefits of his sonship began to dissipate, consumed until they were gone. He was a son because he was born of the father. He received an inheritance because of the provision of the father for his sons—only sons inherit. Even though he squandered what he had received, he was restored to his inheritance by the father because he was the father's son. He was restored because of who he was not by anything that he had done. The Father's love in action is always grace—Him doing what we can't do.

The Other Son

When the prodigal returned and was received of the father as a son, it made the older son angry.

Luke 15:28-30 NASB

- (28) "But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and *began* pleading with him.

(29) "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and *yet* you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;

(30) but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.'

Out of his anger we see his legalism, "For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours". He was saying that it is not fair. He had been an obedient servant for years, doing what was right while his brother was living a wild life blowing their father's money. His father's answer is crucial to our understanding of the issue.

Luke 15:31 NASB

(31) "And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.

Remember that the father had divided the inheritance between them. As the oldest brother he even had a bigger portion. However, as an "obedient servant" he had never availed himself of any of the benefits of his sonship. He was a son and had always been a son but he didn't act like a son. He acted like a servant and as a result the benefits of being a son were not realized

The Point

Both sons received their inheritance.

The younger son squandered his inheritance and lost the benefits of his status as a son.

The older son never realized his inheritance and never utilized the benefits of his status as a son..

The father's love in action—grace--restored the benefits of a son to the younger one.

The older son's resentment and anger over the loving, gracious restoration of the younger son prevented the older son from coming into the fullness of his own sonship.

The legalistic sons always resent the sons of grace because they didn't "earn it".

However, a son is a son. Both the legalistic sons and the grace sons are still sons whether they think it is fair or not. The difference is how each handles the inheritance.

You have permission to copy and distribute these materials provided:

1) no changes are made to the content, and, 2) they are not sold.

© 2003-2015 by Art Nelson and Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For comments or questions contact Art Nelson at this address:

artnelson@lifestreamteaching.com