The Elder Son

Intro: In Luke 15, Jesus gives three parables. The last of these three is generally called the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), which is what we wish to study at this time.

I. BACKGROUND
A. He was born in innocence.
   1. He was the firstborn; Gen. 49:3 “Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:”
   2. No doubt he, as children do, brought delight to his parents. They must have thrilled at his smile, childlike laughter, his first word and step, etc.
B. The birth of the second must have multiplied their joy.
   1. The elder brother now enjoyed the joy of brotherhood.
   2. They must have fought and played with each other, but willing to take on the world for each other.
C. The younger son’s decision.
   1. He wanted to live life in the “fast lane.”
   2. He got his portion of the inheritance and left; Luke 15:13 “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.”
   3. Wasteful living took all his inheritance.
   4. Poverty and hunger took away all the pleasure of sin.
   5. Thoughts of a good home filled his heart. 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!”
   6. He left the far country coming home with godly sorrow and penitence.
   7. His father sees him and embraces him with compassion and forgiveness.
   8. They have a feast for the formerly lost son.
D. The elder son.
   1. Refused to join the feast and spurned his father’s tender entreaty.
   2. He buried himself in the cloak of self-pity.
   3. The former innocence had given way to the ugliness of sin.
      a. Brotherly love was replaced by contempt.
      b. Parental delight replaced by sorrow and disappointment.
   4. Notice some of the sins of the elder brother.

II. SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.
A. Luke 15:29 “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:”
   1. Notice the personal pronouns.
   2. He viewed his life with perfection.
   3. He felt no need for grace.
      a. He looked at all life from the perspective of self.
      b. He operated on the system of human merit and regarded himself as self-sufficient.
B. The need of God’s grace.
   1. Man’s existence is linked to God’s grace.
      a. He created us; Gen. 1.
b. He sustains us
   (1) Mat. 5:45 “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his
   sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”
   (2) Acts 14:17 “Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave
   us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”
   (3) Col. 1:17 “And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

c. Everything we know as good in this life is as a result of God; Jam. 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.”

2. Man simply could not exist with God.

III. INGRATITUDE.
   A. Luke 15:12 “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.”
   1. He divided unto both what was their’s by inheritance.
   2. The eldest son would receive a double portion.
   B. Luke 15:31 “And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.”
   1. His father’s wealth was at his disposal.
   2. His primary concern was what he had failed to receive.
   3. Luke 15:29 “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:”
   4. Instead of thank you, he said why didn’t you.
   C. Ingratitude leads to all sorts of sin.
      1. Israel.
         a. Did not appreciate what God had given them so they murmured against God.
            (1) Num. 11:4-6 “And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of
            Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? 5We remember the fish, which
            we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and
            the garlick: 6But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our
            eyes.”
            (2) Num. 20:2-5 “And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves
            together against Moses and against Aaron. 3And the people chode with Moses, and spake,
saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! 4And why have
we brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should
die there? 5And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this
evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any
water to drink.”
            (3) 1 Cor. 10:10 “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of
            the destroyer.”
         b. Their failure to appreciate the land of Israel and its blessings led them to idolatry.
      2. Egypt’s new Pharaoh did not appreciate what Joseph had done leading to years of
bondage for Israel.
   D. We are to be grateful.
      1. 2 Cor. 9:11 “Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving
to God.”
      2. Eph. 5:20 “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus
Christ;”
      3. 1 The. 5:18 “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”
IV. CALLOUSNESS.

A. What greater news could there be than that his brother had been restored.
   1. Joy should have filled the older brother for his brother’s safe return.
   2. Instead, the elder brother only had reproach and censure; Luke 15:28-30 “And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. 29And 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. 30But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.”
   3. This should have been a time of great rejoicing.
      a. Rom. 12:15 “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”
      b. Luke 15:9-10 “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. 10Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

B. How do we act toward those who have gone astray and then been restored?

V. SIN HARDENS.

A. Psa. 1:1 “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”

B. Heb. 3:13 “But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

C. The elder son’s heart was hardened by the encroachment of sin.

Conclusion: Do not live a life of sin nor allow your heart to be hardened by sin. Live a life that God would have us to live.