

# Luke 15:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

## Analysis

The prodigal returns: 'And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him' (καὶ ἀναστὰς ἤλθεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἐαυτοῦ. ἔτι δὲ αὐτοῦ μακρὰν ἀπέχοντος εἶδεν αὐτὸν ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐσπλαγχνίσθη, καὶ δραμὼν ἐπέπεσεν ἐπὰ τὸν τράχηλον αὐτοῦ καὶ κατεφίλησεν αὐτόν). The father's actions are shocking: he sees the son 'a great way off' (μακρὰν ἀπέχοντος, suggesting he was watching), feels deep compassion (ἐσπλαγχνίσθη, visceral mercy), runs (δραμὼν, undignified for a Middle Eastern patriarch), falls on his neck, and kisses him repeatedly (κατεφίλησεν, intensive form). This demonstrates God's eager, undignified, overwhelming love for repentant sinners—He does not wait for full penance but rushes to embrace.

## Historical Context

In ancient Near Eastern culture, elderly men never ran—it required hitching up one's robe, exposing legs, appearing undignified. The father's running demonstrated his extraordinary love, overcoming cultural propriety. His actions preempt the son's prepared speech (vv.18-19), not demanding full contrition before granting forgiveness. The embrace and kiss signal complete restoration, contradicting the son's hope for mere servant status. This parable's climax reveals the gospel: God's grace exceeds our expectations, forgiveness precedes works, and divine love takes the initiative in reconciliation.

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. How does the father's undignified running challenge your mental picture of God's response to repentance?
2. What does the father's interruption of the son's confession teach about the relationship between repentance and forgiveness?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ ἀναστὰς ἤλθεν πρὸς τὸν πατὴρ ἐαυτοῦ ἔτι δὲ  
And he arose and came to father his was yet But  
G2532 G450 G2064 G4314 G3588 G3962 G1438 G2089 G1161

αὐτόν μακρὰν ἀπέχοντος εἶδεν αὐτόν ὁ πατὴρ αὐτόν  
him a great way off saw him G3588 father him  
G846 G3112 G568 G1492 G846 G3962 G846

καὶ ἔσπλαγχνίσθη καὶ δραμὼν ἐπέπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸν  
And had compassion And ran and fell on G3588  
G2532 G4697 G2532 G5143 G1968 G1909

τράχηλον αὐτόν καὶ κατεφίλησεν αὐτόν  
neck him And kissed him  
G5137 G846 G2532 G2705 G846

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 86:5** (Parallel theme): For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

**Psalms 86:15** (Parallel theme): But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

**Ephesians 2:13** (Parallel theme): But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

**Genesis 33:4** (Parallel theme): And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

**Isaiah 49:15** (Parallel theme): Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

**Genesis 46:29** (Parallel theme): And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

**Isaiah 57:18** (Parallel theme): I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.

**Jeremiah 31:20** (Parallel theme): Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.

**Ephesians 2:17** (Parallel theme): And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

**Genesis 45:14** (Parallel theme): And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.