



THE SIN OF THE ELDER BROTHER

(a reading based on Luke 15)

**“IF YOU WERE IN MY
SHOES AND SAW
FIRSTHAND THE HURT
HE CAUSED MY
FATHER, YOU WOULD
HAVE DONE THE SAME.”**

BY DOUG BEACHAM

I am the elder son. For two thousand years I have stood outside the party happening in my Father's house. For two thousand years I have listened to you talk about my Father, and his foolish son, and me. You have always referred to me as a self-righteous, pharisaic sinner. But you don't understand Pharisees, and you don't understand what happened in our family. You romantically call him a “prodigal” and get sentimental when you think of him at my Father's feet. But you had to be there to really understand what he did and why I feel the way I do.

He had it made. As the law mandated, he was going to get his third of the inheritance at the right time. Our custom required that he await Father's death. Even before Father's death he could have had exercised some

liberty with the inheritance; but it would have remained under the careful hand of Father. Why these laws and customs? To make sure that foolish people not waste the hard-earned inheritance and that they have the maturity to use it wisely.

But, he was a rebellious and foolish man insisting on his portion, *now!* He browbeat my Father with his rebellious and demanding attitude. I was ready to strike him when he insulted my Father by this demand. Do you realize he was insinuating that he could not wait for my Father to die? In fact, he didn't care if my Father was dead or alive—his actions proved he wished that my

and prostitutes. I've never done that. Oh, I've been tempted; who hasn't. But I've more respect for my Father than that. I know the value of standards, integrity, money, property, the inheritance. I would never dishonor my Father's name like that.

You see, all you think about is how I've reacted to this homecoming. But you haven't understood that I am right about this. I mean, if you were in my shoes and saw firsthand the hurt he caused my Father, you would have done the same.

The pain he caused my Father was unbelievable. Not a day went by that my Father would not stand at the door and look down that long

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Father were dead. If you had seen the pain on my Father's face, you would have felt the same way I do.

Well, he got it, and he wasted it. That's what a prodigal is—a waster, a waster of precious resources. It's not that I wanted his portion; I didn't. I didn't resent that which was his—as the eldest I was guaranteed two-thirds; I had plenty. What I resented was that he wasted it with pagans

and winding road. You would see him wipe away tears, and even his shoulders shook with sorrow.

I have never understood why he gave him the inheritance anyway. I could have told him that the kid was going to blow the money and that he should have held his ground and said, “You can leave, but you're not going to waste what I've worked hard for.” At least he could have giv-

en it to me, and it would have been invested back into the property. Why, we could have invested it, and when the waster returned, as I knew he would, it would have been here

me? I saw you walk in the house and eat some barbecue. The old man never had a community feast like that for me. Look at this place: the beautiful pastures, the well-equipped barns,

Father's property, and I treat it with respect. You had better believe I resent it. Father is setting a bad example for the young people around here by celebrating this waster and not recognizing us "salt of the earth" kind of people who hold the world together by our good hearts and hard work.

What's that you say? Why don't I go in? Do I ever wish I were an insider?

Oh yes. It hard being out here. I know my Father meant it when he told me that all he has is mine and that I've always been with him. I know he's right. Father even reminded me that the waster is still my brother. I'll admit, that's a hard one to swallow, given his reputation in the community. I counted him off

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THE BOY NEEDED TIME TO JUST BE A SERVANT AROUND HERE. TO TREAT HIM LIKE A SON JUST LIKE THAT ... WELL, "IF HE DID IT ONCE, HE'LL DO IT AGAIN."

for him. Now, it's gone forever.

I hate to say this, but there have been times I've actually wondered about my Father's wisdom. I'm not sure he always knows how to do the right thing. When the boy came home the way he did, broken and asking to just be a servant, that's what Father should have made him. The boy needed time to just be a servant around here. In fact, he needed to be under *my* authority. He needed the discipline. As it is, to treat him like a son just like that ... well, to put it in a way I think you'll understand: "If he did it once, he'll do it again." We know their kind. Father had a great opportunity to teach him a lesson about responsibility, the wages of sin, respect for authority; but, I'm afraid Father missed it.

Look in that house. There he is, being loved on by all the people in the community. He's got that robe on, and I couldn't believe it when Father placed that ring on his hand. All the servants heard his request to be treated like a servant, and then Father put those sandals on him, again marking a distinction between him and the servants. I'll tell you, things like that cause problems and we don't need that around here. I'll tell you something else. I don't know how he did it, maybe it's the way he came home broken and making no demands, but it looks like he's got Father wrapped around his little finger, and I resent it.

You think I'm bad because I resent it. Well, why are you out here with

the hard workers, the sense of law and order that's here. How do you think has done this? How do you think the calf became fatted in the first place? That's *my* work. I care about



RACISM



CONFESSION: The initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost occurred in an interracial setting as some 16 people groups were numbered. The Azusa Street revival that began in 1906 in Los Angeles, California, was also interracial, breaking down racial barriers as the Holy Spirit united people from many cultural and ethnic backgrounds. William Seymour, the Black pastor, believed that the dissolution of racial prejudice was a sure sign of the Spirit's presence.

Many Whites, however, became uncomfortable with the interracial worship and its Black leadership and chose to abandon it. The racist culture gradually eroded the unity, particularly in the southeastern part of the United States, the birthplace of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church. The General Board in 1922 agreed that anyone, regardless of race, should be accepted into the denomination. Racism in the church, however, was revealed by a statement of that board recorded in the January 4,

1922, *Minutes*: "1st, That the colored element shall always be confined to the Conference, or Conferences, north of the Mason and Dixon line; provided 2nd, That no colored person shall ever hold office in an Annual Conference; and provided 3rd, That no colored person shall ever be a delegate to a General Conference." We weep for this dark blot on the pages of our history.

REPENTANCE: Father, we confess that racism, with its hatred, bigotry and exclusion, is a sin which has brought division to the body of Christ. We have excluded a part of our Pentecostal heritage. By doing so, we have lost blessings of life and growth that could have been ours. We confess that we have overtly and covertly participated in our racist culture. We failed to support our Black brothers and sisters in their long struggle for equal rights. We now renounce and turn from our racist views and actions and celebrate our unity and equality in the body of Christ.

and God said

"You and I are standing at a river. The difference is that you see dust, but I see water. You see doubt, but I see belief. You see impossibilities, but I see possibilities. You see barriers, but I see breakthroughs, because I see a mighty river that I am unleashing before you. The dams are breaking on the other side. The water that is beginning to flow is but a trickle now, but I am going to flood upon you a mighty river like you have never had before. It's not going to be just ankle deep, knee deep, or waist deep. It is going to be over your head, and you are going to have to learn how to swim. As you swim, I will be with you and nothing will hurt you, but the presence of the Lord will surround you, and I will chase you with the blessings of the Lord. Your churches will grow. Dead traditions will be broken down. I will take you into new dimensions of the power and Spirit of God. There will be healings in your services. When your pastors lay hands on the sick, they will recover. The lame will walk, the blind will see, and the deaf will hear. Trust only in Me, and I will bring it to pass, for I am the Lord God your Deliverer."

SOLEMN ASSEMBLY continued

was under the leadership of Bane and Barbara James, co-directors of World Intercession Network (WIN) of the IPHC. Special speaker for the event was Chuck Pierce, director of Glory in Zion Ministries of Denton, Texas, and prayer leader for Generals of Intercession.

According to Underwood, Fayetteville was chosen as the site for the Solemn Assembly because of its proximity to the birthplace of the denomination, as well as its history as a major slave market. The denomination



MALE DOMINATION



CONFESSION: Maximizing the gifts of both men and women is essential if we are to fulfill our purpose as a church. The Bible clearly defines the distinctiveness of male and female and their importance in God's plan (Genesis 1:27; 5:2; 6:19). Gender differences are never to become a platform for discrimination and division, but rather are attributes to enhance and complete Christ's body.

The Bible clarifies that both men and women are responsible before God and reveals God's impartial treatment of all individuals regardless of gender. The apostle Paul declares that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, **male nor female**, for [they] are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Christ did not abolish our gender differences, but rather the discrimination that historically has resulted from them.

We, the men of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, confess that we have not honored the precedent set forth in God's Word. Often, we have not treated our wives as equal part-

ners in marriage and ministry. We have distorted the doctrine of holiness by focusing on the external appearance of women. We recognize the sin of male domination and acknowledge that we have withheld from women places of honor in the church. We have not affirmed the ministries of qualified women by releasing them to serve in places of leadership. We also have shown inequity regarding their wages.

REPENTANCE: Forgive us, O Father, of the sin of male domination which has made our spouses feel like unequal partners. We repent of our unbiblical treatment of women with regard to their ministries and wages. We repent of targeting them in our teaching on holiness and of abusing them verbally, both in public and in private.

Create in us a new sensitivity to the God-given gifts of the women of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church, that there may be unity and greater power in our worldwide ministry.



got its start in nearby Goldsboro, North Carolina, in

1898. A merger of the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church and the Pentecostal Holiness Church took place in Falcon, North Carolina, in 1911.



(Left) Mrs. Barbara James rejoices during the all-night prayer service as the Holy Spirit breaks through, announcing the dawning of a new day for the church. (Above) In the WIN Prayer Conference preceding the Solemn Assembly, Chuck Pierce (Generals of Intercession) explains that the sins the church would be confessing have a power behind them. "We must recognize and deal with that power," he said.

As a follow-up to the national assembly, the General Superintendent's office has mailed instructional packets to all PH pastors urging them to conduct similar events in their local churches. Reports have come in from several churches that held Solemn Assemblies in conjunction with the services in Fayetteville. These reports indicate the dawning of a new day for the denomination. †

years ago. But sometimes he comes to the window and looks at me with a look that still brings a tear to my eye.

● It means kneeling before Father just as the waster did, with no demands, and trusting that Father will give me whatever is best for me.

It's awfully hard for us good, hard-working people to feel like we're keeping the standards, to be on the property, but not where the party is happening.

What am I going to do? Am I going in? I don't know.

What about you? Are you going in?

IT'S AWFULLY HARD FOR US GOOD, HARDWORKING PEOPLE TO ... BE ON THE PROPERTY, BUT NOT WHERE THE PARTY IS HAPPENING.

Do you want me to be honest with you? Sometimes I do want to go in the house and join the party. It sounds like they're having a blast, and Father seems so happy. But you know what? If I go in, I will be admitting that Father was right. That's what confession is, isn't it? Agreeing with someone that what he's said and done is right.

● To go in the house means agreeing that Father's love, even in giving the inheritance away to be wasted, was right.

● It means agreeing that when the waster came home the way he did, that you accept him back as a son, even as a brother, and not as a waster.

● It means throwing a party for that kind of homecoming and not making demands about the future.

● It means agreeing that Father had been, and is, right.

Dr. Doug Beacham wrote this homily for the Pentecostal Holiness Salem Assembly held August 23-24, 1996, in Fayetteville, North Carolina.



The reading helped define the Elder Brother Syndrome, one of the seven sins confessed and repented of at the Assembly. Beacham serves as superintendent of the Georgia Conference.



ELDER BROTHER SYNDROME



CONFESSION: No story confronts us with the Father's love like the parable of the prodigal son and his older brother. In this illustration, Jesus contrasts God's boundless love with the total ineptness of human affection. Both the prodigal and his brother needed the embrace of a forgiving father and a sense of "coming home." The difficult point of the parable, however, is the older son, who believed that by "staying at home" he deserved priority treatment. His refusal to join the celebration revealed his flawed understanding of the father's love. It also exposed pride, because he considered himself more worthy than his prodigal sibling.

Knowing that God has called us to be one (John 17), we acknowledge the sin of the elder brother in the Pentecostal Holiness Church. This "elder brother syndrome" has caused us to resist God's love rather than rejoice in seeing it lavished upon penitent prodigals. This syndrome opens the door to anger, bitterness, jealousy, and complaint. Old resentments, rooted in pride,

intensify our withdrawal from God and His family and deepen divisions that dishonor and wound others.

The elder brother's selfishness reveals spiritual poverty which closes the door to communion with the Father and fellowship with His family. Like the elder brother, we have hardened our hearts against those who have left us and wanted to come home. We have often failed to demonstrate that God is full of grace and mercy. Instead, we have manifested a spirit of legalism that is based on works. We remember offenses and forget the love and generosity of the Father.

REPENTANCE: Forgive us, our Father, for all the ways the Elder Brother Syndrome has worked in our hearts, causing us to be territorial concerning our positions, possessions, churches, conferences, and denomination. Free us to exercise with joy and gladness the wonder of Your love toward all Your family.

and God said

"Blessed are those who do His commandments ... but outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters and whoever loves and practices a lie ... And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come! ... drink of the water of life freely'" (Revelation 22:14-17) The dawning of the new day begins when the Bride agrees with the Spirit and says to all who are outside, "Come drink of the water of life freely." The new day of harvest will begin."