

The Lost Brother

Some preachers were discussing the Bible one day when the subject of the elder brother and his identity came up. They were trying to figure out who he was. One older preacher spoke up and said, "I know who he is. In fact, I saw him just yesterday." The other ministers, eager to hear his response asked, "Who is he?" The wise old preacher said simply, "He is me."

Read Luke 15:25-32

The Lord Jesus is still talking about lost things in this section of Luke. He is still dealing with the attitude of the Scribes and Pharisees toward lost sinners, (v. 1-2). This elder brother pictures one who is involved in the things of the father, but who, sadly, has no real relationship with the father. He might be in the father's house, but he is still lost. He is still in the "distant country" in his heart.

This study is directed to two types of people. First, to those who are lost in sin and need to be saved. You might be religious, you might be a church member, you might be a good, moral person, but you have never been saved. God has a word for you today.

Second, this study is for the saved, but who have the same attitude as the elder brother. Those who are upset that God is blessing others; who don't like it when the prodigal sons come home. People who refuse to rejoice over what God is doing because it isn't being done their way.

V. 25 - The position the elder brother held within the family:

A position of privilege - He is the elder brother. As such, he is entitled to two-thirds of His father's possessions, (Deut. 21:17). Since his younger brother has already received his part of the inheritance, (v. 12), everything belongs to this man. When his father dies, not only will he receive his father's possessions, he will also become the head of the family. Much has been given to his younger brother already and more is on the way.

A position of productivity - This man is *in the fields*. He is busy doing his father's business. While his younger brother has been off in the distant country living it up.

Remember that this parable is directed to the Pharisees, teachers of the law, and religious elite who were muttering about Jesus. These people were also in a place of privilege. After all, they had been given the Law and the revelation of the coming of Messiah. They had been given the truth. The Pharisees and the scribes looked good to men, but there was a problem within their hearts. - Look up: 1 Samuel 16:7

V. 25-30 - The eldest brother's problem with the festivities

When he hears why there is a celebration, he is angry and refuses to go in to the party. His father pleads with him to come but his reply reveals his heart. He reminds the father of his faithful service and complains that he has never been given a feast for what he has done (v.29).

1. He did not care that his lost brother had come home.
2. He did not care about that which pleased the father.
3. He did not care about the glory of the father, he wanted the glory for what he had been doing.
4. He even saw his service to the father as "slavery" (v. 29). He didn't serve his father out of love.

Sadly, this same mentality is in the hearts of many within the church today. They cannot get excited when the church grows, or when others grow into a position of leadership because they see their hold on power slipping away. They do not care about God's will being done in the church, if it runs counter to their personal agenda. They want the accolades. Their service in the church is not about God, it is about them. What drives your service in the church today? What are your motives for what you do? Paul tells us there is but one valid motive: Look up: 1 Corinthians 10:31

He had a problem with his attitude - When you listen to this boy talk to the father, you quickly realize that he is proud, disrespectful, arrogant, defensive and angry. He should be overjoyed that his brother has returned safely. He should be rejoicing but all he can do is complain.

You can serve in your church, sing in the choir, preach the Word, or anything else and still be out of God's will. You can pretend to be anything you wish outwardly, but it is the condition of the heart that matters. - Look up: Matthew 15:18-19.

V. 28, 31-32 - The petition from the father

It was a petition of pleading - The father went out and pleaded this boy to come in to the feast. Look up: Matthew 22:2-3

It was a petition of promise - The father praised him for his efforts, and reminded him that everything was already his. The father was saying, "I value you and our relationship together more than I value your works." This boy could have enjoyed fellowship with the father anytime he wanted, but apparently, he was too distracted with his own legalism.

The same thing is true in many hearts today! People want the church. They want to feel better about themselves. They want a fire insurance (from Hell), but they do not want an intimate relationship with the Father. Remember, you are as close to the Lord as you want to be. You can have as much fellowship with Him as you want. How much do you want?

It was a petition of priorities - The father tells the older brother: "*we had to celebrate*". A lost one had been found. One considered dead was now alive again. There was much cause for rejoicing. The father wants this brother to learn that there are bigger issues at stake and they should take priority.

Instead of getting upset when things don't go our way, we should learn to thank the Lord for what He is doing. The fact of the matter is, instead of pouting, this brother could have been partying. It was his choice. Did the elder brother ever go enjoy the feast? We don't know. What will you do at the celebration?