

Luke 15: 1-7; “The Parable of the Lost Sheep”, Session # 10 – “God’s Kindness & Our Repentance”, Presented by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 17th, 2024, in the Adult Sunday School.

Luke 15: 1-7 – “Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them.’ “So He spoke this parable to them, saying: ‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?’ “And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.” “And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ “I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”

There is Joy in God’s Heart over one sinner who repents.

Who are those in Heaven who have this joy?

Answer: The phrase, “There is more Joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents”, has reference to the 3 Persons of the Divine Trinity: God the Father, Christ the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit. And it also refers to the holy angels. They all rejoice in heaven when one sinner repents. And, then, it also refers to all the saints in heaven, as well, who rejoice when they hear of the “one sinner” who repents.

The Joy of the Triune God over one sinner who repents

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rejoice to see true repentance in any sinner because of God’s own declarations in His word concerning repentance.

The Reverend Edward Payson, D.D. says in Vol. 3 of His Works, P. 238 – Why do the inhabitants of heaven rejoice over repenting sinners? So far as this inquiry respects the motives of Jehovah’s conduct, it becomes us to answer it with reverence and humility, lest we should darken counsel by words without knowledge. It is however certain, that God does not rejoice in the repentance of sinners, because it can add any thing to His essential happiness or glory; for He is already infinitely glorious and happy, and so would continue though all the men on earth, and all the angels in heaven should madly rush into hell. Is it any profit to the Almighty that thou art righteous, or is it any gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect? No, our goodness extendeth not to him, and when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants.

(More from Payson)

Why then does God rejoice when we repent? He rejoices,

- 1.** Because his eternal purposes of grace, and his engagements to his Son, are then fulfilled.
- 2.** God rejoices when sinners repent, because bringing them to repentance is His own work. It is a consequence of the gift of His Son, and is effected by the power of His Spirit. The Scriptures inform us, that He rejoices in all his works, and with reason does He rejoice in them; for they are all very good. But if He rejoices in His other works, much more may He rejoice in this, since it is of all His works the greatest, the most glorious, and the most worthy of Himself.
- 3.** God rejoices in the repentance of sinners, because it affords Him an opportunity to exercise mercy and show His love to Christ, by pardoning them for His sake. Christ is His beloved Son in whom He is ever well pleased. He loves him as he loves himself, with an infinite love; a love which is as inconceivable by us, as His creative power and eternal duration. He loves Him not only on account of the near relation and inseparable union which subsists between them, but for the perfect holiness and excellence of His character, and especially for the infinite benevolence which He displayed in undertaking and

accomplishing the great work of man's redemption. As it is the nature of love to manifest itself in acts of kindness toward the beloved object, God cannot but wish to display his love for Christ, and to show all intelligent beings how perfectly He is pleased with his character and conduct, as Mediator.

4. God rejoices when sinners repent, because it gratifies Him to see them escape from the tyranny, and from the consequences of sin. God is light; perfect holiness. God is love; pure benevolence. His holiness and His benevolence both prompt him to rejoice, when sinners escape from sin.

1. The Kindness and Goodness of God in Relation to Repentance.

Romans 2: 1-11 – “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.” “But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” “But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who ‘WILL RENDER TO EACH ONE ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS’: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” “For there is no partiality with God.”

Question # 1 – What kind of judging is taking place, according to Paul's description here in verse 1?

Answer: It is hypocritical judging; looking at others who are sinning the sins of verse 28-32 of Chapter 1 of Romans, and not thinking that we ourselves are committing the same sins and not repenting of them.

Question # 2 – Will God judge every person impartially, according to verses 2 and 3?

Answer: Yes, every man will be judged according to his works. There is no partiality with God.

Question # 3 – What is the intention of God's showing the riches of His goodness, kindness, forbearance, and longsuffering to those who are unsaved, to those who do not know Him?

Answer: It is so that through this means they might come to repent of all of their sins.

Question # 4 – According to verse 7, God will render eternal life to those who do what?

Answer: He will render eternal life to those who patiently continue to do good, and by that means they seek for glory, honor, and immortality.

2. The Patience of God in relation to Repentance.

2nd Peter 3: 8 & 9 – “But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

Question # 5 – What is the one thing that we should not forget according to verse 8? And what does that mean in relation to repentance?

Answer: The one thing that we should not forget is that with the Lord one day is a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day? And what that means in relation to repentance, is that we should remember that God will most surely judge the world someday through Christ. He has fixed a day in which He will do this. Even though a thousand years goes by, yet God never forgets His purpose in relation to sending Christ to judge. Even though many years had gone by since the promise of His return was spoken, yet the saints should remember that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, but He is patient, or longsuffering toward us (or toward you). He will not forget a thing that men have said or done during the time of their life, and will judge righteously and reward every man according to his works.

Question # 6 – What does Peter mean when he says that God is not slack concerning His promise of Christ's Coming?

Answer: The word slack has a number of meanings, like – not taut, a slack rope. Or not closely drawn together, not holding fast, or being remiss about one's duties. It is this last definition which applies to our great God and King. He is not remiss in what He has promised that He will do. We should not believe that He is slack concerning His promise. Christ will most certainly come and judge the world in righteousness in God's appointed time.

Question # 7 – When it says that He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, is it only referring to Christians, or is it a promise that He will forgive any person who will repent? Is He willing to forgive any person who will repent, not abusing His patience?

Answer: But God really does want to show His love to all mankind. He is not willing that any should perish. (The word willing in the Greek is βουλομαι) That is, it is not His will of desire that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Obviously, it is His will according to His eternal decree that not one of His elect shall perish, but that all will come to repentance. But the verse is saying more than that. It is saying that this is God's fixed disposition according to His general love for all of mankind, that they should repent. Otherwise, Paul would not have said in Acts chapter 17, verse 30 – “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained.”

John Calvin says on 2nd Peter 3: 9 – “So wonderful is His love towards mankind, that He would have them all to be saved, and is of His own Self prepared to bestow salvation on the lost. But the order is to be noticed, that God is ready to receive all to repentance, so that none may perish; for in these words the way and manner of obtaining salvation is pointed out. Every one of us, therefore, who is desirous of salvation, must learn to enter in by this way.” “But it may be asked, If God wishes none to perish, why is it that so many do perish?” “To this my answer is, that no mention is here made of the hidden purpose of God, according to which the reprobate are doomed to their own ruin, but only of His will as made known to us in the gospel.” “For God there stretches forth His hand without a difference to all, but lays hold only of those, to lead them to Himself, whom He has chosen before the foundation of the world.” “But as the verb κορῶσαι (korosai) is often taken passively by the Greeks, no less suitable to this passage is the verb which I have put in the margin, that God would have all, who had been before wandering and scattered, to be gathered or come together to repentance.

Albert Barnes says on 2nd Peter 3: 9 – “Not willing that any should perish - That is, He does not desire it or wish it. His nature is benevolent, and He sincerely desires the eternal happiness of all, and His patience toward sinners “proves” that He is willing that they should be saved. If He were not willing, it would be easy for Him to cut them off, and exclude them from hope immediately. This passage, however, should not be adduced to prove:

(1) That sinners never will in fact perish; because:

(a) the passage does not refer to what God will do as the final Judge of mankind, but to what are His feelings and desires now toward men.

(b) One may have a sincere desire that others should not perish, and yet it may be that, in entire consistency with that, they will perish. A parent has a sincere wish that his children should not be punished, and yet he himself may be under a moral necessity to punish them. A lawgiver may have a sincere wish that no one should ever break the laws, or be punished, and yet he himself may build a prison, and construct a gallows, and cause the law to be executed in a most rigorous manner. A judge on the bench may have a sincere desire that no man should be executed, and that everyone arraigned before him should be found to be innocent, and yet even he, in entire accordance with that wish, and with a most benevolent heart, even with tears in his eyes, may pronounce the sentence of the law.

(c) It cannot be inferred that all that the heart of infinite benevolence would desire will be accomplished by his mere will. It is evidently as much in accordance with the benevolence of God that no one should be miserable in this world, as it is that no one should suffer in the next, since the difficulty is not in the question Where one shall suffer, but in the fact itself that any should suffer; and it is just as much in accordance with His nature that all should be happy here, as that they should be happy hereafter. And yet no man can maintain that the fact that God is benevolent proves that no one will suffer here. As little will that fact prove that none will suffer in the world to come.

(2) The passage should not be adduced to prove that God has no purpose, and has formed no plan, in regard to the destruction of the wicked; because:

(a) The word here used has reference rather to His disposition, or to His nature, than to any act or plan.

(b) There is a sense, as is admitted by all, in which He does will the destruction of the wicked - to wit, if they do not repent - that is, if they deserve it.

(c) Such an act is as inconsistent with His general benevolence as an eternal purpose in the matter, since His eternal purpose can only have been to do what He actually does; and if it be consistent with a sincere desire that sinners should be saved to do this, then it is consistent to determine beforehand to do it - for to determine beforehand to do what is in fact right, can only be a lovely trait in the character of anyone.

(3) The passage then proves:

(a) That God has a sincere desire that people should be saved;

(b) That any purpose in regard to the destruction of sinners is not founded on mere will, or is not arbitrary;

(c) That it would be agreeable to the nature of God, and to His arrangements in the plan of salvation, if all human beings should come to repentance, and accept the offers of mercy;

(d) That if any come to Him truly penitent, and desirous to be saved, they will not be cast off;

(e) That, since it is in accordance with His nature, that He should desire that all people may be saved, it may be presumed that He has made an arrangement by which it is possible that they should be; and,

(f) That, since this is His desire, it is proper for the ministers of religion to offer salvation to every human being. Compare Ezekiel 33:11."