SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES

†
15:20

DEEP DIVE

Luke

Chapter Fifteen, Verses 1–32

Lost and Found — a shepherd on the hills, a woman with a lamp, a father on the road — and an older brother outside the party

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Tax collectors and sinners crowd in to hear Jesus, and the religious men grumble that He eats with them. He answers with a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost son — and a father who runs down the road, throws a feast, and then goes out to plead with the son who would not come in. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Luke's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Luke 15:1–32

sheep · coin · son · brother

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Five movements from the grumbling at the table to the father pleading at the door

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"I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." — Luke 15:7

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Luke 15:1–32

Lost and Found — Sinners come near to listen, the Pharisees grumble, and Jesus answers with three stories of heaven's joy

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Luke 15 in 5 movements, in Luke's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where Luke is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word
R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle
MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED
△ God — His character & actions
Command / instruction
Key repeated word
Sin / warning
Promise / blessing
Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · LUKE 15:20

"So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him."

† Before the Passage

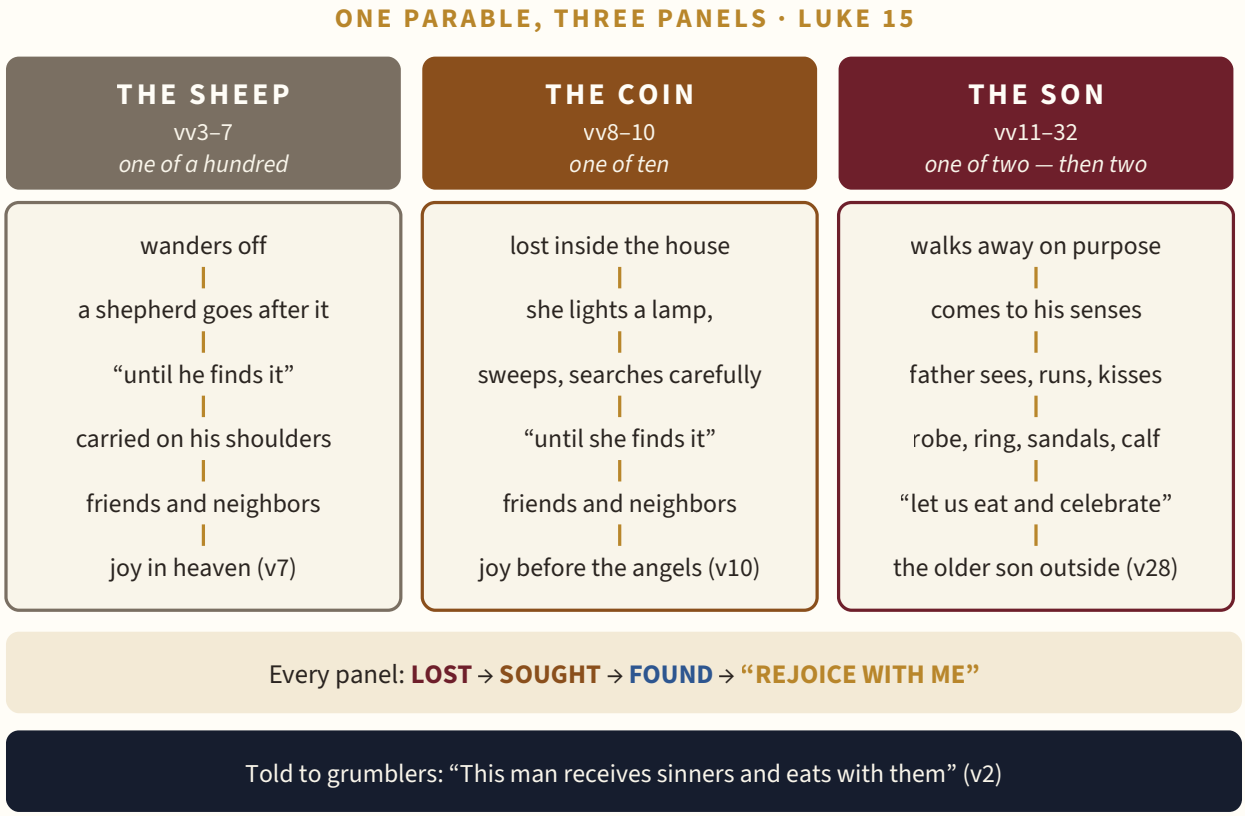
Luke 15 follows straight on from the hard sayings of chapter 14 — count the cost, carry your cross, salt that has lost its taste is "thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (14:35). The next people Luke shows us with ears to hear are the worst people in town: "all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him" (15:1). Guzik: "His strong challenge did not drive people away; it attracted them to Jesus."

The complaint is an old one in Luke. At Levi's feast the Pharisees and scribes grumbled, "Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?" (5:30), and Jesus' critics called Him "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (7:34). Tax collectors worked for Rome and were counted traitors and thieves; "sinners" meant people known for open, immoral lives. Guzik: "The religious leaders of Jesus' day divided humanity into two classes: the unclean and the righteous." To share a table was to share a life, and that is what scandalized them: "This man receives sinners and eats with them" (v. 2).

Jesus answers with one parable in three panels (v. 3, “this parable”). The Old Testament had already drawn the first picture: “I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out” (Ezekiel 34:11), and “All of us like sheep have gone astray” (Isaiah 53:6). The second panel moves indoors to a poor woman’s house; the third to a family farm, where a younger son asks for his inheritance while his father is still alive — a demand many commentators compare to wishing him dead — and the father lets him go.

Each panel narrows the odds: one sheep in a hundred, one coin in ten, one son in two. Each ends with friends called in and joy in heaven. But the third panel has a second half that the first two do not — an older son who has never left home and will not come in to the party. That son stands where the grumblers of verse 2 are standing, and the story ends with the father’s plea still hanging in the air.

FIGURE · ONE PARABLE, THREE PANELS



Read across: each panel narrows the odds and ends the same way — lost, sought, found, and friends called in to rejoice.

I
MOVEMENT

LUKE 15:1–7

This Man Receives Sinners

Sinners come near, the Pharisees grumble, and a shepherd goes after one sheep

> *1 Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. 2 Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” 3 So He told them this parable, saying, 4 “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave*

the ninety-nine in the open pasture and △ go after the one which is lost until he finds it? [5] *"When he has ⟲ found it, △ he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.* [6] *"And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, '⟲ Rejoice with me, for I have ⟲ found my sheep which was ⟲ lost!'* [7] *"I tell you that in the same way, there will be ☆ more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.*

LUKE 15:1–7

"For thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out."

EZEKIEL 34:11

"All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him."

ISAIAH 53:6

διεγόγγυζον

DIEGONGYZON · "BEGAN TO GRUMBLE" · G1234

From *diagongyzō*, the ordinary word for muttering (*gongyzō*, the sound of a low complaint) with *dia*, "through," added: a grumble that goes all through the crowd. Only two New Testament uses, both in Luke — here, and at Zacchaeus's house: "they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner"" (19:7). The tense is imperfect: they kept it up. The three parables are Jesus' answer to that sound.

ἀπόλλυμι

APOLLYMI · "LOST" · G622

The verb means to destroy, to perish, or to lose, and Luke 15 uses it for all three senses at once. The sheep is "lost" (vv. 4, 6), the coin is "lost" (v. 9), the son "was lost" (vv. 24, 32) — and in the pig field the son says, in the same word, "I am dying (*apollymai*) here with hunger" (v. 17). To be lost is to be perishing. Luke later sums up Jesus' mission with it: "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (19:10).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes the surprise of verse 1: after the hard words on the cost of discipleship, "His strong challenge did not drive people away; it attracted them to Jesus." The Pharisees divided people into clean and unclean, and "They decided to live, as much as possible, in complete separation from the unclean." Jesus' shepherd does the opposite: "He does not grudgingly receive the lost; instead, He searches after them." The sheep cannot rescue itself — "The lost sheep would never save himself, or find the shepherd himself" — and "God finds the sinner more than the sinner does find God."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "The Lost Son (Part 1)" (27 July 2014) starts with the setting: "Jesus spent time with sinners not because He wanted to be like them but because He was driven by compassion." That was the scandal: "Jesus' behavior made the scribes and Pharisees aghast because it violated every principle they held precious." He pictures the shepherd's find — "When you find that sheep trembling, you stoop over, reach down, and pick up that lamb" — and reads the ninety-nine as believers already in the fold. In an article from *What Is the Great Commission?* he adds: "before the lost can be redeemed, they must first be found." "He searched for lost people."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "An Appeal to Sinners" takes the Pharisees' sneer as the best news in the chapter: Christ receives sinners, and only sinners. "No man can come to Christ until he truly knows himself to be a sinner." The worse the case, the brighter the grace: "A great sinner brings great glory to Christ when he is saved." So he presses the hearer to come now — "Come, because He has said He will receive you" — and dares him to ask at Mercy's door: "Was there ever one applied to the door that was refused?"

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry notices why the crowd came: "They drew near to him, not, as some did, to solicit for cures, but to hear his excellent doctrine." He sees the shepherd's claim on the stray: "Observe, he calls it his sheep, though a stray, a wandering sheep." And he reads the joy of verse 7 as the heart of God: "God rejoiceth in all his works, but particularly in the works of his grace." No case is too far gone: "It is possible that the greatest sinners may be brought to repentance."

II
MOVEMENT

LUKE 15:8–10

A Lamp, a Broom, a Coin

A woman searches her house until she finds what she lost

8 *"Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and* △ *search carefully until she finds it*? 9 *"When she has* ⟲ *found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, '*⟲ *Rejoice with me, for I have* ⟲ *found the coin which I had* ⟲ *lost!'* 10 *"In the same way, I tell you, there is* ☆ *joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

LUKE 15:8–10

δραχμή

DRACHMḖ · "SILVER COIN" · G1406

A Greek silver coin, roughly a day's wage for a laborer, about the same as a Roman denarius. The word appears only here in the New Testament (vv. 8, 9 — three times). Ten of them may have been a poor woman's savings. A coin cannot wander off the way a sheep does; it is lost inside the house, in the dark of a windowless home, and someone has to light a lamp and sweep to find it. Sproul: "In the parable, Jesus was describing a virtually destitute woman."

μετανοέω
METANOEŌ · "REPENTS" · G3340

To change one's mind — and so one's direction. It comes twice in the chapter's refrains (vv. 7, 10), and the noun *metanoia* once (v. 7, "no repentance"). Notice that neither a sheep nor a coin can repent; in both stories the finding is all the seeker's work. Jesus applies the word to the sinner anyway. Grace finds a man first, and repentance is what being found looks like in a person. The third story shows it from the inside (vv. 17–19).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik stresses the woman's persistence: "She did not just count the coin as lost and care nothing about it." She kept at it — "She kept looking until she found the coin." He sees in her a picture of the church's work: "This is how the church, led by the Holy Spirit, will search for lost souls." And he lingers on verse 10, because it shows us something about God most people never think of: "We don't often think of God as rejoicing, but this passage tells us that He does, and in what circumstances."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul, in the same sermon, stresses what the coin meant to its owner. "In the parable, Jesus was describing a virtually destitute woman." One coin out of ten was no small loss to her, so she searched the house carefully until it turned up. And the finding sets off a celebration bigger than her house: "Every time Christ finds one who is lost then brings it to Himself, the angels rejoice, and the devil complains."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "The Lost Silver Piece" (No. 970, 15 January 1871) reads the woman as the Spirit working through the church. The sinner is lost, yet "The silver piece was lost but not forgotten." "First, she lit a candle" — the gospel — and then "she fetched her broom, she swept the house." Seeking souls stirs things up: "You cannot sweep a house without causing some confusion and temporary discomfort." She did it herself, not by a servant. And at the end, "The greater her trouble in searching, the higher her joy in finding."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry draws the same lesson from the coin as from the sheep: the finding is God's delight. "He rejoiceth to do good to penitent sinners, with his whole heart and his whole soul." The angels' joy of verse 10 is not a rare event in heaven, but its steady music: "There is always joy in heaven." And because no sinner is beyond that joy, no sinner is beyond hope: "It is possible that the greatest sinners may be brought to repentance."

III
MOVEMENT

LUKE 15:11–19

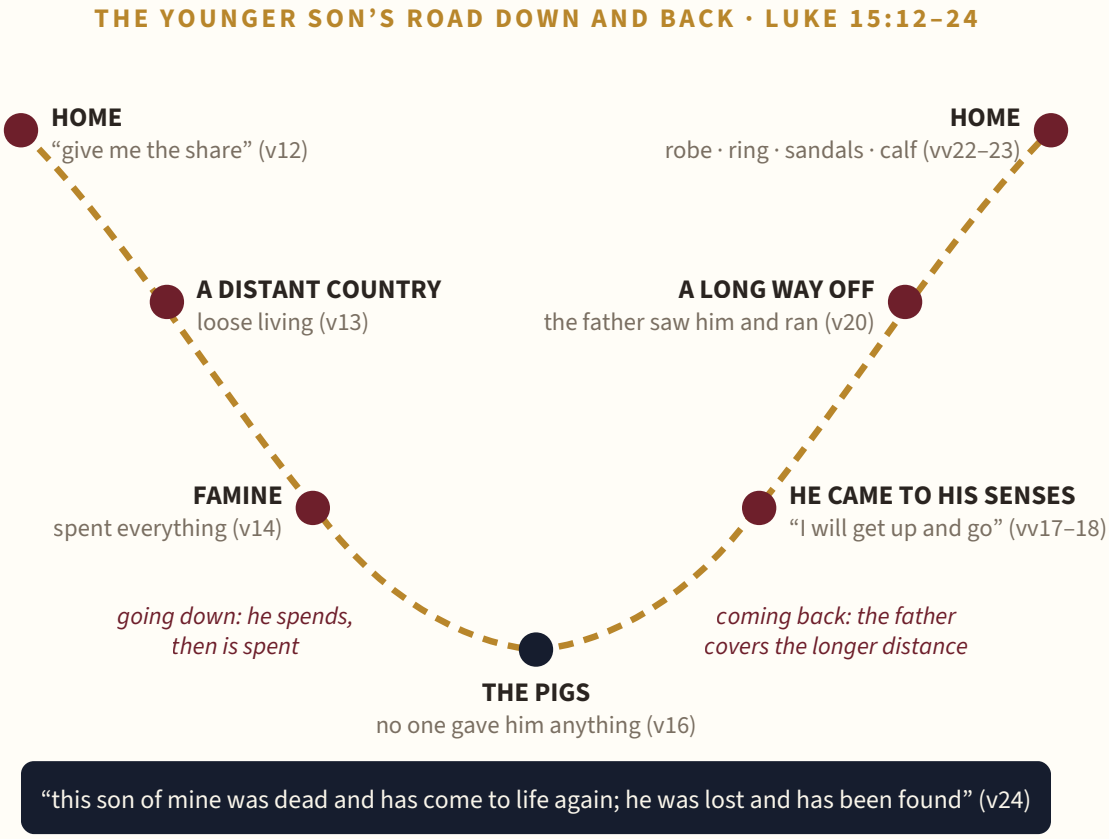
When He Came to His Senses

A demand, a distant country, a famine, a pig field — and a speech rehearsed for home

11 *And He said, "A man had two sons.* 12 *"The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, ⚠ give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them.* 13 *"And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into ◷ a distant country, and there he ⚠ squandered his estate with loose living.* 14 *"Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished.* 15 *"So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent*

> *him into his fields to feed swine.* 16 *“And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and* ⚠ *no one was giving anything to him.* 17 *“But* ◷ *when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!*
> 18 *‘* 🖹 *I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father,* 🖹 *I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;* 19 *I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.”’*
>
> LUKE 15:11–19

FIGURE · THE ROAD DOWN AND BACK



Follow the younger son down from his demand to the pig pen, then back up the road — where the father runs to cover the last stretch.

ἀσώτως

ASŌTŌS · “WITH LOOSE LIVING” · G811

An adverb built on *a-*, “not,” and *sōzō*, “to save”: living like a man who cannot be saved, wastefully, recklessly. This is its only New Testament use. The noun *asōtia* is Paul’s word for what drunkenness leads to — “do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation” (Ephesians 5:18). The older brother later fills in the detail with his own accusation: “devoured your wealth with prostitutes” (v. 30).

εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἐλθών

EIS HEAUTON ELTHŌN · "CAME TO HIS SENSES" · G2064

Literally, "coming into himself." The NASB says "came to his senses," the KJV "came to himself." The picture is of a man who had been beside himself — out of his right mind — waking up. Sproul makes it the hinge of the story, and insists that the son came to himself "not by himself": the light that wakes a sinner comes from God. What follows is a real turn: a true thought (my father's hired men eat), a decision ("I will get up and go") and a confession ("I have sinned").

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik sees the father in verse 12 as a picture of God: "The father clearly illustrates God's love." He did not lock the door: "His love allowed rebellion and, in some sense, respected human will." The far country was the son's own choice, and Guzik will not let anyone else carry it: "The son was completely to blame for the wasteful, foolish living and spending." When the money ran out, the friends did too; at the bottom he came to his senses and, Guzik stresses, did not stop at feeling sorry — he decided to get up and act on his repentance.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul hears the son's demand as "Father, I want my inheritance, and I want it now" — a young man who "did not believe in delayed gratification." He wanted no one watching: "He did not just go to the next town where somebody might know him; he went to a far country where he was anonymous." In "The Lost Son (Part 2)" (17 August 2014) Sproul makes verse 17 the turning point: "In his state of ruin, he had come to the end of himself and hit bottom." But he came to himself not by himself — "Nobody ever comes to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ without that divine and supernatural light."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry is brief and pointed. On the far country: "Note, Wilful waste brings woeful want." On the pig trough: "Husks are food for swine, but not for men." A man made for his father's table cannot live on what the world feeds its pigs. Yet the story does not end there: "Note, We must not despair of the worst; for while there is life there is hope." And when conviction comes, act on it: "Note, It is our interest speedily to close with our convictions."

IV
MOVEMENT

LUKE 15:20–24

His Father Ran

Compassion, an embrace, a confession cut short, and a feast

20 *"So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.* 21 *"And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'* 22 *"But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;* 23 *and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;* 24 *for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.*

LUKE 15:20–24

> *"Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a delightful child? Indeed, as often as I have spoken against him, I certainly still remember him; Therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him," declares the LORD."*
>
> JEREMIAH 31:20

σπλαγχνίζομαι

SPLANCHNIZOMAI · "FELT COMPASSION" · G4697

From *splanchna*, the inward parts — a mercy felt in the gut. In the Gospels it is used only of Jesus Himself and of figures in His parables. Luke has it three times: Jesus and the widow of Nain (7:13), the Samaritan at the roadside (10:33), and this father (15:20). Each time, compassion moves the feet: the Lord touches the coffin, the Samaritan crosses the road, the father runs.

κατεφίλησεν

KATEPHILĒSEN · "KISSED" · G2705

Kataphileō strengthens the ordinary word for a kiss (*phileō*) with *kata*: to kiss warmly, again and again. Guzik, citing Morris, notes that the grammar points to the father kissing his son over and over. The son's rehearsed speech had three parts (vv. 18–19); the father lets him say two (v. 21) and never lets him reach "make me as one of your hired men." The kisses came before the confession was finished.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik's note on the father's watch is simple: "The father's love waited and never forgot." He saw the son first because he had been looking. And the welcome was complete: "It was a love that fully received, not putting the son on probation." The robe, the ring, the sandals and the calf were more than a meal and a coat: "The father did much more than merely meet the son's needs." He gave him back his place as a son.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul pictures the scene: "On his weak and elderly legs, he started running down the road." The father embraces the boy before the confession is done. Each gift says something about grace: "No one has ever entered the kingdom of God without wearing the robe of the righteousness of Christ," and the ring says, in Sproul's paraphrase of the father, "Give him the ring that signifies he is not a servant or slave, but that he's my son." Only the broken get in: "Nobody ever entered the kingdom of God saying: "Here I am, folks. Heaven wouldn't be right without me.""

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "The Prodigal's Return" (No. 176, 7 February 1858) is for the man "a great way off" — convicted, wanting to come back, afraid he will be turned away. He answers each fear from the verse. God sees: "Sinner, let this be thy comfort, that God sees thee when thou beginnest to repent." God feels: "He did not merely see him, but he wept within himself to think he should be in such a condition." And God moves: "But he did not stop in mere compassion." "He is not angry with you; his anger is passed away, and his hands are stretched out still."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry sees grace running ahead of repentance: “He expressed his kindness before the son expressed his repentance; for God prevents us with the blessings of his goodness.” The boy had brought his ruin on himself, yet “Misery is the object of pity, even the misery of a sinner; though he has brought it upon himself, yet God compassionates.” The run shows “how swift God is to show mercy,” and the robe and ring show that “Thus does the grace of God provide for true penitents.” The change from dead to alive is “such a change as that upon the face of the earth when the spring returns.”

V
MOVEMENT

LUKE 15:25–32

The Son Who Would Not Go In

Music from the house, an angry older brother, and a father who comes out to plead

25 *“Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and*
dancing. 26 *“And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be.* 27 *“And he*
said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back
safe and sound.’ 28 *“But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began*
pleading with him. 29 *“But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving*
you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I
might celebrate with my friends; 30 *but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with*
prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’ 31 *“And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me,*
and all that is mine is yours. 32 *‘But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and*
has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.’”

LUKE 15:25–32

FIGURE · TWO SONS

TWO SONS, BOTH FAR FROM THE FATHER'S HEART

	THE YOUNGER SON	THE OLDER SON
Where he is	a distant country (v13)	in the field, near the house (v25)
His sin	loose living, open and public (v13)	anger that would not go in (v28)
How he sees himself	"no longer worthy" (vv19, 21)	"never neglected a command" (v29)
How he sees the father	comes home to a father (v18)	"serving you" — like a hired man (v29)
What he asks for	"give me" (v12), then "make me" (v19)	"you have never given me" (v29)
Where the story leaves him	inside, at the feast (v24)	outside, being pleaded with (vv28, 32)

The father goes out to both: he runs to one (v20) and comes out to plead with the other (v28).

Compare the two columns: one son is lost far from home, the other is lost standing next to the house.

τέκνον

TEKNON · "SON" (LIT. "CHILD") · G5043

In verse 31 the father does not use *huios*, "son," the word in verses 11–30, but *teknon*, "child" — a word of tenderness. Guzik passes on Morrison's note that it carries real affection. The older son had called himself a slave ("I have been serving you," *douleuō*, v. 29) and his brother "this son of yours" (v. 30). The father answers with "child" and "this brother of yours" (v. 32), giving back both the relationships the older son had thrown away.

ἔδει

EDEI · "WE HAD TO" · G1163

The imperfect of *dei*, "it is necessary" — the same "must" Luke uses for the cross ("The Son of Man must suffer," 9:22). The father does not say "we chose to" or "it seemed good to" celebrate, but "we had to." Joy over a found sinner is not optional in God's house. The KJV's "It was meet" means "it was fitting." Sproul: "It is right that we rejoice when someone who is lost is found."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik is fair to the older son: "The older son never lived a prodigal life, and was hard at work in the field even as the younger son came home." But he was angry, and the father went out to him too: "The father also loved the older son, and earnestly appealed to him." Guzik ties the scene back to verse 2: "This answered the complaint of the religious leaders that began the chapter." "They had no reason to complain and every reason to be happy." And the call of all three stories is the same: "repent, come home to the father."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul identifies the older brother plainly: "The older son, who represents the Pharisees and their complaints, was in the field." His protest — "How many years have I been serving you? I never transgressed your commandment," in Sproul's words — is the voice of the man who thinks heaven owes him. Sproul's conclusion is the father's: "It is right that we rejoice when someone who is lost is found." The party is not a scandal; refusing it is.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry puts his finger on the older son's problem in one sentence: "Those who are comparatively innocents seldom know how to be compassionate towards those who are manifestly penitents." His anger is named plainly: "This is not the Spirit of Christ, but of the Pharisees." The father's answer in verse 31 reassures him that grace to his brother costs him nothing: "Thou shalt fare never the worse for it, nor have ever the less for it." And the lesson for the household is verse 24's: "Note, God's children and servants ought to be affected with things as he is."

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From the Shepherd of Ezekiel to the Son of Man who seeks and saves

> *"I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment."*
>
> EZEKIEL 34:16

> *"Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes."*
>
> ISAIAH 40:11

> *"Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge."*
>
> PSALM 51:4

> *"Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'"*
>
> EZEKIEL 33:11

> *"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."*
>
> LUKE 19:10

> *"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."*
>
> JOHN 10:11

> *"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),"*
>
> EPHESIANS 2:4–5

> *"It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all."*
>
> 1 TIMOTHY 1:15

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's article on the lost sheep warns that if no one is truly lost, the mission of Christ was a waste of time. Jesus did not wait for the lost to come to Him: "But Jesus didn't have a building; He didn't wait behind closed doors for people to come and see Him." "It is finding the lost that necessitates the endeavor of missions."

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik walks the text and keeps the Pharisees' complaint in view; Sproul presses grace — the divine light that wakes a sinner and the robe of Christ's righteousness; Spurgeon pleads with the convicted man who is still a long way off; Henry turns each scene into a proverb. They agree that the father is God and the older son is the grumbler of verse 2, and that the story ends with an open door.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The sheep	Hard words attracted sinners; He searches, not grudgingly receives.	Driven by compassion; the lost must first be found.	Only sinners come — and none who knocked was refused.	He calls it His sheep, though a stray; God delights in grace.
II · The coin	She kept looking; we seldom think of God rejoicing.	A destitute woman's coin; angels rejoice, the devil complains.	Lost but not forgotten; candle, broom, joy.	There is always joy in heaven over penitents.
III · The son who left	Love allowed rebellion; the son was completely to blame.	I want it now; came to himself, not by himself.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Wilful waste brings woeful want; husks are for swine.
IV · The father who ran	Love waited and never forgot; no probation.	Old legs running; the robe of Christ's righteousness.	God sees, weeps within, and does not stop at compassion.	Kindness before repentance; how swift God is to show mercy.
V · The older brother	He worked hard — and had every reason to be happy.	He represents the Pharisees; it is right to rejoice.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Not the Spirit of Christ but of the Pharisees; you lose nothing.

LUKE 15:1–32 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **The worst people came to listen.** After the hardest sermon on discipleship (14:25–35), it was tax collectors and sinners who drew near (15:1). Guzik: "His strong challenge did not drive people away; it attracted them to Jesus." GUZIK
- **One parable in three panels.** Luke says "this parable" (v3), singular. Sheep, coin, son: the odds narrow from 1 in 100 to 1 in 10 to 1 in 2, and every panel ends in a party. THE TEXT
- **Lost means perishing.** *Apollymi* is "lost" for the sheep, coin and son — and "dying" in the son's own mouth (v17). Being lost is not a mild condition. THE GREEK
- **The seeker does the finding.** A sheep cannot repent and a coin cannot search. Guzik: "God finds the sinner more than the sinner does find God." GUZIK
- **God rejoices.** Verses 7 and 10 give a rare look into heaven's mood. Henry: "There is always joy in heaven." Spurgeon: "The greater her trouble in searching, the higher her joy in finding." HENRY
- **He came to himself — not by himself.** Sproul: "Nobody ever comes to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ without that divine and supernatural light." The son's turn begins with a true thought and ends with a walk home. SPROUL
- **The father covers the longer distance.** The son walks; the father runs (v20). Spurgeon: "But he did not stop in mere compassion." SPURGEON

- **Kisses before the confession is finished.** The son never gets to "make me as one of your hired men" (v19 vs. v21). Guzik: "It was a love that fully received, not putting the son on probation." THE TEXT
- **A son can be lost at home.** The older son was in the field, near the house, and would not go in (vv25, 28). Henry: "Those who are comparatively innocents seldom know how to be compassionate towards those who are manifestly penitents." HENRY
- **The story ends with a question.** We never learn whether the older son went in. The Pharisees of verse 2 had to write the ending — and so does every reader. THE TEXT

† Questions for the Table

1 **Tax collectors and sinners came near to listen to Jesus. Would the men I know who are far from God feel welcome to come near me — or would they hear grumbling?**

This man receives sinners and eats with them.

15:1-2; 5:30-32

2 **Neither the sheep nor the coin could find its way back. Where do I still think I have to find God, when He has been looking for me?**

God finds the sinner more than the sinner does find God (Guzik).

15:4-10; 19:10

3 **What was my "distant country" — and what was the moment I came to my senses?**

He came to himself, not by himself (Sproul).

15:13-17

4 **The son rehearsed a speech, but the father ran and kissed him before he could finish it. What keeps me trying to earn a place God has already given me?**

It was a love that fully received, not putting the son on probation (Guzik).

15:18-24; Eph 2:4-5

5 **Am I more like the younger son or the older son right now? Where do I see the older brother's anger in myself?**

The comparatively innocent seldom pity the penitent (Henry).

15:25-30

6 **The father said, "we had to celebrate." Whose return to God have I been slow to celebrate?**

It is right that we rejoice when someone who is lost is found (Sproul).

15:31-32

Luke 15 starts with a complaint and ends with an invitation. A shepherd, a woman and a father all go looking, and heaven throws a party every time a sinner is found. If you are far off, get up and go home — your Father is already running. If you have been home all along, go in to the feast.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) completed his *Commentary* himself through the Gospels and Acts. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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