



Summer is here. Youth are graduating and moving on to the next grade, and with the summer comes fun, freedom, and missions. The youth will be taking two mission trips this summer. The first is SST (Summer of Service and Training) to Tyler, Texas, for a week of mission lessons and intense discipleship, with a second week of missions work in either Houston or Chicago. The Lord will use our youth mightily to bring people to know Him. This mission trip is taking place **June 15-30**. The second mission trip of the summer is a Jesus Culture conference in LA on **July 21- Aug 2**. We will go to learn how to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit bringing revival to our campuses. After the conference we will be returning to lead the VBS at

St. Clements.



I have been reading Tim Keller's "The Prodigal God." The book is a series of sermons that Keller has given on Luke's famous prodigal son narrative. In the book Keller points out that both the bad son and the good son, the young and elder alike, found themselves in a position whereby they didn't love their father. Neither of them loved their father for who he was. They both wanted something from him. The first wanted the inheritance money; the second wanted the prideful recognition of being the responsible one. Keller says "This means that you can rebel against God and be alienated from Him either by breaking His rules *or* by keeping all of them diligently." Huh? What? You can be alienated by God for keeping the rules? That makes no sense. Aren't we suppose to keep the Commandments and love them? Aren't we supposed to be Holy as the Father is Holy?

I am leading multiple Bible study's. One is going through Galatians and another Romans. In Galatians, Paul is arguing to the people in Galatia to hold onto the Gospel that He preached, for it was not a gospel made by man but a gospel given to him by the revelation of Jesus Christ. He makes mention of Judaizers who are trying to infiltrate the church with Jewish customs, specifically in regard to circumcision and food laws from the mosaic covenant. Paul is vehement that keeping the law does not make one justified before God. It is faith alone in Jesus Christ that makes one acceptable to God. It is faith alone.

In Romans, Paul is speaking to the church in Rome and is building a case for Christ. Part of the case he is building is one in which Abraham, who represents Jewish identity, is not "reckoned righteous before God" by works but by faith. We are not righteous before God by our actions or lack thereof, we are made righteous before God by Christ's actions.

So Keller is correct. We actually can be like Paul, so self-righteous that we are distant from our loving Father; so conceited in our being good that we forget that everything that we have is the Father's to begin with; so aware of our value on the earth, so assured of our right choices, our listening and doing what the father asks that we become **selfish in our obedience**. We, like the elder brother, are not willing to join the feast. We, like the elder brother, are unwilling to praise the Father for the love of the younger son. We, like the elder brother, are pompous in our self image. Then the Father reminds us that everything He has ever had has been ours all along and we are confronted by His amazing grace.

The Rev. Keith Pozzuto