

When We Come to Ourselves

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As we follow in the footsteps of our elder Brother, Jesus Christ, I think we all know that one of our main goals is to become more like Him. He set the perfect example for us. We do that through exercising the Holy Spirit that is in us. As we go forward, we change from the old person to the new person, the new person being more in the image of our older Brother. But as we all know, every one of us sins. We all have weaknesses, we all have shortcomings and the fact is, as we look back on our lives, we can sometimes be spiritually blind to our own faults. We just can; that's happened to me, I've done it. Sometimes we stubbornly don't want to deal with our faults or our sins or our shortcomings. We just deny them or don't want to think about them.

A good example—this goes back a number of years ago—I had to go to the pastor over me because there was a problem. He had deeply offended a recent widow—she was a brand-new widow—and he deeply offended her because he showed indifference towards her when she needed some compassion and attention and he did just the opposite. I went to him and I said, “This woman is offended because you had the opportunity to show her some compassion, concern and love and you didn't do that.” His response was, “Well that's just the way I was raised. That's just the way we do it in my family and that's just the way I am.” Then I said, “Aren't we called to change, no matter how we were raised, aren't we called to change be more like Jesus Christ?” There was no response and he just looked at me with a blank face and didn't say a word. That was his way of saying, the case is closed, be quiet and go away. So, I did.

The problem is, that when reluctance occurs, we become reluctant to look into our faults, our sins or weaknesses. Then sometimes our loving Father has to take steps or bring conditions to pass to get us to see and deal with these deeper issues in our lives; our sins, our faults, our weaknesses, our shortcomings.

There is a phenomenon recorded in the Bible that has either had an impact on us or will have an impact on us individually, before our Christian life is through. Certainly, as we get closer to the end and we are being prepared for the coming of our Father and His Son. This phenomenon actually occurs because of the blind spots we have. All of us have blind spots in our character, in our conduct, which over time lead us away from our Father. They lead us away from the example of His Son. As a result of this, either our spiritual blindness or our not focusing on our conduct as compared to the example of Jesus Christ, the Almighty can set into motion a process that results in this phenomenon that we are going to look at today.

By way of introduction go to Luke 15, and you will want to place a marker there because we are going to read a parable and go back and forth to various scriptures as we go through the parable—Luke 15:1.

Luke 15:1 *Then drew near unto him [meaning Christ] all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. (KJV)*

They were curious.

2) *And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, [standing on the sidelines murmuring] saying, this man receiveth sinners [what an evil guy he is], and eateth with them [He even does that].*

3) [As Christ could read their hearts and understood what they were thinking and saying He responded] *And he spake this parable unto them, saying ... (KJV)*

We know in verses 4-10, there is the parable of the lost sheep and there is a parable of the silver piece. But we are going to start in verse 11, which is the focus of our subject today. This is out of the New King James.

11) *Then He said: A certain man had two sons.*

12) *And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. So, he divided to them his livelihood. [He gave them their inheritance in advance.]*

13) *And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. (NKJV)*

“Prodigal” means either *wasteful or extravagant*. So, he just went out and partied and had a good time.

14) *But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.*

15) *Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he [this citizen who owned some land and flocks and herds] sent him into his fields to feed swine.*

16) *And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. (NKJV)*

Notice verse 17.

17) *But when he came to himself, [this is an interesting turn of phrase] he said, How many of my father s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! (NKJV)*

We see that there comes a time, generally through severe trials and a lot of pain, that we as God’s people, as individuals, do come to ourselves. I am ashamed to say that for decades I haven’t seen blind spots in myself and then at some point, our Father brings circumstances to pass where all of a sudden you “come to yourself”. What we want to do is investigate this breakthrough, this coming to ourselves. The title of the sermon is:

When We Come To Ourselves

The first point, the first thing we need to do is define our terms.

1. What does the phrase, “come to himself” actually mean?

That’s the first point. The Jewish New Testament and the NIV put it in more modern terms and say, “came to his senses” rather than “come to himself”. Today the modern vernacular would be, he woke up because he got a two by four between the eyes. That is certainly what occurred to this man who had an empty stomach. It means—coming to your senses or coming to yourself—you come to the realization as you look back and ask yourself, “What on earth have I been doing?” I think we have all done that.” What on earth have I been doing? How could I have done that, how could I have said that, how did I get to this place or to this point?” I think we’ve all been there.

We know that the first step to solving a problem is, of course, to admit we have a problem. As long as we are in denial about a problem or as long as we sweep it aside, we can’t solve a problem. God can’t work with us if we don’t admit that we have a problem. So that is the first step; to admit we have one.

We first come to ourselves prior to baptism. Christ said, in John 14, that the Comforter was coming and would be with you and shall be in you. Before we were baptized the Father sent the Holy Spirit to be with us to begin to open our minds to the truths in His Word. We began to see God’s commandments, to see our behavior and we began to think that maybe this is how God sees me. I’m breaking these commandments and maybe I should do something about it. We should also know that, thankfully, our Father does not open our eyes all at once when we are first called. He has mercy on us because we couldn’t handle it. If He dumped all our sins on us all at one time, we would just quit in discouragement. We couldn’t deal with it; we couldn’t handle it.

Thankfully, what God does instead, is reveal our sins over time, in little bite sized chunks so that we can digest them. We can ponder them, we can evaluate them and then we can make some changes, little by little over time. Let’s go to Romans 7:7. This process started when we began to look into keeping the Sabbath or tithing or keeping the Holy Days or what foods we eat. We began to look at God’s law and read about God’s law and then compare our behavior to God’s law.

Romans 7:7 *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: [by reading, understanding, comprehending the law which God’s Holy Spirit opened our minds to see.] for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet.[Talking about one of the Ten Commandments.] (KJV)*

Our Father, opens our mind to recognize His law. He opens our minds to begin to see ourselves relative to God’s law and then compare our conduct. Then He gives us the opportunity to make changes. Therein begins a lifelong process. Nobody is perfect,

nobody has arrived. Only one human being ever walked this earth Who was perfect and that was our elder Brother, Jesus Christ.

Over time, we begin this process of “coming our ourselves”, of seeing our behavior relative to God’s expectations and then making changes. David did that and it took him a year—nine months to a year—after the incident and the situation with Bathsheba. Psalm 51:1 is very familiar scripture. David is speaking and this is after he had Nathan come to him in front of his whole court—we’ll talk about the details of that in just a little bit—but he began to see himself as His Father really saw him. David is pleading to His Father.

Psalm 51:1 *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies [God is a God of love, the fruits of His Spirit are love, kindness and mercy, so David is making an appeal to His Father for His loving kindness.] blot out my transgressions. [What I’ve done.]*
2) *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. (KJV)*

Here’s the key in verse 3.

3) *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. (KJV)*

Prior to Nathan appearing in court, he just swept it under the rug. He denied it, he didn’t deal with it. Nathan’s confrontation with him prompted him to “come to himself”. See his sins, not deny his sins. “Coming to ourselves” is a matter of self-awareness. A matter of being aware of how we come across, how we think and how we act. How we compare the life of Jesus Christ to the life we are currently living. We see the difference and then hopefully start to make some changes. We can ask the questions of what kind of mate am I? Or what kind of brother or sister am I to the brethren? What kind of mother or father am I? How do my attitudes, words and deeds affect other people? We begin to be more self-aware in that regard. We begin to see what it is in our character that is preventing us from becoming like Christ and we work on that—to change it.

When we “come to ourselves” in those situations where the blindness is removed, we begin to see something about ourselves that is not very pleasant and not very pleasing to God. During those situations, we come to see and realize that we have been blind to certain areas of our conduct or certain areas of our character. In Ephesians 4:13; Paul is addressing the Gentiles here and there is a principle that applies to us today, specific to “coming to ourselves”. As we know, before the Gentiles were called, they also were totally blind. Then the Father began to take the scales off their eyes, so to speak metaphorically, and began to open their eyes.

Ephesians 4:18 [Referring to the Gentiles] *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: (KJV)*

That principle applied to us before God called us. We were all blind as stumps and then God threw a switch, so to speak, and the Holy Spirit began to work with us and we began to start to see things. When we “come to ourselves”, we realize that we have been as blind as we were before conversion, and as the Gentiles had been. The fact is, blindness of the heart can happen to those who have God’s Holy Spirit living in them. It can happen because we are human, we are not perfect. If we deny it or sweep that fact under the rug then God has to bring circumstances to pass to open our eyes. As I’ve said, I have been absolutely blind in certain areas. As I look back over almost fifty-five years now. I’ve been so blind as to how I compared to Christ. I didn’t see it at the time. I thought I was doing okay but then in “coming to yourself”, you realize you are not doing okay. The prodigal son’s empty stomach and need for something to eat made him realize he was not doing okay, he needed help.

In “coming to ourselves” we come to see our true nature and we realize that we can be deceived. If somebody thinks that they can’t be deceived, that they are beyond deception, that means they are deceived, because we can be deceived. What does Jeremiah 17 say?

The heart is deceitful above all things; it is desperately wicked and who can know it?

We need to keep that in mind. In Romans 8:7 we see a fact about the carnal mind. Even though we have the Holy Spirit residing in us because the Father and the Son are living in us through the Holy Spirit, we still have our human nature to wrestle with and deal with, plus the provocations of Satan, our adversary.

Romans 8:7 *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* (KJV)

Let’s look at this for a second. The Greek word for “carnal” is Strong’s #4561 and it has two meanings; a literal meaning and a figurative or symbolic meaning. The literal meaning is very interesting. It means, when looking at a body—say a cadaver—this word means, *flesh, as stripped of the skin*. You take a human body and peel the skin off and then “carnal” is what is underneath the skin.

What is not beneath the surface we might say. The carnal mind is the guts or the inner workings of the mind. The symbolic meaning of this Greek word of course means *human nature with its frailties and with its passions*. We see that when referring to the carnal mind, the Father is inspiring Paul to focus on what’s inside of us, not on the exterior, not on the skin but what’s underneath all that. What’s underneath all that is our human nature. It says that our human nature, our carnal mind, is enmity against God. We don’t use that word very often but, in the Greek, it means *hostility*, it can mean *opposition* or it can even mean *hatred*. Prior to our conversion, we were all of that. Sometimes even with God’s Spirit we can be opposed to what the Holy Spirit is doing in us and leading us. Our carnal nature rises up against that or Satan is whispering in our ear.

The Greek word for “subject”, it’s not subject to the law of God—it can’t be—just straight human nature, “subject” means *what we would understand; to obey or to submit yourself to*. The point I am making is that the human mind resists change to become like Christ. That is the opposite of our nature, our human nature. We have this struggle between the Holy Spirit in us and the human nature we have and that is a lifelong struggle. In coming to ourselves, we realize that we have to change and become something different from the human nature that we have in us. Look at verse 29 of Romans 8.

Romans 8:29 *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he [Jesus Christ, the firstborn, the forerunner of our salvation] might be the firstborn among many brethren.* (KJV)

All of us, if we resist our human nature and we win that battle. With that in mind, we will go to Ephesians 4:13, because this talks about our goal to come from someone who has a carnal nature to the image of Jesus Christ. This is our goal.

Ephesians 4:13 *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God [His example while He was on earth; how He behaved, how He acted, how He thought, what He did], unto a perfect [or mature] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:* (KJV)

Our goal is to become like Him in every conceivable way. That’s why we need to study about His life and how He behaved and how He dealt with the issues at hand that He was faced with. I remember a number of years ago, I think it was on PBS as I recall, it was a show on artists and they interviewed a sculptor. They showed a horse, which was more than life size, a gorgeous statue of a horse that this fellow had carved out of solid marble. This is a contemporary sculptor; it wasn’t somebody way back when. Of course, the interviewer stupidly asked, how did you do this? That’s a kind of dumb question. You take a chisel and hack along the rock. So, the sculptor had a wry smile on his face and said, “I just chip everything away that doesn’t look like a horse.” That answered the guy’s question and I got to thinking, isn’t that what we’re supposed to do? We have Jesus Christ as our example, we have His example in God’s Word and we have the Holy Spirit in us. That’s the tool—like the hammer and the chisel—and aren’t we supposed to chip away everything from our character that does not look like Jesus Christ? We have to evaluate ourselves. We have to look at Jesus Christ, we have to see the difference and there is a huge difference. Then we need to take the hammer and chisel and start chiseling away at ourselves so we begin to look like our elder Brother.

Colossians 3:10 talks about this new man—or woman we are supposed to become. Back in those days, “man” was a more generic term; human we might say. Colossians 3:10 is one simple scripture we need to keep in mind.

Colossians 3:10 *And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge [knowledge of what?] after the image of him that created him: (KJV)*

Created him, that is the new man. The image we seek is the image that Christ left us when He walked this earth and we can read it in the Bible. The image we seek of His Father who sent His Son. So, we seek to be in Their image and we seek to chip away everything that does not look like Their image.

In 1 John 3:1 John is telling us all, that if we don't have love for the Father and we don't have love for our fellow man, we aren't worth much.

1 John 3:1 *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, [through His very Spirit] that we should be called the sons of God: (KJV)*

When you think—how much more honor can a human being have than to be called the son of the Father? The eternal Father, Yehovah, Who has no beginning, Who will have no end and Who is the Living God right now—what an honor.

1 continued) ... *therefore* [because we follow the Father and His Son] *the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

2) *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he [the Father] shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (KJV)*

Now notice verse 3.

3) *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (KJV)*

That is chipping off all the impurities of ourselves as we seek to walk in the image of His Son and seek to be like the Father as revealed in His Word. As a personal example, I can remember in the 1990's I had a blind spot revealed to me. As you know I went to military school, wanted to be in the military, was in the military, got out of the military, so authority, power, being a dictator, barking out orders came very naturally to me. I walked into the Church of God and was right at home—this looked very familiar to me. I came into the church in the '60's, so it took me only thirty years and then it was pointed out to me—I asked for it—that I was too harsh, too tough and I lacked Godly love. I chewed on that and thought about it and it had to be within a week, two weeks at the most, I read 1 John 3:14 as though I had read it for the first time. But it wasn't the first time I had read it.

1 John 3:14 *We know [it doesn't say we suspect or it might be or it could possibly be] that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. (KJV)*

I looked at myself and realized I have been going down the wrong road for thirty plus years. Taking on the authority structure that was in the church and the church stressed that—obedience, authority and submission. But in a lot of cases, it was not tempered or moderated by much love. I had to admit to myself and to my Father that I had fallen into that trap. It caused me to completely change my behavior in that regard. It didn't happen overnight but it happened over time. You remember when Christ healed the blind man in John 9 and the blind man said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, "I was blind and now I see. That's all I know; you can make all the accusations you want but this Man healed me—I was blind and now I see". That is what spiritually happened to me and I'm sure it's happened to all of you. There comes a time when we come to ourselves and "we say, now I see. Now I get it"—spiritually coming to ourselves. So, closing out this first point, "coming to ourselves" means to see ourselves, to acknowledge our sins and our faults and our weaknesses. To actually comprehend and see.

Which leads to the next point—the second point—we only have three today.

2. When we "come to ourselves" it leads us to humility and to repentance.

When we have the blinders taken off, when we're hit between the eyes with a two by four, when we are in pain, we come to ourselves. When we acknowledge that then we acknowledge our sins and that leads to humility and repentance. Back to Luke 15 and notice verse 18 of this parable that Christ is giving us. This prodigal son is now out in a foreign country, he's looking at the pigs, he's feeling his own hunger in his empty stomach and he's finally come to the realization that if he had stayed put, he would have had something to eat. These pigs were faring better than he was.

Luke 15:18 *I will arise and go to my father [which is symbolic of our heavenly Father], and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,*

19) And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. (KJV)

Because these servants have it better than I do right now. We see in verse 18 and 19, he has a dose of humility, he has a dose of repentance because he finally saw himself and what he had been doing. We see three things happen in these two verses.

Number one, conditions occurred to cause him to be humbled. Because of his hunger, because of his pain and dire circumstances, he finally saw himself as God the Father saw him. His physical father didn't know where he was. He finally realized that he had gone from extravagant living to feeding pigs and he was hungrier than the pigs were. Not a good deal and he sees that. Conditions occurred that caused him to be humbled.

The second point is that he acknowledged his sin by waking up to his behavior. He said, "Look what I'm doing—how did I get here? How stupid can I be?" He acknowledged his sin which led to the third thing.

He went to his father. In the parable he went to his physical father but the point of the parable is we have to have deep humble repentance and go to our heavenly Father. He went to his earthly father in the parable, but in reality, the lesson for us is, we go to the Almighty Father in deep and humble repentance.

So, you see it takes humility to “come to ourselves”. It leads us to humility and repentance. Remember this is the second letter to the church at Corinth and he corrected them in the first letter and that’s what he’s referring to here.

2 Corinthians 7:8 *Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—9) yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. 10) Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. (NIV)*

So, we see that sorrow is not the way to go; that does not buy us anything. But Godly sorrow, when we “come to ourselves” in Godly sorrow and repentance and acknowledgement of our sins, then the Father responds favorably, he responds positively. Back to Luke 15:20 to see what the Father’s response in the parable was.

Luke 15:20 *And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, [the father recognized him a long way off. He was probably trudging through the desert] his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. (KJV)*

That was the father’s response. Once we repent, once we acknowledge our sins and then we repent, notice the Father’s response in 1 John 1:9. We will see that the physical father's response in this parable is an example of our spiritual Father’s response in heaven.

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins [we acknowledge our sins, we repent before our Father], he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (KJV)*

That is His response to us, when we come to ourselves, when we acknowledge our sin and then in humility we repent. We see our sins and how far away we are from our Father and the example of His Son and we repent. When we come to ourselves, we begin to develop true humility because we see how blind we have been or how deceived we have been. Back to Luke 15:21.

Luke 15:21 *And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. (KJV)*

That is true humility. He could have said, I want you to restore me to where I was before and I want all my money, my perks and inheritance back. No, he didn't say that. He was at the bottom of the barrel and said he didn't deserve anything. He says, "I'm not even worthy to be called your son; just take me back and treat me as one of your servants." As humans, we tend to be stubborn and in all too many cases, we have to hit bottom before we do "come to ourselves" and that's just a fact. This young man indeed hit the bottom. He had nothing, he had no home, he had no money and as we're going to see he was barefooted. He had just the clothes on his back as we would say. That poor kid hit the bottom and it was only then that he "came to himself". Before this happens, we tend to be stubborn, in denial or we sweep it under the rug. It takes pain to wake us up. Which is sometimes the only way we learn. We hope it doesn't get to that point. But if we just deny, deny, deny or don't look at ourselves and compare ourselves to Christ, at some point the Father will bring circumstances to pass where we do indeed hit bottom. Then through much pain, maybe we can start to learn.

Think about Job for a minute. He suffered horribly and he finally "came to himself" but look at what he had to lose. He lost his sheep, cattle and oxen, meaning he lost his livelihood—his way of earning a living—he lost all of his servants. He lost his sons and daughters and on top of that he had boils over his entire body. As with the son in Luke 15, it's my experience that that kind of pain is the catalyst "to come to ourselves". It might be physical pain, it might be emotional pain, it might be mental pain—or all of the above. God Almighty—Yehovah—had to put matters in perspective for Job, after he went through this suffering. Look at Job 40, out of the New Living Translation.

- Job 1:1** *Then the Lord said to Job, [He's setting Job straight here]*
- 2) *Do you still want to argue with the Almighty? You are God's critic, but do you have the answers?"*
 - 3) *Then Job replied to the Lord,*
 - 4) *I am nothing [just like the prodigal son]—how could I ever find the answers? I will cover my mouth with my hand.*
 - 5) *I have said too much already. I have nothing more to say."*
 - 6) *Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind:*
 - 7) *Brace yourself like a man ... (NLT)*

How would you like to hear God talking out of a whirlwind and He says, "Son brace yourself because I'm about ready to tell you something!"

- 7 continued) *... because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them.*
- 8) *Will you discredit my justice and condemn me just to prove you are right? (NLT)*

Sometimes we want to be right in our own eyes more than we want the truth; that's just a fact. We want to be right rather than know the truth.

Finally, after being confronted by his Father, Job did indeed “come to himself”—look at chapter 42:1

Job 42:1 *Then Job answered the LORD, and said,
2) I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.
3) Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore, have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. (KJV)*

“Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not”—he’s admitting he’s fallible. Verse 5.

5) I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. (KJV)

He is speaking figuratively and saying “I know who you are versus who I am; I finally get it. I see You; I see me and the huge chasm between us”.

6) Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. (KJV)

In coming to ourselves, closing out this second point, we finally realize in humility and through repentance that we are nothing and we deserve nothing and we are only here because of our Father’s mercy and His love for us. We all need to pray—maybe a little self-interest here—that we can “come to ourselves” without hitting bottom. We need to pray for our Father’s mercy and favor in opening our eyes to see ourselves.

The third and final point—this is a key we need to think about:

3. The Father gives us time to come to ourselves.

King Saul had a blind spot and the problem was, he wanted to do things his own way. Proverbs 14 tells us that *there is a way that seems right to a man but that way ends in death*. Saul had this problem so Yehovah gave him two tests to overcome it. Two tests to “come to himself”. This is right at the beginning of Saul’s reign.

1 Samuel 13:1 *Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel ... (KJV)*

So, this was after his second year and now we begin in verse 5.

5) And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea [so this is a big army coming to Israel.] verse 7 (KJV)

7) And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, [Gilgal is about fifteen miles northeast of Jerusalem] and all the people followed him trembling.

8) *And he [referring to Saul] tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.*

9) *And Saul said, [he took matters into his own hands] Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.*

10) *And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.*

11) *And Samuel said, what hast thou done? And Saul said, [notice the denial] Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; (KJV)*

This was ten miles to the west so they were coming fairly close.

12) *Therefore, said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.*

13) *And Samuel said to Saul, thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God ... (KJV)*

You look at Leviticus 17 and Numbers 18, only the line of Aaron was to make those offerings and Saul was not of the line of Aaron. He violated the commandment of God.

13) *... which he commanded thee: for now, would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. (KJV)*

Now comes the big 'but' in verse 14.

14) *But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee. (KJV)*

His punishment for failing this first test was he would have no dynasty to follow him. He was still King so the Father gave him another chance—a second chance and that was the second test. This is the incident where he was commanded to destroy Amalek in chapter 15.

1 Samuel 15:1 *Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: [what he is saying is, you failed the first test] now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. (KJV)*

You failed the first test; you didn't listen to Yehovah, so listen carefully now.

2) *Thus, saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. (KJV)*

The example is back in Exodus 17 where Israel fought Amalek and you remember that Joshua and Hur held up Moses' arms and as long as they were up, the fight continued in the favor of Israel. But Amalek picked off the weak and the lame and the halt at the tail end of the march as they were going through the desert. Going on in verse 3.

3) *Now go and smite Amalek, [because of what they have done and now he's given the details; this is what he should have carefully listened to.] and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. (KJV)*

Today we would call that genocide. You would go before the U.N. and have some tribunal to be convicted of genocide; killing babies, elderly and all of that. We have to look at it from God Almighty, the Highest God, Yehovah's perspective. He is sovereign over life and death. Keep your finger here and go to Deuteronomy 32:39. This out of the New King James and Yehovah is speaking. Notice this is His perspective, which is the only perspective.

Deuteronomy 32:39 *Now see that I, even I, am He, And there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand. (NKJV)*

The fact is, from Yehovah's perspective, even though Amalek should have been slaughtered—wasn't entirely—but if they had been, from Yehovah's perspective, at some point in the future they would be resurrected and they would have their chance in a far better world. But notice what happened in verse 9.

1 Samuel 15:9 *But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.*

10) *Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, [he's done it again]*

11) *It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.*

13) *And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. (KJV)*

He's absolutely blind to his behavior and in denial.

14) *And Samuel said, what meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?*

15) *And Saul said, They [not himself] have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the*

LORD [notice this] *thy God* [he didn't say, my God, so this gives you an indication of Saul's mindset]; *and the rest we have utterly destroyed.* (KJV)

He said, they didn't do it, but we have destroyed it. Shows you his mindset.

16) *Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.*

17) *And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight [when you were first appointed king or called to that office, you were humble], wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?*

18) *And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.* (KJV)

That was your mandate, those were your instructions.

19) *Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?*

20) *And Saul said unto Samuel [look at his blindness here], Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD [absolutely blind to his disobedience], and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.*

21) *But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.*

22) *And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken [remember he told him in the beginning to listen to this] than the fat of rams.*

23) *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.* (KJV)

The lesson here is that rebellion and stubbornness prevent us from coming to ourselves and prevent us from being like the Father and His Son.

23) *Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.* [He failed the second test.]

24) *And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.* (KJV)

He finally saw it and finally admitted it but it was too late. Saul put the people's wishes before God Almighty's wishes and instructions and his time had run out.

25) *Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.* (KJV)

He just wants everything to be smoothed over, wave a magic wand, make it alright.

26) And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. (KJV)

Let's hope and pray that we never come to this; where the decision has already been made and our time has run out, as it happened with Saul.

27) And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

28) And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou. (KJV)

Bitter words.

So as a result of this second failure, he would shortly have his kingship removed and even more importantly he would lose God's Spirit. Look at chapter 16:14.

1 Samuel 16:14 *But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. (KJV)*

If you have a King James, you look in the margin and it says an evil spirit from Yehovah terrified him. What an awful way to come to yourself but it's too late.

Now look at Job—we talked about him earlier—he took potentially years or decades “to come to himself”. In the example of David, he did come to himself but it took some time, after nine months to a year, when Nathan came to him. He had blind spot; David diminished his sin and he believed somehow God winked at his sin because he was king and God would overlook his sins. Reminds me of a vice president in the Worldwide days in the '60's when he said, “God winks at my sins because what I do for the work”. David was in that same mindset. In 2 Samuel 12 is the account where Nathan confronts David with a parable about a poor man who had a lamb. I'll just paraphrase for you. There was a wealthy man and a poor man. The wealthy man had all kinds of flocks, herds and animals and the poor man had one ewe lamb that was like a pet, lived in the house, the children and the family treated it as a pet. The wealthy man had a visitor who he was going to prepare a meal for and rather than take of his abundance, he took the lamb—the one lamb—from this family and killed it and served it up as a meal for this visitor. In 2 Samuel 12, Nathan tells David this story and David's reaction is in verse 5.

2 Samuel 12:5 *And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: (KJV)*

Then in verse 7, now that Nathan had David's attention.

7) *And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. (KJV)*

Notice his punishment in verse 10.

10) *Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me [we don't want to go there], and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.*

11) *Thus, saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house ... (KJV)*

The sword is never going to depart and the evil is going to come even from your own children.

13) *And David said unto Nathan, [he finally came to himself] I have sinned against the LORD. (KJV)*

At this moment in time, you can only imagine what was going through David's mind. But I'm sure he thought, how could I have gotten to this point, from where I was anointed king of Israel to get to the point, where I would do this. That I would be guilty of adultery, murder, a cover up and lies and all of this? I'm sure he thought, I love God, how could I get to this point? How could I get to the point where I despised God Almighty? If David can do it, we can do it. Notice the result; because of his repentance, "coming to himself", and our Father's forgiveness, our Father put away his sin and look at his reward. Go to Hosea 3:5. David's reward is people are going to look to him in the future, when he will be resurrected as Israel's king.

Hosea 3:5 *Afterward shall the children of Israel return [meaning return to their land], and seek the LORD their God [this hasn't happened yet], and David their king [they will look to him]; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days. (KJV)*

Because David "came to himself" and acted on it and repented and changed, this is his reward. The point we are making in this third point though, is that there is a limited time for us to "come to ourselves". Isaiah 55:6 is a familiar scripture but let us apply the principles we see here to the subject of "coming to ourselves", because it gives us insight into this process.

Isaiah 55:6 *Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: (KJV)*

The implication is, there could be a time when He is not near and can't be found.

7) *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD ... (KJV)*

If we become unrighteous in our actions then we have drifted away from Yehovah, from God Almighty and we are being told that we have to come back. We have to come back to our Father and if we do that:

7 continued) ... *and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

8) *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.*

9) *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.* (KJV)

So, the lesson in this third point is, since God gives us time to “come to ourselves” and we are so thankful for that, should we not do the same with our brothers and sisters? If a brother or a sister sin against us or offends us, if the Father can give time to allow us to “come to ourselves”, shouldn’t we do that for each other? None of us has fully “come to ourselves” in this life. We all have our sins and faults and weaknesses. Therefore, since none of us have “come to ourselves” fully, then why should we judge and condemn each other? Ephesians 4:2 is the attitude we need every day of our lives; it doesn’t matter if you are an Elder, Deacon, brother, sister—makes no difference.

Ephesians 4:2 *With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;* (KJV)

The Father does that with us—gives us time to “come to ourselves”—we should do that with one another. Philippians 2:3 tells us it is about showing the fruits of the Holy Spirit to our brothers and sisters.

Philippians 2:3 *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.* (NKJV)

Our Father is patient with us, allowing us time to “come to ourselves”, therefore in this life, we should be patient with one another because all of us are imperfect, all of us are a work in progress.

Let’s summarize now. It’s clear that our Father is calling us to “come to ourselves”. To see, acknowledge and repent from whatever it is that prevents us from being in the image of Jesus Christ, His Son, Who set us the perfect example. The good news is that the Father gives us time to do this. The bad news is there is indeed a time limit. At some point, the Father is going to run out of patience. He ran out of patience with Saul and as we get closer to the end, that means there is less and less time left for us to “come to ourselves in the areas that we need to see.

The Father is interested in how we end up. Today is just like a snapshot; it’s a slice of time between the time we were first called and until whenever our end is. Whether the Father and the Son come or we die for some reason prior to that. Today is just a snapshot. The Father is interested in how we end up. Yes, today He wants us to be

making progress. But He gives us time and we have to realize that time is precious, time is short and we need to be about our Father's business of looking at ourselves, comparing ourselves to Jesus Christ's example—then making the changes.

The key is, after we “come to ourselves” and we see ourselves in comparison to Christ and we see this gulf—this change we have to make—the real question is, what do we do next? After we see ourselves, maybe acknowledge our sins and see the gulf between our behavior and Christ's example of what the Father expects from us? What do we do next? Do we blame others as Saul did? He blamed the people, he said “your God”, Samuel's God. Do we blame others as Saul did? Or do we accept responsibility and repent and change as David did? And look at his reward. In the end we are responsible directly to our Father for how we have lived our lives at the very end. What is the result?

Let's go back now to Luke 15 and see what was the result of the young man “coming to himself”. Luke 15:22; they had a tearful reunion, hugging, the father was so thankful. Obviously, the prodigal son was also thankful to be in his father's embrace.

Luke 15:22 *But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: (KJV)*

He probably walked through the desert barefoot.

23) *And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:*
24) *For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. (KJV)*

There was great joy on the part of the father and of course the family and the servants who knew the boy. Verse 7, notice what Christ says.

7) *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. (KJV)*

Our job, our duty, is to continually evaluate ourselves, comparing ourselves to our Father, comparing ourselves to the example of His Son as He walked this earth and then changing to become like both of Them. What is the result? What's the end result for us? As we just saw, there would be great joy in heaven, great joy with the Father and His Son, the heavenly host is rejoicing as we make progress by “coming to ourselves”.