

The Parable of the Rich Fool concludes as follows: LUKE 12:32 *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. 34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* Brother Hawkins wrote this of verse 33 & 34: "The desires which God requires are those of the heart, and not of the lips only. *"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* Men are controlled by their inner-most desires, therefore those affections must be set "on things above, and not on things on the earth" ...COLOSSIANS 3:2. Having such a heart for heavenly treasure dictates our manner of life." {End of quoting Brother Hawkins.} Where is your treasure?

To conclude my thoughts concerning the Parable of the Rich Fool I would like to bring our attention to focus upon what we hopefully have learned in our studying the deeper truths revealed in Paul's gospel message. Having grown up in this church I perhaps have a different perspective than some, who haven't had the same opportunity that I have had. There are several however in this meeting, or from this meeting, who have also for years heard the rich gospel messages we have been privileged to hear, whether in person, or by tape, CD, or internet. The Apostle Paul too had several followers, who followed his rich gospel message for years, even a couple of decades, and he mentioned over a hundred of such followers in his epistles, and we talked about most them in our study on the life of the Apostle Paul. So how many of Paul's followers went on to have God's best? We cannot answer that question for only God knows this answer. To some of these racecourse runners Paul wrote in GALATIANS 5:7 *Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?* That is quite a question isn't it? There have been untold thousands of believers down through the centuries since Paul wrote this, who have had the eyes of their understanding enlightened to the hope of His calling, and to what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the Saints is, and have, like Demas, forsaken Paul's teaching, having loved this present world more than the deeper things of God. And the fact is these of Demas mindset are going to be found among the innumerable multitude of REVELATION rather than in that small rib portion company known as the Bride of Christ. Demas was unwise spiritually speaking, and we should all be thankful for the rich treasure we have in Christ Jesus, and not squander our opportunity to have God's best, which is to be the Bride of Christ. EPHESIANS 5:17 *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.* The Bride of Christ will be proved, tried, and tested, and will have kept the word of His patience. In the end of Paul's life in 2 TIMOTHY 4:11 Paul writes: *"Only Luke is with me."* It was only Luke who wrote us the Parable of the Rich Fool, and don't you think he too wondered about these very same things? Luke followed Paul as Paul followed Christ, and was given the opportunity, and the privilege of writing 52 chapters of God's Holy Word. Study COLOSSIANS 4:14 and PHILEMON 1:24 and note that Luke and Demas worked side-by-side in their fellow-laboring with the Apostle Paul. There is no comparison between what Luke took in, and what Demas took in for they both had the very same opportunity. The difference is the deeper truth of Paul's gospel message was laid ahold of by Luke more so than by Demas. Demas means "popular," or "of the people," and certainly Paul's gospel message isn't "popular." Brother Copley notes that Demas turned away from Paul's gospel message, and preached a more popular gospel. Let me say it this way, how many today preach that if we suffer with Him, we will reign with Him? {Study 2 TIMOTHY 2:12.} Is it popular to preach ROMANS 8:17 & 18? -- *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* The answer is no, this is not a popular message, nor is it a message one hears expounded upon by television ministries. At their best the television ministries preach to the innumerable multitude, and talk politics more than the word of God. Luke suffered the same shipwreck Paul did in ACTS 27, and continued following Paul, and the leading of the Lord until the end. May we be found among those who truly appreciate the exceeding and abundant riches of God's great grace towards us!

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

We are going to spend some time in LUKE 15 discussing the three parables found in this chapter, which ends with the Parable of the Prodigal Son, or the Parable of the Lost Son as Scofield calls it. Before we get started in this chapter I want to refresh our thinking a little bit as to why we are studying some of the parables Luke left us in scripture. Recall that Luke was inspired of the Holy Ghost to write more parables than any other gospel writer, and at least eleven of them are unique to The Gospel According to St. LUKE. Luke also recorded many sermons in both LUKE and ACTS, and many of the sermons Luke recorded are also in the form of a parable, or have a parable in them. Look up the word “parable” and you will find it forty-nine times in scripture. Sixteen of the times where we find the word “parable” is in LUKE. Sixteen is the number of LOVE, so we can safely say that Luke loved Jesus parables.

As we begin studying LUKE 15 we find that Jesus is speaking unto two different groups of people at the same time. One group found in LUKE 15:1 is “the publicans and sinners.” The “publicans” were tax collectors, or tax gatherers, and the “sinners” were irreligious people, who were also called “notorious sinners” in one translation, and “outcasts” in another, and “heathens” in yet another translation. The bottom line is that both the “publicans and sinners” were classified together as “sinners.” In LUKE 15:2 we find the second group that came to Jesus, which Luke notes was “the Pharisees and Scribes.” This group was viewed as religious being scholars of the law, however they didn’t believe Jesus was their Saviour, thus they too were sinners. Recall our Apostle Paul was also a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee according to ACTS 23:6, who we can safely say knew the law better than any of his peers, yet in his own words of 1 TIMOTHY 1:15 he called himself the chiefest of sinners. Paul too didn’t recognize Christ Jesus as his Saviour until the day the Lord arrested him on the road to Damascus, and thank God, that was the day he passed from death unto life as he believed Christ Jesus was indeed his Lord and Saviour! So as we begin examining LUKE 15 keep in mind that Jesus here was addressing sinners.

LUKE 15:1 *Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. 2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.* The “publicans and sinners” of verse 1 came to hear Jesus, and the “Pharisees and Scribes” as verse 2 informs us, came to accuse and criticize being full of their own self-righteousness. Brother Hawkins here notes: “It is this unjust criticism which calls forth the three outstanding parables of this chapter.” The first parable found in LUKE 15:3-7, tells of the Tender Shepherd, who is Jesus. The second parable, found in LUKE 15:8-10 testifies of the Holy Spirit, as we will see when we get there. The third Parable of the Prodigal Son, found in LUKE 15:11-32, shows the love of God the Father. So in these three parables of LUKE 15 we find the Trinity, and their part in the plan of redemption. These three very important points will become clearer as we study this chapter.

The Parable of The Lost Sheep

To best understand The Parable of the Prodigal Son, which is unique to Luke in LUKE 15, we first find The Parable of The Lost Sheep, which story is also recorded in MATTHEW 18:11-14. Also in JOHN 10 we find the discourse on the Good Shepherd. We read in JOHN 10:11 & 14 Jesus informing us: *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. ...14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.* The fact that Jesus is The Good Shepherd, the Tender Shepherd, and the True Shepherd doesn’t change in these three portions of scripture referenced in MATTHEW, LUKE, and JOHN. Thus we find in this Parable of The Lost Sheep here in LUKE 15 a picture of Christ our Redeemer!

Let’s now read The Parable of The Lost Sheep found in LUKE 15:3-7. LUKE 15:3 *And he spake this parable unto them, saying, 4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? 5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he cometh*

home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, *Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. 7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.* The ...*ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance...* of verse 7 is a reference to the Pharisees that Jesus was here addressing, who felt they need no repentance thinking that they were justified by the works of the law. GALATIANS 3:11 tells us: *But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.* Earlier in GALATIANS 2:16 Paul also wrote: *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* To the ...*ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance...* of verse 7 Jesus was unable to help them for they didn't recognize that they too were lost. LUKE 19:10 records these words of Jesus: *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

Verses 4 through 6 tell of the one lost sheep, and here Jesus addresses the “publicans and sinners” of verse 1, who came to hear Jesus, being both needy, and receptive listeners of what our Saviour had to say. LUKE 15:4 *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? 5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.* Brother Hawkins here notes that “only Luke tells of the tenderness between Shepherd and sheep, as he carries this ‘newborn’, holding it closely on His shoulder. MATTHEW records the rejoicing, but it is only the Shepherd who is mentioned.” {End of quoting Brother Hawkins for now.}

Since we are studying about Luke the man, and what he wrote, recall that Luke means: “light-giving,” and that Luke shed light on many thoughts, and themes, and lives that we otherwise would know nothing about. The fact that only Luke records of the tenderness between Shepherd and sheep in this parable gives us a glimpse into the heart of Luke, who himself was very tender, and caring, especially to our Apostle Paul. Luke was very attentive, and also sensitive to note the gentle tenderness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as he drew the portrait in the gospel records of Christ the Man. Words also cannot express how grateful Luke was for the Lord bringing the Apostle Paul into his life. And as we know Luke stuck by the Apostle Paul, and learned from him the deeper truths that were revealed to Paul, until Paul's last day here on earth. So when Luke was told this Parable of The Lost Sheep, it struck a tender chord in his own thankful heart.

Let's read LUKE 15:4 through the first part of verse 7 again. LUKE 15:4 *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? 5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. 7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth...* . Jump ahead for a moment to LUKE 15:10 *Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.* Who is doing the rejoicing in heaven in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth? There is a lot of joy and rejoicing found in the three parables of LUKE 15, and in each case we find His friends and neighbors called to “Rejoice with Me.” Truly the God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost all rejoice in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

The Parable of The Lost Coin

Only Luke records the Parable of the Lost Coin found in LUKE 15:8-10, so let's read these verses, and as we noted in our introduction of this chapter, this second parable, found in LUKE 15:8-10 testifies of the Holy Spirit. LUKE 15:8 *Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? 9 And*

when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. 10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Silver in scripture points to REDEMPTION. TITUS 2:14 tells of Christ our Redeemer ...*Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Who revealed this truth to the Apostle Paul? The answer is The Holy Ghost, who is The Spirit of Truth. We find this in JOHN 16. JOHN 16:13 *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* We do not have to follow a guide, and so it is with the Holy Ghost. He will not force us to follow, but He is there to guide us if we will follow His leading. The Holy Ghost is not only a true Spirit, but He is the Spirit of Truth! Jesus was the Truth in living loving beauty. Through the Holy Spirit in us, Christ in us becomes the same active Truth, as we read, and heed His Word. One of the main ways the Holy Spirit sheds light, and reveals things unto us is through the scriptures, the written Word of God, who is Jesus. The word “diligently” found in LUKE 15:8 is found thirty-seven times in the Bible, and again thirty-seven is the number pointing to THE WORD OF GOD. Note it is The Holy Ghost whose job it is to shew you things, because He is the revealer of truth. The Holy Ghost sheds light upon the word of truth in order to reveal the deeper things found in THE WORD OF GOD. This parable of the lost coin is not representative of Christ Jesus, or of God the Father, but rather (according to Brother Hawkins notes): “testifies of the Holy Spirit working through the Church, spreading the light in order to find the lost piece of silver – the redeemed.” This statement from Brother Hawkins enlarges upon what Jesus told his disciples in JOHN 16:8-11 about the Holy Ghost, and His job during this Church Age. JOHN 16:8 *And when he is come, he will reprove (expose) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.* Furthermore it is the Holy Spirit’s leading, and guiding that makes the Bride of Christ ready to be the Lamb’s wife! She is found in REVELATION 5 singing the song of the redeemed. REVELATIONS 5:8 *And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. 9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*

In the Parable of the Lost Coin, once found according to LUKE 15:9 & 10 -- *...she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. 10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

We now come to The Parable of the Prodigal Son, which occupies the remainder of LUKE 15, and again this is a parable told only by Luke. This parable emphasizes the love of God the Father as we mentioned earlier. Let’s read the parable for familiarity, and then go back over it to glean some of the golden nuggets of truth found herein.

LUKE 15:11 *And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have*

filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. 25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. 28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. 29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: 30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. 31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

We will now go into this parable told only by Luke to glean some of its treasures. We certainly should have noticed that this Parable of the Prodigal Son gives us a glimpse into the depths of the love of the Father. In the Parable of the Lost Sheep found in LUKE 15:3-7 above we found the newborn Christian, a babe in Christ tenderly held in the loving arms of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In the second Parable of the Lost Coin we found the tender guiding of the Holy Ghost, who sheds the light during this Church Age to find the lost piece of silver – the redeemed. This third Parable of the Prodigal Son takes us much deeper into the plan of redemption than just the initial faith of a repentant sinner, and reveals some of God's plan for a deeper walk with Him. LUKE 15:11 *And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.*

Before proceeding keep in mind that this parable emphasizes the love of God the Father as we mentioned twice earlier, so the two sons found in this parable are both indeed sons of God. But as we all know, not all of the sons of God are interested in a deeper walk with Him. So what we find discussed in this parable is two different heart attitudes found in the sons of God.

Let's discuss some facts of scripture for a moment concerning the sons of God. We read in 1 JOHN 3:1 *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* Recall also what the Apostle Paul wrote in ROMANS 8. ROMANS 8:14 *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God,...* Let's stop there for a moment, and look at GALATIANS 4:1, which scripture our Pastor Jesse O'Dorisio often references: *Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all.* Back to ROMANS 8:16 compared with GALATIANS 4:1 we find *...And if children, then heirs; heirs of God,...* ...Now I say, *That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all.* So we find that a child of God, is also an heir of God, but this child needs to grow up in Him to fully enjoy the "lord of all" status, which is further explained here in ROMANS 8:16 as we continue reading: *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be*

that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. We have talked about this numerous times noting how not all of the sons of God are going to be “joint-heirs with Christ.”

LUKE 15:11 *And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.* Brother Hawkins here notes that “...both of these men were sons; both apparently received his inheritance at this time, for the father divided unto “them” his living. Although it is not manifest until later, the younger son represents the believer with the traits of the “younger” new creation. The elder, who is also a son, is a believer, but is controlled by the Pharisaical attitude of the Adamic or “elder” old creation.”

LUKE 15:11 *And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.* One of the things the Apostle Paul taught us in 1 CORINTHIANS was the difference between “the natural man,” “the spiritual man,” and the “carnal man,” three different classes of people. 1 CORINTHIANS 2:14 *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* Simply stated “the natural man” is a non-believer, in other words unsaved, or unregenerate as Brother Copley termed it. Scofield notes that “the natural man” is the Adamic man, unrenewed through the new birth. {Study JOHN 3:3 & 5.} “The carnal man,” and “the spiritual man” are both saved; born again believers. “The carnal man” walks after the flesh, and “the spiritual man” walks after the Spirit. ROMANS chapters 7 & 8 expound upon this theme, and we find Paul writing in ROMANS 8:5 *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.* Paul gives a brief discussion on “the carnal man” in 1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-4. 1 CORINTHIANS 3:1 *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. 3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? 4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?* “The carnal man” walks after the flesh as Paul explains here, thus his eyes are focused upon the things of this world, and not the things above. Again “the spiritual man” is led by the Holy Spirit as we read above in ROMANS 8:14. So back in LUKE 15:13 we find the younger son, the prodigal son, is a carnal Christian, who walked after the works of the flesh, and ...*took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.* The far country that the Lord mentions here speaks of a foreign place from where the loving Father dwells. The far country also speaks to that place not far in actual distance, but a place in the alienation of the heart. When a Christian gets away from following the things of God, they end up living in a far country void of the love of God. Brother Hill used to tell us that even though we are still in the world, we are not of this world; his teaching being that we do not have to be worldly, and live like the world. The prodigal son wanted to be worldly, ...*and there wasted his substance with riotous living.*

In verses 14-16 of LUKE 15 we find what the far country had to offer, and the grass is not always greener on the other side. LUKE 15:14 *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.* The prodigal son soon spent all that he had on riotous living, and then a mighty famine hit, and we are told ...*and he began to be in want.* The bottom line is that the world will not feed your hungry soul. Note in verse 15 that he “joined himself to a citizen of that country.” The Greek word translated “joined” here is kollaw {kol-lah'-o}, number 2853 in The Strong’s Greek Concordance, meaning: 1) to glue, to glue together, cement,

fasten together; 2) to join or fasten firmly together; 3) to join one's self to, cleave to. This word is found eleven times in scripture, and eleven is the number of INSUFFICIENCY. It is safe to say that the world offers insufficient satisfaction. Being sent to feed swine was the very lowest form of employment, and keep in mind here Jesus was addressing in this parable scribes and Pharisees, and publicans and sinners. The self-righteous Pharisee would have distained this degrading occupation. The prodigal son even came to the point that coveted the very husks of animal pleasures, but such husks cannot satisfy the soul! Note next in verse 16 that *...no man gave unto him*. Think of it like this, the religious teachings of many ministries do nothing to feed the soul, because they fail to preach Jesus Christ the true bread of life, who only can satisfy the hungry soul.

Brother Hawkins here wrote: "This was really a great blessing in disguise. As long as a person is full of himself, trusting in his own riches and resources, there is nothing God can do for him. His lack was what literally set him on the road home. This is true of sinners, but it is also true of carnal believers. We read, he "began" to be in want. He has not reached the depths of despair. He still has a few "tricks" of his own, some reserve energy and ingenuity with which he will try to extricate himself from this dilemma. LUKE 15:15 *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country*. Of course, the logic of his reasoning mind is filled only with the world. He has no spiritual insight, and such worldly solutions are all he knows. He turns to that which he can see, and is rewarded with a trip to the pig pen. This is all the world has to offer, but he must learn this lesson by experience to really understand it. God allows many Christians to follow this dead-end path, so that they, too, will become utterly filled with the hopelessness the world has to offer. We marvel at times of the amazing capacity of some people for this kind of misery. There was nothing there to stop the severe pangs of hunger, and *"...he would fain have filled his belly with husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him..."* (LUKE 15:16). He was hungry to be sure, but the void in his heart was more than physical, and could not be filled by what a mere man could supply." {End of quoting Brother Hawkins for now.}

LUKE 15:17 *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!* At camp this year, Brother Henry Smith ran out of time to finish his lesson, but he gave us plenty to think about in what he was able to present. So he saved about 30 minutes to take prayer requests, and have a prayer meeting. And the prayer requests were all anointed in a special way as to what my ears heard. And the theme of these many prayer requests was all about the same in that the requests were for those family members, and friends, who had not yet come to themselves, and realized the treasure we have been taught these many years of the bridal truth. Without exception it seemed to me that these prayer requests were that these loved ones one get their eyes opened to what they are missing out on. That they too like the prodigal would come to themselves. I didn't hear any requesting prayer for their own individual needs, though they very well may have. I must say that I was deeply touched by the spirit I felt in that room that day, for it was the Holy Ghost revealing what he had accomplished in Brother Henry Smith's unfinished lesson. Our souls were being fed, and had been fed. We certainly thank God our Heavenly Father for His abundant provision for us.

LUKE 15:17 *And when he came to himself...* I found it extremely interesting that the phrase "he came to" is found thirty-seven times in scripture, the number that points to The Word of God. In this Parable of the Prodigal Son the turning point for this younger son was "when he came to himself." It was at this point he realized what he had left behind; what he used to have; and what he had been missing out on. He didn't fully appreciate what he had until he no longer had it. There is nothing greater than God the Father's love, and certainly the prodigal son didn't find this kind of love out in the world. Jesus said in JOHN 16:33 *...In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*. In 1 JOHN 2:15 and 16 we read: *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world*. When the prodigal son "came to himself" he essentially realized this was

true. The literal translation of LUKE 15:17 reads: "But coming to himself he said, How many servants of my father have plenty of loaves, and I am perishing with famine."

Brother Hawkins here wrote: "It was at the point of desperation that *"...he came to himself."* God also uses this kind of bankruptcy today, to show us our desperate needy condition. All of this time, we have not read of any remote thought he may have had of home, but now his need awakened memories and visions of the provisions offered by his father. It is the appreciation of the Father's image, which God would bring before every Christian. In their carnal state, they, like this young man, dream only of being a servant, and that is certainly better than what he is experiencing at the moment. He knows that even the *...hired servants have bread and to spare, and I perish with hunger! ...LUKE 15:17.*" {End of quote from Brother Hawkins.}

Let's read again the full list of thoughts that the prodigal son had after coming to himself. LUKE 15:17 *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20 And he arose, and came to his father.*

The far country had left the prodigal son destitute, and he realized in verse 17 that he perished with hunger. This hunger was physical, but the lesson here points to spiritual hunger. And one cannot leave the word of God, and find food that satisfies the spiritual man. In verse 18 he moves into action, and makes the decision to return back to his father. Remember he was in a far country, so the journey would take some time, but he didn't turn back, and as he proceeded he rehearsed what he would say, and here is what he came up with: *...Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.* To confess that I have sinned exceedingly, and have been wicked, ungrateful, and rebellious, not only here on earth, but I have sinned against heaven, and have violated God's law is quite a confession. The Greek word translated "sinned" in verse 18 is hamartano {ham-ar-tan'-o}, number 264 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, and it has the following meanings: 1) to be without a share in; 2) to miss the mark; 3) to err, or be mistaken; 4) to miss or wander from the path of uprightness and honour, to do or go wrong; 5) to wander from the law of God, violate God's law; to sin. Hamartano {ham-ar-tan'-o}, is found in thirty-seven verses of New Testament scripture, and once again we find another example of how the number thirty-seven points to THE WORD OF GOD. For the prodigal son to say "I have sinned" means he was saying "I have missed the mark, I have violated THE WORD OF GOD!" Keep in mind he hadn't confessed this to his father yet, he will do that in verse 21, but these were the thoughts he was rehearsing through his heart, and mind. Remember our discussion earlier between "the natural man," "the spiritual man," and the "carnal man," three different classes of people? "The natural man" is unsaved, "the carnal man," and "the spiritual man" are both saved; born again believers. "The carnal man" walks after the flesh, and "the spiritual man" walks after the Spirit. So what kind of thinking is *...I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants?* This prodigal son is thinking with his carnal mind, not yet fully realizing, nor appreciating the goodness of his father, nor his father's love. Stated another way, when he came to himself, down deep inside he knew his father loved him, but he didn't yet appreciate how much his father loved him. Thus we find in LUKE 15:20 *And he arose, and came to his father.* In his present state of fleshly thinking, this was a long journey, and not a journey made in haste either. It was a journey filled with shame of his own conduct, and perhaps with many doubts as to how his father would receive him. He may have even thought within himself, would his father still recognize him being clad in rags, poor, deprived and emaciated?

Now let's read the rest of LUKE 15:20 *But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.* This was not the gracious reception the prodigal son envisioned. How far is "a great way off?" I think EPHESIANS 1:4 best answers this question. EPHESIANS 1:4 *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.* Before the

foundation of the world God the Father saw us, and had compassion on us, and loved us, and had an eternal plan for us that was out of this world! Again let's read 1 JOHN 3:1 *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

We are getting down to the most important details of this parable. It is the Father's love that is emphasized in this parable. God the Father doesn't care what we have, for He gave it to us in the first place. He just wants our love, agape love; He wants to be our first love! EPHESIANS 2:4-7 expounded: *But God the Father, who is rich in mercy, for his great agape love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come (beyond the expiration date of this world) he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.* Yes our heaven Father saw us "a great way off," and He also sees us grown up into Christ in all things "a great way off" into the eternities yet future.

Back in LUKE 15:20 there are five things, five expressions of the father's love described in this verse, which also apply to God the Father's love for us. And by now we all know that five is the number of GRACE, so these also are five expressions of God's GRACE. First the prodigal son's father "saw him" a great way off. The father was looking for him, anticipating his return. Yes the prodigal son's father was disappointed, and grieved above measure when his younger son took off chasing after all that the world had to offer. Secondly the father "had compassion" on his returning emaciated son. But the father had always compassion on both of his sons. My father-in-law Brother Burge had eleven children, and the majority of his time in his later years was spent in praying for his children. He had compassion on them all. So too it is with our heavenly Father, He certainly has exceeding great compassion on us all! Thirdly here in LUKE 15:20 we find the father of the prodigal son running to greet him; running to hold him. The joy and the thrill and the high emotions are beyond words. The father couldn't get to him fast enough, so he "ran." The fourth point of the father's love we find in LUKE 15:20 is that when the father finally reached his returning son, he "fell on his neck." This is the third time in scripture where we find the phrase "fell on his neck." The first time is in GENESIS 33:4 when the twin brothers Jacob, and Esau greeted each other after years of being separated, and the second time is in GENESIS 46:29 when after decades Joseph met again his father Israel when he came to the land of Goshen. Jacob, who is Israel, thought his son Joseph was dead for many years, so words can not express the rush of emotions that each of these two men felt when they embraced in such a tender loving fashion. The father of the prodigal son "fell on his neck" with the same enthusiastic loving greeting as did Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his father Israel. The fifth expression the father's love found listed in LUKE 15:20 is that he "kissed him!" The phrase "kissed him" is found in exactly fourteen verses of scripture, and again fourteen is the number pointing to DELIVERANCE or SALVATION. The prodigal son was already saved as we pointed out when we began this portion of our study, but it had been a good long while since he had felt such love and heart felt affection as he now once again did in the loving arms of his father. Truly the prodigal son was greeted with GRACE!

The prodigal had been rehearsing in his heart for a long time the words he felt he needed to say in LUKE 15:21 *And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* Pointing out his own repulsive condition didn't have the slightest affect, nor change the immeasurable love that the father had for his wayward son. Nor do we find the father responding to his son's words. 1 JOHN 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* PSALMS 103:12 *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*

There are 44 "but God" statements in scripture. There are also seven "but the father" statements found in scripture, which speaks to the SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, the SPIRITUAL COMPLETION found in our next sentence of LUKE 15:22-24. LUKE 15:22 *But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on*

his feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Let's look at some of the riches found in this portion.

Notice this statement found in verse 22: *Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.* Brother Hawkins here writes: "The "best robe" is the robe of practical righteousness. When we are born again, God imputes or counts to our account the very righteousness of Christ (ROMANS 4), but it takes some time before we learn to practically and actually put on such a robe." {End of quote.} We read in ISAIAH 61:10 *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*

Let's spend a few moments discussing "the best." We talk a lot about having God's best, which is "the best," so let's do a quick summary of what that means. Have you asked the Lord for God's best in your own life? Would you recognize God's best if you seen it? These are good questions to ask yourself. Those Saints that will ultimately reign with Christ as His Bride will be the ones who achieve God's best, and they will recognize His best treasures daily in their own life. Stated a little differently, today is a special treasure, a precious gift from God containing twenty-four hours of "the best" of what God has ordained for you. Luke is the only writer of scripture to mention a little man of stature named Zacchaeus in scripture, and when Jesus first saw him having never yet met him, He knew who he was, and called him down from the tree he had climbed, and informed Zacchaeus that this was "the best" day of his life, stating in LUKE 19:5 *...Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.* Zacchaeus got saved that best day of his life, *...And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house,...* ...LUKE 19:9. Truly today is a special treasure of "the best" of what God has ordained for you, for indeed today as a believer Jesus is abiding in the house of thy heart!

Here are seven of "the best" highlights found in The Word of God:

1. God gave us the best when He gave us His only begotten Son to be our Lord and Saviour. In short, God's best is Jesus.

JOHN 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

EPHESIANS 2:4 *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

ROMANS 10:10 *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

1 CORINTHIANS 3:11 *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

Since God's best is Jesus, those who have accepted Jesus Christ into their own heart as their own personal Saviour, now have God's best living in them.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

GALATIANS 3:26 *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

GALATIANS 2:20 *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

2. God gave us the best Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, the Guide into all truth.

On the night of the last supper Jesus told His disciples some things about the Holy Ghost. JOHN 14:16 *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. ...26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. ...15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:...*16:12 *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*

In short, the Holy Ghost is the power that enables the believer to grow up unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; to help us have God's best.

EPHESIANS 4:13 *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:...* .

ACTS 1:8 *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

ACTS 19:2 *...Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?*

3. God gave us the best Apostle.

HEBREWS 3:1 *Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; 2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.*

EPHESIANS 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,...* .

ROMANS 11:13 *For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:...* .

2 TIMOTHY 1:11 *Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.*

1 CORINTHIANS 4:15 *For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*

1 CORINTHIANS 11:1 *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

1 CORINTHIANS 4:16 *Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.*

4. God gave us the best pastors and teachers.

EPHESIANS 4:11 *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:...* .

And what do they teach? Paul's gospel as inspired by the Holy Ghost, which magnifies our lovely Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! If your pastor, or teacher isn't following these guidelines, then they are not showing you the correct path that leads to having God's best.

5. God gave us the best (...fill in the blank here for yourself...) **Mom, Dad, Step-mom, Step-dad, Grand mother, Grand father, brother(s), sister(s), aunt(s), uncle(s), husband, wife, children, friends, boss, supervisor, co-workers, neighbors etc.** Before you take issue with this statement, realize that these people were fore ordained to be on your pathway in life, to aid you in your pursuit to be a full overcomer, and to have God's best. Did you ever look at it this way? Did you ever ask God for His best? Again would you recognize God's best if you seen it?

PSALMS 37:23 *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*

EPHESIANS 2:10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

6. God gave us the best individually prepared trials. The full overcomers truly latch onto this fact.

1 PETER 1:6 *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*

1 PETER 4:12 *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*

ROMANS 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

7. God gave us the best opportunity during this church age. This opportunity wasn't given to any of those in the ages past. This unique opportunity that we have during this church age is to be in the Bride of Christ!

In ACTS 15:14 we read: *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.* "A people for His name" can most simply be defined as Christians. Out of this "people for His name" comes also a rib portion of people who will be called "Mrs. Jesus," "The Bride of Christ," "The Lamb's wife." In REVELATION 19:7 we read: *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*

How does the Bride of Christ make herself ready? She recognizes these seven points of having God's best that we mentioned here. She knows Christ to be God's best of everything, and in everything.

Back to The Parable of The Prodigal Son, where we left off reading from LUKE 15:22 *But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.*

We just discussed at length "the best" that God has to offer us. In LUKE 15:22 we next find the father exhorting his servants to put a ring on the prodigal sons hand! How many times in a wedding ceremony did we hear Brother Hill expound upon the meaning of the ring. The ring, the wedding ring, is symbolic of love, and as Brother Hill used to point out, it was also symbolic of God's eternal love, which had no beginning, nor no end. He also pointed out how the ring was made of a metal lest tarnished. Brother Hawkins here wrote: "The ring is a seal, speaking of that which is eternal, and is symbolic of the eternal seal of the Holy Ghost which is given to us. (EPHESIANS 1:13 *...ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*)." {End of quoting Brother Hawkins.} The king's ring in scripture was a symbol of power and authority. Think about it for a moment, would the father give such a ring to one of his servants? This act of putting "a ring on his hand" further showed the exceeding love that the father had for his son. The Apostle Paul, who was fluent in three languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and the one, who called himself the chiefest of sinners, so he was also fluent in the exceeding riches of God's grace, and His great love wherewith He loved us. With the enabling power of the Holy Ghost Paul wrote the following familiar portion of scripture, which we reference quite often: EPHESIANS 2:4 *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)* 6 *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness*

toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. So we find in this parable that the father gave the prodigal “a ring,” expressing the exceeding love that the father had for his prodigal son. And one more thing about the ring on his hand mentioned here in LUKE 15:22. To wear a ring on the hand was a symbol of wealth and dignity, as well as a mark of favor, and, or of affection. We read of the Pharaoh of Joseph’s time demonstrating such favor toward Joseph in GENESIS 41:39 *And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: 40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. 41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. 42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph’s hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; 43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.*

This third item to be given unto the prodigal son was shoes for his feet. LUKE 15:22 *But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.* The servants most likely went barefoot, and no doubt when the prodigal returned home he too was barefoot, having wasted his substance walking in the filth of the world. The teaching of EPHESIANS 6:15 informs us what these shoes represent. EPHESIANS 6:15 *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.* This verse is taken from the section in EPHESIANS that talks about the armour of a good soldier of the Lord. 2 CORINTHIANS 5:7 informs us that we are to ...*walk by faith, not by sight.* By faith Enoch walked with God, and was translated. And all of the Old Testament worthies of faith also walked by faith. The full overcomers from this Church Age will too ...*walk by faith, not by sight.* ROMANS 4:12 informs us that we too are to walk in the steps of faith that Abraham did, for he was the father of the faithful. The Apostle Paul explains to us in ROMANS 6:4 that ...*we also should walk in newness of life!* Furthermore we are told by our beloved Apostle Paul to “...*walk in the Spirit...*” in GALATIANS 5:16 & 5:25. EPHESIANS 5:2 *And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.* Also Paul tells us in COLOSSIANS 4:5 to “walk in wisdom.” Israel was a figure of believers, who are delivered out of the bondage of sin, and from the power of the flesh, who finally enter into the land of Canaan, and fellowship with God the Father. The indication from DEUTERONOMY 8:4, and NEHEMIAH 9:21 is that during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness their shoes never wore out, or waxed old, nor did their feet swell! We read in THE SONG OF SOLOMON 7:1 *How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince’s daughter!* It is safe to say that the Bride of Christ will have the very kind of shoes we have been discussing in this section.

Next in LUKE 15:23 we read: *And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry.* Brother Hawkins here noted that “the fatted calf represents Christ, the Object of mutual fellowship between the Father and His children.” {End of quote.} In REVELATION 4:7 we read of the four living creatures, the four beasts, who are types like Jesus. Even though these four living creatures are a mystery to many, we know, and have been correctly taught that they are indeed the Bride of Christ pictured in type. REVELATION 4:6 *And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. 7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. 8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.* Brother Hill, and Brother Copley before him, and Brother Hawkins all have taught us that the four living creatures, the four beasts mentioned in verse 7 are also portraits of Jesus painted by the four gospel writers. MATTHEW pictured Christ as King; MARK pictured Christ as Servant; LUKE pictured Christ the Man, and JOHN pictured Christ the Heavenly Son of God. The lion is king of the beasts, and Jesus is pictured by MATTHEW’s gospel as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the King of the Jews.

The calf pictured by MARK's gospel as the perfect faithful servant; the perfect sacrifice for sinful man. LUKE's gospel picture Jesus Christ as the Son of Man, and the flying eagle, the king of the birds, the high flying heavenly one, the Eternal One is pictured in JOHN's gospel.

So as this relates to LUKE 15:23 in our parable of the prodigal son we find: *And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry...* pictures the best; Christ as the perfect servant, and the best sacrifice ever offered for the sins of man. 1 CORINTHIANS 5:7 states, in part: *For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:...* Christ is the best provision that can be set before a believer, or that he can feed upon. Jesus Christ was the best God had to offer, and Christ Jesus is the very best that Saints could ever desire! Christ is the true and real food, the *...meat to eat that ye know not of...* that Jesus Himself mentioned in JOHN 4:32. We are to feast upon The Word of God, who is Jesus for he is the true real food that satisfies our hungry, and thirsty spiritual soul. It is Christ Jesus, who both gives, and preserves life; nourishes, strengthens, refreshes, delights, and fattens with this *...meat to eat that ye know not of.* LUKE 15:23 *And bring hither the fatted calf...* means to put Christ to the forefront, and all full overcomers learn to put Christ first in anything, and everything. Jesus is their first love; the preeminent love in their life; the first love whom the Ephesians had left. May we all learn from the church at Ephesus and keep Jesus first in our lives. May He be our preeminent love. Jesus will be the first love of all full overcomers, thus He will always be in the forefront.

LUKE 15:23 *And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:* 24 *For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.* Next notice the words "be merry" both in verse 23 and 24. This phrase "be merry" is found exactly seven times in scripture, thus points to SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, and speaks to a glad rejoicing heart full of thankfulness. The full overcomer has learned to "*Rejoice evermore...*" 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16, and to "*...rejoice in the Lord...*" PHILIPPIANS 3:1. In PHILIPPIANS 4:4 Paul wrote from prison: *Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.* Memorize 1 THESSALONIANS 5:18 where is found one of the secrets of all full overcomers: *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* The Apostle Paul amplified upon this very same thought in EPHESIANS 5. EPHESIANS 5:18 *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;* 19 *Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;* 20 *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The reason for this feast, and being merry was that for the first time in his life the prodigal son was entering in into what it meant to be the son of his father. The prodigal son was beginning to appreciate the benefits of the grace of his father, and to enjoy the fellowship of his father. As a Christian we are encouraged to *...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ...* according to 2 PETER 3:18. As Brother Hawkins notes in his LUKE study book, the fatted calf represents Christ, the Object of mutual fellowship between God the Father and His children. We have in LUKE 15:23 & 24 a picture of full fellowship and feasting with God. As Brother Hawkins put it "this son finally discovered the intimate significance of such a feast. He knows now what it is like to really be merry - content with God's choice of blessings rather than the shallow experiences of the world. Such a celebration is held because "*this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry*" ...LUKE 15:24. {End of quoting Brother Hawkins.}

Recall when we started looking at this parable we noted that what is being discussed in this parable is two different heart attitudes found in the sons of God. The prodigal son had in the previous verses spent his time, and wasted his inheritance walking after the flesh as a carnal man, which means he was saved, but worldly. However now we find the prodigal in verse 24 beginning to learn how to walk with the Lord. In 2 CORINTHIANS 5:7 the Apostle Paul wrote how we are to walk, writing: *(For we walk by faith, not by sight:).* Paul also wrote that we are to: "*...walk in newness of life...*" in ROMANS 6:4; "*...walk in the Spirit...*" GALATIANS 5:16 & 25; "*...walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us...*" EPHESIANS 5:2; and to "*...walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;*" ...COLOSSIANS 1:10. This is how

the spiritual man walks, after the leading of the Holy Spirit! When this begins to happen God the Father, and the sons of God ...*they began to be merry...* just like is found stated in LUKE 15:24.

LUKE 15:25 through 32 focuses mainly upon the elder son of the father. Again remember both were sons of the father, depicting to us sons of God. The elder son never left his father, but his heart attitude was also that of the carnal man, who walks after the flesh. We see his carnality in his actions. And also recall what Brother Hawkins noted earlier, that “The elder, who is also a son, is a believer, but is controlled by the Pharisaical attitude of the Adamic or “elder” old creation.” With this background let’s read these last verses of LUKE 15.

LUKE 15:25 *Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. 28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. 29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: 30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. 31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*

Note the attitudes of the elder brother. When he heard the news that his younger brother was “safe and sound” instead of being happy, and glad, he was angry verse 28 tells us, and wanted no part in the fellowship that was to be had with his father because of his younger brother. Jealousy reared its ugly head. He was envious. These are inward qualities of the flesh. The Apostle Paul wrote in ROMANS 7:18 *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.* Furthermore we find the elder brother in verse 29 was full of himself, with his focus being on me, myself, and I. He had no thought or concern for others, even his own brother. Furthermore he then declared to his father the merit of his own works, the implication being that his father was really indebted to him.

Here is what Brother Hawkins wrote: “Like his brother, (the elder brother) depicts the carnal Christian, but instead of worldliness he shows the attitude of the Pharisee, who is motivated and controlled by the flesh, regardless of a pious appearance. One of the first responses is anger; another is separation from fellowship, as he refused to go in even though he knew his father was there as well as his brother. He let his own pride keep him from feasting on the fatted calf, which was available to him also.” “...Next, he blames his father for being unfair, as he accuses: “...*thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends...*” LUKE 15:29. The glaring, but unwise characteristic of comparing himself with others, is seen as he points out the sins of his brother: “...*But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf...*” LUKE 15:30.” {End of quoting Brother Hawkins.}

Let’s read again the fathers response. LUKE 15:31 *And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.* We read in JAMES 1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* This simply means God doesn’t change. God the Father has always been, and always will be a God of grace. The same opportunity to begin to be merry was the eldest son’s also, but he was too selfish to see it, or apprehend it. As Brother Hawkins here noted: “Self-centered folks, as represented by this elder brother, can rejoice only in what is a benefit to themselves.”

As we conclude our thoughts from this parable of the prodigal son, let’s take note of the word “merry,” which is found four times in this parable (see verses 23, 24, 29 and 32). In total we find the word “merry” twenty-eight times in scripture, the number pointing to ETERNAL LIFE. Both of these sons in the parable of the prodigal son had eternal life. Note again LUKE 15:24 *For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.* The Greek

word translated “merry” all four times in this parable is euphraino {yoo-frah'-ee-no}, number 2165 in The Strong’s Greek Concordance, meaning: to be glad, to be merry, to rejoice, to rejoice in, be delighted with, to be happy, to cheer, and to make glad. We find the Greek euphraino {yoo-frah'-ee-no} fourteen times in the New Testament, and again fourteen is the number pointing to DELIVERANCE, or SALVATION. We find here in LUKE 15:24 that *...they began to be merry...* the implication being that for the first time his younger son began to realize what a wonderful SALVATION he had, and what it meant to have ETERNAL LIFE. Thus he began to be merry, he began to grow in his love, and appreciation of who he was as a son of God! LUKE 15:24 *For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.* This thought is expressed again in LUKE 15:32 to the eldest son: *...for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found...* but the eldest son being so self-centered as he was couldn’t begin to make merry, and thus he missed out on the best of what was also available unto him.