

Forgiveness and the Unmerciful Servant

Matthew 13:34 *“All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them.”*

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Matthew 18:21-35 *“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? 22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. 23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. 24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. 28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. 29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. 32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? 34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. 35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”*

This parable provides a great lesson on the subject of *forgiveness*. The forgiveness taught here is the forgiveness of God toward man as well as the forgiveness of man toward man. Strife among brethren

began in the first family as Cain slew his brother Abel. Strife can become an offense. If an offense is not addressed before the heavenly Father, it becomes a stumbling block in the path of righteousness.

Forgiveness is an issue many struggle with. The Lord had quite a few things to say in his teaching about forgiveness. The Lord's Prayer, which we all subscribe to, deals in length with forgiveness. It is certainly *not* human nature to forgive. Yet, it *is* God's nature to forgive or no man would have hope. *You got introduced to God by forgiveness. Forgiveness is the very reason I know God!*

Peter opened the door for this parable spoken by Christ by asking the Lord a question. Peter knows he must forgive his brethren, for Christ taught him to do so in Matthew 6:14,15. Peter just wants to know how *many* times he is required to forgive a brother who wrongs him. Peter feels seven times is good enough, but he thought it good if he got the Lord's opinion. It is, by the way, important what the Lord thinks. I doubt Peter is prepared for the answer the Lord is about to give. The Lord replies "seventy times seven," that is, 490 times. This amounts to once a week for nine years! Or, once a month for 41 years! This is an astronomical number, or, shall we say, a heavenly number. Forgiveness is next to God! The number 490 is so large the lesson we are to take from it is that we are not to keep count of how often our brother injures us- just forgive him. We will learn also that forgiving 490 times is a *lifetime* of forgiveness. In fact, 490 implies that forgiveness is a constant act.

Forgive means to *forth-give* or to *put away* or *give up*. Few people, saved or unsaved, ever know the true meaning of forgiveness. We may forgive in word, but not in heart. We may forgive in word, but not in our mind. To forgive is to forget. If you say "I forgave him for doing me wrong, but I will never forget what he did" you have not forgiven in the manner the Bible teaches.

To answer Peter further, the Lord begins in verse 23 to speak the parable of the "certain king" and "his servants." First things first, verse 23 clarifies for us that the king keeps records, or "account," of his servants. God keeps track of His children. If you didn't want God involved in your business, you shouldn't have gotten saved. If you didn't want God to track your church attendance, you shouldn't

have gotten saved. If you didn't want God to track your giving of tithes and offerings, you shouldn't have asked Him into your life as your king. Kings have the right to, and do, keep records on their servants. Employers keep records on their employees. We have no problem with that, but we don't want God involved in our business! Get real; wake up! Furthermore, the first thing an awakened Christian asks is "how much do I owe my Lord?" When revival comes, Christians everywhere ask "what do I owe Jesus? I have been asleep in my Christian service and I know I am behind to my Lord."

In his examination of the records, the king found one servant who owed 10,000 talents. This is a fabulous sum. Consider this debt. The talent is a measure of weight. If the talent were silver, by *Roman* calculation, 10,000 talents would mean three million dollars. This is the *human* estimate of the sin debt. If the talent were silver and measured by *Jewish* calculation, the equivalent sum would be about ten million dollars. This would be the calculation of the man's sin debt by the *Jewish law*. If, on the other hand, the talent were gold, the sum would be 150 million dollars. This would be the *Divine* measure of the sin debt. Such a colossal sum! Such was my sin debt before God. In fact, this sum is so large it can never be paid. Nothing short of Christ's blood can resolve a debt of sin. Psalm 40:12 reminds us our iniquities outnumber the hairs of our head. Wow!

In verse 24, the servant with the astronomical debt is brought before the king to give account. What shall he do? He, of course, is what is called *insolvent*. In other words, he is so greatly in debt there is no solution to paying what he owes. He is bankrupt. The king decrees that the servant, the servant's wife, his children, and all that he has be sold and "payment be made." *Sin will wipe you out*. The wages of sin are harsh. This servant could only have accumulated such a debt by wastefulness, that is, sin. The price of the servant, his wife, his children, and his possessions could only make one "payment" and could not pay the debt. Again, nothing but the blood of Christ can settle a sin account before God. Praise God for the blood.

So, in verse 26, the servant, likely in the fashion of a whipped puppy, came before the master. Destitute, insolvent, and bankrupt, he can only plead for mercy before the king. The servant knows that

selling himself, his wife, his children, and all he has will *not* satisfy the debt. So, he asks for some mercy in the form of more time by saying *“have patience with me.”* The king knows more time will do him no good, for the sin debt is too large.

Therefore, the only solution to this debt is to forgive it. In other words, forget it. It is too large to ever be paid. What would you have done had you been king? How long have you held a grudge against a fellow man, refusing to forgive him? In one utterance, as was spoken in John 8:11, the debt was forgiven. John 8:11 says *“She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”* Again, forgive means *forth-give*. Forgiveness means the issue is gone. It will not be brought up again. God places our sin behind his back never to be remembered. Can we, as so-called Christians, do this in regard to forgiving someone who transgresses us?

Despite the glory of verse 27, verse 28 brings us to a time of sadness. The forgiven servant is faced with an opportunity to forgive as he has been forgiven, and he fails to do so! Shame on him! Amazing. He did not practice Ephesians 4:32 *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”* We want to be forgiven for our wrong, but we will not forgive fellow man. With such God is not pleased.

The forgiven servant found another servant who owed him 100 pence, verse 28. This is a very small amount. By one Bible scholar's estimation, this sum is about twelve to fifteen dollars. He grabbed his debtor by the throat and demanded payment. Yet, he just came from a throne of grace where the king forgave him. He just had a 150 million dollar debt forgiven! Yet, he won't forgive a man 15 dollar debt? In verses 29 and 30, the debtor fell at the feet of the one he owed and uttered the same words the forgiven servant had uttered before the king- *“have patience with me and I will pay thee all.”* Yes, amazingly, he uttered the same words as the forgiven man had spoken to his lord. He refused to forgive him, for verse 30 says *“and he would not.”* This is sad.

In whatever way man wrongs you in this life, it is 12 dollars compared to the 150 million dollars of wrong you did to God. Now,

let us ask, why can't we forgive men? If God treated our debt as we treat others in debt to us, we would be in a state of eternal ruin.

In verse 31, we find that word of how he treated his fellow-servant reached his lord. "*Be sure your sins will find you out*" Numbers 32:23. When you fail to forgive fellow man, it becomes an issue with God, the king. Why shouldn't it? Where would we be if He had not forgiven us? Let me repeat- the matter of forgiving one another is a matter God always gets involved in. He does not care whether or not you catch a fish when you go fishing, but He cares about the matter of forgiveness. This is one issue He involves Himself in.

In verses 32 and 33, the forgiven servant is called into account. His lord sent for him. He reminds him of what he did for him in forgiving him the massive debt. People who are filled with grudges have no vision of Calvary. They have forgotten what Jesus did 2000 years ago on the Cross. The king delivered him to be tormented. The most miserable person in the world just may be a Christian who has failed to forgive fellowman. They cannot have peace and joy in their soul. Failure to forgive someone will eat you like a cancer and it should. Are you miserable? It may be because you failed to forgive someone.

In verse 35, Christ speaks to us. He says our joy will be withdrawn unless we forgive our brother's trespasses. We are to forgive both the large and the small. We are to forgive even those who don't ask for forgiveness. We are to forgive him even 490 times!

Facts about forgiveness:

- *We are required to forgive those who wrong us because Christ forgave *us* our wrong.
- *No one will ever offend you as much as your sin offended Holy God.
- *You can never be a happy Christian with ought in your heart against fellow man; you may be tormented.
- *We are to forgive not once, but 490 times which is a lifetime of forgiveness.