

Luke 15:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

Analysis

And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. The servant's report emphasizes three key elements: family relationship ("thy brother"), the father's extravagant celebration ("killed the fatted calf"), and the cause—the son's safe return. The phrase "safe and sound" (ὕγιαίνοντα, *hygiainonta*) means healthy, whole, sound—not merely alive but restored to wellness. The father celebrates not just the son's survival but his wholeness.

The servant's perspective reflects proper gospel understanding. He identifies the returned prodigal as "thy brother"—family relationship is central. He credits the celebration to "thy father"—the father's joy drives the feast, not the son's merit. The phrase "because he hath received him" (ὅτι ὑγιαίνοντα αὐτὸν ἀπέλαβεν, *hoti hygiainonta auton apelaben*) uses the verb *apolambanō* (ἀπολαμβάνω), meaning to receive back, recover, reclaim what was lost. The father hasn't merely accepted a stranger but recovered his son.

This servant's simple report contains profound theology: salvation is about family restoration, God's initiative and joy, and the complete healing of those who return. The elder brother will hear this same truth but respond with resentment (vv. 28-30), demonstrating that knowing gospel facts doesn't guarantee gospel joy. Information without transformation breeds religion without relationship.

Historical Context

Servants in first-century households participated in family celebrations and understood family dynamics. This servant's joy in reporting the younger son's return contrasts with the elder brother's impending anger. The detail about the fatted calf communicated the extraordinary nature of the celebration—this wasn't routine hospitality but a once-in-a-lifetime feast marking profound family restoration.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the servant's emphasis on 'thy brother' and 'thy father' reveal the relational essence of the gospel?
2. What does the phrase 'safe and sound' teach about salvation as complete restoration, not merely legal forgiveness?
3. Why might believers sometimes resist celebrating when God receives back the lost 'safe and sound'?

Interlinear Text

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτὸν ὅτι Ὁ ἀδελφός σου ἦκει καὶ
G3588 And he said him because G3588 brother Thy is come and
G1161 G2036 G846 G3754 G80 G4675 G2240 G2532

ἔθυσεν ὁ πατήρ σου τὸν μόσχον τὸν σιτευτόν ὅτι
hath killed G3588 father Thy G3588 calf G3588 the fattened because
G2380 G3962 G4675 G3448 G4618 G3754

ὑγιαίνοντα αὐτὸν ἀπέλαβεν
safe and sound him he hath received
G5198 G846 G618

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