

**Luke 15: 1-7; “The Parable of the Lost Sheep”, Session # 9 – “The Joy of God’s Heart”,
Presented by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 10th, 2024,
in the Adult Sunday School.**

Luke 15: 1-7 – “Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them.’ “So He spoke this parable to them, saying: ‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?’ “And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.” “And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ “I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”

1. There is Joy in God’s Heart over one sinner who repents.

Question # 1: Who are those in Heaven who have this joy?

Answer: The phrase, “There is more Joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents”, has reference to the 3 Persons of the Divine Trinity: God the Father, Christ the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit. And it also refers to the holy angels. They all rejoice in heaven when one sinner repents. And, then, it also refers to all the saints in heaven, as well, who rejoice when they hear of the “one sinner” who repents.

2. The Joy of the Triune God over one sinner who repents

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rejoice to see true repentance in any sinner because of God’s own declarations in His word concerning repentance.

a. He declares that He has no pleasure to see any sinner die in their sins.

Ezekiel 18: 21-23 – “But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.” “None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live.” “Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? says the Lord God, and not that he should turn from his ways and live?”

Question # 1 – What is repentance described as, in verse 21?

Answer: Repentance is when a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, and now he is actually going about to keep God’s word, His statutes. He goes about to do what is lawful and right.

Question # 2 – Why is it that all men outside of Christ do not see themselves as wicked people? Why did the scribes and Pharisees not see themselves as wicked people?

Answer: It is because as they look at themselves, they think that they are pretty good people who will be able to justify themselves before God on the Last Day, the Day of Judgment, that the course of their life has not been wicked, but basically good.

Question # 3 – When it says here that none of his transgression which he has committed shall be remembered against him, and that, because of the righteousness that he has done, he will live, how do we

explain these statements in light of Paul's statements that Justification is not by the works of the law, but by faith? Is that man's justification by works, and if so, in what sense?

Answer: We should understand that he has been given grace to repent, and he has personally decided to repent. He has actually gone about to repent of all of his many sins. This repentance leads to life through the working of God in the New Birth, even though it is not mentioned here directly. This is what is meant by "life". And he truly did exercise faith in what God would do for him if he trusted in the promise of God, concerning forgiveness being given to him, and his sins not being remembered any more. This is the grace of the New Covenant. This passage is being spoken in the sense of what this man, a sinner, actually did to respond in repentance and faith to what God has said in His word. This is something that each one of us must do to be saved.

Question # 4 – Can we say that when a person turns from his ways and lives, because of God's mercy and grace to him, does this truly bring joy to the heart of God? Can God really be impassible and still have Divine Feelings and affections like the joy which is mentioned here?

Answer: Yes, the joy is real in the heart of God, according to the Parable that we are studying. His joy is over one sinner who has truly repented. It is true that God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. He is impassible. Nothing moves Him from outside Himself to do anything that He does not want to do. It is impossible that it should be so. All of His purposes will be fulfilled and none shall be thwarted. But the text in Numbers 23: 19 does not say that God is not a man so that He cannot really be affected by our love or our repenting over our sins. Or even have joy when sinners repent. It does not say that He is not affected by what we do. Just because He has affections does not mean that He suffers change because of them, or that He is any way moved or overcome by them to change His eternal purposes. A sinner's being found as a lost sheep and being brought home by Christ into His fold, this brings God joy. That is, to see this come to pass, that a sinner willingly turns from His wicked ways. This most certainly takes the grace of God towards that sinner to bring him to that place where he will turn from all of his sins. But the sinner realizes his own responsibility to repent and really does repent. It is truly something that he himself does because he is convinced that his way of walking in sin was wrong, and dishonoring to God, and therefore He turns from all of sins. Repentance is his own real act of obedience.

If God communicates in the Anthropopathic way that He does in the Scriptures, it means that within God's infinitely great Being, He does have affections which are perfections, which are all held in perfect equipoise together. He is in no internal conflict with Himself. That is, His love and His wrath are both there in Him together. He is love, and at the same time, He is angry with the wicked every day. But there is no sin or weakness or changeability in Him whatsoever. There are no parts and passions in Him, and yet He is able to feel joy and to take delight in one sinner who repents.

I believe that we must therefore be willing to understand God, as much as we can understand Him, in this holy and righteous way in which the Scripture reveals Him. Yes, there are many places in Scriptures where God is spoken of Anthropomorphically, and Anthropopathically, but it does not mean that there is nothing behind the words. There is infinite reality and infinite greatness of feeling behind the words. He really shows love and kindness because it is a part of His Being. He really has joy over one sinner who repents.