

# ***FORGIVENESS***

(Matt 18:23ff)

## **INTRODUCTION:**

1. One of the most beautiful and yet one of the most baffling for many people is the subject of forgiveness:
  - Leonardo da Vinci was one of the most outstanding intellects of all history, for he was great as a draftsman, an engineer, and a thinker.
    - Just before he commenced work on his "last Supper," he had a violent quarrel with a fellow painter.
    - So enraged and bitter was Leonardo 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 seemed to be baffling him.
    - After a long soul search he determined that which was holding him back was the fact that he painted his enemy's face on Judas.
    - He therefore 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.
    - >>**We cannot at one and the same time be painting the features of Christ into our own life and painting another with the colors of enmity and hatred...**C.E. Macartney (pg.458).
2. One reason why it is such a beautiful subject is because we all stand in need of it:
  - a. *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Romans 3:23).*
  - b. 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 honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9).*
3. It is baffling to many because to forgive others requires humility on our part:
  - a. *"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15).*
  - b. *"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:25-26).*
4. Matthew 18:21-35 contains a great parable on the subject of forgiveness:
  - a. The context: Chapter 18 deals with problems among brethren
  - b. Particular: 18:15-20 deals with when a brother sins against us
  - c. *We must maintain the proper attitude: "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3-4).*
  - d. After Jesus had taught that brethren are to work out their problems and then forgive one another, Peter asks the important question: *"Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22).*

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

- A. An accounting is required (23): *"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants" (Matthew 18:23).*
  1. Servant -- probably a high-ranking official who had charge of great sums of money. Immense sums of money would pass through their hands -- hence the great debt which is owed.
  2. 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 take into account the times he had to forgive others.

- B. Attitude of humility expressed by the servant who could not pay the debt: ***"The servant therefore fell down, and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all" (Matt 18:26).***
  - 1. This goes back to the picture of a child (3,4).
  - 2. Servant had to realize:
    - a. He owed a debt
    - b. He could not pay the debt
    - c. He had to be willing to pay all the debt, that is, dedicate his life to the king.
  - 3. The debt we owe the King today must be met with the blood of Christ: Plan of salvation:
- C. 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.
  - 1. The fact that the king forgave does not mean the servant earned it.
  - 2. 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.
  - 3. The amount was forgiven because of the compassion of the King.

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

- A. Purpose of the forgiven servant was to find someone who owed him and not forgive him: ***"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" (Matthew 18:28).***
  - 1. While the remembrance of the debt just forgiven him was fresh on his mind -- went out and found someone who owed him.
  - 2. Notice he went for the throat - "to use strength, to seize or retain by the throat, to wheeze, to throttle or strangle, to choke"
  - 3. This shows the opposite of the compassion shown to him by the King.
- B. Position which the second servant assumed was the same as the first servant had assumed earlier: ***"And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all" (Matthew 18:29).***
  - 1. Remembrance is a key part of forgiveness
  - 2. Repentance is also a key part
  - 3. Renewal of attitude is also important
  - 4. The first servant should have remembered all these as he dealt with the second servant.
- C. Proportion of debt was limited - which means it could have been paid.
  - 1. First debt was about 2-10 million
  - 2. Second was about \$20
  - 3. Second debt was one which could have been repaid and thus should have been forgiven by the first servant.

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

- A. We are to forgive because we have been forgiven:
  - 1. Think of the debt we owed to Christ
  - 2. Think of the compassion God had on us in forgiving us
  - 3. Think of how loving and forgiving we want God to be with us
- B. If we are unforgiving we are mean and wicked: ***"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:" (Matthew 18:32).***
  - 1. We usually have a good reason in our minds as to why we do not have to forgive or why we are justified in not forgiving someone
  - 2. We would not usually think of ourselves as wicked if we would not forgive

- C. If we are unforgiving we are on our way to torments: ***"And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him" (Matthew 18:34).***
1. Tormentors-" a torturer," [Thayer's]--"One who obtains the truth by the use of a rack..."
  2. It is used here to mean an officer who uses strong pressure to force the debtor into the acknowledgment of his debt and to take some action necessary to meet it.
  3. How long would he be with these people? Eternity because he would never on his own be able to pay the debt.
  4. 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 can not repay the debt of sin apart from the blood of Christ.
  5. [Pulpit]-**THE MAGNITUDE OF GOD'S MERCY IS ALSO THE MEASURE OF HIS WRATH**
- D. We should find it easier to forgive when we consider how much we have been forgiven:
1. 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.
  2. Gratitude should cause us to be able to humble ourselves and forgive our brethren and forget (not bring up the actions) what has happened.
- E. We learn why we are unforgiving if we are: ***"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" (Matthew 18:28).***
1. The servant went out: He went out from the presence of the King, forgetting the mercy shown unto him.
  2. 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.
- F. Lack of compassion is another root cause of unforgiving: ***"Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?" (Matthew 18:33).***
- G. We are to forgive from our hearts: ***"So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matthew 18:35).***
1. We may say "I forgive you" but if we do not truly mean it from our hearts, we will still be lost.
  2. 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.
- H. We are to forgive as our Father forgave:
1. We should strive to be like God in everything including forgiveness.
  2. We are to love our enemies as God does: ***"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).***

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. ***"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).***
2. ***"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also [do] ye" (Colossians 3:13).***
3. Do we harbor any hard feelings toward others? If we do we had better get rid of them before judgment.
4. ***"Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" (Luke 17:3). "And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:4).***