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Weary Prodigal Come

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Leaving family is not always the easiest or the wisest thing to do. There are times when it would be so great just to get in the van and head out to be with family. The simple things that we once took for granted are now major things we just did not understand. It was difficult to sell many of our possessions, pack up the rest and move away from family. We knew it was only going to be for a short time and we were going to try our best to return close to the Northeast to preach; we just *knew* it! You know (as Paul Harvey says) “the rest of the story.”

Those who have left their families behind for school, military, jobs, etc. understand the kinds of things that go through the mind. Will I be able to return if needed? Will I see everyone I leave behind again? Will I meet new additions to the family if I am able to return one day? Am I making the right choice for my family? A plethora of thought flood the mind. Though at times I may ponder some of the costs of leaving physical family behind, I count daily the many blessings I have within my spiritual family.

Have you ever considered the high cost of packing up and leaving your spiritual family? In Luke 15:11-32, we have the parable of the prodigal son. A parable is an earthly story with a Heavenly meaning. This parable is a powerful picture of a “one time” faithful and obedient son leaving his family, severing his relationship with his family and joining himself to that which would bring him to the brink of ruin and death. This parable represents the Christian (one who has obeyed God’s plan of salvation to hear (Rom 10:17), believe (Jn 8:24), repent of sin (Lk 13:3), confess Jesus (Rom 10:10; Mt 10:32-33), be baptized, immersed for forgiveness (Acts 2:38), and live a godly life (1 Cor 15:58)) who leaves the family of God then recognizes his sinful state and returns to the family again.

There may be many good reasons or ambitions for one to leave their physical families. But can any of us come up with a good reason to leave the family of God? Why would one desire to leave the family of God? Though many may *feel* safe or believe that

Heaven will be their home with the Father, are they living outside of the family of God? Who is in the family of God? The family of God is made up of Christians (as well as those who are unable to comprehend). Those who wear His name (Acts 11:26), not that of another. Those who are members of His body, the church that He built (Mt 16:18) and purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). The church where He alone is head (Eph 1:22-23). By obeying the Gospel, one has been adopted into the spiritual family of God (Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5). One is *“born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever”* (1 Pet 1:23).

Just as the prodigal son, one cannot leave the Father (the family of God), enter another country (denomination), and believe that they are safe and secure in the Father’s arms. The Father desired the son to return, but he did not chase after him. The son has to “come to himself,” realizing that he was lost and without hope, confessing his sin to the one (or ones) offended in order to be accepted and welcomed back into the family. Can it be any different for the Christian who leaves the family of God, “the (one and only) faith” (Jude 3) and remains unattached or joins himself to another? Certainly not!

“God is calling the prodigal, come without delay. Hear, O hear Him calling, calling now for thee.”