

THE PRODIGAL SON

PASTOR DAVID ROSALES



David Rosales, senior pastor of Calvary Chapel Chino Valley, CA, is a personal friend of Pastor Robert Grenier and his family. David gave the keynote address at the Reconciliation Celebration at Calvary Chapel Visalia, CA. The celebration recognized the forgiveness and reconciliation in the Grenier family after 13 years of painful separation. Here is the summary of David's words to the Greniers and Calvary Chapel Visalia church family.

God has shown us His compassion. We know the most famous Scripture in the New Testament: **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.** (John 3:16, KJV) Paul said in Romans 5:8 that **God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** Jesus died on the cross so we might be reconciled to God.

God is also patient. God waits. Yet, His Holy Spirit still exerts an influence to draw people to Himself. **The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.** (2 Peter 3:9)

Tonight, I think of the parable of the Prodigal Son, where the son shamed his father. He demanded his inheritance before the father had died. In Jewish culture, that was a way of saying, "I wish you were dead." That caused a tremendous rift within the family and community. The son took that which was his, but he should not have had, left, and wasted all of his inheritance. Because the Jewish community regarded this kind of young man and such behavior toward his father to be serious, they would have excommunicated him. But when he returned, the father was waiting because the father loved his son, even though he had brought shame and deserved exile.

If the community leaders had gotten to the son first, they would have enacted exile, or worse. The father was waiting and looking to see his son appear over the horizon that he might run and embrace him, and be able to save him.

I think that is the case in Bob's and Gayle's family. Know that Bob is a man who was waiting. I have known and loved him as a friend for a long time. On occasion, he has shared his heart of grief. How the pain was so tremendous and so intense, and the shame that occurred when so many people rejected that family. It is interesting to me how willing people are to believe the worst

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about you, how slow they are to pray for you, and then not to think that perhaps something is happening that they are not aware of. There is always more than one way to look at the same story. Yet in ministry so very often the pastor is always wrong and anybody who makes an accusation against him is always right. Gayle and Bob were patiently waiting and praying. When their son Alex returned, they celebrated his return and wanted the community to do the same. Let's celebrate the return of their son, because that is the way God works; He brings restoration and healing. We are able to witness this tonight.

He First Loved Us

One woman in the Bible has become very dear to me. Found in Luke 7:36-50, she entered the party that Jesus was invited to by Simon the Pharisee. She washed Jesus' feet with her tears. What drew her into that room? Was it all the love that she had

for Jesus or was it not all the love that Jesus had for her? Always remember that you can never love God more than He loves you. Always remember that you love Him because He first loved you.

Think about Moses, who was inspired by the Spirit of God to write: **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."** (Deuteronomy 6:5-6) Did Moses love God with all of his heart? The answer is, no, Moses did not enter into the Promised Land of Israel because he violated his relationship with God. He failed like all of us, because none of us can ever love God completely.

That causes us to ask God for help. It's not how much you love Him—it's how much He loves you and what He's done in your life. It's that kind of love that has drawn Alex back to Jesus Christ.

As a sinner I speak to sinners. Who here is not a sinner? Who here has not failed?

Many years ago, I was in our front room. My oldest daughter, who was not living at home at the time, came and sat with me. I was happy to see my little girl. Her mother, my wife Marie, walked up to her, sat down, and said, "I'm surprised, what are you doing here tonight?" Then my daughter looked at me, then at her mama, and said, "What can I say? I've failed. I've become pregnant." And she wasn't married. I still remember looking at my firstborn, my baby, and my heart broke inside. Raised in a Christian home, raised in church, loved every moment of her life. I remember looking at her, and I said to her, "Baby, there's nothing that you can ever do that would make me not love you."

Listen church, there's nothing that you can ever do that can make God not love you, just like in Alex's case, there was nothing he could ever do to make his parents stop loving him. Let's celebrate this incredible gift of reconciliation. Our God loves us.