

WHEN GOD SAYS 'NO'

And Other Radio Addresses

by
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CHAPTER SIX

THE PRODIGAL'S STORY RE-TOLD

A LONELY, dreary-hearted young man, ragged, hungry and homesick, sat dejectedly under the shade of the tree. His tired eyes look away for a moment out across the hot, pastureless fields. As far as the eye can see, there is only dreary waste, dancing heat-waves, and barren, dry, famine-smitten land. And yonder, far, very far away, over the hills, through the valleys, is a land where there has been rain, and where the fields are aflame with fruit and grain, and where - oh, yonder, so far - is home, and father and mother waiting - a table will be set to-day there, with food and plenty, and even the hired servants will have sufficient . . .

A heavy sigh escapes the young man's parched lips. The grunting of the despised pigs rooting in the dry soil about him, complaining because of the lack of food, vacuums his thoughts back to the barren scene about him. Here in the shade of the old carob tree, - even here it is hot and dreary, while the hot winds rustle the branches, and rattle the long ten-inch pods hanging sparsely upon the tree the one-celled, two-valved seed pods - the husks that the swine did eat. To-day, he had been glad to eat even this despised food - the food of the despised hogs.

Yesterday and the day before and the day before, he had been doing the same monotonous thing - feeding swine (to him, it was a contemptible task, the lowest possible menial work).

Money gone, friends gone, clothes frayed, feet hot and dusty in worn-out sandals, hands grimy with toil, face streaked with weather, almost black under the fierce onslaught of the thirsty sun . . . It had been a long time since he had had enough to eat. A long time since he had met with anyone who cared.

That other day, it seems only yesterday, and yet it has been so long, when he had ridden away from the old home - his pockets lined with wealth, his beautiful new clothes rich in colors - not as they are now - tattered, sweat-bedraggled, weather-faded, soiled. Oh, there had been so many new friends, so many who had wanted to help him spend - drinking, laughing at GOD's laws of sowing and reaping, women of the street who had plied their wares so subtly.

Oh, there had been ribald and raucous parties, midnight debaucheries, scenes of lewdness, gluttonous banquets, filthy conversations - drink, and at night, loneliness and heartache as he had lain upon his pillow and stared into the terrors of the night, as his conscience had smitten him - stabbed him with warnings, and saying, "Stop, young fool! STOP! You cannot trifle with GOD's laws! Some day you will pay . . . some day . . ."

But he had not stopped - not until he was stopped - not until NOW. Again he sighs, stands, perhaps, reaches up, tears a long twelve-inch carob-pod from the thirty-foot-high tree, kicks, perhaps, at a grunting despicable hungry hog, squealing and whining at his feet. - In times of famine, even people ate hog food - making a kind of syrup from the pulp . . . He had sought for freedom from Father's restraint, and he had only run away from it; he had sought to be master of himself, and he was now mastered by misery, loneliness and heartache.

He had sought for luxury, and had found only poverty; there was a famine in the land and a famine in his heart.

Oh, . . . he was hungry, not only for good food, but for - for Home - for Father - for love and sympathy - even - even the hired servants, and there were so many of them in the old home and on the old home farm - even they had enough and to spare.

That was a sad day - filled with tingling hopes and plans, when he had said to Father, "**Give me . . . GIVE . . . ME!**"

Hmm? I wonder. Could it be - possible that my philosophy of life has been all twisted, has been in reverse? **GIVE . . . ME!**

I have been wanting to possess, rather than to be. I have gone astray . . .

Listen . . . Again we hear the guttural grunts, and the complaining squealings and whinings of the hogs, again we look with the young man out across the famine-wasted fields, far, far across the way - and yonder, down below the horizon's rim, in the old home - the old gate that swings, the green vine that sprawls across the porch, the vari-colored flowers that border the winding walk - the green fields, with cattle grazing - and yonder, standing weary and lonely, his beard long, white and flowing, is Father, waiting at the old well - and Mother, perhaps, at the window - "Father," she calls, "have you seen anything of . . . "

The vision fades. The young man in the ragged suit and the road-worn shoes, suddenly rises to his feet, a resolution leaping into sudden flame like dry logs thrown upon smoldering coals . . . "I - I'm at the end of my rope. I - I'VE SINNED. SINNED . . . I will arise and go to my father. Back to my Father and Home . . . I will say to him, "**Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight. I am no more worthy to be called thy son . . .**"

At the end of the rope - at the beginning of GOD's opportunity; at the end of self - at the beginning of salvation; midnight before the dawn . . . a vision of sinfulness - the price of cleansing.

No longer will I say, "**Give me . . . But Make me . . .** (As one of thy hired servants). Not what I have, but what I AM, is the important thing. His thoughts carry him far ahead, on the old home road. He is almost there, almost. And now, tired, thirsty, hungry, dusty, sin-sick, his heart panting for forgiveness, his sins as black as H e|l in his mind and soul - he sees the familiar scene - the old gate - the old vine sprawled across the porch - Father standing - ah, not, not standing but RUNNING, Father running!

A picture of GOD in a hurry! GOD in a hurry. GOD is seen in a hurry only when a wanderer is on the way home. Hurry, man, hurry. GOD is waiting for you to start home - and then He will RUN to meet you, RUN to forgive you, RUN to give you the kiss of sonship.

Good-bye, old hog pen; good-bye, old worldly companions!

Good-by, old drink and filthy language; good-bye, old sins of adultery and covetousness and wastefulness.

Good-bye, old carousing, old thievery, old gambling, old - GOOD-BYE, old slavery to sin. I'm going home . . . back to my Father!

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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