

# Are you Hard

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'd like us now to turn to our second reading in Luke's Gospel and chapter 15. Luke chapter 15, I'm reading again at verse 11.

And he said, A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.

And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country.

And there wasted his substance with right his living. Particularly towards the verse Mark 20, read at verse 18. I will arise and go to my father.

I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am no more worthy to be called to thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants.

[ 1 : 02 ] And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion on him. And had compassion and ran and fell on his neck.

And kissed him. And so on. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

In the book of Proverbs that we read there a few moments ago, there are many very succinct comments made with regard to the character of mankind. And especially with regard to the foolish in heart.

Those who will take no thought for what they are doing and the consequences. We live in these lives of ours surrounded by consequences.

And the Bible is at pains to present to us these consequences. We cannot run away from them. We always know that they are there.

[ 2 : 08 ] They confront us maybe every day. And if we bear something upon our heart and our mind that troubles us, how difficult it is to live with so many things that bear upon us.

In verse 15 of chapter 13 of the book of Proverbs, this is what we are told and the wisdom of it. Good understanding gives favour.

But the way of the transgressor is hard. And it certainly is. Anyone who knows anything at all of what sin has done within these lives of ours can understand something of the wisdom and the sentiments of that statement.

The way of the sinner is very hard. However much we want to cover up what we are by nature and by practice, we know fine, even those of us who might not want to admit to ourselves, that the way is hard.

And we might even know that the way is hard because we have done things that we know are deserving of much of God's wrath and God's judgment.

[ 3 : 29 ] Like the thief that we read about this morning, who said and admitted, we deserve our due reward.

Christ has done nothing wrong. We cannot justify ourselves by pointing the finger at Christ. We cannot justify ourselves by pointing the finger at anybody.

We stand before God exposed. And that's a thought in itself that ought to make us shudder, especially if we are not sheltering under the sufficiency of the blood of the everlasting covenant.

The story that is presented to us here in parabolic form is a story that I'm sure we have heard preached upon many times.

Every preacher, I'm sure, will approach this story in a different way. Many will take more applications out of it than maybe I will this evening. But what I want us to consider this evening with regard to the prodigal son, because he is an evident token of the way of the sinner being hard.

[ 4 : 43 ] Not one of us would ever want to be in the state that this man got himself into. But having said that, not any one of us could say, it will never happen to me.

There is a great risk in these lives of ours if we are not, as it were, protected and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

This man has been known of as the prodigal son. That's what he is. He has gone away from the influence of his own home.

He has turned to his own way, not giving consideration to the consequences that were going to come upon him as a result of his earthly desire.

He had everything going for him in the home life. He wasn't living in poverty. Many people might look upon a state of poverty as the reason for falling into bad ways.

[ 5 : 56 ] And our nation is full of them, some of our cities. And not just our cities are full of people who we might classify or who might classify themselves as having fallen into hard times.

Everyone wants to blame somebody else. And very few people want to take the responsibility for that one action, maybe, that set them in a road to disaster.

There was nothing wrong with this man wanting to have his share, his inheritance, if what he was going to do with it was going to be for the good of his own family, if he would have a family, if it was going to be for the good and the glory of God.

But that was not his intent. And it is certainly not to the intent of many people as they are seeking to map out at a certain stage of their life what I'm going to do with my future.

For some, like this man, maybe his upbringing was experienced by himself. He would have been thinking to himself, this upbringing of mine is too strict.

[ 7 : 17 ] It is pretty obvious from the parable that the kind of life that this man represents and the kind of family that is behind this life, it is a family that is very likely to have been God-fearing.

At least that's the impression one gets, as we see later on. But for him, he had had enough. And for many of our day and generation, being cooked up, as they would classify it, in a situation where they haven't any freedom, they would even go as far as to say, I feel suffocated in this home.

I wonder how many parents have heard their children say something of that kind of ilk. That the children, they want to get out.

They want to break free. But I'm quite sure that if in the parable we address it this way, that this father, having responded to the son's demand, he wasn't in any way at all doing anything wrong by giving him what was his due.

It was his due. But I'm sure right at the very outset there was an anxiety in him with regard to what was the son going to do? Was the son sufficiently protected from a world into which he was going?

[ 8 : 43 ] Did the father believe for one moment that the son was going to have an assured life, protected life, because of faith in God and trust in God? many want to leave the family home like this man was because there was a certain degree of desire to, as it were, look upon the grass on the other side.

It was much greener. It was much tastier. It seemed to present many more possibilities. And if one has one control of one's life, then we can do what we like.

The danger was, of course, he didn't sit down for a moment to think of what he was going to really do, where he was really going to go, but he was wanting to depart from the influence of the home as far away as possible.

He was probably one of those young lads, just as it could be a young girl who would want to go somewhere as far away from the influence of the home.

I'm not saying that everyone that leaves the island here or any young person that goes away to college or to nursing training in Edinburgh or Burness or somewhere like that is intent on getting involved in things that are shady or things which their parents would be absolutely appalled.

[ 10 : 16 ] But the allurements of the world can do funny things. It can, as it were, desynthesise our thinking that we don't think straight.

And I remember, and I hope there's nobody here that comes under this, but I remember when I was in Edinburgh and I was an elder when I was a student in St. Columbus.

I remember that one or two girls used to come to church maybe just a Sabbath before or two Sabbaths before they went home so that they could tell their parents they were in church but the rest of the time they weren't.

The dangers of that, of course, as we all know and maybe all of us have been there at one level or another, but the allurements of the world was distracting from, yes, the teaching and the upbringing of the home.

How important it is for all of us to, as it were, make sure that our children have a good grounding on the things of God and of Christ. Self-will was this man's desire.

[11:26] I want to do my will and I wanted to do my way. He never anticipated for one moment that it was possible for him to fall into hard times.

And again, for all of us, we don't have to think of somebody who's taking a mass of money and think you can buy your happiness as you venture out into the wide world and all will be well.

You don't even need to go that far away to make yourself appear as though you're self-sufficient. We can do that very well sitting at home doing their own thing every single day and feeling self-satisfied.

But still, the life is governed by the allurements of the world. And that, of course, is the case for every soul that will not respond to what has been offered to them through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

People become hardened in heart. Maybe that's what this son was demonstrating a greater hardness of heart. Maybe he put upon his father a great concern and a worry that how many people and parents are worried about what their children are doing.

[12:49] This man was dissatisfied. The life that he was living at home was a life that he would have seen as lacking, yes, individuality, lacking opportunity as he would see it.

And he wanted to get out and so he does. Now, I'm not going to reiterate the whole of the story because you know it only too well. But there are aspects about this story that show to each and every one of us the great dangers if we are thinking to ourselves that we are capable.

We are not. We are vulnerable. Very vulnerable. Every believer in this building tonight will express and acknowledge the vulnerability of their lives.

They know fine because they know what the devil wants to do with us and we are fighting against him all the time. But what about somebody upon whom there is no restraint?

For this young lad, maybe the restraints of home were too much for him to cope with and he wants to break free. But what he didn't realise was that these influences of the home were a blessing to him but he saw them as something else.

[14:10] I want to break free. I want to do it my own particular way. He was dissatisfied with the home life and that must be very hard for parents when they see their children wanting to leave and escape from the home.

Of course, the allurements of the world was very pleasing and it was doing many things, I'm sure, for his ego. And what generation knows anything about ego than the present one?

Our life, our society, is full of egoistic things. We want to elevate ourselves, we want to feel proud and well thought of, we want to be admired, we want to attract attention to ourselves.

This is the way that we are by nature and it's becoming an increasingly more difficult situation for people as we grow up in this kind of world and society.

the young man, everything was going fine, he had money and I'm sure as we've heard it often times, if you've got money, you have friends, plenty of friends.

[15:27] Yes, if you have got the latest car maybe, motorbike, if you've got the latest and all the things that the world has wanted to, as it were, attack you with, you feel satisfied for a time.

But what happens when all is taken away? And let's face it, it does. How many tragedies there have been and still are going on.

Tragedies of life where people have thought, young people and not necessarily young people, but people of all ages who have thought to themselves, I don't need anything.

I've got everything I want, until all of a sudden it's stripped from them, they've got nothing left. In fact, however hard it was for this man to be in the far country with nothing, it was certainly a blessed providence to him that everything was taken away from him.

because if you and I are dependent upon the things of this world and that is all our dependency, then we are in danger of having it been taken from us and for the Lord to allow us as is suggested to us in this parable, the Lord having taken away all his props, all his supports, everything that he depended and wished for in this life, nothing left.

[16:59] where was he going to go? The nearest poorhouse, the nearest down and out accommodation, he wanted to, as it were, satisfy a need.

And the need was borne about as a result of his refusal to accept what was suggested to him probably in the home. The way of the wicked the way of the sinner is hard.

And I don't envy anybody who lives in the same channel or the same lane as the way of the sinner in this kind of way.

This poor man, robbed of everything, lost everything, and who could he blame? Society might want to turn around and blame all kinds of people, but at the end of the day, we are answerable.

We are answerable to God for whatever we have done with this life or what we have not done. In that state of destitution, and of course, destitution is not necessarily something that speaks of an inclement kind of condition of being poor without money, without accommodation, without any friends.

[18:30] In fact, you could have plenty and still be destitute. Many are one I've heard say who live in the big cities and the towns where there is plenty of activity, and their life is one of great loneliness.

They don't have a friend. Why? it may be the case that they don't have the friend that they need more than anyone else. It took this man to be brought to his knees, as it were.

It took this man to be brought into that state of destitution before he came to himself and he realized. What does he do? Oh, well, he came to himself.

Love that expression. everyone that sat at the table at some point or another in their life, they came to themselves. They came to realize that the life without Christ was nothing.

And he decided he had to do something about it. For you and for I, it's what is it? It is that we have to go, we must go. To whom can we go but to the Lord Jesus Christ himself?

[19:47] He runs to his father. But not blindly. He remembers things. And that's what's good about having a good ground in scripture.

Even if at some point, even in teenage years or even much later, you decide to hive off and go elsewhere, the very fact that you have heard something of the truth may come into your thinking and mind on the day when you find yourself destitute, hopelessly lost.

That was this man's condition. I could nothing. He would faint as filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.

That's how far he got. But again, the dependency on self surely is not an answer to whatever problems might arise for us in the future.

we need to be penned upon the Lord Jesus. For this young man, he thought and he thought and he said, I will arise and go to my father.

[20:58] I will go back to that home of safety and security and I will say to my father, and these again are precious truths that resonate with God's people who have come to faith in Jesus.

I will say to my father, I have sinned against heaven, I have sinned against him. I am not worthy to be called anything, I am not deserving of anything at all, and none of us, when we come to this state, can ever say that we are worthy of anything.

But he says to himself, I will arise, I will go to my father. And he goes back home and he is believing that even if he just makes him as one of his hired servants, that would be sufficient.

He is appealing in his own heart and soul that there is something in what I was taught when I was in the home, the very home that I wanted to, as it were, clear out of.

He goes back, and he is going to make this appeal. Listen to how it is put. I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee.

[22:24] I am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants. Those of us who ever came to an awareness of our sinful state and knew that our only hope was Christ, we would never make any suggestion that we were deserving of him.

Far from it. But what we do know, and what word has taught us is that there is hope there, there is forgiveness. He arose and came to his father, but when he was yet a great way off, his father ran toward him and fell in his neck and kissed him.

Here was the son, the disobedient son, the wayward son, you and I, before we ever came to a realization of our need of Christ, there he is, longing for people of all ages, whatever you've done in this life, however far away you have gone from God, whatever you have been, there is hope, because that's what the gospel teaches, doesn't it?

it. And it doesn't, we don't need, as it were, to wait until some way or another we have revitalized our life, we have reshaped our life. How many people think that they can self preserve by actually changing their lifestyle?

But it doesn't really change unless Christ enters that experience. When he comes to himself and he goes to his father, I am sure he never for one moment believed that the father would have accepted him.

[ 24 : 09 ] No more than the greatest sinner on earth would ever believe that God would bring us to himself. I mentioned I think it was yesterday that you know the stench that was of this man, the stench of the world, and we don't need to be living in a pigsty to be as it were full of the stench of unbelief that characterises this world and characterises each and every one of us outside of him.

The father had compassion on him and ran and fell on his neck and he kissed him. What a picture of beautiful love, fatherly love.

What a picture that Christ is here seeking to portray to us with regard to how he would receive you, how he would receive me as a poor wretched sinner.

I quoted it the other evening, what Paul says in Romans, oh wretched man that I am, and there is not one redeemed person here that could ever say that I have not been wretched and undeserving and hell deserving.

For this young man, he comes and he is amazed at the acceptance that is before him. Why is he amazed? Well, because he uprooted and left.

[ 25 : 41 ] He probably believed to himself that who could ever bring me back, who could ever take me back. In looking at the thief in the cross this morning, I have often thought, if it had been possible for that thief to have come down from the cross, I conjecture, but if it had been possible, how would he be accepted by the crowd?

How would he be accepted by the world? This man was no longer wanted by the world. He had become an outcast, and he probably felt himself that he would be an outcast of his family, that I could be a servant of my father.

You see, the difference is that when we come to Christ, he is not going to condemn us. If we come by faith in him, putting our trust in him, we have nothing to fear by way of rejection.

Because, let's face it, it's one of the things that, harm us a lot in this world. That feeling of rejection. Rejection from our fellow man, from our peers, feeling rejection in many respects.

But the Lord Jesus does not reject. The Son of Love does not reject those who would come humbly and meekly and penitently lead to a Savior who reaches out, knowing that the stench of this world is hung around us, yet he will embrace us.

[ 27 : 26 ] That's what the picture for me tells. And when Jesus listened to the thief on the cross, making that appeal, remember me, that appeal of desire for redemption.

How would Christ ever turn him away? What a privilege it was for that man. But let's not just leave it there.

What a privilege it is for any one of us here this evening. If, having lived outside of Christ, the opportunity is given to you, even although you believe yourself to be, yes, a sinner, maybe not aware of how wretched a sinner you are, yet is there hope for you?

Of course there is. There is hope for everyone that would cast their care and put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have no need to be afraid.

Contrast, the life that this young man was living in the far country with the life that he was now going to live as an accepted son of his father.

[ 28 : 49 ] Yes, he wasted his life. You and I have wasted our life for long enough and maybe still are doing it. But are we beyond the pale?

Are we beyond the hope of the condescension of Christ? The outstretched arm of Christ to redeem? It is good for us to learn something from this parable, whoever you are.

It is for everybody, of course, isn't it? It is not just a sermon addressed to those who are outside of Christ. It is significant to express it in that way, but for all of us.

In order that you and I, and let's face it, it can happen, and it has happened to many of the Lord's people, who find themselves wandering away, maybe dissatisfied with the newfound favour.

In time, we lose ground, because we are not, as it were, linked into Christ as we should be. We're not giving credence to what Christ desires of us.

[ 30 : 02 ] We could fall quite far, but we know the Lord will pick us up, but that doesn't give us any excuse whatsoever. We must always put our trust in him, and like this young man, be accepted in the beloved.

I don't want to do anything at all at this stage with regard to the elder brother, but he is a significant character. But what is important is that if there is one, one who comes to faith in the Lord Jesus, one who reaches that zenith of believing in the Son of God's love, then surely there should be great rejoicing.

The elder son was very jealous of this. In fact, it was the case, was it not, that he felt himself to be offended by what had been taking place.

Here was a party laid on for someone who had wasted their life. Well, if you knew somebody that had wasted their life and came back pleading, please, please, how many broken-hearted parents have experienced something of that?

A son or a daughter returning from a waywardness of life? Would you turn them away? Would you tell them, go and sort yourself out?

[ 31 : 36 ] Surely not. This father didn't do that anyway. He ran and fell on his neck and kissed him and made a great feast because this, thy brother, this, my son, was dead.

And he is alive. He was lost and he is found. So anyone this evening, if you are in that state of lostness, arise, go to Christ, call upon him.

Do you think he will have mercy upon you? Of course he will. The word of God says so. And there is none here, as I've said it already, if it is beyond the pale.

come, come to the Lord Jesus Christ, pour out your heart to him, acknowledge your ways, and yet believe that he is the one who alone will make you accepted.

Maybe nobody else will, but he will, if you put your trust in him. Shall we pray? O eternal and ever blessed God, thine hand is so great, it reaches from afar, it pulls up from the deepest cesspit, it enables those who were deeply involved in this world, to return and to seek the Lord, whilst he is to be found.

[ 33 : 22 ] Christ is not willing for any to perish, but that all would come to a knowledge of the truth. And we pray that if there are any here this evening, who may be struggling with that relative position, of maybe being in the far country, away from God, away from Christ.

O Lord, help them to seek the Lord, to seek him with all their heart and soul, to plead with him, to remember them.

O Lord, leave us not to ourselves then, and continue with us in fellowship, loving us freely, for we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. I'm now going to invite two men from the congregation to lead us in a word of prayer.

If I could first of all ask Ross Duncan from Stornoway and then Willie Finney MacLeod from back to lead us in a word of prayer. Amen. Praise for Penny .

[ 35 : 05 ] Hallelujah, the heavens I would do. I would praise the name that the Lord's hand is not strong. Let us come and see.

Let us hear heavy, let me not hear. And the grand name of the Lord is the Lord in the Lord. The response is, don't come to me.

You may know why this Christ is not. We have to be water, please, but we have to get the water to go.

What we do is like that. We have to go on to the world, which is our life. I just never want that. We have to be perfectly in the past.

We have to be at the end of the world. We have to the night's mountains, the night's mountains, the past came all the way here to the sun, all the poor and spiritual young, except I want to see it the marches of the marches of the marches of the marches of the marches of the marches of the marches.

[ 36 : 25 ] And the ■■■■■es of the marches of the marches of the marches yet of Zion, the li bad light, and everything else, But they have their own responsibility.

The gospel is repent and leave the gospel. You must be born again. I don't want to be spirit. I'm not sure my role is to be patient.

Those blessings you need some age tonight. The gospel will be the entire world. The gospel will be the entire world.

Not only that, we are united to Christ. Nothing is the same way that's wrong. I promise you. And yet, the Lord sees the Lord as I am on the cross.

Very decided to do it. It is my best, Jesus Christ. I am not the Lord. The Savior, until Jesus died on earth. I will now.

[ 38 : 02 ] God is so, I am one of your feet with the golden sonraki. The Lord loves you. I am a Forest Americus guy. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[ 41 : 09 ] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[ 45 : 45 ] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. make the people understand and when they make me like we made a life they look back at these days and it's nice for people because they can't resist for the smiles and finally friends go thank god and enjoy forever and we are only touching the surface of the gospel message when we hear we're only getting little glimpses here on the head but when we get a full taste of glory divine on that final day when you think of all hope and we will see the king in his beauty and that he be so glorious and we shall see him face to face and all all evil will bless his songs and we'll be singing with a saint with a saint and we all join together and we'll pray that this may our unity and this congregation as we gain and the blessings of thy holy spirit amongst us when we get these things it's like we say i'm wasting our debtor and we would say just as many when she went to the to the well she went for water and she was a samaritan ruler and she was probably hated by so many people but she left her parts behind she didn't she didn't even go water she went for she received more than she ever expected and she went back and she told her people come see a man that has told me all these things this is from the christ and after the prayer of his night the prayer was so much compassion and was so much love bless this time to the poor i'm going to come see a man we're going to conclude by singing in psalm 32 psalm 32 and singing from verse 7 to verse 11 thou art my hiding place thou shalt from trouble keep me free with songs of deliverance about shall compass me i will instruct thee and teach the way that thou shalt go and with mine high upon me set i will direction show then be not like the horse or mule which do not understand whose mouth lest they come near to him a bridle must command unto the man that wicked is his sorrows shall abound but him that trusteth in the lord mercy shall compass round ye righteous and the lord be glad in him do ye rejoice all ye that upright are in heart for joy lift up your voice these verses then of psalm 32 from verse 7 thou art my hiding place thou art my hiding place thou shalt from trouble keep me free the wisdoms of deliverance the wisdoms of deliverance the wisdoms of deliverance the heart shall comfort me i will instruct thee and teach the way thou shalt from me the way that thou shalt go and with mine eye upon thee set i will direction show that thou and the symptoms shall■■■ and that thou shalt go and with mine the ■■■ grantee■ Lest they come near to thee, how bright a must-old earth.

A to the man that wicked is, his sorrow shall alone.

But in the trust in the Lord, mercy shall come the throne.

[ 51 : 46 ] Ye righteous in the Lord, be glad.

In him do ye rejoice. O give that up, bright God in heart, for joy lift up your voice.

And to know me the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship and the comfort of the Holy Spirit rest upon and remain with you and with all the Israel of God, both now and always. Amen.