

## Do or Die!

<sup>18</sup> I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, <sup>19</sup> and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.” <sup>20</sup> And he arose and came to his father. - Luke 15:18-20.

The young man in the story had reached a point of desperation in his life. His own survival was at stake. For him, it was a ‘do or die’ moment. He had to do something about his situation or face death as a result of starvation. His ‘spiritual death’ was also imminent since he continued to embrace a sinful lifestyle which had brought him to near ruins.

Thankfully, he came to his senses and recognized that life in his father’s house was far better than what he had to endure as a servant in a distant country. He needed to get up and do something about his situation. He said, “I will arise and go to my father.”

The focus here is on his mind-set or attitude during his times of trouble.

### 1. He Was A ‘Doer’

The young man’s critical situation called for action, or else he would have perished through hunger. My point is simple. When we are in a sinful state sometimes we know what needs to be done to change our situation but we **do not** act. We often think about doing something but we procrastinate and eventually nothing gets done. There are times when the Word of God will convict the heart of the ‘backslider’ but yet he/she remains in that sinful state. James 1:22 reminds us:

*“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”*

The NIV Version of the Bible puts James 1:22 as follows:

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”*

We deceive ourselves when we hear the right sermon and do nothing, since we remain in the same sinful state, and the word fades away quickly from our minds.

What may cause us to remain in sin, and do nothing about it? Perhaps, we get comfortable with the situation, or at the other extreme we may think that the situation is so hopeless that nothing will ever change. We may refuse to take action because we may be afraid to hurt the feelings of other persons.

But, the young man in the parable was determined to act. It is interesting that when we come to our senses we can, with the help of God, find the courage to make tough decisions, even if it means that others may not be pleased with our decisions. There will always be consequences to our actions – good and bad.

Unfortunately, the devil seeks to make us feel that our troubles and problems are so insurmountable that we tend to remain in a perpetual state of inaction. However, the first step, just like the young man is to have a strong resolve or thought that starts with the words “I will arise...”

Beloved, any time you feel overwhelmed by your troubles remember that Jesus is our Burden-Bearer, and He is willing to carry our problems upon his shoulders. At no time should we feel alone or think that our situation is so hopeless that nothing can be done. Psalm 55:22 encourages us:

*“Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.”*

## 2. He Puts Aside Pride, Fear and Discouragement

Going back to his father’s home would have been a very humbling experience for the young man. One would recall that at the beginning of the story, he boldly asked for his share of his father’s estate and quickly left home for a better and more exciting life. Now that he had become a destitute, returning to his father’s home was the only real option that stood between him and death. So he had to set his foolish pride aside, humble himself and go back, in his present state, to his father’s home.

During his long journey back home, he would have fought a lot of battles in his mind. First, he had to overcome the fear of the unknown – he was not sure how he would have been treated by his father and brother upon his return. Second, discouragement would have set in since he was returning home in a worse condition than when he first left. His life was in complete disarray, and by every standard he was a failure, and had really made a mess of his life.

Yet, **in faith**, he persisted on his journey and came to his father’s house.

As sinners, we encounter the same mental challenges when we come before God. We would have messed up in our sinful acts, and would have had to deal with pride, and admit that we made some terrible mistakes and now sought God’s forgiveness. Humility in spirit is always a good place to start when in the presence of God.

Of course, fear and discouragement are normal feelings with which any sinner would have to treat, knowing that we are at the mercy of God, and that we failed miserably in the recent past.

## 3. He Forgot the Past

In faith the young man persisted on his journey until he reached his father’s house. We need to forget the past and press on forward in Christ. Philippian says:

Minister Debra Aikens writes,

*“The call today is to forget the past and focus on your future with Christ Jesus. Forget all those past hurts, pains, failures, disappointments and misunderstanding.... Let them go!!! You cannot change the past! In forgetting our past, we allow the “open doors” of opportunities that lead to eternity with Christ to swing wide open once we begin to move forward (with) Christ. The enemy of our minds wants to continue to hold us hostage to our past, but God, the Lord of the universe is trying to push us forward into His future with us.”<sup>1</sup>*

#### 4. 'Double Mindedness' Didn't Keep Him In Bondage

The young man was not double-minded in his decision to go back to his father's home. Although his life had become unstable, his decision was firm and final:

*"I will arise and go to my father."*

When we are double-minded and vacillate between two decisions: "stay in this sinful state" or "turn to God and repent," we cannot really get anywhere. In short we remain in bondage and continue to be a slave to sin. The Bible says this about the double-minded man:

*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. <sup>6</sup> But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. <sup>8</sup> Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do." – James 1:5-8*

Note that the double-minded person cannot receive anything from the Lord since his doubt prevents his faith from being activated. A double-minded person is unstable in his ways and should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

The decision to return to his father's house was not an easy decision for the young man to make. He had to overcome certain obstacles. For example, his trip back home may have been a long and difficult one since he had little or no money for his return journey from the distant land. When we make a decision to turn from sin, there will always be some inconvenience and consequences that we have to endure. However, once we have made the decision, we need to stick with it and act on it.

The young man was settled in his resolve to go to his father, and he was blessed.

#### 5. He Recognized that Although 'Life Is Short.... Eternity Is Forever!'

I have often heard the expression "Life is short. Be happy and enjoy your life." Or "Do whatever makes you happy!" It means that one should be care-free and do those things that satisfy one's lusts and desires. The young man in the story did exactly that. He had a great time through wild living, and was now a destitute. The pleasures of sin always catch up with the sinner and will invariably bring the sinner to ruin. A person gets a sobering experience when he reaches 'rock bottom' in his life, and realize that God is his only help.

We must always remember that there is life after this temporary sojourn on this earth. A person's soul lives on after the human body has died. The question is where will my soul spend eternity? In heaven or in hell? In this regard, "Life is short but eternity is forever." One needs to seriously ponder over the question, "If I should die tomorrow, where will my soul spend eternity?"

## 6. He Worked Out His Own Salvation

The young man's journey back to his father can be likened to a journey of the sinner back to his Heavenly Father. In doing so, the sinner decides to make it right with God so that his soul can spend eternity in heaven, and not in hell. Each of us, both sinner and saint, must work out his own salvation daily.

Philippians 2:12 reminds you to: **“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”**

Each person must heed the above call in Philippians 2:12. This was the turning point in the conversion of the young sinner in the parable. It was a matter of life or death. Not only because he was starving, but because his decision determined where his soul would spend eternity.

It is one of the devil's greatest deceptions that keep us working hard for the material things in life, and to go through life living care-free and without a thought about God. As we enjoy the niceties of life we should always ask the question, “Is what I am doing pleasing to God? Or “Is this wrong by God's standard?”

Further, although you and others may be partaking in sin, when you stand before God on the day of Judgment, it is **only you** who will have to answer for your sins. You cannot make the excuse that someone else caused you to sin – as Adam did. So before it is too late, make a decision in your heart that today is the day that you will arise and turn from that sinful life and come to Your Heavenly Father in prayer. Let this be your ‘do or die’ moment. God bless.

*Heavenly Father,*

*“I pray over my mind today. Help me to be settled in my mind that I need to do what is right in Your eyes in respect of my problems. Give me the courage and boldness to do so, even if others may be hurt or there may be some level of discomfort or inconvenience to me. I cast out the spirits of fear, discouragement, pride and double-mindedness that have taken root in my mind, and which kept me from turning to You, O God. Even now, I don't allow past hurts, disappointments and failures to torment me. Forgive me, Lord, of my sins. I recognize that I need Your Son Jesus in my life. Holy Spirit come into my life and guide me in all truth. In Jesus' mighty name I pray with thanksgiving. Amen.”*

### Memory Verse:

**“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”**

Note:

1. Minister Debra Aiken's full article *“Philippians 3:13-14 Forgetting The Past and Reaching Towards The Future With Christ”* can be found at <http://www.tellthelordthankyou.com/blog/2016/1/4/philippians-313-14-forgetting-the-past-and-reaching-towards-the-future-with-christ>

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