

Luke 15:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

Analysis

And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me (Πάτερ, δός μοι τὸ ἐπιβάλλον μέρος τῆς οὐσίας, Pater, dos moi to epiballon meros tēs ousias)—The son demands his inheritance (ousia, οὐσία, substance/property) while his father lives. The verb epiballō (ἐπιβάλλω, falling to, belonging to) indicates legal entitlement, but requesting it prematurely was culturally shocking—essentially saying 'I wish you were dead.'

And he divided unto them his living (καὶ διεῖλεν αὐτοῖς τὸν βίον, kai dieilen autois ton bion)—The father grants the request immediately, dividing his bios (βίος, life, livelihood). This word means more than assets; it's his very life. The father absorbs the insult and loss without protest, imaging God's permission for human rebellion. He gives the son freedom to destroy himself, the terrible prerogative of genuine relationship. This is sovereign love's vulnerability.

Historical Context

Jewish inheritance law (Deuteronomy 21:17) gave the firstborn a double portion; the younger son would receive one-third of the estate. Requesting inheritance before death was virtually unprecedented and shameful, implying impatience for the father's demise. The division would have been public, legally binding, and gossip-worthy. The father's compliance rather than disinheritance or discipline was

equally shocking. Jesus's audience would have gasped at this opening, making the father's later welcome even more scandalous.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. In what ways have you treated God's gifts as entitlements while showing contempt for the Giver?
2. How does the father's immediate granting of the son's destructive request illuminate God's respect for human freedom even when we choose rebellion?
3. What does it reveal about divine love that the father divides his 'life' (bios), not just his property, to accommodate his son's departure?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	εἶπεν	ό	νεώτερος	αὐτοῖς	τῷ	Πάτερ	Πάτερ	δός
And	said	G3588	the younger	of them	G3588	Father	Father	give
G2532	G2036		G3501	G846		G3962	G3962	G1325
μοι	τὸ	ἐπιβάλλον	μέρος	τῆς	οὐσίας	καὶ	διεῖλεν	
me	G3588	that falleth	the portion	G3588	of goods	And	he divided	
G3427		G1911	G3313		G3776	G2532	G1244	
αὐτοῖς	τὸν	βίον						
of them	G3588	his living						
G846		G979						

Additional Cross-References

Mark 12:44 (Parallel theme): For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

