

The Wonderful Salvation in the Gospel of Luke

And He said, a certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to the father, Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me. And he distributed to them his living. And not many days after, the younger son, having gathered everything together, went abroad to a distant country and there squandered his estate by living dissolutely. And when he had spent all, a severe famine occurred throughout that country, and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed hogs. And he longed to be satisfied with the carob pods which the hogs were eating, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, how many of my father's hired servants abound in bread, but I am perishing here in famine! I will rise up and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants. And he rose up and came to his own father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him affectionately. And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his slaves, bring out quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fattened calf; slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry, because this son of mine was dead and lives again; he was lost and has been found. And they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing, and calling to him one of the servants, he inquired what these things might be. And he said to him, your brother has come, and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has received him back healthy. But he became angry and was not willing to enter. And his father came out and entreated him. But he answered and said to his father, Behold, so many years I have been slaving for you and have never neglected a command of yours, and you have never given me a goat that I might be merry with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who devoured your living with harlots, you slaughtered for him the fattened calf. And he said to him, child, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to be merry and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life, and he was lost and has been found (Luke 15:11-32).

THE FATHER'S RECEIVING THE RETURNED PRODIGAL SON

If we read carefully the parable of the loving father, we shall see that while the prodigal son was still squandering the father's riches, the father was waiting for him to come back. When the son came to himself and decided to go to his father, he prepared what he would say to him. What would you have said to the father if you had been the prodigal son in this parable? Perhaps you would have said to yourself, "I am going back to my father's house. But what shall I say, and what shall I do when I get there? Should I knock on the door? Should I call out, 'Father, I'm home'? I feel ashamed and foolish for squandering everything my

father gave me. I cannot bear to recall the way I have been living. I know for sure that my father will not be outside waiting for me. Probably he will be in the house relaxing and enjoying life. Everything is fine with him, but not with me. Oh, what shall I do when I get home?" To the prodigal son's great surprise, "While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion; and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him affectionately." Perhaps the prodigal said to himself, "This is like a dream! I didn't call out or knock on the door, but my father comes running to me. Now he is embracing me and kissing me!"

THE ROBE, THE RING, THE SANDALS, AND THE FATTENED CALF

Immediately the returned prodigal son said to his father, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." However, while he was still speaking, the father interrupted him and said to his slaves, "Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf; slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry; because this son of mine was dead and lives again, was lost and was found!" The father told the slaves to quickly bring out the best robe and put it on his son. They were to do this "quickly" to match the father's running to receive his son. The definite article "the" indicates that before the son returned the father had prepared a particular robe for him, and the servants knew that this robe was the best robe. Therefore, the father told the slaves to take the best robe and put it on his son.

When the son returned home, he was a poor beggar dressed in rags. But after the best robe was put on him, he was covered with a splendid garment prepared especially for him. With this robe on, he was qualified to match his father.

The best robe put on the son is a full type of Christ as our righteousness in whom we are justified before God. Hence, putting the best robe on the returned prodigal signifies justification in Christ. As those who have Christ as the best robe, we are justified by God.

The father also told the slaves to put a ring on his son's hand. I believe this was a gold ring. This ring signifies the sealing Spirit given to a returned sinner (Eph. 1:13). This ring is a sign that a repentant sinner receives something divine, the very Spirit of God Himself. The ring signifying the sealing Spirit indicates that the returned prodigal belongs to the Father. It also indicates that whatever the Father has as an inheritance belongs to the returned son.

Sandals were also put on the feet of the returned son. Sandals separate one's feet from the dirt of the earth and strengthen him for walking. The sandals put on the son's feet signify that God's salvation separates us from the world and unto Him so that we may then take His way.

With the robe, the ring, and the sandals the returned one was fully clothed and adorned. This means that he was fully justified and qualified and could be accepted into the father's house. Then the father told the slaves to bring the fattened calf and slaughter it for their enjoyment. Thus far, we see Christ as righteousness to justify a repentant sinner outwardly, the Spirit as the seal, and the power of God's salvation separating a repentant sinner from the world. Now we see that Christ is also the fattened calf to fill us with the divine life for our enjoyment. The father, the returned son, and all the others could enjoy feasting on this fattened calf. So "they began to be merry."

In this parable we see that God's salvation is of two aspects, the outward aspect and the inward aspect. The outward aspect is Christ as our righteousness to justify us, and the inward aspect is Christ as our life and life supply to satisfy us. After coming back to his father, the prodigal son enjoyed all the riches of God's provision in His salvation. He enjoyed Christ as his outward righteousness, he enjoyed the Spirit as the seal indicating that he belongs to the Father and that the Father and all His wealth belongs to him, he enjoyed the power of God's salvation separating him from the world, and he also enjoyed the inner Christ, the Christ who is his life and life supply. Therefore, he could become a very happy person. With his father he could eat and be merry. What a pleasant picture this is!

(Adapted from the Life Study of Luke)