

## The Parables of Our Lord

### The Parable of “The Unforgiving Servant” - Matthew 18:21-35

Wednesday August 3rd, 2022

[Update on Pastor Dale and Denise]

By way of reminder:

- Jesus was the greatest teacher who ever lived
- The crowds were astonished by the way He taught
- He used parables
  - Only used by Jesus in the NT
  - Rare in the OT (Nathan the Prophet & King David is one example)
- Parable means “to throw something alongside something else” ie, a comparison thrown alongside a truth
- Jesus used parables to reveal deeper truths to those who have been given understanding but used them in judgment against those who had not been given understanding.
- Main theme of most parables was the Kingdom of God (or Kingdom of Heaven)
- We never interpret parables allegorically
  - Look for a single, clear main point in a given parable (though there are sometimes exceptions)

Tonight we are looking at the parable called the Parable of The Unforgiving Servant. Read Matthew 18:21-35.

Context always matters and the context of this parable is no different in that sense; it's crucial. This parable is found in the same part of Matthew where we find instructions on what happens when a brother offends you ("church discipline"). Let's go back and read verse 15 to see the wider context: Read Matthew 18:15-20.

"If your brother sins against you, go and confront him **ALONE**". If the brother repents, you have won your brother. If he refuses, then you go with one or two others as witnesses. If they still refuse to repent, then you go and bring it before the church. And if they still refuse to repent after all of that, then they are to be to you as a Gentile or a tax collector or in other words "one outside the faith or one who has turned his back on God". This is known as "excommunication" ie, the official or formal act of prohibiting one from any further participation in the services or activities or fellowship of the church. But there can only be one sin which could warrant such an action: the stubborn refusal to repent.

THIS is the context in which Peter is asking Jesus the question (HOW MANY TIMES AM I TO FORGIVE MY BROTHER? How many times do I have to do this? Seven times?). And Jesus responds "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times". That's a very heavy statement. Because when God forgives us, He holds that sin against us NO MORE. So if we TRULY grant forgiveness to someone who has sinned against us, what we are really saying is "I hold this against you no more".

To highlight His point a bit more, Jesus "throws" this parable alongside it. "[23] *Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. [24] When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.*". Try to get a sense for the size of this amount. A "talent" was the highest monetary unit in those days. It represented a measurement of weight for gold and silver weighing around 75 pounds.

So, just ONE talent was an unbelievably large amount of money. ONE TALENT was worth 60,000 denarii. And one single denarii was worth one whole day's wages. So ONE TALENT represented 60,000 full day's wages. How much did this servant owe the king? 10,000 TALENTS - 60,000,000 day's worth of wages. If you were to break down what a day's wages were - even if you were being conservative - you can now begin to see the enormity of this debt. It was impossibly large.

And Jesus compares US to debtors like THAT. He is saying that we are debtors who cannot possibly pay our debt. We owe too much and are indebted to God every single time we break His law. And my debt to Him is GREATER than the debt of this servant. My debt to God is effectively INFINITE. It's the reason why it's so stupid to think that we can work our way out of our debt to Him. And that's all of us. We are all in that position - being debtors who cannot pay what we owe.

The only thing this servant could do was beg that the king would give him more time to make up for what he owed. But how foolish is that? He was a debtor who couldn't possibly pay and he didn't even realize the overwhelming nature of his debt. But he knew he required the grace and mercy of the king. In Verse 25, *"[25] And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. [26] So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' [27] And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt."* The king's compassion and mercy was so incredible that he actually absolved this servant altogether.

[Story About My Miracle On 34th Street?]

But upon leaving the presence of the king, he sees another servant that owed him 100 denariis. A joke of a sum compared to what he owed the king, right? *[28] 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.'* *[29] So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'* It's interesting that Jesus chooses the same words that the first servant had used with the king: "Have patience with me. I'll pay you".

*"[30] He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt."* An act of total ingratitude; a failure to pay forward even a TINY amount of the same mercy and compassion that the first servant received from the king.

And the other servants witnessed this. *"[31] When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. [32] Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. [33] And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' [34] And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt."* Think about the grace of God because this parable SHOULD get us to SEE God's grace every single moment of our lives.

Jesus says, *"[35] So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."* There is much debate and a lot of discussion about the question of forgiveness among us as Christians. Some would say that we are only to grant forgiveness when one asks for it. Others would say that we are to forgive even when somebody DOESN'T ask for it and who DOESN'T repent. I myself am in that latter camp.

But there is **NO DEBATE** about when we **ARE** to forgive, when it's in the case of a brother or sister **repenting** and asking for forgiveness. In **THAT** case, you **MUST** forgive the person. We have to be ready to forgive a person's offenses if they **should they repent of that sin.**

Whenever we offend someone, whenever we sin against a brother or sister, we are called to repent and to apologize and ask forgiveness. But likewise, if someone offends us and they come and apologize and ask forgiveness, then we have to be ready with the **same compassion** that was demonstrated by this king who forgave his servant of this overwhelming debt that he couldn't possibly pay. The Christian **MUST** be a possessor of a forgiving spirit. The application Jesus gives comes directly from the Lord's Prayer: "*...and forgive us our debts as we have also forgiven our debtors* (Matt 6:12)". Make no mistake, if we are not willing to forgive those who have sinned against us, then we should not ever expect God to forgive us when we sin against Him. But since forgiveness is at the very heart of the Christian faith, then we of all people, should be known as forgiving people.