

# FORGIVENESS

Matt 18:23

This topic is one of the most misunderstood and misused words in scripture. Leonardo da Vinci was one of the most greatest intellects of all history. He was great as a draftsman, an engineer, and a thinker and painter. Just before he commenced work on his "last Supper," he had a violent quarrel with a fellow painter. So enraged and bitter was da Vinci that he determined to paint the face of his enemy, the other artist, into the face of Judas -- thus being able to take revenge for succeeding generations. The face of Judas was therefore one of the first he painted, and it was easily recognized as the face of his enemy. But when he came to paint the face of Jesus, he had a problem. Something prevented him from painting the face of Jesus. After some searching of his own heart, he determined what was holding him back was that he painted his enemy's face on Judas. So, he painted out the face of Judas and began anew on the face of Jesus and this time the success he had has been recognized through the ages. Folks, we can't paint the face of Jesus in our own life while we are painting others with hostility and hatred.

One reason why Forgiveness is such a great topic is - **we all need it:**

*"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;"* Rom 3:23.

Jesus died for all: *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man"* Heb 2:9.

It baffles many because to forgive others requires humility on our part:

*"For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* Matthew 6:14-15.

*"And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."* Mark 11:25-26.

Matthew 18:21-35 contains a great parable about forgiveness. The context deals with problems among brethren. Verses 15-20 deals with when a brother sins against us as individuals. In order to make this a peaceful situation, as we discussed this morning, I am commanded by God to go to my brother and deal with the problem. Matthew 18:3-4 tells us the attitude we should possess as we do this: ***“Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*** **Maintain a proper attitude.**

After Jesus had taught that brethren are to work out their problems and then forgive one another, Peter asks the important question: ***“Then Peter came up and said to him, ‘Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.’”*** **Mt 18:21-22.**

#### **UNLIMITED FORGIVENESS SHOWN BY KING (23-27)**

An accounting is required ***“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.”*** **(Matthew 18:23).**

Here the word “Servant” is -- probably a high-ranking official who had charge of great sums of money which would pass through their hands, hence the great debt which is owed. The accounting could be from time to time (26). If it refers to the end of time, it would be natural that the accounting would consider all the times he had to forgive others.

Notice the attitude of humility expressed by the servant who could not pay the debt: ***“So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything’”***. Matt 18:26. This goes back to the picture of a child (3-4). This servant realized that he owed a debt; He could not pay the debt; He had to be willing to pay all the debt, that is, dedicate his life to the king. The debt we owe the King today can only be met with the blood of Christ:

Amount of debt forgiven was unlimited -- that is, a debt which could not be paid by the person and only the grace of the King allowed it to be paid. The fact that the king forgave does not mean the servant earned it. The servant did have to do something to receive the forgiveness of the debt - dedicate his life to the King in order to pay it. The amount was forgiven because of the compassion of the King.

## **LIMITED FORGIVENESS OF THE SERVANT** (28-33)

Purpose of the forgiven servant was to find someone who owed him and not forgive him: *“But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, Pay what you owe”*. Mt 18:28.

While the remembrance of the debt just forgiven him was fresh on his mind – the servant went out and found someone who owed him. Notice he went for the throat - "to use strength, to seize or retain by the throat, to wheeze, to throttle or strangle, to choke". This shows the opposite of the compassion just shown to him by the King. The position which the second servant assumed was the same as what the first servant had assumed earlier: *“So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you’*”. Matthew 18:29.

To be one who truly forgives I must have: **Remembrance** of my own forgiveness; my own **Repentance** is also a key part; **Renewal** of my attitude is also important. The first servant should have remembered all these as he dealt with the second servant. Proportion of debt was limited - which means it could have been paid. First debt was about 2-10 million; Second was about \$20; Second debt was one which could have been repaid and thus should have easily been forgiven by the first servant.

## **LESSONS WE LEARN FROM THE PARABLE**

We are to forgive because we have been forgiven: Think of the debt we owed to Christ;

Think of the compassion God had on us in forgiving us; Think of how loving and forgiving we want God to be with us. If we are unforgiving, we are mean and wicked: *“Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me’”*. Matthew 18:32. If we are unforgiving, we are on our way to torment: *“And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt”*. (Matthew 18:34).

Tormentors- Thayer's “One who obtains the truth using a rack...” It is used here to mean an officer who used strong pressure to force the debtor into the acknowledgment of his debt and to take some action necessary to meet it. How long would he be with these people? Eternity because he would never on his own be able to pay the debt. Likewise, if we do not forgive our brethren then we will not be forgiven by the King and we will not be able to escape the torment because we cannot repay the debt of sin apart from the blood of Christ.

## **THE MAGNITUDE OF GOD'S MERCY IS ALSO THE MEASURE OF HIS WRATH**

We should find it easier to forgive when we consider how much we have been forgiven. How can we even think about approaching Christ in judgment hoping for heaven when we hold grudges and hard feelings in this life over matters which are so much less than our sins before our God. Gratitude should cause us to be able to humble ourselves and forgive our brethren and forget what has happened.

Why are we unforgiving *But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe’*. Mt 18:28.

The servant went out: He went out from the presence of the King, **forgetting the mercy the King had shown him**. It is because we go out in this life forgetting what God has done for us. That places us in a position to be like the unmerciful servant.

Lack of compassion is another root cause of being unforgiving: ***“And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?”*** (Matthew 18:33).

We are to forgive from our hearts: ***“So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”*** (Matthew 18:35).

We may say "I forgive you" but if we do not truly mean it from our hearts, we will still be lost. When we forgive from our hearts we will not bring it up again. We may not be able to completely forget it, but we should never make it an issue again. We are to forgive as our Father forgave. We should strive to be like God in everything including forgiveness. We are love our enemies as God does: ***“so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”*** (Matthew 5:45).

## CONCLUSION

***Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*** Ephesians 4:32.

***bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*** Colossians 3:13.

Do we harbor any hard feelings toward others? If we do, we had better get rid of them before judgment. Jesus tells us how we can best get ourselves right in God's sight in dealing with our sinning brother. In Luke 17:3-4 Jesus says,

***Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.***