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he had done, so he made no such attempt. *“Confess your trespasses”* is a straightforward command (James 5:16), and it ought to be obeyed in a straightforward fashion.

“Against heaven” indicates the son perceived his behavior as worse than a personal slight against his family. He understood the gravity of his choice in that God was the true victim, much as David told the Almighty, *“Against You, You only have I sinned”* (Psalm 51:4), despite having harmed Uriah with death, Bathsheba with adultery, and his bastard with death. Those victims were real, but they were secondary to having offended heaven. Likewise, the prodigal son grasped that what he had done was objectively evil.

“And before you” means the prodigal directly admitted to having offended his father. Acknowledging God to be the primary victim does not discount the fact that persons on earth have been harmed and deserve amends. Rather than a bland, generic apology, the prodigal son presented his sorrow particularly to the aggrieved party.

“I am no longer worthy to be called your son” is a deep expression of humility. He accepted the shame fitting his actions. Some sinners confronted with their error behave petulantly, irritated that they are being held accountable, and impatient to get the process over with. Not so the prodigal! Whereas he had been demanding at the outset, telling his father, *“Give me the portion of good that falls to me”* (Luke 15:12), by the end, he was yielding. Sincere sorrow for sin is nothing short of unconditional surrender. This is why blame-shifting excuses are so repugnant to morality. When the Creator questioned Adam, *“the man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate’”* (Genesis 3:12). Passing the buck is cowardice, *“But the cowardly... shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death”* (Revelation 21:8). The prodigal son was not so proud as to decline the blame, nor so cowardly as to shift it to another; he humbly took it on himself.

“Make me like one of your hired servants” shows that he accepted the consequences. That his father apparently set them aside to welcome him home and celebrate his return is not the point. The man at fault owned up to his responsibility and was willing to be demoted from son to servant. Such a reversal of behavior is consistent with *“fruits worthy of repentance”* as taught by John (Matthew 3:8).

The prodigal son admitted his guilt, acknowledged his victims, surrendered his pride, and accepted the consequences. That is sincerely saying sorry.

WE ARE BEING DESTROYED BY AGREEABLE MEN

Michael Foster

It's easy to like an agreeable man, at least at first. He presents himself as polite, reasonable, and warm. He avoids friction. He avoids awkward or uncomfortable topics. He smiles and nods wherever he can. A conversation with him at a backyard BBQ or in the church foyer can make for a pleasant time.

And those pleasant times can keep on rolling, unless you disturb what the agreeable man mistakes for peace. That is something he will not tolerate. In many cases, he'll simply avoid anything disagreeable. He would truly rather be in the room with a repugnant man who plays along with his desire for agreeableness than with a virtuous man who won't. Tolerance and avoidance are the twin pillars of his modus operandi. False peace is his idol.

But when the agreeable man's idol is touched, and he is forced to confront friction he can no longer avoid, the façade quickly evaporates. He lashes out. What follows is usually an irrational, emotional warpath. And because violating the shallow rules of decorum is, in his mind, the greatest sin, he must lie. He must misrepresent. He must spin the story lest the bystanders see him for what he really is. His goal is to preserve the appearance of reasonableness while shutting down and driving away those with reasonable objections that inevitably create discomfort.

He is an enemy of the reformer, who must press the issue and do so forthrightly. He is a friend of the smiling subversive who quietly corrodes institutions under the camouflage of false peace.

He is a destroyer.

“Beware of manufacturing a god of your own: a god who is all mercy, but not just; a god who is all love, but not holy; a god who has a heaven for everybody, but a hell for none; a god who can allow good and bad to be side by side in time, but will make no distinction between good and bad in eternity. Such a god is an idol of your own...”

The hands of your own fancy and sentimentality have made him. He is not the God of the Bible, and beside the God of the Bible there is no god at all.”

– J. C. Ryle

***"WHAT MUST I DO
TO BE SAVED?"***

ACTS 16:30

LEARN THE GOSPEL

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

CONFESS CHRIST

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 3:19; 17:30

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

***"THE ASSEMBLING OF
OURSELVES TOGETHER"***

HEBREWS 10:24-25

SUNDAY

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

THURSDAY

Men's & Ladies' Studies @ 6:20 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard
Belén, New Mexico

Seekers Welcome.
Members Expected.

***"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN
ANY TRESPASS...
RESTORE SUCH A ONE"***

GALATIANS 6:1

CONFESS TRESPASSES

James 5:16; 1st John 1:9

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 8:22

PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS

Acts 8:22

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

***"A WORD FITLY SPOKEN IS
LIKE APPLES OF GOLD IN
SETTINGS OF SILVER"***

PROVERBS 25:11

"If reading the Bible doesn't teach you anything else, it will teach you that 99% of people who criticize the Bible have never read it."

– Marcelle Cooper

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

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SINCERELY SAYING SORRY

Bryan Matthew Dockens

Knowing how to express regret for wrongdoing is a mark of virtue and spiritual strength. The best template for doing so was set forth by Jesus in His teaching about the prodigal son who said to himself, *"I will go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants'"* (Luke 15:18-19).

"I will go to my father" demonstrates that the sinner in this case was already convicted of his wrongdoing, needing no further rebuke, as evidenced by Christ narrating that *"he came to himself"* (Luke 15:17). Because of this, when his father *"saw him"* yet *"a great way off"*, he *"ran and fell on his neck and kissed him"* (20). The son did not even need to finish the speech he had scripted in his head (21) before the father called for a celebration (22)! This is the best-case scenario – when the sinner does not wait to be corrected, but takes the initiative to make amends. The best-case scenario is rare, however, so the sinner most often needs to be reproved. *"If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him"* (Luke 17:3).

"I have sinned" is an unequivocal acknowledgement of guilt. Notice he did not say, *"If I have offended you..."* His actions were not in the realm of possibility, but of certainty. He knew it. God knew it. His family knew it. There was no saving face by minimizing the reality of what – Continued on page 2 –

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