

THE TWO SONS

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Lesson: Matthew 21:23-32

The Lord told many stories, called parables, when He lived in the world. They were wonderful stories for they had heavenly messages in them. These are messages we all need to hear for they tell us things about ourselves that we need to know. Especially is this the case with the parable of the two sons.

The Lord told this parable to some people who hated Him—the chief priests and elders. These people hated the Lord because He kept showing them how evil they were. He did this by telling them the parable of the two sons. Do you remember it from the lesson? He said to them “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 regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” (Matthew 21:28-31).

In this parable the Lord was really speaking to the evil chief priests and elders—wasn’t He? He was telling them that they were like the second son, because they only *pretended* to obey their Heavenly Father—but really did just what they stubbornly wanted to do. Such people are hypocrites who only pretend to be good. They can never enter heaven. The first son of the story was much better because, while he at first said he wouldn’t go work in the vineyard, he afterwards was sorry for his bad behavior and went and did what his father had told him to do. People like this first son, who are sorry for the wrong they have done, can go to heaven.

Now this parable of the two sons is a very important story. It is much more than a story that the Lord told to his enemies long ago. It is a story that He wants each of us to learn very well. Do you know why? Because each one of us has these two sons in us—these two sides to our nature. You may think this strange at first, but let us think about it together.

Have you ever said, “No I won’t!” or “I will not!” when your father or mother has told you to do something? Most of us have done that, haven’t we? Well, that is what the first son of the story said. We all know it is very wrong to do that, for we must obey our parents for they know what is best for us. Remember the Commandment, “Honor your Father and your Mother!” Yet almost all of us have said, “I will not!” to our parents at one time or another. It is wrong and we

should be very sorry for it and repent of it. Now to repent means to stop doing what is wrong and begin doing what is right.

The first son of the story repented after he said, “I will not” to his father. He was sorry and went out into the vineyard and worked. That is what we should do when we refuse to obey our parents or teachers. We should think about what we have done, be sorry for it, and force ourselves to obey—even if we don’t want to. Why should we do this? Because, if we are really honest with ourselves, we have to admit that our parents are older and wiser than we are and they know what is best for us far better than we do. Sometimes this is very hard to admit, but it is true. If we do admit this, it helps us to truly grow up and prepares us for the day when we no longer have to obey our parents, but rather obey the Lord.

But what about the second son—the one who said to his father that he would go work in the vineyard, but never went at all? Did he do what his father asked? No, he certainly didn’t! Yet sometimes we do the same thing, don’t we?

Sometimes when our parents tell us to do something we say, “I will”, but then never do it. It is true that sometimes we just forget to do it. But sometimes we deliberately don’t do what we have been asked to do and try to sneak out of it and make up all sorts of excuses and even tell lies to get out of it. When we do this we are like the second son. He was far worse than the first son who rebelled and then was sorry and did what he was told. For the first son finally did what his father told him to do, but the second son never did.

Now the father of the two sons in this story the Lord told, is really the Lord Himself, for He Is the Father of all. We are his sons or children. The Lord commands us to do certain things that are right and good. We are to obey Him. But there are times when we don’t. We want to go our stubborn way. Such times come to all of us. When they come we must ask ourselves, “Which son am I?” —The first son who refused to go work in the vineyard and then was sorry and went—or the second son who said he was going but never did.

When we rebel against one of the Lord’s Commandments, we are to be very sorry and repentant. But we must do more than this. We must go to the vineyard and work—we must force ourselves to obey the very same commandment we at first refused to obey. And especially we must do everything in our power not to be like the second son. We must not just pretend to obey the Lord’s commandments and then try to sneak around them and break them secretly. If we do this then we are hypocrites and are in serious disorder.

You probably know that the Lord always forgives everyone of us when we do wrong and break His Commandments. But we must *receive* His forgiveness as well, if we are going to change our ways and be able to enter heaven when we

die. Being sorry for the wrong we've done is what opens our minds to the Lord's forgiveness and gives us strength to change. If we are not sorry, then we do not receive the Lord's forgiveness, nor can we change our evils—and it is our own fault.

Let us learn this parable of the two sons well. Let us try to be truly sorry when we have done wrong and force ourselves to do what is right. If we do, then we will have done the will of our Father and we will be children of the Lord. *Amen.*