



## World Christian Fellowship

[www.wcflondon.com](http://www.wcflondon.com)  
[wcflondon@gmail.com](mailto:wcflondon@gmail.com)

### Story of 2 Sons – Part 01

#### Lost Son

#### Luke 15:11-16

**Luke 15:11-16**, *Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. <sup>12</sup>And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. <sup>13</sup>And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. <sup>14</sup>But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. <sup>15</sup>Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. <sup>16</sup>And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.*

#### **What brings the Lord joy?**

Recovery of the lost. The salvation of sinners.

The Pharisees and the scribes wanted nothing to do with sinners.

Jesus wanted everything to do with sinners.

These two parables draw the Pharisees in.

Jesus draws them in by making the first two parables questions.

Jesus draws them in as if they were the person in the story. Drawing them into the experience and the thinking of the main character so that they really play the role in their minds.

**V 1-2**, they were grumbling and complaining and criticizing Jesus for the kind of people that He received and spent time with.

They always did the same throughout his ministry.

Sinners came to Jesus because He came to seek and save sinners.

When sinners came,

- ✓ He received them,
- ✓ He embraced them,
- ✓ He loved them,
- ✓ He forgave them,
- ✓ He gave them eternal life.

This outraged the religious leaders.

Our Lord gave them two stories for them to answer.

Our Lord's best known and most memorable parable, called the parable of the prodigal son.

This story is intended to demonstrate the same thing, the joy of God over the recovery of a lost sinner. But this story goes even beyond that and it identifies the nature of repentance.

The first two stories they were not part of it but now in this they are part of it. The first two stories they agreed with Lord Jesus spoke of the Ethical of the stories.

Jesus in a way lured them into the story. Slowly without them knowing that they get involved into the story.

The first two stories, about the sheep and the coin, emphasize God as the seeker, the one who finds and the one who rejoices.

But this the third story looks not so much at the divine side, but at the human side.

- Sin,
- Repentance,
- Recovery, and
- Rejection.

This is a dramatic and emotionally moving story. All of it is deeply interesting and impactful on the thinking of anyone who is gripped by divine truth.

This story can be divided into three parts.

1. Younger Son, Prodigal son
2. Older son
3. Loving Father.

I would like to rephrase it as loving father and two sons instead of Prodigal son.

### **Historical setting:**

It is very essential for us to understand the Middle Eastern Culture for whom our Lord told this story.

Whatever Jesus meant to the people to whom He spoke is exactly what His words mean today.

Respect for father is very much honoured and respected by the family.

**Exodus 20:12**, *“Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.*

Dishonouring or disrespect to the father means your life will be finished.

**Deuteronomy 21:18-21**, *“If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, <sup>19</sup> then his father and his mother shall take hold of him*

*and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city.<sup>20</sup> And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.'*<sup>21</sup> *Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.*

So, they did respect for the father was high on their life, like our earlier Tamil culture.

### **Authority and ruling:**

Father holds the authority and after that the elder son holds the key. As long as the father is alive, he will be the leader and responsible for everything.

Elder son gets 2/3 of the property. Second son gets 1/3 of the property.

**Deuteronomy 21:17**, *But he shall acknowledge the son of the unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.*

If there are five sons, you first split the inheritance into six portions, and the firstborn son gets two portions while everyone else gets one.

Property ownership was generally passed down through the males, and they in turn were obligated to support their unmarried sisters (that is, unless there were no sons, in which case the daughters inherited the property)

### **Selling taking possessions of Land:**

**Leviticus 25:23**, *'The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me.*

So if the father is alive, he will divide the land and give it to his children, but they can't sell it, or the buyer can't take possession of it.

The children may have the property ear marked for them, yet they cannot take possession by themselves until their father is alive.

As we go along the story, I will give you some more details about the culture prevailed at that time.

**V 11**, *Then He said: "A certain man had two sons.*

We have a Father and he has two sons.

**V 12**, *And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood.*

Younger son the prodigal son.

### **What is the meaning of “prodigal”?**

It means "spendthrift."

Someone who is wasteful, a person who is senselessly, extravagantly self-indulgent.

The young man is the classic illustration of wasting your life, of extravagant self-indulgence.

'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.'

When Jesus said that, you could imagine that the Pharisees and the scribes would have said this is absolutely an outrageous!

Most likely the younger son is not married, probably in his teens, because he wants to go and live wildlife. This son is completely disrespectful toward his father.

He lacks any love for his father whatsoever.

Absolutely no gratitude in his heart for the legacy that generations of his family have provided for his father and one day for him.

We can take this like this, if a son says that I want my property then he is indirectly saying to his father, why are you still alive? I want you to be dead.

In a culture where honour was so important especially when it was established under Ten Commandments.

Honouring your father and your mother had been embellished and improved on where honouring your father was like at the top of the list of social life.

Any son who made such a breath-taking request, such an outrageous request from a healthy father probably relatively young is understood by everyone to be wishing his father was dead.

You never got your inheritance until your father died. But to ask for it at this point essentially was not only to affirm that your father was dead but was also to commit suicide. Because anybody would expect that that kind of request of a father would be responded to with a slap across the face.

The father would be slapped across the face with no small force. Very likely he would be shamed publicly and perhaps dispossessed of everything he had and perhaps even considered as dead and dismissed from the family.

That's how serious the breach was and that is why when his son comes back, the father says that this son of mine was dead.

**V 24**, *for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.* And they began to be merry.

**V 32,** *It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.”*

It was even customary in that time to hold an official funeral.

You were done, and you were out of the family.

The only way back in was some restitution, some way to earn your place back in the graces of the family for the dishonour you had brought. The system was very clear to everybody.

The father was at the head of the honour list.

Then came the older brother.

Then came the younger.

This is shameless at its highest level. The lowest in the family, and line of honour expressing shame and hatred about his father. While the father is still alive and standing in the way of him getting what he wants is the highest degree of shame imaginable.

Highest shame in the society of Israel.

**V 12,** *‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.’*

Give it to me “portion of goods/estate.”

The Greek word used here is *‘tēs ousias,’*

This word used only here, nowhere else in the New Testament. It means the goods, the property, the portion.

The normal word for “inheritance” is *‘klēronomia’*.

That's the normal word. But listen carefully.

This word means inheritance, that is everything that comes with the material. That includes the management of the estate, leadership, responsibility to provide the resources for the family.

When you receive your inheritance from your father, you literally are receiving the responsibility to manage all the assets of the estate on behalf of the family.

It comes with the responsibility to build the estate for the family in the future. So, with the word “inheritance” comes responsibility, accountability for the future. He didn't want any of that, so he didn't use that word.

Jesus put this word, *tēs ousias*, "

So simply the younger son is saying that,

- I just want my stuff.
- I don't want leadership,
- I don't want responsibility,
- I don't want accountability,
- I don't want anything for the future

The younger son is asking for the material stuff; land, animals, buildings, whatever of the family possessions he is entitled to get.

This family is a two-brother family.

According to Deuteronomy 21:17, the estate would be divided unequally.

It will be divided unequally.

The older son gets double portion.  $\frac{2}{3}$

The younger son gets one third.  $\frac{1}{3}$ .

They must have had a lot. Later in the story we find out that they have servants, calf, hired musicians, they invited musicians to play music all the people gathered home.

All of this indicates that he is living under the father's authority very reluctantly.

- He is miserable.
- He wants freedom, independence.
- He wants to go as far away from all restraint, all accountability that he can.
- He doesn't want to obey his father.
- He doesn't want to be directed by his father.
- He doesn't want to have to answer to his father.
- He wants nothing to do with anybody who knows him.
- He wants out,

But he wants out with all that he can get to finance his leaving.

Any father in the Jewish culture at that time could give gifts to the children as he wished. He could assign also their portions of the estate. As I set out the historical background that they can't sell the property.

When the word gets around the village about the younger son demand then they villagers would have very angry and upset.

- They would expect the father to be angry, ashamed, dishonoured.
- They would expect him to be furious with his son.
- They would expect him to slap the boy across the face, to rebuke him, to shame him, to punish him, to dismiss him from the family, and perhaps even to hold a funeral.

First surprise in the story!

**V 12,** *' So he divided to them his livelihood.*

He divided his wealth and gave it to both the sons.

Some of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes probably thought he is just telling both the sons that, this is what you are going to get, and this is going to be yours. You can begin to take responsibility for what's going to be yours now and I will be there to oversee it.

Rather than strike him across the face for his insolence, the father grants him what he wants. He extends to him this freedom because he is willing to endure the agony of rejected love.

The agony of rejected love is the agony of the most painful of any personal agony. The greater the love, the greater the pain when that love is rejected. This is God.

This is God giving the sinner his freedom. There's no law in the customs of Israel that would forbid a father to do this. He's not doing this because he thinks this is best. He is giving the sinner his freedom. The sinner's not really breaking the law, but he is demonstrating the absence of a relationship.

The sinner has no relationship to God whatsoever.

- Doesn't love God,
- Doesn't care about God,
- Doesn't want to do anything with God,
- Doesn't want to do anything with the family of God,
- Doesn't want to do with anything the future of the family of God,
- Doesn't want any accountability to God,
- Doesn't want to have any interest in God,
- Doesn't want to answer to God,
- Doesn't want to submit to God,
- Doesn't want any kind of relationship at all.

God, in the agony of rejected love, lets the sinner go.

We still have two boys in this story at this point because once it was divided then it was clear to the other brother what was his.

So, they both received their portions!

Mishnah, Jewish law did say that if this was done, if a father decided to do this, the sons had to hold the property until the father died and only then could they do with it what they pleased. Up until that time, the father still oversaw how they managed that property and the father had a right to everything it produced in terms of income. But that certainly wouldn't suit the plans of the younger son. He wanted what he wanted it now.

**V 13**, *And not many days after,*

Just a few days, not many days later. He didn't wait long, and he wouldn't wait.

- He is sick of being in the father's presence.
- He is sick of having any accountability or relationship with the family.
- He has no love for his father.
- He has absolutely no love for his older brother either and his older brother has no love for him.

The older brother has no love for the father either.

Later in the story we find out that when the boy comes home and the father is happy, the older brother is angry. He has no investment in the father's affections whatsoever. He is equally unloving, and ungrateful even though he stays home. He is the hypocrite in the house.

So, the father basically has no relationship with either son!

These are two kinds of people who have no relationship with God.

- One is irreligious and
  - Another is religious.
- 
- One is as far away from God as he can get.
  - The other is as close as he can be.

### **What did the younger son do?**

He turned it all into cash.

**V 13**, *the younger son gathered all together,*

Technically, he could sell the property. Once it was given to him, even though the father still had some oversight and could get the interest off it, and they couldn't take possession of it until the father died.

There was a loophole, there was an out in the ancient tradition and that was that he could sell it to somebody who would buy it, but not take it until the father died.

He wants cash. He needs to find a buyer for his third of this estate, a buyer who will give him the cash now and not take possession until the father is dead.

We who live in 21<sup>st</sup> century can understand this very well. There is a term called 'Forward Selling' in the stock market. Which is a company agreeing to issue shares to a third party and that third party sells those shares in the market prior to actually receiving them.

Similarly, future buying is also there in the market for the commodities.

When you buy this kind of purchase the price was going to be good because you have got a desperate seller. Nothing more excites you when you are a buyer than a desperate seller.

**V13**, *"Not many days later."*

He wants to turn everything into cash. His property can be sold, which means buildings, land, animals, whatever it was. He gets the cash now.

Whoever bought it can't take possession until the father dies. Of course, there are people who would be glad to do that because it's going to be a fire sale.

Younger son takes a discounted price.

This is the foolishness of the sinner.

- The sinner wants to get away from God.
- The sinner wants to get away from God now.
- The sinner wants no accountability to God.
- The sinner sells all opportunities that God has provided for him very cheaply.
- The sinner sells all the good gifts.
- The sinner foregoes all the gospel opportunities.

All that goodness and forbearance of God that's meant to lead him into a relationship with God he turns it down and walks away.

**V 13**, " *journeyed to a far country.*"

Get out fast and far.

Gentile land would be distant country.

Any country outside Israel is Gentile land.

He went to a Gentile land, which was a horror.

How bad is this son?

This son is as bad as anybody could be.

You can't be worse than to disrespect your father and dishonour your father.

Add materialistic greed to that.

Add selling off the generational family estate.

Add going into a Gentile land as far away from anybody know.

The family for sure then would have had a funeral and the village. He is gone and dead.

It is all over.

Only could be restored now if he were to come back and repurchase the estate which he sold. He had to come back and buy it back.

**Ask yourself this question:**

**Where is the older son?**

**Why doesn't he ever rise to the defence of the father's honour?**

**Why doesn't he ever step up and protect the father?**

**Why the older son didn't go to the younger, rebuking for dishonouring the father?**

The answer:

Because he didn't love the father either!

He was happy to get his share, stay home.

Never came to the father's defence!

The older son has no love for the father as well.

The whole scene is filled with shame.

Generously unconditionally loving father gave away massive gifts to two sons.

- One is a blatant, rebellious, irreligious sinner,
- Another is a religious one who stayed home.

They both have any relationship to the father.

They both hate each other and the father.

They both didn't have love for one another.

**V 13**, *and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living*

He just threw it away.

Hence "prodigal," he wasted it.

Loose living, reckless, wasteful living, **zaō asōtōs**,

- a dissipated life,
- a debauched life,
- a dissolute life.

In **V 30**, his older brother says, "*He devoured his wealth with harlots.*"

Wow!

Jesus put that in the story because that's an accurate reflection of what He wants to convey the young man did.

### **What else would he do?**

Running as far as he could from all accountability, holding all his money intact, he goes into this far country trying to get away from any responsibility or accountability from his father and he dissipates his life in an immoral fashion.

He wastes it.

This young son represents open sinners.

These sinners, those who make no pretence of faith or love towards God.

We can compare them to Verse 1 of this chapter, the tax collectors, and sinners.

They run as far as they can from God because they have no love for Him and no relationship with Him.

They don't want anything to do with His law or His rule.

They don't want any accountability to Him whatsoever.

They are not interested in exposing themselves to anybody's expectations.

**V 14**, "Now when he had spent everything."

When he arrived in the far country, he was the fat cat, the fair-haired boy, the new guy in town with the big bankroll.

He comes into town. He sets himself on the party trail and goes on a wild spree, certainly collecting around him all kinds of people who wanted to cash in on his foolish generosity.

**V 14**, *"But a severe famine occurred in the country."*

That's not his fault, but that's how life is.

Some things are your fault and some things are not.

Life is like that. A severe famine occurred in the country.

What is a severe famine?

How do people act in a severe famine?

When Israel was under siege and women ate their afterbirth and even cannibalized their children. That's in the Old Testament. **2 Kings 6:26-30**

That's a famine.

Children being sold into slavery to keep them from starving.

People were stealing to eat.

Men venturing out at night unarmed were attacked and eaten.

Straying animals were killed and eaten raw.

Shoe leather, rotten flesh and garbage were all devoured.

They ate palm trees.

Something like that would be the picture in the minds of the listeners to Jesus when He told the story.

The worst possible and circumstances have made it even more severe. This is life at its lowest!

Pharisees and the scribes listening to the story now are feeling the weight of the horror of the life of this young man.

From a wonderful place under a loving father in a generous environment, he has come to this. It is life at its lowest in the pits at the most desperate.

He has no family. He has nobody left. He is in a foreign land, nowhere to turn. All his resources are gone. He is destitute. He has no money. He is alone.

Yet he is not ready to go home!

Still not ready to fully humble himself to go back.

The older brother knows that, once the thing was split, he no longer could draw resources from the other third.

He doesn't want to face the town.

### **What do the people try to when they hit the rock bottom?**

**V 14,** *"He began to be in need."*

For the first time he can't supply what he needs!

Like typical sinners, he comes up with the first plan.

**V 15,** *Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country,*

This is his plan A.

He went, attached himself to one of the citizens of that country.  
First thing he wants to get a job. I got to stand on my own legs.  
He is walking the street to get a job.  
For the very first-time he must work.

He forfeited the easy life.  
He left a loving father.  
He ended up with a hard.  
He wanted unrestrained pleasure.  
He wanted his lusts fulfilled.

So, he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country. "Citizen" is a word that refers to a privileged person. Not everybody was a citizen. That meant you were privileged and honoured by the society.

He found somebody who had some means, a citizen, and he attached himself.

So, he finds a citizen who has some means and he stick to this guy to the point that the guy can't get rid of him.

**V 15, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.**

This isn't really a job.  
It is the lowest possible thing that anybody could ever do and as it turns out, it doesn't pay anything.

But to get rid of the guy he says, "Go to the field and feed my pigs."

He is so desperate, and he does it.

Now can you imagine the gasp in the audience!

This is a Jewish boy feeding pigs in a Gentile land, serving a Gentile.

**Leviticus 11:7**, *and the swine, though it divides the hoof, having cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud, is unclean to you.*

**Deuteronomy 14:8**, *Also the swine is unclean for you, because it has cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud; you shall not eat their flesh or touch their dead carcasses.*

Old Testament passages indicate that Jews could not eat pork, unclean animals.

He ends up feeding pigs!

Worst is yet to come.

**V 16**, *And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.*

He was longing to fill his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating.

He was so hungry that he was not just feeding pigs and earning wages, but he was trying to eat their food and battle them for it.

That is a losing battle?

He was longing to fill his own stomach with the carob pods.

Here is this Jewish guy out there and the unbelieving reality is he is one among the pig. He is not with them, but he is one of them only wishing that he was better at getting food.

It's just unthinkable.

He is so low and can't get lower.

**V 16, *no one gave him anything***

Whatever promise about job and money.

He didn't get anything.

He went there to be with the pigs, he wasn't being paid anything and he wound up acting like a pig, trying to eat pig slop and get enough to fill his stomach.

You cannot even begin to understand the tensions of the Pharisees and the scribes imagining any Jewish young man doing this?

Unthinkable!

*nobody gave him anything.*

This is the greatest tragedy that they could ever conceive of. This is the greatest rebellion, the greatest breach, the greatest waste of a life, waste of an opportunity.

This is the most despicable kind of conduct that they could conceive. Now he is starving to death.

This is desperation.

This is the sinner, poor, hungry, hopeless, trying to get a little pig slop. Nobody to help.

Nobody to pity him.

## **Application:**

Sin is rebellion against God the Father.

It is not rebellion so much against His law, it is more rebellion against His relationship.

It is the violation of His Fatherhood, His love.

Sin is disdain God's law, but before that it's disdain for God's person, God's authority, God's will.

Sin is shunning all responsibility and accountability.

It is to deny God His place.

It is to hate God.

It is to wish God was dead.

It is to not love Him at all, dishonour Him.

It is to take all the gifts that He's surrounded you with in life and squander them as if they were nothing.

It is to run as far from God as you can get to give Him no thought, no regard, no concern.

It is to waste your life in self-indulgence and unrestrained lust.

It is to shun all except what you want.

It is to selfish indulgence.

The foolish sinner makes his plan.

The foolish sinner has exhausted plan A.

I will fix my own life.

I will go to psychology.

I will take drugs.

I will drink alcohol.

I will go to some self-help.

I will move to a new neighbourhood.

I will marry a new person.

When all that stuff is exhausted, the sinner wakes up at the bottom. Exactly the same place is where the young man is!