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“And Kissed Him Much”

by C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

In the Revised Version, the text reads, *“And kissed him much.”* This is a very good translation of the Greek, which might bear the meaning, “Kissed him earnestly or eagerly.” I prefer to have it in very plain language, “Kissed him much.” The parable of the Prodigal Son is a very familiar one, yet it is so full of spiritual truth. Before the prodigal received these kisses of love, he had said in the far country, “I will arise and go to my father.” He had, however, done more than that, else his father’s kiss would never have been upon his cheek. The resolve had become a deed: “He arose, and came to his father.” A bushful of resolutions is of small value when compared to a single grain of practice. The determination to return home is good; but when the wanderer begins the business of doing, it is then he knows the love of the father.

The “Kisses” and Embrace of the Father

Before the kisses of love were given, this prodigal was on his way to his father; but he would not have reached him unless his father had come the greater part of the way. When you give God an inch, He will give you a mile. If you come a little way, when you are “yet a great way off”, He will run to meet you. I do not know that the prodigal saw his father, but his father saw him. The eyes of mercy are quicker than the eyes of repentance. Even the eyes of our faith are dim compared with the eye of God’s love. He sees a sinner long before a sinner sees Him.

I do not suppose that the prodigal traveled very fast. I imagine that he came very slowly—he was resolved to come, yet he was half afraid. But we read that his father ran. Slow are the steps of repentance, but swift are the feet of forgiveness. God can run where we scarcely limp, and if we are limping towards Him, He will run towards us. These kisses were given in a hurry; the story is narrated in a way that almost makes us think that such was the case.

His father “ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” He did not delay a moment; for though he was out of breath, he was not out of love. “He fell on his neck, and kissed him much.” There stood his son ready to confess his sin; therefore did his father kiss him all the more. The more willing you are to own your sin, the more willing is God to forgive. When you make a clean confession of it, God will soon make a clear record of it. He that was willing to use his lips for confession, found that his father was willing to use his lips for kissing him.

See the contrast; there is the son, scarcely daring to think of embracing

“Oh if you are in the far country, if all the angels in heaven turn their backs on you, if all the devils in hell tell you that you cannot be saved, and if your own heart says it is too late, never mind them—go home! Go back, despite earth and hell, and tell your heavenly Father how you have wandered, and He will receive you, for the door is never shut.”

D. L. Moody
(1834-1899)

his father, yet the father has scarcely seen him before he has fallen on his neck. The condescension of God towards sinners is very great. He seems to stoop from His throne of glory to fall upon the neck of a repentant sinner. God on the neck of a sinner! What a wonderful picture! Can you conceive it? I do not think you can; but if you cannot imagine it, I hope that you will realize it. When God's arm is embracing our necks, and His lips are on our cheeks kissing us, then will we understand more than a world of preachers can ever tell us of His condescending love.

The "Seeing" and "Running" of the Father

The father "saw" his son. There is a great deal in that word, "saw." The father saw who it was; saw where the son had come from; saw the swineherd's dress; saw the filth upon his hands and feet; saw his rags; saw his ashamed look; saw what he had been; saw what he was; and saw what he would soon be. "His father saw him." God has a way of seeing men and women that you and I cannot understand. He sees right through us at a glance, as if we were made of glass; He sees all our past, present, and future.

"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him." It was not with icy eyes that the father looked on his returning son. Love leaped into them, and as he beheld him, he "had compassion on him"; that is, he felt for him. There was no anger in his heart toward his son; he had nothing but pity for his poor boy, who had gotten into such a miserable condition. It was true that it was all his own fault, but that did not come before his father's mind. It was the state that he was in, his poverty, his degradation, his face pale with hunger, that touched his father. Likewise, many who have left the Father's house have brought their troubles upon themselves, but nevertheless God has compassion upon them. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not they are new every morning."

We read that the father "ran." The compassion of God is followed by swift movements. He is slow to anger, but He is quick to bless. He does not take any time to consider how He shall show His love. He has no need to prepare for the sinner's return to Him; that was done on Calvary. God comes flying in the greatness of His compassion to help every poor, needy, and lost soul.

And when He comes, He comes to kiss. If we had read that the father had kicked his prodigal son, we would not have been very surprised. Well, I should have been very greatly astonished, seeing that the father in the parable was to represent God. But still, his son deserved all the rough treatment that some heartless men might have given; and had the story been that of a selfish human father only, it might have been written that "as he was coming near, his father ran at him, and kicked him." There are such fathers in the world, who seem as if they cannot forgive. If he had kicked him, it would have been no more than he had deserved. But no, what is written in the Book stands true for all time, and for every sinner, — "He fell on his neck, and kissed him"; kissed him eagerly, kissed him much. What does this much kissing mean to us?

1. MUCH KISSING MEANT MUCH LOVE. It means much love truly *felt*; for God never gives an expression of love without feeling it in

"He did not see the father, but the father saw him and ran to meet him. This is the only place where we read of God being in a hurry. He did not run to create a world, but He ran to put His arms around a poor prodigal. Oh never, never, never doubt your heavenly Father's love."

Henry Moorhouse
(1840-1880)

His infinite heart. God will never give a "Judas kiss", and betray those whom He embraces. There is no hypocrisy with God; He never kisses those for whom He has no love. There is no measuring the love He bears towards you. He has loved you before the foundation of the world, and He will love you when time shall be no more.

This much kissing also means much love *manifested*. Beloved, God has wondrous ways of opening His people's hearts to the manifestation of His grace. He can pour in, not now and then a drop of His love, but great and mighty streams. The poor prodigal had so much love manifested to him, that he might have sung of the torrents of his father's affection. That is the way God receives those whom He saves, giving them not a meager drop of grace, but manifesting an overflowing love.

This much kissing means much love *perceived*. When his father kissed him much, the poor prodigal knew, if never before, that his father loved him. He had no doubt about it. It is very frequently the case that the first moment a sinner believes in Jesus, he gets this "much" love. God reveals it to him, and he perceives it and enjoys it at the very beginning. Think not that God always keeps the best wine to the last; He gives us some of the richest desserts of His table the first moment we sit there. I recollect the joy that I had when first I believed in Jesus; and, even now, in looking back upon it, the memory of it is as fresh as if it were but yesterday. I did but look to Jesus on the cross, and the crushing load was immediately gone; and the heart which could only sigh and cry by reason of its burden, began to leap and dance and sing for joy.

2. MUCH KISSING MEANT MUCH FORGIVENESS. The prodigal had many sins to confess; but before he came to the details of them, his father had forgiven him. I love confession of sin after forgiveness. Some suppose that after we are forgiven we are never to confess; but, oh, beloved, it is then that we confess most truly, because we know the guilt of sin most fully! To think that Christ should have washed me from my sins in His own blood, makes me feel my sin the more deeply, and confess it the more humbly before God. The picture of this prodigal is marvelously true to the experience of those who return to God. His father kissed him with the kiss of forgiveness; and yet, after that, the young man went on to say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

From this point of view, those kisses meant, first, "*Your sin is all gone, and will never be mentioned any more. Come to my heart, my son! Thou hast grieved me sore, and angered me; but, as a thick cloud, I have blotted out your transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins.*" As the father looked upon him, and kissed him, there probably came another kiss, a kiss which seemed to say, "*There is no soreness left: I have not only forgiven, but I have forgotten too. It is all gone, clean gone. I will never accuse you of it any more. I will never love you any the less. I will never treat you as though you were still an unworthy and untrustworthy person.*" Probably at that there came another kiss; for do not forget that his father forgave him "and kissed him much," to show that the sin was all forgiven.

There stood the prodigal, overwhelmed by his father's goodness, yet remembering his past life. As he looked on himself, he thought, "I have these old rags still on, and I have just come from feeding the swine." I

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can imagine that his father would give him another kiss, as much as to say, "I do not see any filth on you, or any rags on you either. I throw my arms around you just as I would pick up a precious diamond out of the mire." This is the gracious and glorious way in which God treats those who return to Him. As for their sin, He has put it away so that He will not remember it. He forgives like a God.

3. MUCH KISSES MEANT FULL RESTORATION. The prodigal was going to say to his father, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." In the far country he had resolved to make that request, but his father with a kiss, stopped him. By that kiss, *his sonship was owned*; by it the father said to the wretched wanderer, "You are my son." He gave him such a kiss as he would only give to his own son. I wonder how many here have ever given such a kiss to anyone. You can understand that this overwhelming greeting was like the father saying, "My boy, you are my son. Despite all that you have done, you belong to me; however far you have gone in vice and sin, I own you. You are bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh."

The father received his son with many kisses and so proved that his *prayer was answered*. Indeed, his father heard his prayer before he offered it. He was going to say, "Father, I have sinned," and to ask for forgiveness; but he got the mercy, and a kiss to seal it, before the prayer was presented. Further than this, you shall have all your *privileges restored*, even as this wandering young man received a son's honor. As you see him now in the father's house, where he was received with the many kisses, he wears a son's robe, the family ring is on his finger, and the shoes of the home are on his feet. He eats no longer swine's food, but children's bread. See how this father treats his boy. He kisses him, and kisses him again, because he knows his own child, and, recognizing him as his child, and feeling his fatherly heart yearning over him, he gives him kiss after kiss. He kisses him much, to make him know that he has full restoration.

—**C. H. Spurgeon** (1834 -1892)- The beloved English minister at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. He is author of hundreds of books and pamphlets. He was called the "Prince of Preachers." His ministry still touches lives today.