

Luke 15:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. The prodigal's rehearsed confession reveals his profound awareness of unworthiness. The phrase "no more worthy" (οὐκέτι εἰμὶ ἄξιος, ouketi eimi axios) acknowledges complete forfeiture of sonship rights. Having squandered his inheritance, violated family honor, and lived among Gentiles with pigs, he recognizes the magnitude of his offense.

His request to become a "hired servant" (μίσθιος, misthios) shows both humility and calculation. Unlike household slaves (δοῦλοι, douloi) who belonged to the family, hired workers were day laborers paid wages, living outside the household. The son's plan seeks to earn his way back through labor—a works-based restoration befitting his shame. Yet this reveals incomplete understanding of grace: he envisions reinstatement through merit, not realizing the father's love transcends legal categories. The profound irony is that God's grace will not allow him this quasi-servitude—the father will restore him to full sonship (vv. 22-24), demonstrating that salvation is gift, not wage.

Historical Context

First-century Jewish family structure made the son's offense catastrophic. Having demanded and wasted his inheritance, he had effectively killed his father in his heart. Return to the household would require village reconciliation ceremonies and profound humiliation. The son's strategy to become a hired servant reflects

realistic assessment of his disgrace—he cannot claim family rights but hopes to survive economically while making restitution.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does the son's plan to earn his way back as a hired servant reflect common misunderstandings about salvation by works?
2. In what ways do believers sometimes try to 'pay God back' for grace rather than simply receiving it as free gift?
3. What does the father's complete rejection of the hired servant proposal teach about God's insistence on full sonship for the redeemed?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	οὐκέτι	εἰμὶ	ἄξιος	κληθῆναι	νιός	σου	ποίησόν	με
And	no more	am	worthy	to be called	son	of thy	make	me
G2532	G3765	G1510	G514	G2564	G5207	G4675	G4160	G3165

ώς	ἐνα	τῶν	μισθίων	σου
as	one	G3588	hired servants	of thy
G5613	G1520		G3407	G4675

Additional Cross-References

Job 42:6 (Parallel theme): Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Psalms 84:10 (Parallel theme): For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Luke 5:8 (Parallel theme): When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

Genesis 32:10 (Parallel theme): I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.

1 Peter 5:6 (Parallel theme): Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

1 Corinthians 15:9 (Parallel theme): For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

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