

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" (ὑγιαίνοντα, 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	Ὥ	ἀδελφός	σου	ῆκει	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 fatted	because	
G2380		G3962	G4675		G3448		G4618		G3754
ὑγιαίνοντα	αὐτὸν	ἀπέλαβεν							
safe and sound		him	he hath received						
G5198		G846	G618						

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