

THE FATTED CALF

Luk 15:21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

Luk 15:22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.

Luk 15:23 And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry;

The story of the Prodigal son is one of the most beloved parables of Jesus. Most often the focus of people in looking at this parable is on the Prodigal son who left his father for the pleasures of sin. The young man soon found out that sin only had pleasure for a season but left him empty and lacking. He came to himself and came home. He felt like he must deserve the father's blessings again so he decided to offer to be one of his father's hired servants.

The focus of others in looking at this story is on the father. The father's love and desire to bless his son never changed even though the son had left. The father saw the boy returning while he was still afar off. This means the father was looking for him. When he saw him he ran to him. It was a Jewish tradition that it was not proper for a Jew over 30 years old to run. However, the father sprinted to embrace His pig smelling son. The son confessed His sin, but before he could even offer to become a hired servant and earn the blessings of the family, the father cut him off and commanded that the family robe, the family ring, and the family sandals be given to him freely.

The focus of others in this story is upon the elder brother who was laboring in the fields. When the older brother found out the younger brother had come home from this trip of sin and how the father freely gave him the family blessings without his earning it, he

became enraged. Matter of fact the elder brother felt that the younger brother had disearned these blessings! The elder brother felt he had earned the family blessings and the younger brother disearned them. This was the reason he was so angry.

However, I want to look at a different character in this parable, which does not get much focus. I want to focus upon the **fatted calf!** He did give up the most than anyone else for this celebration by the way! The father had the family robe, family ring, and family sandals brought out but also he had the fatted calf killed. The usual word for “kill” in the NT is the Greek word **apokteino**. However, the word used for “kill” used of killing the fatted calf is **thuo**. This word means “*to sacrifice*”. This word was used of sacrificing the Passover lamb. In was a usual custom that when a public celebration was given in Israel that it began with a sacrifice and the meat from it was used in the feast. The father gave the family blessings to the son but it was in connection with the sacrifice of the fatted calf. In the OT when a sacrifice was offered up the fat was burned on the altar to the Lord. The fat belonged to the Lord. The fat of the sacrificial animal represented the richest and most excellent part of the animal. The father did not just offer up a calf but he offered up **the fatted calf**- His best! The father gave the prodigal son his robe, ring, sandals, and his fatted calf as a sacrifice. They came as a complete package.

Today the heavenly Father offers to his children His robe of righteousness, His ring of authority, and His sandals of peace. These blessings are made available to us because He has killed His fatted calf- Jesus Christ. The fat of the OT sacrifices were burnt and produced a sweet smelling savor to God. All the sacrifices of the OT represented the sacrifice of God’s Son Jesus Christ. The sacrifice of the fatted calf represented the richness and best of His Son Jesus. Notice that the Father sacrificed the **fatted calf** and not just a calf. Many wonder why God waited 33 years before He sent His Son to the cross and not earlier. God wanted to offer up Jesus as the fatted calf, not just a calf. Jesus lived for thirty three years under the Law.

During His life He spent every minute of it fulfilling the Law in every point and every demand. By the time he was to be sacrificed, Jesus was loaded down with every merit and perfection of performance gained by His complete adherence to His Father's Law. Jesus fulfilled perfectly every demand of the Father which He had demanded from mankind. Jesus died as the **fatted calf**. Jesus took our sins, but we got His perfect righteousness from His fulfillment of God's law. It was freely given to us!

Many feel that when the sin they dismerit the family blessings. Many elder "brothers and sisters" will even tell you that you have disearned God's blessings because of your sin. However, you Father wants you to understand that the robe of righteousness, the ring of His authority, and the sandals of His peace belong to you because He has sacrificed His fatted calf for you. The blood of Jesus has cleansed you and qualifies you to receive the family blessings. You do not have to be a hired servant. You are a son through faith in Jesus Christ. God delights in blessing you because of His own goodness and grace.

If you are a child of God, but you are in the pig pin right now suffering for your own actions, you need to come to your senses, acknowledge your sins, and come back home. However, you can't come back as a hired servant. You can't merit the family blessings. You are the Father's son and He loves you. He is looking for you. He has the family robe, ring, and sandals for you. The sacrifice of the fatted calf is the assurance of you enjoying the family blessings again. Come on home and celebrate.