

Matthew 21:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

Analysis

He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went—The first son's initial defiance (οὐ θέλω, ou thelō, 'I don't want to') represents tax collectors and sinners who initially lived in rebellion. **But afterward he repented** (μεταμεληθεὶς, metamelētheis)—felt regret, changed his mind—and went.

This parable inverts religious expectations. Outward compliance matters less than eventual obedience. The 'sinners' who initially rejected God but responded to John's baptism proved more righteous than religious leaders who professed devotion but refused to repent. True discipleship means doing the Father's will, not merely talking about it (Matt 7:21).

Historical Context

This parable follows directly from the question about John's baptism (v.25). John called everyone—including despised tax collectors and prostitutes—to repentance. The 'sinners' responded; the religious establishment refused. Jesus validates John's ministry while condemning the leaders' hypocrisy.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. In what areas might you be the second son—saying 'yes' to God but not actually obeying?
2. How does this parable challenge social respectability as evidence of saving faith?

Interlinear Text

ό δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν Οὐ θέλω ὥστερον
G3588 **He answered** G611 **and said** not I will afterward
G1161 G2036 G3756 G2309 G5305

δὲ μεταμεληθεὶς ἀπῆλθεν
He answered **he repented** **and went**
G1161 G3338 G565

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org