***The Prodigal Son

Colossians 2:18-19

COL-470***

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Our subject is "The Error of Angelic Worship," segment number 27, on Colossians 2:18-19.

The Christian's daily life is designed by God to be a great adventure with our Father from the point of salvation to one's death, or to the rapture of the church. That is the plan. But unfortunately for most Christians, the life as a Christian is a drag, and is lacking a sense of purpose, and lacking any real fellowship with the Father. It ought not to be that way. That is not the way of the Christ-like life. The object of this lifelong adventure, which we have with God, is to fulfill our divinely assigned mission of Christian service.

We have this pointed out to us in a verse that you're well-acquainted with, in Ephesians 2:10: "For we Christians are His (God's) workmanship, created spiritually alive in Christ Jesus," for what? For good works – not to boogie through life. We get a lot of fun out of it, but it's for good works: "Which good works God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." This is our Christian mission. If a Christian is not walking through life and saying, "I've met the challenge this day of my assignment," then that life is a wasted life. And we are to be most pitied. God the Holy Spirit, through the expository preaching ministry of your right local church and pastor-teacher, trains the believer in grace-age, Bible doctrine, and in the spiritual power system of the Holy Spirit, which enables that believer to produce divine good works.

Ephesians 4:11-12 tells us that God provides this communicator called the pastor-teacher to do that job. For the faithful fulfillment of one's mission, God will reward the church-age believer at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and thereby to enrich his eternity forever (2 Corinthians 5:10). This is the orientation of our lives if they are to have meaning and purpose. This is the lighthouse, as you're coming into the harbor of the various events that you will meet in life, and the shoals of disaster that lie there under the water. It is this that is our guidance.

2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ." This happens after the rapture of the church in heaven: "That each one may be recompensed for the deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. This is not a decision for salvation: heaven; or, hell. This is a decision with what you did with the life – how you fulfilled the mission, and how God can deservedly and properly reward you with eternal treasures.

**We Choose to Invest for Eternity**

Now, the individual Christian is the one who chooses to live the spiritual life as God's steward of the time he's given of a life; of the talents that he's given; and, of the treasures which have been entrusted to him. And he chooses to live the carnal life of materialistic, self-centered Christian, or he chooses to obey God, and to invest for eternity. It is your choice. You do have the option to go one way or the other. With one, you go to heaven without treasures of eternal blessing. With the other, you'll still go to heaven, but enriched beyond your fondest dreams.

Some Christians, under the special church-age power system, choose to follow a godly lifestyle, and one which was often exemplified in the Old Testament scripture by the saints of old. These people had to operate without the indwelling, ever-present power of the Holy Spirit. All they had was their self-determination. The Mosaic code told you what was the standard – what you should do, but there was no power to do it. Yet, we read about Enoch and Noah, and they walked with God. Even under those conditions, they rose to walking with God. With whom have you walked this week? Of Abraham, we're told he was a friend of God – what an honored title. How friendly have you been to God this week?

We read of David – that he was a man after God's own heart. This is a man that he could trust. This is the man you would pick to go into combat, and to whom you wouldn't trust your life, because he was one after your own heart. The Christian may have a pattern of choosing to assist in God's work, which was exemplified by the dedication of Epaphroditus, a young man who was associated for a while with the apostle Paul, when Paul was in prison. And in Philippians 2:25, Paul describes Epaphroditus as: "My brother." He's in the family of God – a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those are the people we want to go into spiritual combat with. Paul called him: "My fellow worker." Epaphroditus had a servant's heart in the Lord's work. He wasn't always thinking about excusing himself: "I don't feel too well. I'm really busy. I'm tied up. I have to be careful to take care of myself, and all the other things that Satan tells us." Paul called him, "My fellow worker."

It's a tragedy if the believers in the local congregation cannot look at you and say, "There's one of my fellow workers." When the time comes to dig in, he'll grab a shovel and dig in with me."

Then Paul called Epaphroditus: "My fellow soldier" – perhaps the greatest honor of all. On the battle line of the angelic conflict, Epaphroditus was ready to put himself in harm's way. Any time you're going to do soldiering, you're putting yourself in harm's way. That's true in natural combat, and that's true in spiritual combat.

**The Prize**

So, we have great examples in Scripture, in both the Old and New Testaments, of what it is for Christians to use in life to the glory of God. All this is made possible, in time (during the lifetime) with the marvelous eternal enrichment in eternity because of what Colossians 2:18 calls "the prize." Paul says, "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize. Don't let anybody rob you of your prize." We have been spending time studying what is the prize? When you're saved, God says, "Congratulations, you've just won this for time and eternity." And it's a prize, and it is a grace prize – something that you have been given. This prize is the ability to obey the moral code compatible with the character of God. You can do right. This prize is the capacity to produce divine good works of service by means of the indwelling Holy Spirit. You have guidance on what to invest your time; your talents; and, your treasures in, and make them count for eternity.

This prize includes being able to go on to a mature, spiritual, Christlike lifestyle. None of this was possessed to any degree in the Old Testament, as it is with us in the New Testament. The Old Testament was self-effort, but in the New Testament God does it for us, unless you blank Him out, and unless you neutralize Him. Christians can be robbed of this spiritual power prize system by dependence on human effort; influenced by the world system around them; by the sin nature within them; or, by Satan. Religious ritualism replaces reality. It is easy for a Christian to get caught up in the lifestyle of the world, especially when you know where your next meal is coming from.

Then the thought about God becomes less important. By the baptism of the Holy Spirit, at the point of grace salvation, every Christian was placed permanently into Christ, so that the spiritual power system is always available, unless it is neutralized by our carnality. This is always available, unless we're out of temporal fellowship. 1 Corinthians 12:13 points that out to us: "By one baptism, we've been placed into the body of Christ."

Christians, however, in this church that we have been studying (the church at Laodicea) are a classic example of carnal believers who compromise the Christlike way of life because of their material well-being and their greed. And, we read about these people in Revelation 3:14-22. These people were Christians, and they were wealthy. They had a good life, unlike many others who suffered in the Roman world. They were in a position of special privilege. And the result was that they began to think they were really something cool. And they did not see themselves as they really were.

Compare this to the admonition of Romans 12:3. Paul says, "For through the grace given to me, I know what it is to have God carrying me through life – to be what I ought to be, and can be – the grace given to me. I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment as God has allotted to each a measure of faith."

So, don't get your nose up in the air because you know Bible doctrine; because you know church-age truth; or, because you know the special power system of doctrine and the Holy Spirit, and the confession of known sins that enables you to go to the moon in your spiritual life, because it can be neutralized. And when it is, you have the picture that you have here in Laodicea, where the Lord Jesus Christ is seen as standing outside the heart's door of these people, and knocking for entrance. Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." This is the door of a carnal Christian's heart, and they have to decide to open or to close it: "If they open up; come in with Him; dine with Him; and, He with me, I'll get back into fellowship."

Well, as you know, this is a very famous picture that was drawn of that scene. And somebody put it on my chair this morning – Christ knocking at the heart's door. If you look more closely, you notice that something is missing here, as is pointed out to the artist – there's no doorknob. It has no latch. How do you get in? And the artist said that that's because the latch is on the inside. Christ is knocking and saying, "Come on, Christian: confess; admit; repent; and, open up the door. Let me get in there and sit down and have a meal – a time of fellowship with you, and a time of blessing. Why do you want to leave me outside of your life, standing here, knocking and pleading, when I have the riches, and you're on the inside? You've got nothing. But the Laodiceans, who are on the inside, were rich people. They had everything. They didn't have to ask for anything, so they thought they were something. That latch is on the inside, and this is the heart's door of the believer. This is not a salvation picture. This is not Christ knocking at the door, in order to invite you to salvation.

So, here's the Lord Jesus Christ. The hearts of the Laodicean Christians are pleading with Him (His own children) to open the door, and let Him into the life. Now, don't blow this off, and say, "I wouldn't do that." Yes, you would. And we do this, very easily, as soon as you lose your focus of the world that you're living in. And what kind of a place is it? You'll do this. And all of a sudden, when the light comes crashing down around your ears, you'll be shocked to realize how foolish you have been, and what eternal consequences there would be.

So, the carnal (out of temporal fellowship) Laodiceans had to choose to let Christ in (open the door); or, to ignore as a people, and stop up their ears, and continue in their worldly lifestyle that they just loved so much, and which was so fun, and it was. The Laodiceans equated their material wealth with being spiritually rich, and in favor with God the Father. This is one of the dumbest things. I've heard Christine say that people who are in favor with God, and are pleasing to God are blessed with material wealth. This would be like: the Roman Catholic Church, one of the richest around; or, Islam, one of the even richer around. No. Material doesn't mean anything. These Laodiceans had the good life, but they were, in fact, totally lacking in grace-age doctrine; in and experiential sanctification; and, in all spiritual insights, they had lost their way. They didn't know where they were. The true divine evaluation of them was that they were spiritually blind. Jesus said to them: "You're terribly poor in terms of treasures in heaven." Jesus said, "You make Me sick. You nauseate Me. That's how strong is the picture of a Christian who slams the door in the face of Jesus Christ when it comes to living a Christ-like life. In exchange for what? For living a life with Satan's world?

Therefore, Christ called upon this Laodicean congregation (Christians) to change their minds, and to come to the truth – the reality that is to be found in the mind of God, and to see themselves as they are. The worst part of spiritual backsliding (or revisionism) of a Christian is that he loses sight of himself as he really is. And what's the consequence of that? The most terrible thing in the world – you lose the potential of your life span.

Luke 9:23-25: "Jesus was saying to them all, 'If anybody wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself; take up his cross daily; and, follow me. What is your cross? Ephesians 2:10. We just read it. It is the works that God has provided for you to do, for which He will give you the time; the talents; and the treasures to execute.

Luke 9:24: "For whoever wishes to save his life (his life on earth – to preserve his life on earth for his interests) shall lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake, he is the one who will save it." Read it this way: "Forever who uses his life for himself shall lose it. But whoever uses up the days of his life for My sake will save his life." Save it for what? For rewards in heaven: "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, on a financial basis, and he forfeits himself? He forfeits his life? At the Judgment Seat of Christ, that's where the tears are going to come from. So, it's good to remember what we know.

The Laodiceans are a tragic example. If the carnal Christian repents, and he opens his heart's door to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord says, "I'll come in. We'll be friends again, (as always, as soon as confession is made), and we'll sit down (the highest expression of Christian fellowship) to share a meal together. And that's what we'll do – friends sharing a meal.

**The Prodigal Son**

There is in Scripture, one of the parables of Jesus, that I think can be used as an analogy of carnality in confession. Please turn to Luke 15:11. We call this the story of the Prodigal Son. This parable has a primary meaning. It is dealing with the attitude of the Pharisees and the scribes, who looked down on sinners and other people. The Pharisees considered that they had a special relationship with God. Then they looked at Jesus, and He sits down and eats with sinners as if they were significant people. And all of a sudden, Jesus is telling them that these people, that they consider insignificant, are going to be there in the kingdom with Him. And the Pharisees picked up the implication: "Those of you who think you're so great religiously, you're not even going to be there. That's the background.

However, here's an analogy, and I think we can apply it in another direction. Verse 11: "And He (Jesus) said, 'A certain man had two sons.'" We may view "a certain man" as God the Father. It is this Father in this home: "The younger of them said to his Father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' And He divided His wealth between them." Here are these two sons, and we may view them as both being in fellowship. At the point of salvation, we accept Christ as Savior. We've received salvation by faith, and we immediately enter this inner circle of the spiritual Christian. Here, we are controlled by God the Holy Spirit; our prayers are being answered; and, we are enabled to produce divine good works that receive eternal rewards in heaven. Both of these sons are in here now. They've been in fellowship with their Father, and they've been serving Him.

Now, something happens with the younger one. He wants to get his part of the inheritance, and bug out. Throughout all of this, these two sons remain sons. But their relationship to their Father, of fellowship and of obedience, changes dramatically. Once we are born into God's family, there's no reversing the matter (John 10:27-29). We cannot be taken out of His hand (Romans 8:38-39). Once we're here, we're in the family. We have entered eternal fellowship by faith in Christ. We have entered the temporal fellowship that is in our experience at the point of salvation.

**Sin**

However, when sin comes in, and we begin to work on the sin nature of the world system, and our focus changes from the Christ-like life to things of the world, some evil takes us out of that inner circle fellowship, but not out of salvation. We're still in eternal fellowship. But out he goes. We cannot leave our natural, or our spiritual, family, even if we wanted to. 2 Timothy 2:13 points that out. We are born into the family. Whatever family you're born into, on a physical basis, you stay in that family, no matter what your conduct is. This is true of salvation also. Once you're born into the family of God, that's irreversible. But your fellowship with your Father – that can change. Your place of blessing – that can change.

So, these two sons are both on good terms with their Father. The younger son decides that he would like his part of the inheritance, which is usually not given until the Father is incapacitated to conduct the business, or he dies.

So, the Father gives him his share of the estate. The material assets for time represent, in this analogy, the eternal operating assets that a Christian has. As you know, there are at least 36 things that a Christian receives at the point of salvation from God, which he did not have. There are 36 magnificent, spiritual things. You'll have to look it up on the Philippians series tapes, to go through them one-by-one. But the Christian, at the point of his salvation, is an enormously wealthy person, where wealth really counts. And this is pointed out by the prophet Isaiah – that God is waiting to reward those who are faithful to Him.

In Isaiah 30:18, speaking to Israel, God says, "Therefore, the Lord longs to be gracious to you. He wants to treat you in grace and blessing. Therefore, He waits on high to have compassion on you." So, you have this picture of God sitting in heaven on His throne; tapping His foot; and, waiting for you to get around to repentance and confession, and on track with your mission: "For the Lord is a God of justice." His fairness cannot bless you when you're out of fellowship. His blessings cannot be withheld from you when you're in fellowship. That's fairness, either way: "How blessed are those who long for Him! How blessed is the person who has a heart desire for Christ!

So, the Father here, in the Prodigal Son divided the world to both sons. And God, at the point of salvation, gives us thousands of promises – thousands of things that are promised to us as Christians. If you don't use them now, they're no good in heaven. But they come one after another – these promises in New Testament Christianity. So, nobody is poor as a Christian when it comes to where real wealth is going to be enjoyed. The Bible now tells us that this father made the division of His capital.

Verse 13: "Not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together; put it in his backpack; put all the money in there; and, went on a journey into a distant country. He had bigger plans that were not godly plans. When a young person has plans that are not godly plans, and he is in the presence, in the home, of godly parents, what does the kid do? He gets out of it. You can always count on that: "I want out of here. I want to be away from here.

I had a lady one time say, "I don't attend Berean church anymore because you always make me feel guilty. Why should I sit there and feel guilty by your preaching?" It never occurred to her that what she was hearing was what God thought. Maybe it was God making her feel guilty. But when you don't want to face up to a spiritual reality, you bug out.

So, this kid goes a long way off. There, he lived high on the hog. He squandered his estate with loose living. He's now way out of fellowship with his Father. Here it implies that the financial resources he took with him – he just blew it. He had lots of friends to help him spend it. He was in a deep state of carnality. And he was no longer yielded to anything of the spiritual principles that he had learned from his Father.

You cannot always distinguish between behavior patterns of carnal Christians and of unbelievers. 1 Corinthians 3:3 says: here you are – a Christian, but you're living just like a person of the world. We look at you, and nobody would think you *are* a Christian. Many times, in some respect, every Christian plays the prodigal son with his own besetting sin. We are tempted to walk off from the pattern of the Christ-like life. And this is what the Laodiceans did. The pattern of most Christians is to keep up a sweetness-and-light front, so that nobody notices what finks they are on the inside. When they are around Christians, they act with smiles and kindness, and niceness, and yet, on the inside, their longing is for the devil's world.

So, the respectable Christian can often con other people about him in a very terrible way. But that doesn't matter. It's what God sees that counts. You might con other people that you're something that you're not, but God knows better. So, going through your motions is not spirituality.

Verse 14: "Now, when he had spent everything, he didn't even put anything aside. It's all gone now. A severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be in need." He squandered his capital. Here, the Christian is cutting himself off from all the divine enablements that are his in the Christian life. There are 36 things that are available for his blessing. Now he is spiritually poor, because he's out of fellowship.

So, this man began to be in want – the discipline of suffering. And a Christian, who is out of fellowship, is told: "If you do not repent (cease and desist), I will begin to put pressure on you that may lead to your physical death." God judges unbelievers in time and eternity; and, He judges Christians. So, now, what is this kid going to do? He knew he was so smart. He knew that the thing he needed to get away from, was the bugging presence of his Father. And now he has nothing. And he has come upon hard times socially.

**Swine**

Verse 15: "And he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into the field to feed swine. Now, you must understand that this is a Jewish boy. He had never eaten a piece of pork in his life. And he is offended by even touching a pig. And here he is, in this far country. He attaches himself (hires himself out) to the citizen. And he goes to feed the swine.

Verse 16: "And he was longing to fill his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him." The carob tree produces these pods. It's food for the pigs. And this is what he was doing. He was giving them this food. So, he's coming up with his bucket of slopped-up pods mixture, and pouring it out to the pigs. And they were just having a wonderful time, getting fatter. And he was starving and getting thinner. That's a bad situation. And nobody was coming up, and giving him anything.

Verse 16 he says, "He was longing." The Greek word is in a tense that means it went again, and again, and again – the grinding hunger of his hunger pains was just repeated, and repeated. And he was getting desperate now, literally without food. He had a pathetic picture. We may have an analogy here of a believer, out of temporal fellowship, wallowing in the world's spiritual confusion, and holding its human viewpoint assumptions. Here you have a Jew slopping pigs. How low can you get? The carnal Christian degenerates in his taste. He goes from lambs chops to pig slop, when he wants to be in the lifestyle of the world. That's what's sad – somebody who was reared with an opportunity to know what it is to walk in the noble character of Christ. And instead, he said he wants to get away from home, to get out into the world, where he can free to associate with the pigs, and share their slop with them.

He leaves a home of provision of lamb chops to go with the pigs. No one provided food to this hungry prodigal. He himself was providing food for the pigs. So, finally he decided that this was too much – the result of all the desperation that he had. And he began sharing the pigs' food with them. It is desperation to be able to eat something.

In verse 17, he comes to his senses. God mounts the discipline, and we begin to start thinking. All of a sudden, all our self-confidence drains out: "But when he came to his senses." What a refreshing statement! What did he come to? He recognized that the old man was right. He recognize that he had sinned. He recognized that he was out of sync with all the right things that his Father had taught him. Those things which were the things of God. And he admitted the reality of his situation. He said, "How many of my Father's hired hands have more than enough bread, but I'm dying here with hunger." He says, "Back home, the men who are hired hands (they're not the sons) – they have good food, and I'm starving."

Here's a Christian with all the spiritual resources when he's in fellowship with his Heavenly Father; the knowledge of the Word of God; the principle of prayer; the power of prayer; and, the Holy Spirit guidance and enablement. Those rich qualities are all gone. Those are the true riches. The Christian who is poor is not the one who is low on funds, but the one who can't pray to God and get answers – the one who cannot know where to look in Scripture and say, "This is the path I should follow. This is the way of righteousness. And the one who does not have this Holy Spirit power to do what is right. So, you go through life as a clown, coming up to the trough to elbow the pigs out of the way, so that you can share their slop.

Well, the Prodigal Son, the son of the master, was starving to death. And spiritual starvation is not uncommon among Christians today. Any time you sit in a church where there is no expository preaching on the part of the pastor-teacher, then you're not being fed. And there's only one alternative. Your emotions are being played on. You're being calculated and maneuvered as to how you will be moved to do something that the organization wants you to do.

In verse 18, he says, "I will get up; go to my Father; and, will say to Him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight.'" Finally, he decides that his Father was right. The way of life his Father had taught him, based on Old Testament Scriptures, was right. And he says, "I'm going back home." He gathers up whatever stuff he had; goes down the road; starts thumbing a ride in the first chariot that comes by; and, heads out, back to home again. He's ready now to confess to his Father: "I will get up. I will go to my Father, and I will say to him." The Laodiceans needed to finally realize that they had had enough time with the pig slop, and it was time to return to the lamb chops. And the first step was to go back to his Father and confess, and make the admission of what he had done, and what he was. This son is ready now to confess to his Father that he had sinned against God's will, in the treatment his Father.

Notice that the end of verse 18 says, "I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight." Never forget that while sin injures people, and while sin may be against certain people, that it is, first of all, against God. When we sin, it is always against God. So, the next time you might want to think about doing something pointedly evil, and against the law, and the will, and the grace of God, remember that that's sinning against God. Do you think that He's not going to know that? That is number one. But, in the process, this son now realizes: "I've hurt my Father. I have mistreated Him, for all of His kindness to me."

This is no big emotional jag here. He's not saying, "I'm going to go home, and I'm going to weep, and I'm going to tell Him how sorry I feel for all this." It's just what f1 John 1:9 says to do: "Admit you're wrong:" "If we confess ("homologeo") – I admit – if we admit that we're wrong (if we confess our sins), He (God the Father) is faithful to forgive us our sins (every time), and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (the sins that we have not been aware of, or forgotten, that we've never confessed – when repentance comes for what you know, it covers all the rest."

So, he comes, with no weeping; no wailing; and, no emotionalism. This is what the devil is egging him on to do: get emotional about this; get really emotional; and, get on top of this.

I was shocked this week. Somebody told me a very prominent Bible church in our vicinity has a bench down front called "the mourners bench," where people can come, and kneel, and pray to rededicate their lives, and find forgiveness, and I don't know what all else. That's big stuff. My predecessor here at Berean Church, half-a-century ago, had a bench down front over in the other building, in the library room. And it was covered with an army blanket. I thought that was in very poor taste on his part. At least if he's going to ask people to come down, he should have covered it with a Marine Corps green blanket to have added the dignity of the moment. But as it was, he's got this army blanket, and it was really fun at the end of the service. People who needed to come and get right with God were called to come forward to kneel at the mourner's bench, and to pray for the forgiveness they needed. It was fun to see who had been fooling around that week. It was worth coming to church: Aha, so, I wouldn't have thought that of her. Of him, I would. But this was really weird. That's emotionalism. And that's the devil' trump card.

So, there's no emotional jag. He recognizes that he has sinned. He has sinned, first of all, against God. And consequently, he has sinned against his father.

In verse 19, he prepares a little penance speech that he's going to give. He's still not right on track. He's going to go home, and tell his father to assign him some penance. This is like when you go to your Roman Catholic priest, and he assigns something (a penance) that you must do to suffer for your temporal suffering for your sin.

In verse 19, he says, "I'm going to say to him, 'I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.'" Well, that might be true. But nevertheless, you still are His son: "Make me as one of your hired men," that would make him no longer worthy. He considers his position of sonship having been forfeited. But we are not God's sons because of our worthiness. We are His Sons as this prodigal was this father's son by birth. And by our spiritual birth, through faith in Jesus Christ, we are His Sons. It is the worthiness of Christ that has made us His Sons – not some worthiness in ourselves. The prodigal could never cease being this man's son. There was a birth relationship – not a hired-hand relationship. But we can understand what he's trying to say – that he doesn't deserve to have the honored privilege of being a son in the family.

Carnal, out-of-fellowship believers do not return to God's blessing by some kind of determination to re dedicate their lives to do something better, or to rededicate to some ideal life. This is a common invitation in churches too. In earlier times (I have been in that circle for some time now), every service would end with: "Please raise your hand if you want to rededicate your life to Christ." Rededicate my life? Yeah, get back on track in God's blessing. Well, how do I do that? And that's where the mourners' bench came in. Get down here, and weep and wail, and rededicate, and make new promises that you'll break. The way you come back to God is to admit your sin to Him – not to your friends; not to your pastor; not to your priest; and, not to your business associates, or anyone else. Admit, by confession, to the Father. He says, "I'll deal with it from there. I'll put it behind My back. We're back on track. You're in my blessing. You've got the full standing of an adult, mature son in this, with all the privileges of that pertaining thereto.

So, here are Christians who are trying, by an emotional act, to get back in God's favor. And it never works. Whole denominations are trained to go through this regularly – every Sunday. They go through this emotional jag. And the result is what? Spiritually miserable Christians who keep falling and failing spiritually, and who, worst of all, because they never get back in fellowship, they never store treasures in heaven. What a great eternal loss that's going to be!

The son said, "Make me your hired hand." That was the penance that he said: "This is what I'm going to suggest on how the Father should deal with me."

So, he decides to carry through. He has a recommendation of penance. He understands what he has done wrong. He sees what must be done to get back on track. He realizes that he has enormous financial material resources at home, and he's living with pigs and eating their food. He came to his senses, and he realizes he needs to do something with the Father.

Now, how is the Father going to respond to this when he walks in, and comes down that road, back to that ranch, and back to the Father's house? And we should look at that tonight.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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