

The parable of the Two Sons



Passage for Consideration:

*28 -32 But what think ye?
A certain man had two
sons; and he came to the
first, and said, Son, go
work today 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..

This is a parable where Jesus explains the meaning to us.

There are two classes of people to whom Jesus is referring to in this.

1. Those who reject the commandment of the Father, but then later change their mind, and are obedient.
2. Those who say they will obey the commandment of the Father, and appear to be the righteous and honourable. But then refuse to obey, as they have said.

Jesus compared the publicans – the tax collectors and the harlots to the first type. These had heard the commands of the law. They knew what was required of them, but they decided to go in the opposite direction, and so because of their behaviour were regarded as the worst sinners.

Jesus then compared the Scribes and the Pharisees, those who were most learned in the law, to the second type. These made a great show in their knowledge of the commands of God, and in their piety, and dogmatic behaviour appeared to be most vigorous in their zeal to do what had been required of them.

But Jesus showed the contrast between the two types.

The first – the tax collectors, the harlots, those who society regarded as the worst sinners, were the ones who when they heard the preaching of John the Baptist, they were deeply affected, and changed direction, they repented – Matthew 3:5: *Then went out to him [John] Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins...*

The second, the Scribes and Pharisees who for a pretence made long prayers, who sounded a trumpet before themselves when they made donations to the temple treasury, and stood on street corners, and standing in the synagogues praying for to be seen of men- hypocrites, and made many commands of men, and kept none of them, these – these who professed to go and work in the vineyard and be labourers for the Lord, they in fact, did the opposite. They showed no repentance. When John saw them, he said: Matthew 3: 7,8 *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:*

One class said no, but did it in the end. The other said yes, but did it not. There are talkers and there are doers. Talking accounts for very little.

Paul criticised those in Corinth, when he wrote in his second letter, chapter 8. He praised the Ecclesias in Macedonia, who though suffered great poverty, they overflowed in the wealth of their generosity. But now he had noticed that these in Corinth had showed great faith, great knowledge, great utterance, (verse 7) great

speeches and talking, but that which they had promised had not actually yet materialised. So he said (NET translation) verse 7,8: *make sure that you excel in this act of kindness too. I am not saying this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love by comparison with the eagerness of others.* Talking about it, is all very good, but the real test of faith is works. So Paul added: 2 Corinthians 8:11 *Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.*

There are many churches today whose members claim they are saved, because they have declared that they will follow Jesus, and accept him into their lives. Under some deluded notion that emotions stirred up by rock music is the Holy Spirit, they regard anyone who does not trumpet loudly that they are saved as lost. They even go so far as to say, you don't need to read the Bible, the pastor tells you it all, and you have the Holy Spirit anyway. These types are talkers, with an outward show. Most religions operate on this basis. But the Apostle James makes this clear: 2:14-20:

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding you do not give them those things which are needful to the body; what does it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

Yes, a man may say, You have faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works, and I will shew you my faith by my works.

You believe that there is one God; you do well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But will you know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

This teaching matches what Jesus was saying of the Scribes and Pharisees, and also those who claim to be religious, and say a lot, but do not actually perform the doing of it!

On the other hand, there are those who remember what they used to be like, and that although they knew the truth of the Word of God, they behaved badly. They admit and own up to their faults and try to do something about it. They confess their mistakes, and that they go in the wrong direction at times. They do not bang a drum and go around telling people all about how good they are, that they are saved etc. They are humble and accept that though they are being saved, they did not obey the gospel call as best as they should.

They recall what the Apostle wrote the Corinthians in his first letter: 6:9 -11: *Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you:** but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

And such were some of you. They admit and recall that they went in the opposite direction at first.

As Paul wrote the Ephesians: 2:1-3 *And you hath he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, ... the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience:* Yes, when asked to work in the vineyard, you said no! But it is good that you repented, and went and did as you were commanded.

So the takeaway lesson here, is – it is easy to condemn the talkers, those who act all high and mighty, and think they are so pious, but do not do the works. We think, ooh, I work in the vineyard, and am ever so good! Er, wait a minute, don't forget you were the one, who actually refused the order in the first place! So stay humble, keep your head down, and work harder!

Brother Terry