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## Our Pulpit.

### The Prigal.—I.

By J. L. BURTON, D.D., of Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.

Text.—Father, give me the portion of goods that fall to me, Luke 12:12.

THE SERMON OUTLINED.

The history of millions of young men is written in the fang of this parable. The history of a few thousands, perhaps, is continued to its close. A hundred die in their degradation among the wise where one struggles back to the father's home. Half of it is as true to-day as it was when Jesus spoke it, and thank God there is here and there an instance in which the blessed outcome is also true. There are thousands in this age, in this city, who grow restless under the restraints of home, who, reckless of consequences, break the cords which check and gall them; who, rising from the paths of innocence and rectitude, plunge madly in a rioting temper into the whirl of revelous sports, and in a few years, property wasted, health impaired, and worse still, the enthusiasm all dissipated, burdens to themselves and to others, are utterly ruined, and who, by their insane folly, are overwhelmed in wretchedness. And here in fact the larger number of cases the parallel occur. Most die in their misery, unrepenting, unrepented, unrepented. Yet there are a few who recover from their moral insanity and repenting of their transgressions, are seen sadly returning to their father's home, where they are lovingly received with grateful rejoicing. This outline indicates the topics I propose to discuss in a series of discourses to the young men of this city.

Let us together trace, step by step, the course and character of the lad—a young man—at first restless, then reckless, then rioting, rioting, ruined and wretched. Then having behind us the multitude who never pass this point, but who die there in their woful debasement, without God and without hope, we will further trace the few in their reflecting, repenting, returning, in their gracious reception by a father's inextinguishable love and in the happy rejoicing over their pardon and restoration to a father's favor.

Unite with me, my young friends, in invoking the Holy Spirit to shed upon our hearts his most gracious influence, that these discourses may prove effective in drawing some feet from the paths of folly and sin, and in winning the love of some souls to the compassionate, forgiving Heavenly Father!

Spirit of God! Let it please Thee to guide the mind and heart of Thy servant that he may present truth clearly and lovingly to those assemblies of young men, and mercifully apply those lessons to the hearts and consciences of those youthful hearers that they may be able for its pollution, shun it by its dangers, that they may sincerely renounce all their transgressions, and, being purified through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, may find refuge and joy within the embracing arms of a reconciled Father and God. This wo

implore for the sake of our Redeemer and Lord. Amen.  
We are then first to contemplate THE PRIGAL.—I.

The younger of the two brothers said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of the goods that fall to me."  
He was evidently restless, dissatisfied. This request indicates discontent with his condition and surroundings. He wanted change—to set up for himself. He had perhaps heard of the joyous freedom from restraint of the life of pleasure—which some of his associates were enjoying, who had escaped the control of home authority. Perhaps he did not like the work expected of him on his father's farm. It became irksome and dreary. You can fancy that you see him wandering listlessly and unhappy over the fields, or lying idly under the shade of the olive trees, and musing as some of you have mused: "Why am I tied down to this dull life? Here I have no freedom, little enjoyment. The same dreary routine every day. My father's restraining eye is ever upon me. I can go no where, get but little to spend, and can form no companionship with such choice spirits as I should like. I have a mind above these things, a spirit that can not brook these galling fetters upon my will and desire. O! what a miserable life I am leading here. There are young men whose fathers have died and left them the control of their property; there are others who are permitted by their parents to indulge in all sorts of amusements, and still others who have run away from home and are enjoying their sweet liberty in the full gratification of their own inclinations. Why are all these pleasures of youth denied me? Must I pass two long years in the dreariest years of my life in this fashion, when I know could enjoy so much by mingling with jolly companions in the pleasures of the world? Must I pass years yet

in my dull, uninteresting, dreary sort of life? O! if my father would only give me now my portion of the estate and let me go I would trouble him no more with what he calls my faults and frivolities. I would live away among strangers, into some far land and enjoy life. How can I live longer in this dreary, joyless manner. O! if only I had money, the money which my father means to leave me, by and by, how soon would I launch out into the broad world and enjoy the pleasures for which I long, and for which my mind and heart are fitted. If I could only choose merry companions, mingle with kindred spirits, I could sit as long at a feast, and shout as loud in the revel, and glide as gayly in the dance, as any among them all. Such days of enjoyment and night of dancing and dancing away, in this dull home, the weary weeks and years. When will the time come for release? When shall I have no more my portion?"

I dare not think like these sometimes disturbed your souls, my young friends? Ah! this restlessness, which is the spring head of so much profrivolity, distracts more hearts than ever give them utterance. Many are dissatisfied and restless in their present position.

I do not mean to say that change is not sometimes desirable. There are circumstances that may warrant a young man in leaving the paternal roof. The best interest of the family and of the son may be promoted by such separation. It is not the fact of leaving home but the motives which lead to it, the ends proposed to be gained by it, that gives the act its moral character.

Some are restless from indolence. Labor is unpleasant to them. The routine of daily toil is dreary. They are lazy and cultivate laziness. Instead of fighting off those propensities and by strong will subduing them, they nurse them. Instead of encouraging interest and determining perseverance and seeking enjoyment in their work, they brood over its monotony and hardships. They

want something easier and brighter, and fancy that a yard-stick would be softer to the hand than a plow-still, a pen than a hoe-handle, a high stool behind a ledger easier than loading a cart and driving a team. By and by they tire of the yard-stick and ledger and imagine that it would be glorious to slide over the railroads and tourists in hotels a commensal traveler. They become disgusted with this sort of life, and think they will try a profession, and study law or medicine. Anything for a change by which they can shirk hard work and indulge inherent laziness, or find leisure for sport. It is of such stuff that gamblers and cheating speculators and thieves are made. It is so easy and jolly to shuffle cards and gamble, to handle dishonest gains, to fish people, to lounge and loaf and mix drinks. Anything for an easier and merrier life. The broad road to hell is crowded with such characters, first leaping and shouting along the course in fashionable attire, then moodily walking in seedy coats, hunting for some short cut to an income, then crawling in rage into some back kitchen or grog-shop, for a free luncheon, and at last lying down in a gutter, to be carted to a police-office and to a poor-house, and thence to the potter's field in a rough pine coffin, and thence—whether?

The temptations to this kind of instability and self-indulgence are very strong with some temperaments. Resist them bravely, my young friends! Faithfully and cheerfully meet the duties of your homelier callings, assured that only by diligence and perseverance in these can you be fitted for higher and more important trusts. The boy that yawns and dawdles over his books is not likely to attain much thorough and serious knowledge. The young man who fags and shirks his honest daily tasks is not likely to become a skilled and thriving workman.

of a large, and ugly brood of vices and crimes. The bands of idle young men, who, disgusted with labor, gather in taverns, and beat gardens, and upon street corners, bent on fun, ripe for mischief, prompting each other to all sorts of devilry, are scandals, scourges and curses to the city or any other city or town. If any good is ever to be gotten out of them, it must be through a thorough and speedy change of character.

Some grow restless because of the serene monotony of peaceful domestic life. What is more lovely on earth than a happy, intelligent family circle, where each seeks to promote the welfare and comfort of all; where in all the duties of the day, at the quietest times and in cheerful evening gatherings around the lighted table, in books and work and pleasant conversation, there is content and love. But how often is the peace and harmony of such a household rudely broken by the dissatisfied restlessness of some beloved member of the circle. One of the brothers becomes dissatisfied and fidgity. His ruler passions will not be confined within the pleasant banks of such a quiet stream and he seeks the rapid times and the river of life plunges madly in to be, as I specifically swept down the awful cataract that rours in the near distance. What is the matter with the young man? Such pleasures are all too tame for him. By degrees turbulent affections have become awakened and gratified. He wants excitement, and he roams beyond the serene home to hunt for it. He leaves the purest sources of joy behind him. O, my young friends, if you can not find happiness within the circle of a virtuous, affectionate family, believe me, you will never find it anywhere else. The cause of your restlessness and dissatisfaction are within yourself and will be carried with you wherever you wander.

Some are restless from an over-weening love of wealth. They will be rich. They will not be satisfied with a comfortable livelihood and prospects

of ultimate moderate competency, gained by labor and economized by frugality. They will be rich, and be rich soon. They plunge into mad speculations, adopt wild schemes, follow some dishonest business, or some honest business in a dishonest way. In several haste to make their money. Frantic restlessness from the source becomes many of our young and older men. Home loses its charms and virtues its beauty under the balmy breathing of this passion for wealth. The restless spirit traverses land and sea, knows the leeching of polar seas and the fivers of torrid lands. In storm or heat digs the sands, breaks the rocks, delves in creeks and gulches to satisfy this inordinate lust for gold. Home, virtue, comfort, health, life are as nothing compared with riches. One in a thousand may be successful, and bear off his load, else with a shattered constitution and a withered heart. The thousand to this one will be disappointed, degraded and ruined in every spiritual and bodily sense.

Some are restless from a thirst for fame. They long to be known beyond the narrow circle of home. They would make for themselves a name that shall excite the wonder, envy and praise of many. They fret against the bars that restrain them. They are discontented with every position in life that stops short of their ambitious aims. But more are rendered restless by lust of pleasure. The lust of wealth and of fame do not so generally characterize the young as this. These passions are often the curse and scourge of later years. The young often chafe their souls against any cords that hold them back from unlimited indulgence in sensual and animal gratifications. Some glimpses of enjoyment yet beyond their reach excite their fancy. They picture to themselves scenes of dissipation and

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and by itself present reach, create disgust with present duties and labor, and foster discontent and envy—restless tenants—in the chambers of the soul. This parable furnishes an illustration of the character and career of every man whose actions are decided by impulses and not by principles. In some respects every ungodly man resembles the youth portrayed in the parable.

A *restless heart is always restless. There is no true rest for any soul but in submission and harmony with the Lord God.* He who created and knows what is best fitted to secure our highest good and happiness, and he has so joined peace with right, joy with piety, bliss with purity, prosperity with integrity, that they never can be long separated. And those who discover themselves from God and religion always discover, sooner or later, that they "have forsaken the fountain of living waters and hewn out for themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water." Those who, parting from God, trust to their own devices for enjoyment or profit, must ever be restless and dissatisfied. It is not a truth alone of God's word, but it is a truth also proved by the experience of all who have tried it, that the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it can not rest, whose waters can not mire and dirt. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." You may sneer at that with curling lips, but down in your soul you know it is true. Still more graphic are the metaphors of an apostle: "Clouds are they without water, carried about of winds, trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame, wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

These representations of the unrest of the turbulence, agitation, fluctuations of a Godless soul, are not exaggerations. In the instance of an exception to such cases, that you can carry a quiet heart and a satisfied conscience into scenes of Godless revelry and vice. You may hurt the lie into the face of Jehovah and tell him that you know better than he what is best for your own welfare and enjoyment, but you will find out—may it be before it is too late—that God is right and that your whole course is wrong, wretched and ruinous. What ever sin in its deceptions may promise, whatever delusions it may impose upon your fancy, by whatever superstition it may seek to convince you that safety and happiness are reconcilable to a life of sinful pleasures, you ought not hide from yourself that your soul is restless: that true peace you have not yet found, and that pure, satisfactory joys you have never yet experienced. Young men, from this restlessness of spirit, which will drive you into ever deeper iniquities and expose you to dire torments, escape by coming into fellowship with the God of peace. "Come unto me, ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "You who are troubled, rest with us."

The practical lesson suggested by these truths is very obviously this: Be content with your lot. I do not mean that lazy, insipid sort of contentment that represses progress and induces stagnation. I would not have you satisfied with trading on gold when you can buy a horse, nor with hammering tacks when you can swing a sledge. As an apprentice you may aspire to become a journeyman, and then a master. As a student you may and ought to desire and strive to become a teacher or counselor. To be always aiming higher in right directions is not hostile to contentment in present surroundings. Make the very best out of your position. "Be content with such things as ye have, and wait hopefully for their natural development into something better. Do not force doubtful changes.

Find your pleasure in your calling and position. You will be restless so long as you do not seek your enjoy-

ment in the occupations and duties of ordinary life. While these are regarded only as necessary drudgery, and you fancy that your happiness is to be snatched at intervals from something outside, you must be miserable. In the cheerful fulfillment of the plain duties of to-day; in pleasant intercourse with your associates in the school or shop or store you can find sweeter enjoyment than the boisterous and demoralizing excursions outside these circles have ever imparted.

And then cultivate those intellectual and social capabilities with which God has endowed you. You possess a mind wonderful in its powers; and in the exercise of its faculties, in storing away interesting and useful knowledge you derive higher satisfaction than any which more animal gratifications can give. You are capable, too, of social affections, in the culture and use of which you can diffuse a charm all around your circle, making home happy, friends confiding and loving, your whole influence a blessing to all, a blessing that shall return with ten fold sweetness upon your own heart. Is not this better, more satisfactory and peaceful than perpetual outbreaks over safe boundaries, in chase of boisterous fun, inane sports and malicious mischief.

Alone all the rest, think of God as a loving Father and of Jesus Christ as a present Savior. After all, piety is trust peace. Faith in God's love for us is purest happiness. This gives calmest repose to the soul. What is there to perturb me if God is my Father and friend? He who created my soul has provided, even after its ruin, for its regeneration; that in regaining purity it may regain lost peace. There is rest—sweet rest—for your soul, in the favor and love of a loving Father and of Jesus Christ as a present Savior. After all, piety is trust peace. Faith in God's love for us is purest happiness. This gives calmest repose to the soul. What is there to perturb me if God is my Father and friend? He who created my soul has provided, even after its ruin, for its regeneration; that in regaining purity it may regain lost peace. There is rest—sweet rest—for your soul, in the favor and love of a loving Father and of Jesus Christ as a present Savior. After all, piety is trust peace. 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