

“Reconciliation”

“Parable of the Two Sons”

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”
Colossians 3:13

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

The main part of this parable, often called the parable of the two sons, is found in 2 Samuel 14: 4-20.

This parable is sometimes confused with the Parable of the Prodigal Son. They are entirely different. First this one is told in the Old Testament and the Parable of the Prodigal Son is told by Christ in the New Testament. It is difficult to understand why this parable of the two sons is used, and what the results of its usage are. Many authorities have written commentaries on it.

Some background information may help us understand it. King David’s personal life had many flaws but David was the one in the lineage of Christ’s earthly ancestry. This wasn’t the first time he had been told about his problems through a parable.

The background for this parable follows his oldest living son, Amnon and heir to the throne, being killed by another son, Absalom. David chose to banish Absalom instead of forgiving him. Joab, David’s servant, thought David needed to forgive his son and bring him back home so he had a woman pretend to be a grieving widow and approach David with her problem through the parable of her two sons. Joab had told her what to say. The woman was asked to dress as a grieving widow and help David see the error of his ways.

In the parable, her sons get into an argument and one kills the other. The people in the town react and want her to have the guilty son killed. Her petition is for the king to help her by having her son’s life spared. She presents the problem as another loss to her. She has already lost her husband and one son. If the guilty son is killed as punishment for his sin she will have no one and the family line will be gone also. David listens to her story and tells her *“As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth.”* 2 Samuel 4:11. But that was only the trap she has been told to set for David. She was a very strong person who could approach a King and tell him he was wrong and needed to change his ways.

**Start by doing what's necessary;
then do what's possible; and
suddenly you are doing the
impossible.**
Francis of Assisi

“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life.”
Romans 5:10

She asks if she can have one more word. When he permits it, she continues by applying the parable of her two sons to the two sons of David. She tells David *“Why, then, the woman said, ‘have you done this very thing against God’s people?’”* 2 Samuel 4:13 She had allowed David to convict himself.

The Scripture tells us in this passage that God does not take life away. He always has a way for the sinner to return to the fold. David allows Absalom to return.

Sometimes we wonder why these stories are in the Bible and how they apply to us today. The burden from this parable that was on David can also be applied to us today. Do we accept with love the forgiveness and the eternal life that is given to us, or do we sometimes turn our back on God?

“It is not ‘forgive and forget; as if nothing wrong had ever happened, but ‘forgive and go forward,’ building on the mistakes of the past and the energy generated by reconciliation to create a new future.”

Alan Paton



There are many levels to the parable. First it is a simple story made up by Joab to make David see the need for him to forgive Absalom and allow Absalom to return. What does it say to us today? Then it becomes a lesson for David. More importantly, it is a lesson for each of us today about the love, justice, and forgiveness of God.

We all know that God’s forgiveness is always there for us. All we have to do is pray. David was willing to have the town people forgive the son of the woman, but he was not willing to forgive his son Absalom. Both David and Absalom had sinned.

Whether or not we want to acknowledge it, we sin every day, but we also have to initiate restoring our relationship with God, and sometimes our relationship with other individuals. There is a wonderful assurance of pardon available to us. We can recall the story of Joseph and how his brothers sold him into slavery, but when they needed him, Joseph forgave them. However, they had to be the ones to take that first step.

The Bible has many stories of forgiveness. Perhaps some of the most often quoted words of forgiveness were given on the cross by Christ when he forgave those who were taking His earthly life

away and casting lots for His clothes. Even then the people who had come to the crucifixion criticized Christ for not trying to save himself. Luke recalls the words of forgiveness given by Christ on Golgotha.

“Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left.

Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, ‘He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.’” Luke 23:32-35

Prayer: Lord, You know the darkness in our souls. Fill us with love and open to us the treasures of Your wisdom. May we seek Your face and know the peace that comes with accepting Your wisdom and love. Amen

1. How can we apply this story to our life?
2. Was Joab right in making up a story and asking the woman to lie?
3. Why is it so hard to see someone else’s faults and not our own?
4. What assurance do we have that our sins are forgiven?

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The Parable of the Two Sons is perhaps one of the longest parables. It can be read in its entirety in 2 Samuel 14: 4-20.

