

# Prodigal's Choice to Return



The story of the prodigal son returning to the father gives a profound message about the divine love our heavenly Father has for us and of our free-will choice to remain in His love. Jude 1:21 *"Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life."* The story is about a son's choice to return and a father's willingness to forgive.

Luke 15:11-12 Jesus began: *"There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them,"* Deuteronomy 21:17. Even though the father would not have wanted to give the inheritance (as it would help the son make a foolish choice to leave home), the father could not make that choice for him and granted his request. This shows the free-will choice we have to do right or to do wrong—to remain with the Father or turn away from Him. God gave that power of choice to Adam and everyone else. He will not force us to love Him or be faithful to Him. The prodigal son was about to ruin his life and the loving father let him do it.

Luke 15:13 *"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living."* The prodigal (wasteful, reckless, and uncontrolled) son, by his own willful choice, travels to another part of the world and

takes himself away from the father, where he deliberately spends his money on *wild living, decadence & excess.*

Luke 15:14-16 *"After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything."*

After he wasted the money, it suddenly became difficult to obtain enough food to survive. Earning some cash was a priority so he accepts a low-paying job. His situation worsens because the little money he earned did not meet living expenses. He would have eaten what the pigs had but no one cared enough to give any to him. Before he left he longed for a life of sinful pleasures with the world, but now he longed for a life of faithful obedience with the father.

Luke 15:17-19 *"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'"*

It is a spiritual awakening from the spiritual darkness that resulted from a wrong choice. He thinks about the laborers and how they are cared for by his father. The prodigal son is starving for nourishment—both physically and spiritually. The *main point* is that the son makes a choice and returns to the father. The choice to repent and return was the son's responsibility since no one could make that choice for him.

The atonement work of Christ, that forgives our sins and cleanses our heart, enables

us (and everyone else) to make that same choice to return. Malachi 3:7 *"Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty.*" That is the choice everyone must make. The Father of mercy receives us back into His family when we repent and return by our own free-will choice.

Regardless of the mistakes we have made or the sins we have committed, the invitation still stands, but we must choose to accept it. The first move is ours and God will do the rest. Our heavenly Father cannot make that choice for us. He wants to forgive, but we have to *want* forgiveness and return to our original position of trust on His faithfulness. The regret, pain, and suffering outside the Father's will, is clearly seen. The prodigal now knows that the world is cruel and heartless, but the Father is loving and forgiving.

Luke 15:20 *"So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."* Our God of love, mercy, and forgiveness is waiting to receive every repentant and returning sinner in the same way. Before the son could even admit to his sins and failures, the father forgives and receives him with open arms. The son has lived in immorality and sin for years, but as soon as he returns the father forgives.

Luke 15:21-24 *"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."*

The son pours out his heart, but the father is so glad that his son has returned, that he does not reply to the confession and orders the servants to bring the best robe (a sign of honor), a signet ring (sign of authority), shoes (symbol of freedom), and a feast (showing acceptance). The son was spiritually dead and is now spiritually alive--again. He was lost *in sin* and is now saved *in Christ*.

The son had wanted the pleasures of sin, so he chooses to cut himself off from the father—beginning the withering process. He becomes spiritually dead, but is made spiritually alive again by his decision to return to his father. Even though he was lost in sin (while in the world), he could still make the choice to turn around and go back to the father (who had continued to love him, but was not able to help him due to the son's willful choice to stay away).

Luke 15:25-28 *"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him."*

The brother is upset over the father having a party for his brother. He should have been glad and rejoicing along with them over his brother's return, because his eternal soul is saved again. Luke 15:29-30 *"But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'"*

The son is offended because his father showed mercy. The older son had always worked hard at his job and obeyed orders, but no one ever held a party for him. He is jealous and responds in anger about getting no recognition or reward for doing what is right. He reminds his father that his brother deliberately left and chose to live in sin with immoral people—and now everyone is glad he returns and holds a party for him!

Luke 15: 31-32 *"'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'" It was only right to celebrate, he means, because your brother was spiritually dead (due to *wrong* choices), but is now spiritually alive (due to *right* choices).*

We are rejoicing, (he tries to explain), because your brother chose to repent of his immoral life of sin (with the world of unbelievers), and return to a life of trust (with the family of believers). Your brother was spiritually alive *in Christ* before he left, but he became spiritually dead *in sin*. Now that he has repented and returned he is spiritually alive *again*.

The pleasures of the world had enticed him away from the father. Satan could *not* have snatched him away *from* his father had the son chose to remain *with* the father. The devil was, however, able to *tempt* him with worldly pleasures to leave the safety of the father, and to live in sin with the lost. The prodigal became another *spiritual casualty* in the serious, on-going *spiritual battle* that is raging for eternal souls today.

At the moment of temptation, the son should have *resisted* the devil by trusting in faith on God to help him, James 4:7 because God would not have allowed him to be tempted be-

yond what he could bear and would have *given him a way of escape* 1 Corinthians 10:13. It was the son's choice to *give in* to temptation (and die in sin), or to *resist* temptation (and grow in faith).

The story proves that a person who decides to turn away from a life of trusting faith on God, will become lost, but they can still decide to return to the Father and be saved. If anyone truly repents and returns to faith in Christ, every believer should praise and glorify God. NKJV Luke 15:7 *"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."*



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PO Box 24283  
PHILA PA 19120-5283  
[info@fcgchurch.org](mailto:info@fcgchurch.org)