

“THE GOSPEL AWAKENING.”

COMPRISING THE

SERMONS AND ADDRESSES,

Prayer Meeting Talks and Bible Readings,

OF THE

GREAT REVIVAL MEETINGS,

CONDUCTED BY

MOODY AND SANKEY,

IN THE CITIES OF

Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and Boston,

WITH THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE

CHRISTIAN CONVENTIONS OF MINISTERS AND LAYMEN.

From Verbatim Reports by our own Phonographer, and those of the New York Tribune, Chicago Inter-Ocean, Boston Journal and Boston Globe.

ALSO THE LIVES OF

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THE PRODIGAL SON.

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.” LUKE 15:18.

We have for our subject tonight “The Prodigal Son.” Perhaps there is not any portion of Scripture that this audience is so familiar with as this fifteenth chapter of Luke. These boys down here in the audience can tell the story as well as I can. All the Sabbath-school children know this chapter as well as I do. In the second verse we are told why Christ described this beautiful picture. The Pharisees and scribes were murmuring, and they said, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” They told the truth for once. An angel from heaven could not have told the truth plainer than they did when they said, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” That is what he came into the world for. And while they were complaining, he went on and gave us three parables: the parable of the lost sheep; the lost piece of money; and the lost son.

This young man, the prodigal son, started wrong—that was the trouble with him. He was like hundreds and thousands of young men in our cities today, who have got a false idea of life: and when a man has a false idea of life, it is very hard for his father or mother or any of his friends to do anything with him. I do not know where his mother was. Perhaps he had sent her to the grave with a broken heart. The Lord did not speak of his mother; if she had been living, he would have referred to her. The father is to be censured; we cannot help but blame the father. When the son said, “Father, divide, and give me my portion,” the father should have said: “You show a bad spirit. I will let you go without your portion.” A great many fathers make that mistake now. I do not think the father could have done a greater unkindness to the boy than to give him his goods and money, and let him go. It showed a contemptible spirit in the boy when he came to his father and said, “Divide: give me my portion and let me go.” He wanted to go away from his father’s prayers and influence, and get into a foreign land, where he could go on as he pleased, where he could run riot and plunge into all kinds of sin, and where there was no restraint. And that indulgent father gratified his wish, and divided his goods with him. And not many days after he went around to his old companions and bade them all good-bye, and went off to a foreign country, perhaps to Egypt. While he was there his family must have heard from him, because the eldest brother said: “This brother hath spent all with harlots, and thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.”

Undoubtedly, the first time they heard from him they heard bad news. I can see him going away very proud: you might as well talk to an iron post

as to talk to him now. He is full of conceit and false ideas. He is going to get on without his father or any help from his friends; he will have no trouble, in his own mind. But the very first thing we hear of him is, he is in bad company. I never knew a young man who treated his father unkindly but would go right off into bad company. He got into that far country, and now we hear of him going on in all kinds of vice. Undoubtedly, if they had theatres in those days, and I do not doubt but they had, he would be in the theatre every night in the week. We would find him in the billiard hall and the drinking saloon. We do find him in the ways of those whose feet take hold on hell. He was a popular young man; he had plenty of money, and his money was popular. He was a grand companion for the young men in that far country. They liked his society. I do not know how long he had been there; but I do not suppose it was more than five years, and perhaps not more than three years. It does not take long for a young man to go to ruin when he gets in among thieves and harlots: that is about the quickest way down to hell. At last his money is gone, and now his friends begin to drop off, one after another. He is not quite so popular as he was when he had plenty of money. He is getting a little shabby; his clothes are not so good as they were. He had a good wardrobe; but now he goes to the pawn-shop, and he pawns his overcoat. I have seen a good many such young men in Philadelphia. I think his overcoat is gone for strong drink; and one thing after another soon goes. He might have had some gift which his mother gave him when she was dying, and at last that goes; and yet he does not come to himself.

The very first thing he did do that I like to commend was, that he joined himself to a citizen of that country to find some work to do. That is the noblest thing he did. There is some hope for a man when he is willing to go to work. I have more hope for the gambler, the harlot, the drunkard, and for any class of people, than I have for a lazy man. I never knew a lazy man to be converted yet. The prodigal started to get some work to do, even if it was to feed swine. That is the lowest occupation a Jew could be engaged in. He joined himself to a citizen of that country and fed swine; and he would have eaten the husks if he could have got them. No man gave him even husks. This wealthy man's son, who was brought up amid good influences and surroundings, is now living in that foreign country like a man who had never seen a decent home.

Now, just for a moment think what that man lost in all these years. He lost his *home*; he had no home. His friends, when he had money, might have invited him around to their homes; but it is no home for him. There was no loving home. There is not a prodigal upon the face of the earth but has lost his home. You may live in a gilded palace; but if God is not there,

it is no home. If your conscience is lashing you, it is no home. He lost his *food*; his father's table did not go to that country. He would have fed on the husks that the swine did eat; but no one gave unto him. This world cannot satisfy the soul. Then he lost his *testimony*. I can imagine some of the young men of that country saw him among the swine, feeding them and taking the place of a shepherd's dog among them; and they said: "Look at that poor wretched young man, with no shoes on his feet, and with such shabby garments." They looked at him and called him a beggar, and pointed the finger of scorn at him. He said: "You need not call me a beggar; my father is a wealthy man." They said, "Your father a wealthy man?" "Yes." "You look like a wealthy man's son." There was not a man believed him, when he said he was a wealthy man's son. His testimony was gone; no one would believe him. So when a man goes in the service of the devil, he sinks lower and lower; and it is not long before every one loses confidence in him. One sin leads on to another. His testimony is gone. But there is one thing he did not lose, and if there is a poor backslider here tonight, there is one thing you have not lost. That young man never lost his father's love. I can imagine one of his father's neighbors has met him in that place, and says to him: "My boy, I have just come from your home; your father wants you to go home." I can imagine the young man said: "Did my father speak of me? I thought he had forgotten me." "Why," says the man, "he doesn't think of anything else; he thinks of you day and night. Do you think he has forgotten you? No, never. He cannot forget you; he loves you too well for that." He didn't yet come to himself; there he is.

But one day, I can see him, he gets a-thinking. It is a good thing to stop and think. I wish we could get some of the men in Philadelphia to think where they are, and what is going to be the end of it. He begins to think that over those blue hills there is a home; and there is a father in that home, who loves him still. As the Scripture puts it, "He came to himself." It is a grand thing to see a man coming to himself. When he began to come to himself, then it was there was hope for him. It teaches us clearly that all these years he had been out of his mind. Very likely he thought Christians were out of their minds. There is not a drunkard, harlot, thief, or gambler, but thinks Christians are mad; and they call us fanatics. But Solomon says: "Madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead."

The prodigal, perhaps, sends word: "I have spent all my money. I wish you would send me some money." The father says: "I will not give him any more money; for, if I do, he will go on with his riotous living." Some men think God does not love them, because he does not answer their prayers while they are living in sin. The father loved the boy too well to send him any money. There was a mother came to me, not long ago, with a prodigal

boy; and she wanted me to talk and pray with him. I said: "You have come to the wrong person; why don't you take him to Christ?" She said she had. I found this boy was the son of a wealthy father; and he had been brought up to do nothing, and he had had all the money he wanted. I said: "This boy has the false idea that all he has got to do is, to write to his father for money." I said: "You make a great mistake. Do you think the prodigal son would have come home if his father had given him all the money he wanted? He never would have come home if he had not got to the end of his rope."

When he came to himself, he said: "I will perish here. I will arise and go to my father." And that was the turning point in that young man's life. There is always hope for a man when he begins to think. I wish you would bear in mind that, if you are willing to own your sin, and own that you have wandered from God, God is willing to receive you. The very moment you are willing to come, that moment God is willing and ready to receive you. He delights in forgiveness. I do not care how vile you have been, if you are willing to come back, God is willing and ready to receive you. The turning point was when he came to himself, and said: "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee.'" I can imagine the angels hovering over him as he said this; and an angel wings his way to heaven and says, "Ring the bells of heaven!" "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." He rises like a man; his mind is made up. He has his heart set upon one thing, "I am going home." It did not take long, after he had made up his mind, to go; he had not many friends to go and bid good-bye. "They had got all he had in that country, and now there was no one there to love and pity him; there was no one there to care for him. But he knew there was one solitary man that would love him, if any one would on earth; and that man was his father. There is a God in heaven who will love you and pity you, and have mercy on you, if you will come to him. There may be a hiss go up. The Pharisees may look down with contempt upon you; they may pass you on the street and not speak to you; but there is a God who takes care of you, and who is willing to blot out your sin, if you are willing to come to him. The blessed Master brought out this parable to teach the lesson of the Father's love.

There was a young man went off to California, and he left a kind, praying father. He went to the Pacific coast; and the first letter to his father brought the tidings that he was in bad company. The next letter told he had gone on from bad to worse; and every time he heard from that dear boy he heard how he was going on in sin. At last one of the neighbors was going

out to California, and the father said to him: "When you get there hunt up my boy, and tell him one thing—that his father loves him still. Tell him my love is unchanged. Tell him I never loved him more than I do at the present time; and if he will come home, I will forgive him all." The man, when he got to California, had hard work to find the boy; but one night, past midnight, he found him in one of the lowest dens in California. He got him out, and he said to him: "I have news from home for you. I have come from New England, and just before I left I met your father; and he told me, if I found you, to tell you that he loved you as much as ever, and he wants you to come home." The young prodigal said: "Did my father tell you to tell me he loved me still? I do not understand that." "But," says the man, "it is true." That broke the man's heart, and he started back to his father. I bring the message to you that God loves you still. I say to every sinner in Philadelphia, I do not care how vile you are in the sight of your fellowmen, I want to tell you upon the authority of God's word, that the Lord Jesus loves you, and loves you still.

I see this prodigal son: he starts for home, and he has a hard journey of it; he is almost starved. There has been a famine in that land; perhaps the famine struck that land to bring that man back to his father's house. Many a trouble comes upon us to bring us to God. He is coming along over the highway, and night comes on; he sleeps. Day after day he travels on. He has no fears of thieves troubling him, for he had squandered all in that foreign land. As he crosses the line that brings him into his native country, his heart must have beat quicker and quicker. This thought might have come to him: "Perhaps my father is dead, and then no one will love me. It may be my father will not receive and forgive me." He might have thought that, as his father had refused to give him money, he would not receive him. Still he comes on. I see him coming in sight of that old homestead. Perhaps some of you understand his feelings. Perhaps some of you have been away for years, and then, when you came back to the old homestead, the tears would come trickling down your cheeks as you remembered the first morning when you left home. When a young man leaves home, the thought will come across him that he may never return. This boy has been away for years. He is coming home; he sees the playground. He is sick of that foreign country; he is sick of that devil's own country; it has not satisfied him. I never saw a man who lived for the world satisfied yet. He has this thought: "I wonder if my father will let me come in. I will ask him to let me get in among the servants."

I can see the old man; he is up there on the flag-roof of the house. It is in the cool of the day; the sun is sinking down behind those Palestine hills. He is looking in the direction his boy went away years ago. How his heart has

ached for him; how he has loved him. I can see the old man as he looks, and as he sees that boy coming back. He cannot recognize him by his dress; but love is keen to detect its object, and he can see it is his darling boy. He comes down those stairs, and he sweeps out past the servants, as if the spirit of youth had come back upon him. You can see his gray hairs, as he flies through the air and leaps over the highway. He runs and leaps for joy. The boy begins to speak, but the father will not hear him. He takes the boy's hand and says: "Bring out the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand. Bring out shoes and put on his feet, and kill the fatted calf; and let us eat and be merry." I see the old man weeping tears of joy. In that home there is gladness. The boy is eating that sumptuous meal; he has not had as good a meal for many a year. It seems almost too good to be true. Picture the scene. While he is there he begins to weep; and the old man, who is weeping for joy, looks over to him and says, "What are you weeping for." The boy says: "Well, father, I was thinking it would be an awful thing if I should leave you again, and go into a foreign country." But if you sit down at God's feast, you will not want to go back into the devil's country again.

Oh, my friends, tonight come home. God wants you; his heart is aching for you. I do not care what your past life has been. This night, upon the authority of God's Word, I proclaim salvation to every sinner. "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Every sinner has a false idea of God; he thinks God is not ready and willing to forgive him. He says it is not justice. But God wants to deal in mercy. If the old man had dealt in justice, he would have barred the door and said to his son, "You cannot come in my my house." That is not what fathers are doing. Their doors are not barred against their own children. Their doors are wide open, and they bid you come home. There is no father in Philadelphia who has as much love in his heart as God has for you. You may be black as hell; yet God stands ready and willing to receive you to his bosom, and to forgive you freely.

Two weeks ago last Sunday, there was a poor, fallen woman came to this meeting; and I would to God we had more come in. I would like to see every fallen woman come to Jesus. I would like to preach to those twenty thousand fallen women that are in this city; I would like to tell them how Jesus would forgive them. The sermon did not touch this woman until I got to that part where I said, There was no sinner so vile but Jesus would receive that one; and it went like an arrow to her soul. She came to the inquiry-room, and made up her mind never to go back. In the course of forty- eight hours, she found her way to the feet of Jesus, and her heart went out with others. She thought of another; and thanks be to God, she is here tonight. There were two Christian ladies left this city this morning to see the mother; and when they came to her house, she was not going to let

them in. She was sick, and did not want to receive any callers; but the thought came to her that perhaps they were bringing good news from her husband. When these two angels of light came in, they said they came to talk about her daughter Mary. The woman said: "My daughter; have you brought news of my child? Where is she? Oh, how my heart has ached for fifteen long years. Why did you not bring her with you?" They said, "We did not know as you would receive her." She said: "Oh, how my heart has been aching. Won't you bring her back tomorrow morning?" If the mother will receive that child, do you tell me God will not receive her? There is not a poor sinner here tonight God will not receive.

William Dawson, the celebrated Yorkshire farmer, once said that there was no man so far gone in London that Christ would not receive him. A young lady called on him and said: "I heard you say, there was no man so far gone in London that Christ would not receive him. Did you mean it?" "Yes," he said. "Well," she says, "I found a man who said he was so bad that the Lord would not have anything to do with him. Will you go and see him?" He said, "I will be glad to go." She took him to a brick building, in a narrow street: and he was in the fifth story. She said, "You had better go in alone." He went in and found a young man lying in the garret, on an old straw bed. He found he was very sick; and he whispered in his ear some kind words, and wanted to call his friends. The dying man said, "You are mistaken in the person." "Why so?" said Mr. Dawson. "I have no friends on earth," said the dying man. It is hard indeed, for a man to serve the devil, and come down to no friends. "Well," said he, "you have a friend in Christ;" and he told him how Jesus loved and pitied him, and would save him. He read different portions of Scripture, and prayed with the man. After praying with him a long time, the light of the gospel began to break into his dark soul, and his heart went out towards those whom he had injured. He said, "If my father would only forgive me I could die happy." "Who is your father?" He told him, and Mr. Dawson said, "I will go and see him." "No," the sick man said; "he has cast me off." But William Dawson knew he would receive him, so he got his father's address and said, "I will go." He came to the west end of London, and rang the bell of the house where the father lived, A servant in livery came to the door, and Mr. Dawson asked if his master was in. The servant showed him in, and told him to wait a few minutes; presently the merchant came in. Mr. Dawson said to him, "You have a son by the name of Joseph." The merchant said: "No, sir; if you come to talk to me about that worthless vagabond, you shall leave the house; I have disinherited him." Mr. Dawson said: "He will not be your boy by night; but he will be as long as he lives." The man said, "Is my boy sick?" "Yes, he is dying. I do not ask you to help bury him, I will attend to

that, but he wants you to forgive him, and then he will die in peace.” The tears trickled down the father’s cheeks. Said he: “Does Joseph want me to forgive him? I would have forgiven him long ago if I had known that.” In a few minutes he was in a carriage, and they went to the house where the boy was; and as they ascended the filthy stairs, he said: “Did you find my boy here? I would have taken him to my heart if I had known this.” The boy cried, when his father came in: “Can you forgive me all my past sins?” The father came over to the boy and bent over him, and kissed him, and said: “I would have forgiven you long ago.” And he said, “Let my servant put you in my carriage.” The dying man said: “I am too sick; I can die happy now. I think God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven me.” The prodigal told the father of the Savior’s love; and then, his head lying upon his father’s bosom, he breathed his last, and rose to heaven.

If thy father or mother forsake you, the Lord Jesus Christ will not. Oh, may you press into the kingdom of heaven tonight, and while Mr. Sankey sings, “Oh, prodigal son, come home,” I hope every one will come home. Oh, may hundreds come home while this is sung. Let us bow our heads while he sings it.