

Zahakiel: Let's begin. Pastor, please offer an opening prayer.

Pastor Chick: Dear Father in Heaven. Bless this holy time with a refreshing from and by Your Spirit. In Yahshua's holy name, Amen.

daphna dee: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

Barb: Amen

Lucan: Amen

Elyna: Amen.

nattie: Amen.

Naraiel: Amen

Elyna: Danielle: Amen.

Peter_Jr_18: Amen.

Zahakiel: Happy Sabbath to everyone. Tonight's relatively short study is called "The Older Brother."

We are all quite familiar with the parable of the Prodigal Son, in which is described an impulsive youth that asks for, and receives, his inheritance prematurely. He goes out into the world and squanders what his father had been saving for him, and eventually finds himself without any means of supporting himself. Desperate for his daily needs, he takes a job as a swineherd, which would be a particularly degrading occupation for a Jewish man. One day, upon considering his circumstances, he decides to return home and seek forgiveness, perhaps to be employed as a servant. When he does so, expecting his father to be angry and disappointed, he is received with joy, and a feast is thrown in his honor. We may read about it as it originally appears in Luke 15:11-32.

Considering how popular this parable is, there is no doubt that each of us has heard several studies and sermons based upon its spiritual lessons. These lessons, however, almost always focus on the son (who represents the repentant sinner turning back to Yahweh) or the Father (who represents Yah, and rejoices that his child has returned). There is another figure in the story, however, who does not often get more than a brief mention and that is, as the title of tonight's study indicates, the youth's older brother. Little is said of him in the first part of the story; it is not until the end that he has a part to play and that is, to be angry that his brother has been so easily forgiven, and to complain that although he had lived and worked faithfully in his father's house all his life, he had never received such a celebration as took place upon his younger brother's return. In response to his first son's anger, the father gives a touching reply, that everything he owns is the elder's, but that now was a time for rejoicing because his brother, who was for all intents and purposes dead to them, was alive again and with them.

What is it that we may learn from the older brother? Although he is not often the focus of this parable, we do find a similar principle represented in other places, such as the Parable of the Workers in Mathew 20. We read here of a similar sentiment, that there is "injustice" in Heaven's rewards, among those who have been workers in the vineyard for many hours, only to find that their pay will be no greater than those who have been called into service for a short time near the end.

Among the saints, there will be no jealousy. The Martyrs, the Faithful under the Old Covenant, and the 144,000 of this last generation... these all receive everlasting life in the world to come. Some will have different offices to hold based upon their particular talents, and some may seem to be more "exalted," yet the joy that each receives, and the peace, and the sense of eternal purpose, is that which is the full amount that he or she may hold.

We must consider the root cause of all such feelings as envy...it is fear. Fear is the root of all sins that mankind may commit. It is true, of course, that Paul says that the "love of money" (not money itself, as he is often misquoted) is the root of all evil, but money itself cannot cure a wound or fill an empty stomach. The reason why some are consumed by the love of money, and material possessions in general, is that they fear not having enough to satisfy their desires. The lust of the flesh, the eye, and the pride of life, (1 John 2:16) all these boil down to discontent with one's own blessings, and a desire for more in order to avoid potential distress in the future.

We know that the Faith of Yahshua teaches us to be like the birds of the air, or the grass of the field, in this matter – relying on our Father in Heaven to provide for our needs. We do not just sit back and wait for our requirements to rain down on us, of course...the birds of the air must go and seek their food, but they do not store up a great supply for the day they cannot find worms.

Those who experience fear for themselves cannot experience Agape-love, that great self-denying, self-sacrificing commitment to the best good of others. John tells us that this love casts out such fear, (1 John 4:18) and therefore those who love in this way are free from envy, unlawful desires, and any other such influence that would prevent them from continually and unfailingly resisting temptation.

We find that the older brother in our parable was fearful, and envious...and therefore revealed that he had not been made perfect in love. We do not know what he did in response to his father's admonition. I like to think that had he been a real person, he would have seen the wisdom in his father's words and repented. Sadly, many who are subject to such an experience, and such a lesson, harden their hearts and become rebellious.

It will not be so with those who find life.

How is it with the saints, those who know Agape, because Agape was first shown to us? Had the older brother been made perfect in love, he would have expressed no negative thoughts about his brother – at least not upon first hearing the news that he had returned. He would not have feared that, perhaps, the remaining inheritance would be divided again leaving him with only a half of what he anticipated receiving. Certainly, the father's words gave him no indication that this would be the case. He said, "All that I have is yours." Perhaps the younger brother would have received a smaller portion, or maybe he would indeed have found employment thereafter, but he would not receive again all of that which he had lost.

Such is the case with sin and its consequences. We are forgiven when we turn to our Father. We are brought into unity with Him, taken to His house and given a robe of righteousness. A celebration is thrown on our behalf, but this does not eradicate all the consequences of lives spent in rebellion. The grace of Yah is not to be taken lightly, or delayed in its receipt until a "convenient season." When one hears the call to repentance, faith and baptism, it is to be heeded immediately, for every second spent away from Yah is a second we shall never recover. Spiritually, we are restored; however marks on our bodies, our health, and perhaps (as in this case) our personal and financial situations are not usually miraculously mended. We must prayerfully begin to apply right principles, and perhaps start over in many areas of our lives, in order to be successful.

From an evangelism perspective, every soul is precious not only for its own sake, but for the sake of those that he or she can reach in turn. Every day that one is not a born again, victorious, committed Christian is a day that an opportunity may be missed to bring yet another sinner to repentance, a day in which that individual's unique skills are not used for the Gospel's advance.

All this is true... but in the day that a sinner repents, in the day that a lost sheep returns to the fold, these things are not brought to mind. The Father and Son, and all their angels rejoice. The saints rejoice with them, as is natural for those who all share one Spirit.

The father of the prodigal son did not consider that a large portion of his wealth, for which he had labored for many years, was now wasted. It was a true turn of events, but for love's sake he did not call it to mind. He only knew that his son had returned home. The brother, had he shared in his father's spirit, ought to have felt the same way. This is what Agape produces in the lives of the faithful, not joy in the misfortune of others (even if that misfortune is the just consequence of cause and effect), but sympathy for the afflicted, and relief and happiness when they turn away from the cause of their suffering.

When it comes to salvation, the saints have even less of a tendency toward envy of the newly converted – not only are we the ones who guide them home, but our Father has no

limit to His resources, and so the everlasting inheritance given to one spiritual child does not in the least diminish the inheritance of others. In fact, our eternal community is made immeasurably greater by every soul added to our number.

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: Perhaps this is why the focus is so often placed upon the returning son or the father, to whom the repenting sinner and the Christian can most closely relate or understand. Yet the lesson of the older brother has value for us as well. It reveals, among other things, the refinement of character that Agape produces, if not specifically toward those restored or newly brought into the faith, then certainly in many other areas of life as well.

The cause of jealousy and undue anger over being treated unfairly is the same as the cause of many other defects of character – fear of loss. I am careful, here, to specify “undue” anger, because Yah’s people share His Spirit, and therefore His judgment. Injustice ought indeed to make us angry. It ought to inspire us to defend others, and to attempt to set right what we are able to if we perceive a wrong being committed. And yet, if that injustice is directed toward us, while we are certainly to work to rectify it if we can, in Christ our reaction is based on righteousness and not self-pity or wounded pride, reacting humbly even when wronged. As it is written,

“Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?” (1 Cor 6:7)

And, “And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.” (Luke 6:29)

Such as conscience permits, we are to give to those who try to take from us...and in so doing we reveal our faith, that our trust in Yah, our Father, is greater than our fear of the world and what it might cause us to be without. In fact, so great is our love and trust of our Father that fear and its consequences do not so much as register in our minds when we are faced with the reality of our circumstances.

We cannot, in seeking to make peace with our enemies, disobey the least of Yah’s requirements, or violate our consciences. We cannot turn aside from the work to which He has set us at the request of the world and its agents. This is a separate matter, and involves the steadfast adherence of the redeemed to principle. But where feelings are concerned, where thoughts of injustice and unfairness are involved, these are subject to

the mind of Christ, and are not made manifest according to the mind of the older brother in this parable.

In all things, our eyes are toward the Savior, we know that He is the trustworthy Keeper of our Inheritance until such a time as that feast thrown in our honor (which is truly His honor) takes place upon His return. Our hearts are toward the Father, our Almighty Creator, and He who loved us so much that He sent His own Son to free us from our chains of sin and transgression. Because He has done this for us, shown us such Agape without calling to mind our transgressions and sins, He has given us the ability to run home, and there to fall on the mercy of One most merciful while the angels and saints rejoice at our long-awaited return.

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: Are there any comments or questions about tonight's study?

Adriel777: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Adriel777: Beautiful study. End

Lucan: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Lucan: I am reminded of another verse. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Rom. 4:4-5)

I think it is notable that both the elder son and the elder workers in the vineyard were offended at the recompense for their faithful work. It shows a misconception that, having done the work, the work itself is the cause for whatever reward, blessing, or treatment comes from it. Our works are a result of faith, and a condition for the reward given to faith by grace. Any species of envy, as described here, seems as though it must result from a misconception in that regard. <End.>

Zahakiel: Yes, thank you for sharing that. That is an excellent observation. The reward is not because of the work, but because of the promise, the covenant. If Yah had not hired those workers, they would have labored forever and not received a single coin. It is only by His goodness that we receive anything 😊

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: Any others?

Adriel777: C

Zahakiel: If there aren't, then I will ask Bro. Luke to offer a closing prayer?

Adriel777: Or have the ability to do any good works. So it is the reason we will all throw our crowns at his feet. End

Zahakiel: Yes 😊

Elyna: Amen. C

Pastor Chick: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

marie: merci à tous (Thank you all)

Elyna: I like this study. I will review it for myself. Danielle: She said thank you. At the end of her meds, she has a clearer mind and understands everything. She prays for the day she won't be under medication. First day in a long time I see her like that. She is quite lucid. Thanks for praying for her. End

Zahakiel: Go ahead, Pastor.

Pastor Chick: I seem to have missed something back when Jody posted her C. I did not see a go ahead, and then I saw her post. Just wondered what happened there. END

Zahakiel: Oh... she posted the C right before I asked Bro. Luke to pray...so she mistook that for the prompt. She only posted one line of comment, and it was an add-on to what I have said. If you saw her statement, you did not miss anything. Full thought: "It is only by His goodness that we receive anything [...] or have the ability to do any good works."

Are there any other thoughts or questions? Ok, please go ahead when ready, Bro. Luke.

Pastor Chick: Q

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Pastor Chick: Is what David described accurate? END

Adriel777: A

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Adriel777: Yes, in fact I was surprised to see that there was no "go ahead" when I finished typing and looked back at screen. 😊 End

Pastor Chick: Q

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Adriel777: A

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Adriel777: Pay closer attention. End

Zahakiel: Is there anything else to share? All right, whenever you are ready, Bro. Luke.

Lucan: Dear heavenly Father. We thank you for freely giving us the fullest endowment of every good thing in Christ. As we grow in our understanding of applying those, we are blessed to be kept from envy, self-serving, and pride. We ask that your Spirit continue with us through the Sabbath hours, and into eternity. In Yahshua's name we pray, amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

Adriel777: Amen

Barb: Amen

Elyna: Amen.

Naraiel: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

nattie: Amen.

Pastor Chick: Amen.

Elyna: Danielle: Amen.

marie: amen

Peter_Jr_18: Amen.