**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**The Parable of the Two Sons**

It is possible for people to think they are right with God, when they are not.

When Jesus lived here upon this earth and went about teaching the Jewish people and ministering to them, we find Him many times in conflict with the religious leaders. The chief priests and elders of the people, the scribes and Pharisees claimed to be righteous people, but when Jesus, the Son of God came teaching the will of God, they opposed it. They thought they were right with God, but they were not. They were rejecting the will of God.

In Matthew chapter 21 Jesus tells the parable of the two sons. Jesus is speaking to the chief priests and the elders, these are religious leaders. They had rejected John the Baptist as a prophet of God, and had refused his baptism. John the Baptist had called upon these religious leaders to repent and turn to God. They didn’t feel that they needed to repent. They also rejected Jesus’ teachings. Well, Jesus is speaking to them and He tells them the parable of the two sons. This is Matthew 21, beginning with verse 28, Jesus said, *“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go.”* And then Jesus says to them, *“‘Which of the two did the will of his father?’ They said to Him, ‘The first.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.”* That’s Matthew 21:28-32.

Now, let us look at this parable and Jesus’ explanation of the parable. Jesus tells about a man with two sons and a vineyard. The father tells his two sons to “go, work today in my vineyard.” The first son says that he won’t go, but later he regretted it and went. The second son said he would go, but did not actually go. Now, Jesus applies this parable to the religious leaders to whom He is speaking. He first aske them, “Which of the two did the will of his father?” The answer is obvious, and the religious leaders say, “The first.” Now Jesus’ reply to the religious leaders is rather direct. He says, *‘Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.”*

You see, Jesus is saying to these religious leaders, you were like the second son, who said he would go, but didn’t. You claim to obey God, but you don’t. Whereas those tax collectors, who were thieves, and those harlots who were sinners, ones whom these Jewish leaders despised, repented at the preaching of John the Baptist, and so they are like the first son, who first said no, but then went.

It must have been a shock to these religious leaders to hear Jesus tell them that those despised tax collectors and harlots would enter the kingdom of God before they would!

Luke records in Luke 7:29-30, *“And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.”* Notice, The tax collectors (and others) who accepted John’s baptism “*justified God*...” Whereas those religious leaders who were not baptized “*rejected the will of God for themselves*...”

What are the lessons we can learn from this?

First of all we learn that we must be DOERS, and NOT JUST SAYERS! These religious leaders gave God lip service, but they were not obedient to God’s commands. It is not enough just to say, “I believe in Jesus,” or “ I am a Christian.” We must be doers of what Jesus taught. To say that “I am a Christian” is to say “I am a disciple of Christ,” “I am follower of Christ’s teachings.” To say that and then not DO what He taught is like the son who says, “I go, sir,” and then he does not go. Jesus said in Luke 6:46, *"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?”* It is not enough to say, “I believe Jesus is Lord.” To be a true disciple of Christ we must be doing what He says. Jesus said in John 14:15, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”* In verse 21 He said, *“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.”* Someone may say “I love Jesus,” but it means nothing unless he keeps Jesus’ commandments. And I need to mention that keeping the commandments of Jesus is essential to salvation. The Hebrew writer said in in Hebrews 5:8-9, *“though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.”* Jesus only saves those who obey Him.

There is the very popular belief today that one is save the moment he believes in his heart that Jesus is Lord and Savior, and that what he does has nothing to do with his salvation. What the parable of the two sons is telling us is that in order to enter the kingdom of God we must be DOERS and NOT JUST SAYERS. And these other passages we have read tell us that salvation and fellowship with God comes to those who OBEY. Look with me also in 1 John 2:3-4. John writes, *“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”* That is a strong statement. For someone to say that he knows God, that he is in fellowship with God, but he is not keeping His commandments, John says, that one is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

But then secondly, as we consider this parable we need to emphasize the point that the first son is approved, not because he said, “I will not,” but because he repented and obeyed. There are some who seem to think that they are approved of God simply because they admit they are sinners and never pretended to be saints. One may say something like, “At least I’m not a hypocrite.” He seems to think that his sin ceases to be sin just because it is committed openly and without any pretense. No, what we learn from the parable is that the sinner is approved only when he repents and obeys. The first son who said “I will not” later regretted what he said and obeyed. He did the will of his father when he obeyed. The tax collectors and harlots do not enter the kingdom of God while continuing in their sins. They enter the kingdom because they repent of their sins. Repentance is a turning away from sin to God. In Luke chapter 19 we read of a chief tax collector by the name of Zacchaeus, who received Jesus into his house. There were those who complained saying, Jesus “has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.” But notice what Zacchaeus said, *“Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”* Zacchaeus had repented of his sins. He shows repentance by his obedience. Therefore, Jesus said, *“Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham.”* (verse 9) Without the change of one’s sinful life, there is no repentance. And without repentance there is no salvation. Jesus said to the apostles *“that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”* (Luke 24:47) And that is exactly what the apostles preached. Peter said to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* (Acts 2:38). He also said in Acts 3:19, *“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.”* Without repentance there is no salvation.

And thirdly, some may find, in the behavior of the first son, some consolation in refusing to obey for a while, with the intention of obeying later. One may say something like, “I will do as this son did. I will ‘sow my wild oats’ for a while, and then when I have had my satisfaction, I will repent and obey God” It is important to note that in the parable Jesus does not express approval of this son when he said, “I will not.” He does not express any approval of the tax collectors and harlots in their sins. They are only approved in their repentance and obedience. While one is sowing his wild oats, he is lost, and he may not have the opportunity tomorrow to repent. He may die. And later he may not want to repent. He may persists in this sins for so long that he eventually convinces himself that what he is doing is right. No, this parable does not give any consolation to those who want to live a life of sin for a while, with the intention of obeying later. The time to obey is when you learn you are a sinner and in need of salvation.

And also remember that it was the religious leaders in Jesus’ day who *“rejected the will of God for themselves”* in not accepting John’s teaching that they needed to repentance and be baptized. These were people who had a knowledge of the law and should have known better, should have known they were wrong, but because of their prejudice and pride they refused to see the truth, and refused to admit their need to change. In the same way, many religious leaders of our day reject the clear teaching of Christ and His apostles, and they are in need of repentance. Yes, he may be “your preacher.” But how are we to know whether our religious teachers today are teaching the truth or not? The only way we are going to know is by each of us reading and studying the Bible for ourselves. The apostle John says in 1 John 4:1, *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”* But how do we test the spirits to determine if one is a false prophet or not? We test them by comparing what they teach to the word of God, the Bible. We read the Bible for ourselves and compare what one teaches with what we read in the Bible. We do what the Berean’s did recorded in Acts 17:11. Luke records, *“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”* When it comes to following Jesus we cannot afford to rely on what “my preacher” says that Jesus taught, rather we must go to Jesus Himself, to His words, and let Him teach us. Study the Bible for yourself, with good and honest hearts, and what you find to be true, obey it.

Our time is gone for today. We thank you for listening.

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