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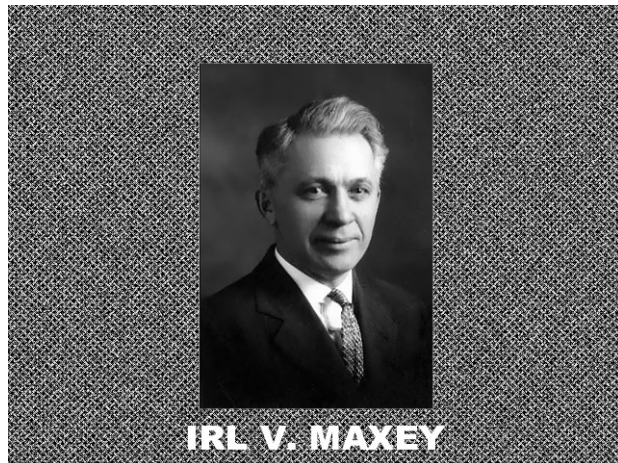
**THE PRODIGAL
A Sermon by Irl V. Maxey
Dated: January 12, 1906**

Digitized by Duane V. Maxey

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INTRODUCTION TO THIS FILE

My father's sermon in this file was dated January 12, 1906 -- just five days over 100 years ago today, January 17, 2006. Papa was born in Mt. Vernon, Illinois on March 12, 1882. So, he was just two months shy of being 24 years old when he wrote this sermon, and very obviously in the early part of his ministry. Though I have digitized this sermon following papa's "Heart Melodies" sermon (which is undated), I suspect that the latter may have been written much later in his ministry. "The Prodigal" was written in Irving, Illinois, a small town on State Highway 16 northeast of St. Louis, Mo. and northwest of papa's home-town, Mt. Vernon, Illinois.

Before beginning the work of digitizing this sermon, I went through the collection of papa's sermons now in my possession. In addition to the undated "Heart Melodies" I found that I have (as yet undigitized) seven more undated sermons and one partial sermon by him, one more sermon from 1906, two from

1907, one from 1912, nine sermons from 1913, four from 1914, two from 1915, four from 1916, one sermon from 1917, one from 1918, and one sermon from 1924.

Thus, this sermon is one of a total of 34 sermons by our father, Irl V. Maxey, that I have received from my brother, Gale E. Maxey of Boise, Idaho. And, in addition to papa's translations of Hebrews, James, and 1st Peter (already done), I also have in my possession his translations of 2 Corinthians, Jonah, Nahum, and Obadiah -- making a total of 41 writings of our father, plus one partial, uncompleted sermon. All of these came within 14 separate bindings which at first gave me the impression that there were far fewer writings than there actually are, until I carefully examined the contents within each binding.

This sermon was handwritten, as are all rest of papa's writings which are yet to be digitized. Though the task of typing in these works may prove to be a bit daunting, the Lord willing, I hope that in time I shall be able to accomplish it. Again in this file, I have done a bit of editing which includes the addition of some Scripture references following Bible quotations in the sermon, and some punctuation marks. That said, I believe that this digital file sets forth quite accurately the message our father intended to convey in "The Prodigal". Though written in 1906, and though it contains some things which pertained to that time, its message is still relevant even though it is just over 100 years old today. -- Duane V. Maxey, (Ahwatukee) Phoenix, Arizona, January 17, 2006.

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TEXT: Luke 15:11-24

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

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SERMON INTRODUCTION

The story of the prodigal is very familiar. So clear is the Bible statement of the story that we need no further comment. Let these simple words, yet concise statements, be enough to form our idea of the younger son. We know from Jewish law he had a portion of his father's estate coming to him after his father's death which was equal to one-half of the elder son's share. Hence, one-third of the property was his at his father's death.

Let us now look into the context.

Before this parable, Jesus has deeply impressed the condition of the lost sheep, and the attitude of the shepherd toward the hundredth part of his possessions. The sheep, without willfulness, had wandered away in the wilderness, and was there suffering and helpless. The shepherd, with deep interest, sought the sheep midst storm or over stony places until he found it and safely sheltered it within the fold.

The position of the lost coin is described and the attitude of the woman toward it -- the tenth of her possession. The coin had no power of itself, but had unnoticed fallen from the neck brooch [or broach]. But the woman, so interested in it, so careful to find it, searched every corner and crevice until she found it and placed it in the rightful place beside the jewels in the brooch.

And then comes the conditions of the lost son described, and the attitude of the father toward the son -- the half of his possessions. His yearning after the son who had willfully left home and pleasant surroundings to wander in his own way. His tears and sighs until the son returned and was once more a son at home.

Now we see in all these the conditions of the lost described -- the attitude of the owner toward them and the restoration with joy.

But let us take some truths from the last one and place them upon our own heart, because the last one is a description in parabolic statement of every sinner's condition.

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THE LOST DESCRIBED

(1) First, the boy did not want to remain under the father's care, watchfulness, and training at home.

Then our first wayward step is: -- We do not need God. We can get along without His care. We do not need His watchfulness and the restrictions of His precepts. We will recognize Him. We know full well He created us and placed us in this world -- gave us a body and mind and certain innate qualities. We will just take these now in our own possession -- a clear and innocent mind, and a body that has not known the satisfaction of lust, and we just launch out, look to our own self and get a name for ourself and respect of the world. We will not pay any attention to the Bible, to the preachers, to God's people, or to the means of grace, but we will turn a deaf ear to all these and satisfy ourselves because the best good to ourself will be by doing thus.

Once loosened from God's care, we at once begin to wander -- to run around. There was once a show that had a most wonderful thing to exhibit: -- A common, ordinary horse was run around a ring and a huge lion was to jump to his back and ride around. When the people came, they saw the lion jump from his stage upon the horse, and the horse without affright carried him round and round. They asked the keeper to explain how they got the horse in condition to let the lion leap to his back and then carry him.

"Well," said he, "the first thing was to get the horse to run around. Then, we built a stage. Then, we taught a cat to jump to his back. Then, when he was familiar with that, a dog, and last the lion could be carried without affright."

So the first step, so natural to human degradation, is to become restless and run around. Already, when we have given ourselves over into self's hand, the stage for the Devil to leap upon us is built, and we go right by it unconscious because so bent are we upon our course. We take this innocent mind which demands satisfaction; we take up a free-thought newspaper, a low fiction magazine, or a cheap novel. The Devil has built the stage. On, on we go with terrific force!

Thoughts of God are pressed out. We even say to ourselves, "Is it true? How foolish I was to think there was a God. How excitable this fiction, how fascinating! We read of the fantastic parlor the waltz caught. By its description we are soon in the places of the ball, spending our money dancing away our time. We feel no amount of condemnation, because we say there is no God, Heaven, or Hell. We

have wasted our substance (our understanding) in riotous living. Round we go -- the cats of viciousness leap upon us, but around we go. The dogs of selfishness leap upon us, but still we go. At last, we are carrying the Devil -- we are children of the Devil, and his lusts we are doing. Around and down we go!

We take our bodies, all tingling with health. With these past associations we have aroused them to their greatest tension. Lust is demanding -- so strong is the demand, we yield. This finds us in a saloon, to heal the tinge of conscience. Around the gambling tables, to satisfy our longings. Yes, even the girls to tipple the wine-bottle at the dance, giving her chances with cards and euchre, and at last plunging into the gulf of prostitution to pay her debts.

Or, we may not sink into these depths, but by respect for our raising just wander on the hills, trying to plan our ways of living without the love of God the father, over and over again telling falsehoods, cursing, bemeaning Christian people, or without these even still yet doubting somewhat the divinity of Christ and the verity of God's Word.

(2) The next thought, or rather the next feeling, of the son is: -- "Bad Luck" -- I am in this place by providence. Ah yes, so people put down in their mind a superstitious idea. God has not given me luck, ah no, but some way the spirits round about me hiss and blow at me. A cold providence has fallen and I am not able to put it down. Brother, sister, you are not there in that hog-pen (with self-indulgence satisfied, self-love fattening, and force of habit very fat -- appetite and sensuality still hungry), by the providence of God nor the ill feats of spirits, but because you have given yourself over to the lust of the flesh, and God said "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap... he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. 6:7-8).

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THE ATTITUDE OF THE OWNER

The father still loved his son. God loves us and is very careful and yearning for us still. Hear the statement of Jesus: "For the Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost."

Ah, brother, sister, remember while you are sinners, or ever you take a step homeward, God the Father weeps and loves you still! So much did this love burn for you, that He gave His only Son to die for you (see John 3:16). He will not go out after you and bring you in, because if he pushed you your will would be the same -- that same haughty, independent spirit. That must be broken down: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." But still, He knows you by name: He will yearn after you and weep over you till you see your condition. Then He will receive you gladly when you come back.

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THE RESTORATION OF THE LOST

Their Action: -- You have willfully gone away from God. You have wasted your understanding. You have joined yourself to the devil. You are in misery and shame. Ah, won't you come to yourself -- realize many, many who are under the love and care of God have peace and joy, and are not bound but have freedom, are not so hungry but satisfied with His love.

Do as the boy did -- do it now! Compare your condition with God's children. Say it, mean it, Do it: "I will arise and go to God and to His Kingdom. I will say I have sinned against You, Oh my Father."

Come back -- come back confessing -- exert your will-power -- break away from that citizen! You are going now. I hear you say, "God be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13).

The Father's love is reaching out to help you -- like the moon draws the tide-water... Surely God is reaching after you. Hear Him say, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Yes, He comes out to meet you with this promise: "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord (you are returning), and I will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

The Father takes you into His arms: "I will love you freely" (see Hosea 14:4). He enrobes you: "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). He puts the ring of authority upon you: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). The sandals of peace: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

We are now children of God -- evidence enough -- His Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ (see Romans 8:16-17).

But the feast is yet to come! Oh Glory! It was good enough to be a child of God, but I am to feast with the Father! Feasting! I am feasting with my Lord: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna..." (Rev. 2:17). Yes, you have overcome the world by faith in Jesus, "and the very God of peace sanctify you wholly" (1 Thess. 5:23). "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

The brother at home did not have this. "From childhood thou hast known the Holy Scriptures" (see 2 Tim. 3:15). Come in, Elder brother! Feast with us. Get sanctified. Amen.

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THE END OF THIS SERMON