

## The Gospel of Luke

### A Father and Two Sons: The Older Son

Luke 15:11-32

1. **His Complacency at His Brother's Departure** (vs.11-13)

The older son was introduced at the very beginning of this parable (v.11) and he was included when the father divided up his estate at his brother's request (v.12), and remained on the family estate after his brother left (cf. v.29).

2. **His Hostility to His Brother's Return** (vs.25-28a)

The older son's overriding attitude toward his younger brother was very different from that of his father.

- A. His Anger: This is the first clear description of the heart of the older brother. His actions show that he does not love and has not forgiven his brother (Luke 7:47; cf. Matt. 18:21ff).
- B. His Stubbornness: His opposition to the occasion for this celebration is so great that he is unwilling even to enter into it. Refusing to rejoice about that which God rejoices is sinful regardless if one has a seemingly justifiable personal reason (cf. Phil. 1:15-18; Jon. 3:10-4:1, 9-11).

3. **The Father's Plea to the Older Son** (v.28b)

The father maintained both love and compassion for the older son in his stubbornness as he had for his younger son in his defiance. Jesus associated with and exhorted both the self-righteous sinner (Luke 7:36; 13:10; 14:1) and the unrighteous sinner (Luke 5:27-32; 7:34).

4. **The Older Son's Response to His Father** (vs.29-30)

A. A Self Righteous Comparison to His Brother

The older brother believes that he has earned and deserves this celebration that brother is enjoying (cf. Isa 29:13). His response embodies the pharisees own righteous self-diagnosis (Luke 5:31-32; 15:7; 18:11-12; cf. Isa. 53:6; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:23; 1 Tim. 1:15).

B. A Self-Righteous Condemnation of His Father

He is angrier at his father's forgiveness than at his brother's rebellion. Israel's religious leaders had already judged Jesus to be guilty of violating the Law, and nothing would change their mind (Matt. 12:24; Luke 20:1-8; John 3:2).

C. A Self-Centered Celebration

His ideal celebration includes neither his brother nor his father. Apart from repentance unto God through Christ Jesus, any religious expression necessarily excludes God (cf. 1 Cor 1:18ff).

1. **His Complacency at His Brother's Departure** (vs.11-13)

The older son was introduced at the very beginning of this parable (v.11) and he was included when the father divided up his estate at his brother's request (v.12). Following the younger son's departure, the older son remained on the family estate as would have been expected of him (cf. v.29).

2. **His Hostility to His Brother's Return** (vs.25-28a)

The older son's overriding attitude toward his younger brother was very different from that of his father.

- A. His Anger: This is the first clear description of the heart of the older brother. His actions show that he does not love and has not forgiven his brother (Luke 7:47; cf. Matt. 18:21ff).
- B. His Stubbornness: His opposition to the occasion for this celebration is so great that he is unwilling even to enter into it. Refusing to rejoice about that which God rejoices is sinful regardless if one has a seemingly justifiable personal reason (cf. Phil. 1:15-18; Jon. 3:10-4:1, 9-11).

3. **The Father's Plea to the Older Son** (v.28b)

The father maintained both love and compassion for the older son in his stubbornness as he had for his younger son in his defiance. Jesus dined with tax collectors and with pharisees; He did not refrain from associating with and exhorting both the self-righteous sinner (Luke 7:36; 13:10; 14:1) or the unrighteous sinner (Luke 5:27-32; 7:34).

4. **The Older Son's Retaliation to His Father** (vs.29-30)

- A. A Self Righteous Comparison to His Brother  
The older brother compares his own self-judged impeccable obedience with the flagrant immoral rebellion of his brother. He believes that he has earned and deserves this celebration that brother is enjoying (cf. Isa 29:13). His response embodies the pharisees own righteous self-diagnosis (Luke 5:31-32; 15:7; 18:11-12; cf. Isa. 53:6; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:23; 1 Tim. 1:15).
- B. A Self-Righteous Condemnation of His Father  
He is angry at his brother's rebellion, but angrier at his father's mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Israel's religious leaders had already judged Jesus guilty of violating the Law, and no amount of evidence could persuade them that they were wrong (Matt. 12:24; Luke 20:1-8; John 3:2).
- C. A Self-Centered Celebration  
In his anger he shows that his idea of a celebration includes neither his brother nor his father. Apart from repentance unto God through Christ Jesus, any religious expression necessarily excludes God (cf. 1 Cor 1:18ff).

5. **The Father's Gentle Response to the Older Son** (vs.31-32)

- A. A Practical Reminder (v.31)  
...all that I have is yours...
- B. A Personal Reunion (v.32)  
...this brother of yours...

6. Exhortations Concerning the Two Sons

- A. To the Older Sons in our midst:
- B. To the Younger Sons in our midst:
- C. To the saint who leans closer to the identity of the Older Son:  
It is God's desire that if / when the worst sinner that you personally know comes to repentance and faith that you should rejoice with God over that conversion and not be blinded by the injustices and/or inequities (be they real or imaginary) that person has done against you.
- D. To the saint who leans closer to the identity of the Younger Son: