



CHRIST MAGNIFIED

PHILIPPIANS 1:20

BY: BEN GISELBACH

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

WAS CAIN THE SON OF SATAN?

WHERE A WRONG TURN LEADS

GOSSIP

HOW WAS CHRIST CURSED?

A FUTURE FOSTER PARENT SPEAKS OUT

AUGUST, 2013

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WRITER'S BIOGRAPHY

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CHRIST MAGNIFIED

PHILIPPIANS 1:20

BY: BEN GISELBACH

I remember, as a teenager in high school, taking a field trip with my biology class to a nearby park. When we arrived, the teacher handed each of us small vials and told us to collect water samples from a small pond. When we brought our water samples back to school, she instructed each of us to put a drop of water from our respective vials onto a glass slide and to view it under a microscope. What I saw was amazing! That small drop of water was full of microorganisms!

It took a microscope to magnify my small drop of water so that I could observe the tiny life forms floating around inside. Remembering this story makes me think about what the apostle Paul said in Philippians 1:20:

"...as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death." (English Standard Version)

The Greek word Paul uses is *megalunó* ("honored"), which literally means *to magnify* or *to enlarge* (the KJV and the NKJV actually translate the word as "magnified"). Paul's simple desire was to magnify Jesus; to make Him bigger to the world.

Does Jesus need to be magnified? Is He too small? Being God (John 1:1), having created the universe (John 1:3), having worked miracles and wonders in the flesh, and having been crucified for mankind, does He need any amplification? Admittedly, it seems impossible to enlarge a Being Who is infinite. But Paul evidently thought Jesus needed to be amplified, and therefore we need to be concerned with amplifying Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1).

While Satan cannot force us away from Christ (only we can do that), he can so clutter our lives with distractions, lusts, indifference, and material things that Christ becomes lost in the static. Our purpose is to magnify Christ to the world so that they can't help but see Him in our lives.

With Boldness, and Without Shame

When he penned his letter to the Philippian church, Paul was in prison. One might expect someone who has been imprisoned for his faith to be ashamed of, and renouncing his allegiance to, Christ. But Paul was still boldly and wholeheartedly in love with Jesus, even in his dark prison cell.

How can we keep from being ashamed of Christ when we experience pressure and persecution from the world? By keeping our focus on what Jesus did for us on the Cross!

I remember hearing about a man and wife who were out taking a walk, when suddenly, without warning, a terrible hailstorm came upon them. The hail was as large as baseballs, and the man realized that his wife was in danger of being severely hurt. So he quickly covered his wife with his own body, creating for her a human shield. Instead of hitting her, the hailstones hit him. The storm was relentless, and after a few agonizing minutes, his head started bleeding after being bludgeoned with some especially large hailstones. Eventually the man collapsed on his wife. When the storm finally passed, it soon became evident that the man's sores, cuts, and abrasions would become scars, forever serving as reminders of the day he saved his wife.

This is a true story. When interviewed by the local news, the man's wife was asked how she felt about their dreadful experience. She said, "Every time I look at that scar on his head, on his neck, and on his ear, I love him more. Every time I see the scar, I love him more, because he sacrificed himself for me."

When we feel shame because of Christ, refocusing on His Cross quickly emboldens us with zeal and gratitude. We can't help but magnify Christ!

Now, Not Later

Paul desired to magnify Christ "now" – in the present. At the time, he was in a Roman prison. Surely he could have said, "I'll worry about magnifying Christ when I get out. It will be easier at a later date." Isn't that the excuse many Christians use today? "When I get out of school," "When I have more money," "When I get married," "When my children are get out of the house," "When I retire," etc. There will always be a better time tomorrow, but Paul didn't procrastinate. He was ready to magnify Christ "now"!

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Here are some tweets from this years
Polishing the Pulpit!

“A man might as well ask "What god do you believe in" instead of "What church are you a part of" because Ephesians 4:4-6 says there's only one of each.”
- Glenn Colley

“I want to preach as fervently to 25 people as I would to 200 people.”
- B. J. Clarke

“The world has always mistaken love for sexual immorality.”
- David Shannon

“I'm thankful that God made it (the creation account) so simple!”
- Eric Lyons

“One of the best things about PTP being a "young preacher" is all the great fellowship and encouragement from older brethren that have more experience!”
- Lee Snow

“Don't be discouraged because the congregation is small, it may just be best for your children!”
- Jeff Archey

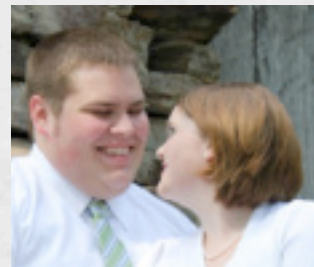
“Don't train your child to do good "for mommy/daddy". Train them to do good because its right! (Eph. 6:1)”
- David Shannon

“Some things are are GOING to happen. He that believeth and is baptized SHALL be saved (Mark 16:16).”
- Alan Highers

“There are some members of the church that have never been able to forgive themselves for the sins they have committed. It is not uncommon to hear a Christian speak of a sin that he may have committed 10, 20 or even 30 years ago.”
- Don Blackwell



Lee Snow is the preacher for the Gray Church of Christ in Gray, GA. He is the Editor of the PFP.



Always, Not Inconsistently

When Paul said “always,” he was alluding to the principle of consistency. Thought inconvenienced by prison, he did not magnify Christ to any lesser degree than he did before being imprisoned. What if everyone was consistently magnifying Christ, every day, no matter his or her life situation? How much more effective would the Church be if all of Christ’s members were actively serving Him?

In Our Own Personal Lives

What is especially interesting is Paul’s use of the phrase, “in my body.” Christ’s name should be magnified not merely on the church sign, within the corporate body of Christ (cf. Eph. 5:23), with programs, with the preacher, with the elders, or the more mature Christians. Christ should be magnified primarily within every individual’s body.

Faithful children of God recognize that the Lord’s Spirit dwells within them, and therefore their bodies should always be used in ways that glorify Him (1 Cor. 6:19-20). When I remember I have been bought with a price, I treat my body differently, and the world notices!

Through The Good And The Bad

There are two deadly mistakes I must avoid: (1) only serving God when things are going well and making God my enemy when things go wrong, and (2) assuming a selfish mentality when things take a turn for the worse, viewing God as my own personal servant.

Paul believed that Christians must magnify Christ both in “life” and in “death.” We must glorify and serve God in both the good days and the bad days, in our peaks and in our troughs. When we live for eternity, we no longer dread becoming sick and growing old. Those who die in Christ and life in Christ can influence even the most bitter of hearts to call on the name of the Lord.

I want to be like Paul. I wanted to recognize that “to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Let’s magnify Christ together.



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The real question is: Are you a son of Satan?

2. What does it mean for Christ to be cursed (Galatians 3:13)?

The idea of a curse in our society invokes thoughts of witches, warlocks or voodoo priests. We associate 'curse' with an involuntary action place onto the head of some unknowing victim, as if they can do nothing correct because of the 'curse'.

As I read and study the idea of this curse I cannot help but be taken to **Deuteronomy 21:23** where this idea was states as "cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree". My mind immediately goes to the death of Absalom, as he hung from that tree and was killed (**2nd Samuel 18**).

Our salvation is made possible because Christ became a curse for us in order to remove the curse of the law (**Mark 15:14**). As He was assuming the role of cursed on that cross, He was separated from God (**Matthew 27:46**); but even this was foretold by God in Scriptures (**Isaiah 53.4, Psalm 22.1**).

Christ bore the reproach for all of mankind (**2nd Corinthians 5:18-21, 1st Peter 2:24-25, 1st Peter 3:18**). It was thought, to the Lord's Jewish enemies, that no one could ever maintain allegiance to this Christ after He was crucified. They wanted to taint His sacrifice.

However, through the wisdom and power of God, He was able to change this 'curse' into the greatest gift given to mankind (**Acts 2.23-24, Hebrews 2:1-3, John 12:32-33, Isaiah 53:5-6**).

Redemption is an act associated with slavery. Jesus bought back (redeemed) those convicted under the law (all of us) by becoming for them what the law required. Involved in that was shame and humiliation. **He was made a 'curse' by the Father by being appointed to receive the penalty which each sinful person (past, present, and future) had earned for themselves.**

3. Why does 1 John 3:9 say that Christians "cannot sin" because he is a Christian? I know that it is possible for Christians to fall from grace (Galatians 5:4), so how does this equal out?

Once again you and I have a healthy plate of a feast from God's Holy Word. The questions this month are thought provoking and worthy of our consideration. Let's get a Bible and dig in!

1. Was Cain a physical son of Adam or of Satan? Someone was telling me that Satan had a physical relationship with Eve because the Bible said she was beguiled by him and so she became pregnant with Cain and later Eve had relations with her husband resulting in Abel.

This is an interesting question as we consider the life of the first couple. We are starving for more information of all those characters in order to understand how we can grow and be more effective in the Kingdom of God. Notice what god wrote in Genesis 4:1-2—"And **Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel.** And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground." The Bible is very clear- cut and dry- as it states that Cain was conceived and produced in the same fashion as every child (except Christ) ever born on this earth.

Perhaps you and I could dig deeper with this question. Let me ask a question, was Cain a son of Satan? On this question you and I would have to answer yes. But you just said... Notice the words of Christ, "**Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.**" (John 8.44) While Cain was not a physical son of Satan, he was a 'son' of Satan. We need to realize that any person can be a son of the Devil. The one who does the will of Satan is his son. We only have to follow our own lusts and desire to be Satan's son.

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and **he cannot sin, because he is born of God.**” (1st John 3:9)

The highlighted portion of this verse is under review. The question is a very valid question. How can a gospel preacher stand before a congregation of the Lord’s people and encourage them to return to God if they cannot sin? Is he not just wasting time and breath? Maybe we do not understand the meaning of that passage.

This passage **DOES NOT** teach that you and I cannot obey God and then change our minds and return to the world. If it does teach that then this passage is in direct opposition to the entire Bible. You and I know that every word of God is harmonious. Notice these verses: **1st Timothy 4:16, Luke 15:24, Acts 20:28, 1st Timothy 4:1-3, Romans 11:21-22, James 1:27, Hebrews 3:13, 1st Corinthians 10:12, 2nd Timothy 4:10, 1st Timothy 1:18-20, 2nd Peter 2:4, Jude 6...** (just to name a few).

However, this phrase is not the first use in this book. Look at chapter 2 verse 1. “My little children, **these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin,** we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.” Both phrases hold the same meaning. They all point to one true fact of the Christian. **A CHRISTIAN WILL NOT WILLING LIVE A LIFESTYLE OF SIN.** We were once of this world but now we are bought away from sin and into righteousness. (**Romans 6.1-4**).

“Cannot sin” means will not live in a life of sin.

I hope this study has been as profitable for you as it has been for me. Remember our mindset as we study “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” 1st Thessalonians 5.21

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THE BEST PART

The best part of anything having to do with the Bible and the divine God in Heaven is the fact that He has provided a way by which a man can be saved from his sins. Paul wrote that every single person, attempting to justify himself by way of his own means, has fallen short of the mark and has therefore been guilty of trespasses (Romans 3:23). But, thanks be to God, He has not left us alone in order to find our salvation! He has sent Himself, in Jesus Christ, to die on a cross for the forgiveness of all man’s sins (John 3:16). BUT, we have to access that salvation which is freely available. How does someone do that?

Hear - Romans 10:17

Believe - John 8:24

Repent - Acts 2:38

Confess - Romans 10:9-10

Be Baptized - Mark 16:16

If you have not done these things, or have never even heard such things, please contact us at the PFP. We would love to help you in your spiritual life so that you can be accepted by the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9).



In the office, it takes place around the water cooler; in the church, it is accompanied with “Bless her heart;” and on judgment day, many will be lost because of it—gossip. Members of the Lord’s church participate in this sin daily, when we have been commanded to abstain from it altogether (Eph. 4:31). “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Eph. 4:29). As Momma always said, “If you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all.” Why is that so difficult to understand?

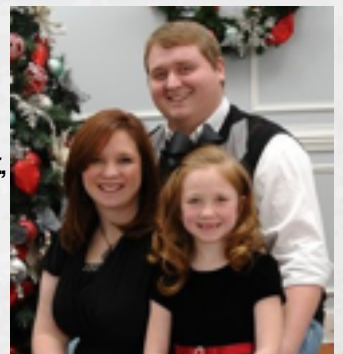
This sin is excused in a variety of ways by those that practice it. Someone might say “It’s not gossip because it’s true;” while someone else might contend “It’s not gossip because I’m not saying it to hurt anyone.” We are in desperate need of definition. “Gossip” is a broad term representing the telling of negative information about another individual. This information could be true or untrue, and could either be shared for the purpose of harming the individual or not. In Scripture, gossip is divided into 3 separate categories: whispering, backbiting, and slander. First, “slander” is the deliberate telling of false or unverified information for the purpose of defaming the character of an individual. This is the most egregious embodiment of gossip, but it is certainly not the only one. Second, “backbiting” is the telling of information, whether true or untrue, for the purpose of harming the reputation of an individual. One might justify this sin by contending that the information is true, but that does not make the sin any less abominable. Third, “whispering” is the retelling of negative information. This could be done without ill intent, and could be absolutely true; but it is still wrong. This may be the worst of all, because its clutches are the easiest to fall into. We know something, feel compelled to tell it, and feel

good about ourselves because we told true information, and did not do it to hurt anyone; but it hurts nonetheless. It hurts those about whom we have spoken, because the information we have shared is shameful in some way; it hurts those to whom we have spoken, because we have caused them to sin because they have listened to gossip, and have put a burden upon them tempting them to sin again by retelling the “dirt” we have shared; and it hurts us, because we will have to stand before the Lord to answer for every idle word we have spoken (Mt. 12:36).

Our society is infatuated with gossip. It is impossible to buy groceries without inadvertently catching some fraction of celebrity gossip from the tabloids surrounding the cash register, social media has made it impossible to spend five minutes on the internet without receiving some form of harmful information about someone, and it is nearly impossible to turn on the television without hearing troublesome tales from all over the globe. It is understandable that this sin is difficult to avoid, but as a Christian, it is your responsibility to “speak evil of no man” (Tit. 3:2). Stop gossip in its tracks.

“Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly. Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross. He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart. Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation. Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him. A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin” (Pro. 26:20-28).

Josh Clevenger is the preacher for the Rockmart Church of Christ in Rockmart, GA and a graduate of Memphis School of Preaching.



"THOUGHTS ON THE TRUTH AND TECH"



The Light Network



SAY WHAT?

with Tony Clay

I would strongly urge each of the readers of this column to avail themselves to the materials provided by Only Hope Publications. They have great materials on Islam and are in the process of developing sound materials on the subject of Catholicism, which will be our subject in this column this month.

If you are like me, then as you were growing up you were confronted with ideas surrounding the Catholic church. As a young child, I had a great number of family members who belonged to the Catholic church and it puzzled me. First off, I wondered why it was different from the church that some of my other family members attended. And of the activities of the Catholic church, I found them very convoluted and strange. As I grew and studied, I was drawn to the simplicity and sincerity of the Lord's church and one of the doctrines of the Catholic church that totally turned me away was that of, "original sin."

Catholic Theologians would have us believe: (1) Anyone who is not a "Priest" cannot understand the Bible; (2) Children are born with an inherited sinful nature that has flowed down from Adam through the ages; (3) Children should be "baptized" as an infant in order to receive remission of sins. Every time I attended the church of Christ I heard verses and sermons that refuted such an idea, and all the while, never said that I could not understand truth vs. error. For our purposes of this column let us consider what the Bible would say in refutation of "original sin."

Firstly, consider what the inspired prophet Ezekiel would say in Ezekiel 18:20 -- "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." With clarity and simplicity, the Bible declares a personal responsibility for ones sins. The guiltiness of sin does not fall upon parent or child, but upon self. This harmonizes with Paul's inspired sayings in Philippians 2:12 where he offers exhortation to "work out your (our, TC) own salvation with fear and trembling." This leaves no doubt that original sin cannot be factual because of the basic truth presented here: my spiritual condition hinges upon my own thoughts and actions which make me either righteous or wicked, not upon another's actions.

Consider also the definition of sin as defined by the inspired apostle John: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Humans do not inherit sin, we commit sin. Sin is an action or thought of rebellion against God's holy law. Infants, however, cannot commit sin. They are able neither to have impure thoughts and motives nor commit actions of transgression. Infants are both pure and innocent; a clean and undefiled being. If children inherited sin and

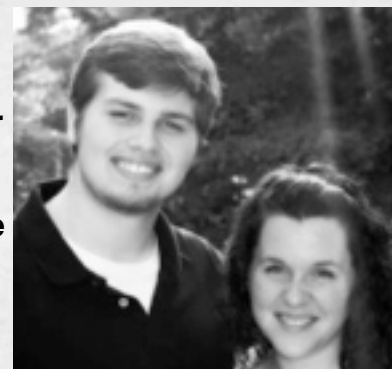
were lost from the moment they were born, why would Jesus exhort those who would follow him to, *become as little children*? (Matthew 18:3). Jesus is calling all men everywhere to be converted and become as innocent children, both pure and totally dependant upon Him.

Finally, consider the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:36-37 -- "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Although the Catholic church "sprinkles" the ones they are baptizing, which is not an immersion the teaching in this passage applies. Just as an infant cannot choose to sin an infant cannot choose to obey God. When the Eunuch came to the intellectual conclusion that baptism was necessary for him to be saved he expressed his desire. Phillip supplied a prerequisite to his baptism, and that was belief. Jesus also supplies belief as a prerequisite to baptism in Mark 16:16. Infant children are totally unable to consciously make the decision to believe in Jesus and even further, to act or verbalize on such a thing.

Under the Jewish system, one's parents would circumcise him as an infant and bring him into a covenant relationship to God thereby. Under the Christian system such things no longer occur; Christianity is a taught religion and to enter into a covenant relationship with God it requires soberness and soundness of mind. Too, it requires commitment and a choice between holy things and worldly things. All of these things which cannot be done by an infant. The Catholic leaders recognize a chasm in their doctrine by supplying a different way for adults to be "converted." Adults seeking membership with the Catholic church are not carried into a church against their will and unbeknownst to them, they must go through months and sometimes years of teaching and training in a "catechism." And after the parish determines that they are ready they will perform the RCIA, which stands for Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Their own inconsistency causes this erroneous doctrine to crumble at it's foundation.

Let us all thank God when we see an infant child; let's praise Him when we behold their innocence and purity of which we should desire. Let us all seek to depend upon Jesus as little children and to uphold His righteousness and Holiness and keepers and soldiers of the cross. Thank God for the cleansing power of Jesus blood to save us when we transgress His law. Praise Him for He is altogether lovely. To God be the glory!


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Featured Sermon:

Abraham's Trail of Altars

by Bart Warren

The life of Abraham is truly amazing. The student of the Bible is at once captivated, entertained, reproved, edified, and instructed by the account of this "hero of faith" (Hebrews 11:8-19). One of the many lessons learned from this friend of God (James 2:23) has to do with proper worship. The example of Abraham demonstrates to us the place worship has always had among the faithful of God.


It has been said by some expositors that wherever Abraham went in the land of Canaan, he was marked (identified) by his tent and his altar (cf. Genesis 12:7-8; 13:3-4, 18). His tent would be symbolic of the fact that he was a traveler, stranger and pilgrim who did not belong to this world (Hebrews 11:9-16). The altars that he built marked him as a citizen of heaven who worshipped the true and living God. He demonstrated clearly to all that he was separated from this world and devoted to the Lord. What a noble and worthy goal for each one of us! In fact, such is something God expects of those who claim to belong to Him. If we are the people of God, we will live as strangers and pilgrims longing for our eternal home, and as individuals that openly display good deeds which glorify God (1 Peter 2:10-12).

Just as Abraham's altars marked him as a citizen of heaven who worshiped a true and living God, so too should our worship identify us. Please consider the

words of Jesus Christ: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). He further stated: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:8-9).

Among the lessons learned from these verses in John and Matthew is the fact that God has certain expectations of mankind when it comes to worship. One, quite plainly, He expects us to participate in the act worship.

CONTINUED on Page 2



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Wrong Turn

by Travis Byars

After services Sunday night I went out to eat with a few visitors and members from the congregation here in Valdosta. The way to the restaurant seemed easy enough. It was just down the road from my house it seemed. As we were leaving one of them said, I suppose you don't need directions back do you? And I said, "Surely not it is just down the road." So they left and I pulled out of the parking lot and headed home. I apparently missed my turn somewhere and was driving what only felt like a little while. I looked around and thought, "Hmm this doesn't look like the way I came." The buildings didn't look the same as the ones we passed, then there were fields, and that wasn't where we came from either. So I drove a little longer hoping to recognize something, and finally pulled out my GPS and looked and I was now 30 minutes away from home. The store is maybe 5 or 6 minutes away how did I get so far out here? That was the question I was asking myself.

On the way back the idea hit me. That's is how so many people get drawn away from God and into a place they don't understand. It usually isn't a big flashing sign that says "ERROR THIS WAY" or "WRONG TURN AHEAD" or some outlandish idea, but it is usually a small seed of error that is planted in with the truth and that makes it easier to accept. They take one wrong turn and now they are off on a journey that will take them far away from home. When we think about the Boy leaving his Father's house in Luke 11, he didn't go strait into the Hog pin, otherwise he most likely would have just turned around and gone home

right then. No he went to a place that was fun, a place where he could enjoy himself and "have good time."

I can only imagine that his party continued as long as his money continued, much like the friends he had around him. When the money ran dry, his friends were probably gone right with it. He had gotten nice and comfortable and settled in but now the money was gone, oh yes now he was forced to work in the pigpens. When I thought about the pigpen being his place of habitation, it reminded me of (2 Peter 2:22). Where a clean sow, went back to wallowing in the mire. The boy that was clean and safe in his Father's house is now out wallowing in the mire of this pigpen hoping for some food. Then he came to himself. When he finally came to his senses he returned home to his Father, and his Father ran out to meet him. How do we respond when someone comes to be restored? Are we like the older brother? Do we second-guess their motives? Are we wondering what they were doing out there in far country? Or do we welcome them back with open arms happy **that** they have come home to the family? If you are out there and you seem to have missed your turn, pull out God's Word, his GPS for us, and head back to the Father's House today. You don't have live in mire.

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