



Followers of Christ  
*Where Are You  
Following Him?*



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## PART TWO

### A Story of the Father's Love:

There is a beautiful story in the Bible which captures the truth of what it looks like to have a loving father. However, the same story is a tragic story of two boys who didn't know how to receive their father's love. You can find it in Luke 15 and is quite well known. Now, for the matter of time and attention span, I will not dig into the story in great depth, describing how the older and younger brothers operate in both orphan mentality and slave mentality. I will not talk about which brother we might be, or even talk about the son's response to the father. There are many well written sermons and books that can do that far better and more helpful than I could ever hope. But I do need to share with you one thing that radically shifted my view.

I first heard this from Doug Roberts in a book called *Back to Basics*, and have since heard it bubble up in skype conversations with others, read it in a second book, and found it in podcasts talking about similar topics. Meaning, I am borrowing this and also heavily adapting it into my own words, with the purpose of highlighting what the Spirit has been teaching me. I hope this encourage you as much as it did me.

When the father runs out to meet his returning son, who has put together his reasons and plans to regain favour, the Father cuts him off mid sentence. We see him completely ignoring the son's feeble attempts to earn back a love that was never actually in question, nor needed to be earned back in the first place. The Father says five things, that I believe sum up what God says to us, his Children.

1. Wrap my best **ROBE** around him
2. Place my **RING** on his finger
3. Bring **SANDALS** for his feet
4. Prepare the **FATTENED CALF**
5. Let us **CELEBRATE**



I have heard this story many times and thought very little of the significance of these five things, but the imagery here is paradigm shifting! When we return to our Father and regardless of why we were distant, the first thing he does after running to us with arms open, is to wrap us in his best robe. Now every where the son goes, people would recognize him as the Father's. Why? Because the robe was clearly the Father's special robe, unique and valuable. The father quickly deals with the son's Identity. At a glance, people would see the father when they look at the Son because they see the father's robe. It is that very thing that my heavenly father does for me. But what is his best robe? What is his special and most valuable thing he closeth is in? Gal 3:27 and Rom 13:14 say it pretty clear - **We are Clothed in Christ**. The father wraps us in his perfect son! So when the father looks at me the first thing he sees is the amazing, rich colours of Christ, wrapped around me.

Then the Father places His signet ring on the son. What a controversial and seemingly foolish thing to do! Essentially, all the father owns, wealth, land, power and authority are represented by this ring, his seal of ownership. It now placed in the hands of this son of his. A son that just wasted half of his father's wealth, a son that is not wise enough to manage such power. *Yet the father's love empowers the son, affirming that he is indeed His own son, regardless of failures in the past.* The son is once again representing the father, not only by how he looks, be wrapped in the father's robe, but now wielding all the father's power and authority in this ring. What a responsibility! Coming on behalf of the father, to do the father's work. In the same way, 2 Cor 1:22 and Eph 1:13-14 tells us that as the father's son, I have been given the signet ring. A seal to prove who my father is and whose authority I come in. Our Father gives us His Spirit. It is only by His Spirit that we have any way of going about our father's business.

"Bring sandals for his feet". Kind of a strange statement, unless of course, the son was barefoot, which he may have been, but I think it was much more than just that. Sandals symbolize some purpose that the father has in mind. I don't buy brand new basketball shoes so I can sit on the couch and watch basketball. I wouldn't buy hiking boots so I can climb into bed and sleep. No, shoes, in general, are designed to get us out of the house, to go and do something. Eph 6:15 talks about strapping on sandals of the readiness of the gospel of peace. Our father has a mission for us so he gives us sandals, but notice the order here. He first wraps us in Christ, then empowered by the Holy Spirit, then he hands us sandals and sends us out, covered and equip.

Now, I would be happy with that much and ready to do something, but there is more, and this is what I actually need to hear. "Prepare the fattened calf". I love that the Father doesn't say "Go grab some chips and half a chicken". He doesn't even say something like, "go order a party sized pizza". No, he says bring us some meat, a lot of it. Almost like he's saying that *there will be leftovers after tonight*. What a picture of the Father's abundant provision. He doesn't just prepare the bare minimum for his son, he prepares more than is needed, copious amounts. Why? **Because He can and because He cares**. This is something that I need to hear daily! I often believe the lie that God will give me just enough patients to scrape through, just enough perseverance to endure hardships. But the Bible tells us something very different, *Ecclesiastes 9:7; 1 Peter 1:8-9; Nehemiah 8:10; Philemon 1:7; Isaiah 43:1-3 and Ephesians 1:3-14* to name a few. God's provision and blessings far outway anything. He goes above and beyond for his children. I'm not talking health and wealth stuff here (though that could be part of it), I'm talking about joy, satisfaction, wisdom, family, compassion, strength, boldness, inner peace, unity, humility... All these things are at our fingertips and the Father gives unsparingly.



Then finally point is one of my favourite verses in the story, verse twenty-four, "So the party began" (NLV). The father literally says "We must celebrate" in the verse before. Joy is found in being sons of the Father and it involves more than just me celebrating. When we are wrapped in Christ and have proof (Spirit) that we are accepted sons; When we take our sandals and step into the destiny God places before us, knowing full well that he has every power and authority in the known universe; When we start living as God designed us to live, with Him as our Father and us as His sons... Then and only then is the fullness of joy found. That is where the party is. Creation, heaven and earth celebrate with us. I can say, through experience, that this is the truth. You want to find satisfaction? Be where God designed you to be. That is where the party is.

This is Good News, news that the Spirit is pressing into me. See the Father never stopped loving his sons (older and younger), they simply weren't receiving His love. Instead, they were living as though they either weren't his son or as though they had to work to become his son - All the while missing the Father's heart! That is the key, the father's heart doesn't change, He is offering the chance for all to draw near, for all to receive the amazing gift of sonship.

### What about that Original Question?

Where does Jesus lead his followers? I believe that he always brings us back to his Father's Heart. Back to the truth of how God sees His sons. The Spirit is ever drawing us closer to the beauty of who we are as His children, His family, His Church.

God is offering his love to the whole world, to all who are in it, none have fallen too far for Jesus' resurrected life to reach. Our Father wants everyone to receive his love, to become adopted children, it is no use just knowing about it! Imagine I were given a \$500 Westfields gift card, I could know I have it, know it's value, but until I appropriate it, it really does nothing for me. How many of us Christians know this truth yet are not living in it! We have been given this great gift yet still scrounge around for coins when we go to the mall. It just doesn't make sense. We were created to be in the Father's heart, in his family. Jesus leads us to the father's heart. His whole ministry on earth was one of pointing people back to the father's will, the father's work, the father's heart.

We can know facts about God yet still operate in the Orphan or Slave paradigm. God knows I have many times. But oh, to truly let myself be loved by God, to see me as he sees me, that is where freedom begins. My arrogance and pride are the only blockers to me receiving this love. I believe the lie that I need to do something to get something, to prove my worth to find worth. Grace seems like a cop out to the arrogant heart, as though there must be more to it. But I know first hand that Corban (4) and Esher (1.5) can never do anything to change the fact they are my sons. **They can not become an Un-Son.** And the reality is, at this stage of the game, they bring very little to the table as part of the family, you know what I mean? If anything, they are taking a lot more than they give, but that changes nothing! I love them, I want them to know my heart, to trust my decisions and to accept my guidance and welcome my gifts... And I am a messed up, unwise, selfish, impatient father.



Don't I want to receive that sort of love? Undeserved compassion, unconditional care, unfair favour? Can I believe that I am a love Son of the Father? Can I truly accept and receive that? Or will I continue living like an Orphan, or like a Slave?

**The Father's Heart is seriously the only destination we were made for.** What a refreshing truth. Only eight months into wrestling through this and I have seen too many things to ever turn back. I know where Jesus and I are walking, I love the view. I love the fresh air that blows on my face, the ecstatic joy that comes from taking a few more steps wearing these new sandals. I love the blister-free peace that is found in being loved. Just getting to admire the amazing colours painted throughout the skies of God's truth. This walk is one that is refreshing, even though it is a long walk following Jesus, I am more energized because of it.

I wonder, would you walk with us?

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