

# STUDY NOTES ON THE PARABLE OF THE TWO

## SONS: -

- Matthew 21:28 – 32: - “But what think ye? A *certain* man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I *go*, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.”
- Jesus is addressing the chief priests and the elders of the Jewish people, in this parable, who had just accosted Him in the Temple, to ask Him, by what authority He had cleansed the Temple of the money changers and buyers and sellers.

Matthew 21:23 - 27: - “And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.”

- The reason Jesus brings John the Baptist into His Parable in VS. 32, is because He has referred to John the Baptist’s ministry in His response to the Jewish leaders questions – see VS. 25.
- The First Son in the Parable who said he would not obey his Father’s request and go work in his vineyard, but who later on repented of his disobedience, and who actually went and fulfilled his Father’s will, represents the Publicans [that is, the Tax Collectors] and Prostitutes, who repented at the preaching of John the Baptist, and who were baptized by him unto repentance and remission of their sins. These people made no pretense of self-righteousness at all. They were NOT proud and self-exalted. They would go into the Kingdom of God before the self-righteous Jewish Religious Leaders. It was for such people – such sinners, that Jesus came to call to repentance.

Matthew 3:11: - “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire.”

Mark 1:4 & 5: - “John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.”

Luke 3:2 & 3: - “Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”

Luke 3:12 & 13: - “Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.”

Acts 13:24: - “When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.”

Luke 5:30 - 32: - “But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

- As the First Son repented in the Parable – see Matthew 21:29, we will briefly touch on this vital subject, because it is an essential first step in any true gospel message. There is NO salvation without genuine repentance.

Matthew 4:17: - “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Mark 1:14 & 15: - “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

Matthew 3:8: - “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.”

Acts 5:29 - 31: - “Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”

Acts 26:19 & 20: - “Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.”

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 7:10 & 11: - “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”

Acts 20:20 & 21: - “*And* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- The Second Son in the Parable who said he would obey his Father and go work in his vineyard, but didn't actually make good on his word, represents the Jewish religious leaders, who were full of words and outward show in the practice of their religious duties; but their hearts were completely estranged from God. They were full of hypocrisy, self-exaltation and self-righteousness. John the Baptist was particularly blunt and severe in his rebuke of them when they came to his baptism. Jesus instructed His followers NOT to follow their example, because they say and do not.

Matthew 3:7 - 10: - “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now

also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

Matthew 5:20: - “For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 16:6 & 11 & 12: - “Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. ... How is it that ye do not understand that I spake *it* not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”

Matthew 23:1 – 3: - “Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.”

Matthew 23:23 – 28: - “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. *Ye* blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. *Thou* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which is* within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”

Luke 12:1: - “In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

- Perhaps Jesus' Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector highlights the two different Sons in this Parable, and the different spiritual conditions of the two groups of sinners. One self-righteous, and the other humbly pleading for God's mercy.

Luke 18:9 – 14: - “And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

- We can clearly see that one of the primary spiritual lessons that Jesus is teaching in this Parable, is that we should not just be a Speaker - that is, someone who says all the right words and phrases with their mouth concerning following Christ; but that the Word of God exhorts us to be more importantly, a Doer as well – someone who not only says the right things, but who actually puts it into practise in their daily lives – which is represented by the First son in this Parable.

It is NOT acceptable with God to be a hearer of God's Word, and yet be a professed believer who doesn't live out its principles, which is what the Second son in the Parable did.

Here are a multitude of very clear Biblical witnesses that establish this vital truth.

Matthew 7:21: - "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Matthew 7:24 - 27: - "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

Matthew 12:48 - 50: - "But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Luke 6:46: - "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Luke 8:20 & 21: - "And it was told him *by certain* which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it."

Luke 11:27 & 28: - "And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed *is* the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed *are* they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

John 13:17: - "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Romans 2:13: - "(For not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."

1<sup>st</sup> John 2:4: - "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Revelation 1:3: - "Blessed *is* he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time *is* at hand."

James 1:22 - 25: - "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

**NOTE**: - In VS. 25, the Apostle James uses the term "*the perfect law of liberty*", in the context of being a doer of that Law, and the person who practices this Law of Freedom is going to be blessed.

## The Perfect Law of Liberty Identified: -

- In the next chapter of his epistle, James identifies this **perfect law of liberty** as being found in the Scriptures – that is, what we today call the Old Testament writings. It is described as being “the royal law” – this indicates that it must be coming from a King.

James 2:8 – 12: - “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.”

- He quotes the second great commandment – “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” This of course originated in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Leviticus 19:18: - “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I *am* the LORD.”

- James teaches us, that when we show partiality to people, we are convicted by the Law as a transgressor. [This is because we do not love our neighbor as ourselves.] He states a foundational Biblical truth, that if we keep the whole Law, but offend in one point, we are guilty of violating all of the Law. He then quotes directly two of the Ten Commandments – namely the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Commandments – Do not commit murder or adultery.

Exodus 20:13 & 14: - “Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

***NOTE: - Fulfilling the “royal law” of loving our neighbor as our self, is fulfilled when we live out within our lives, the principles of the Last Six of the Ten Commandments, which outline our duty to our fellow man or woman.***

- He then illustrates this truth, by teaching us, that if we do not commit adultery, but if we commit murder, we are a guilty transgressor of the Law. Then the Inspired Apostle exhorts us to so speak and to so conduct ourselves, as those who shall be judged by this Law of Liberty.
- The Law spoken of here is a royal Law. It belongs to the King.
- The Psalmist indicates that the Lord – the Holy One of Israel is our King. Jesus is clearly identified as being the Holy One. So we can Biblically call Jesus – King Jesus! So this royal Law of Liberty can rightly be claimed to being King Jesus’ – the Holy One’s Holy Commandments.

Psalms 10:16: - “The LORD *is* King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.”

Psalms 89:18: - “For the LORD *is* our defence; and the Holy One of Israel *is* our king.”

Luke 4:33 & 34: - “And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, *thou* Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.”

Acts 3:13 & 14: - “The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you.”

- Is it any wonder, that Jesus exhorted His followers to demonstrate their love for Him, by keeping His Commandments, which teaching is clearly echoed by the Apostle John’s writings.

John 14:15: - “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

John 15:10: - “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.”

1<sup>st</sup> John 2:1 – 6: - “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins* of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.”

1<sup>st</sup> John 3:4 – 8: - “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

1<sup>st</sup> John 5:2 & 3: - “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”

**These passages are some of the clearest texts concerning being a hearer and doer of the Word – they are the some of the ultimate saying and doing passages in the Bible, and a good place to finish this study on.**

1<sup>st</sup> John 2:4: - “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”