

# Resentful Sons

Jesus the Master skillfully spoke the truth so that He always called upon hearers to make a choice. The sword of His words cut deep into the thoughts and intentions of men's hearts. The Lord's parables uniquely divided listeners and students into those who were receptive and those who were unreceptive. Two different parables describe a father and his two grown sons (Matthew 21:28-32; Luke 15:11-32). The sons illustrate different reactions to a father's request, depicting men in their responses to God's instructions.

Resentment is a feeling of bitter hurt or indignation toward a person, often because of a sense of being injured or offended. It is a common emotion because everyone becomes injured as the result of the words and deeds of others. In all probability, you have been both the injured and the injurer at one time or another. These two parables, though, are not describing our interaction among ourselves, but rather, our reactive attitudes to God our Father.

Our heavenly Father has given us commandments - commandments that are to be carried out. *"A man had two sons, ... and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' ...and he answered, 'I will sir'; but he did not go."* (Matthew 21:28, 30). Perhaps, there are moments in a man's life when he has good intentions, but he simply forgets. That is not what Jesus is depicting in this parable. I believe what is implied is that this son did not have good intentions. He did not plan to carry out his father's request. He deceptively answered with the words that he knew his father wanted to hear. At the root of this disobedience is a kind of resentment. He resented being told what to do; he resented the kind of work it was. He did not want to do his father's bidding. Do we resent the commandments of God because we see them as a burden (cf. 1 John 5:3)?

God desires sinners to repent. He desires men to turn to Him so that He may forgive and restore. All men need forgiveness because all have sinned (Romans 3:23). But how willing are we to forgive when another person has wronged us? The older brother in Luke 15 returned home from working in the field to discover that a celebration was in progress over his brother's return. He became angry. He resented that his father forgave and welcomed his younger brother, who had wasted his inheritance with prostitutes. He felt cheated. *"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"* (Luke 15:29). When a lost person is found, rejoicing is a right response because everyone should long for the restoration of everyone. Everyone needs restoring in one way or another, at one time or another. *"Rejoice with those who rejoice"* (Romans 12:15). But envy and jealousy can work their way into men's hearts. The ugliness of resentment can ensnare anyone who does not guard his heart with the love of God. If he is not careful, before he even realizes it, the obedient son is needing the Father's forgiveness, too, because of an impure heart toward others.