

Matthew 18:21-35 - The King's Forgiveness!

Scriptures:

21 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord,

how often shall my brother sin against me,

G264 – 'to act or
intend contrary to
the will and law
of God'

and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

G863 – pardon,
cancel a debt, -
"to forgive v. —
to stop blaming
or taking an
offense into
account."

Notes:

The previous text dealt with the need to be reconciled to those who have sinned against us. Peter then asks a logical question, 'Is there a limit to how often we should work for reconciliation?'

'my brother' = My fellow believer in Christ. Once someone is saved, they don't stop being a sinner. They are a sinner saved by grace, but they still sin. Becoming a Christian doesn't make us sinless, but we should sin less than we used to.

And because we are all sinners, we may sin against each other. This text will help us to know what to do so that we can be reconciled back to that other believer.

Some of the rabbis taught that you only had to forgive someone three times. This is based on some verses in Amos that showed God would not forgive the wicked nations because they had sinned four times. It is not a very convincing argument.

Peter recognizes that Jesus doesn't always go along with the interpretation of the religious people. He might be imagining that if they say three, then seven must be closer to what Jesus would say. As usual, Peter, though well-intentioned, misses the mark.

Scriptures:

Luke 17:3-4 - Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. 4 And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him.

Romans 13:8 - Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up

to seven times, but up to seventy times

seven.

Notes:

'up to seventy times seven' = Up to 490 times. It would be virtually impossible to keep track of 490 times that someone sins against you. That is the point – don't keep track.

ESV translates as 'seventy-seven times.'

The previous section dealt with unrepentant sinners. This one deals with believers who have sinned against another believer and repents ([Luke 17:3-4](#)).

When dealing with believers, God's goal is always reconciliation. Disunity in the body of Christ is sin, whether it be in a marriage, family, or church.

Don't doesn't count or keep track of our sin that we have repented for – they were taken by Christ on the cross.

Forgiveness is an expression of love. If we truly love, we will forgive and keep on forgiving ([Romans 13:8](#)).

"A man in Christ never reaches the limits of love." (Augsburger, 1982)

Scriptures:
Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a

certain king who wanted to settle accounts

G4868 – ‘to settle accounts v. — to clear financial obligations (whether owed or due).’

G3056 – ‘account n. — an itemized statement of money owed for goods shipped or services rendered.’

with his servants.

Notes:
This is a parable. We are not to take it too literally. Every important detail is exaggerated.

The king is God the Father.

‘settle accounts’ – All sin incurs a debt, first and primarily with God, but also with whoever that sin is against. The problem is that the only acceptable payment for sin is our life (Romans 6:23).

Scriptures:

24 And when he had begun to settle accounts,

one was brought to him who owed him

ten thousand talents.

G3463 - μύριοι (myrioi) – ‘ten thousand (myriad) adjs. — denoting a quantity consisting of 10,000 items or units; often used hyperbolically as of an incalculably large number.’

G5007 - a talent of money (of silver valued at 6,000 day’s wage; gold 180,000 day’s wages).

Notes:
‘ten thousand talents’ – Jesus is using hyperbole to make a point.

Hyperbole: exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally.

‘ten thousand talents’ = \$13.2 billion. Average salary in the US is \$57,448 per year. That equals \$221 per day. Each talent equals 6,000 days labor which equals \$1.3 million per talent. Ten thousand talents would bring it to \$13.2 billion. This would be much higher if they were talents of gold.

The servant owes the debt – in essence he is guilty.

This servant is each one of us. The debt we owed God because of our sin is greater than anything we could ever hope to pay in a thousand lifetimes.

Scriptures:

25 But as he was not able to pay, his master

Notes:

The consequence of not being able to pay this impossible debt is judgment.

commanded that he be sold, with his wife

and children and all that he had, and that

payment be made.

Scriptures:

26 The servant therefore fell down before him,

Notes:

It is unlikely this servant could ever pay back such a debt.

saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I

G3114 - exhibit internal and external control in difficult circumstance, long-suffering'

will pay you all.'

Scriptures:
John 8:36 - Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

27 Then the master of that servant

was moved with compassion, released him,

G4697 – 'have pity on, have one's heart go out to someone'

and forgave him the debt.

G863 – 'cancel a debt'

G1156 -

Notes:

This is completely unreasonable. Not only does the king set him free, but he also cancels this enormous debt.

The servant could never have paid the debt but seems to have been sincere in his desire to make it right with the king.

If someone is a believer in Christ, there was a moment when we realized that we owed a debt to God for our sin that we could never repay. When we humble ourselves before Him and ask for His mercy, God expresses His amazing grace and forgives us completely. We go from owing more that we ever could repay to owing nothing. We go from being in bondage to our sins to being free (John 8:36).

The glory of the gospel is that every human owes God a debt they can never repay. If they confess that debt to God and ask for His mercy, He gives it. Man's impossible debt plus God's amazing grace equals freedom. And that freedom is glorious ().

Even though the king is innocent in this matter, he takes the loss. The innocent paying the debt of the guilty. This is a picture of Christ on the cross. He was the innocent One who paid our debt.

Scriptures:

28 "But that servant ^{\$\$\$07} went out and found one ^{\$07}

of his fellow servants who owed him ^{\$\$\$07}

a hundred denarii; ^{\$} and he laid hands on him ^{\$\$\$07}

G1540 -

G1220 – 'about a common laborer's wage for one long day's work'

and took *him* by the throat, saying, 'Pay me ^{\$\$\$07}

what you owe! ^{\$07}

Notes:

Now the scene changes from the gracious king to the forgiven servant. We are that forgiven servant. How should we act toward God's other servants? As people who have experienced God's mercy, how much mercy should we give to others?

It might be hard for us to imagine this actually happening. Remember, everything is exaggerated in this parable.

'one hundred denarii' = \$22k. This is not an insignificant amount of money, but compared to what he was forgiven, it is a tiny amount.

\$13 billion - \$22 thousand. Equals about 0.000002%.

Scriptures:

29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet

Notes:

Fellow servant did exactly what he had done with the master and begged for mercy.

and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with

G3114 -

me, and I will pay you all.'

Scriptures:

Micah 6:8 -

He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?

Luke 6:36 - Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

30 And he would not, but went and threw him

Notes:

This is an immensely wicked act, especially after the grace he has received. This is the opposite of how we should act (Micah 6:8; Luke 6:36).

into prison till he should pay the debt.

Scriptures:

31 So when his fellow servants saw what had

Notes:

been done, they were very grieved, and came

G4970 -

G3076 -

and told their master all that had been done.

Scriptures:

32 Then his master, after he had called him,

Notes:

said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave

G4190 – evil,
morally bad or
wrong.

you all that debt because you begged me.

Scriptures:
Ephesians 4:32 - And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

33 Should you not also have had compassion

G1653 – shown mercy.

Notes:
As forgiven people we should be quick to forgive and in the same manner that God forgave us (Ephesians 4:32).

on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on

G1653 – showed mercy.

you?'

Scriptures:

34 And his master was angry, and delivered

G3710 – enraged.

Notes:
Someone who understands God's gracious forgiveness and refuses to forgive others is worse than an unbeliever. It also calls into question if they are saved at all. Forgiven people forgive. To not do so, will incur God's anger.

him to the torturers until he should pay all

G930 - torturer-jailer n. — a prison guard who inflicts severe physical pain; usually for punishment or coercion.'

'should pay all that was due to him' – What was 'due to him'? Show compassion and forgive. The only way to be free is to forgive that person who sinned against you.

that was due to him.

Scriptures:

35 "So My heavenly Father also will do to you

Notes:

Unforgiveness is a prison we build for ourselves. The prison guard is our rebellion against God. If we refuse to forgive, we are choosing to be tortured in that self-made prison for the rest of our lives.

'from his heart' – This is a heart issue. If we are unwilling to forgive it is because there is something wrong in our heart.

if each of you, from his heart, does not

forgive his brother his trespasses."

G3900 – 'transgression n.
– the action of going
beyond or overstepping
some moral boundary or
limit.'

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