

FORGIVENESS

Don Krow

Today we're going to look at the subject of forgiveness from Matthew 18:21-22: "Then came Peter to him [Jesus], 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." I think Peter thought he was being very generous to ask how many times he should forgive someone who sinned against him, "seven times in a day do you think?" Jesus said, "Peter, not seven but seventy times seven." That's 490 times, but it doesn't mean that after 490 times you don't have to forgive. What Jesus said was an impossible number of offenses that would happen to an individual in a day. He was saying forgiveness should be continual, that it should go on and on. Forgiveness should be the real attitude of a Christian. Jesus said in Luke 23:34, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." And also Stephen the martyr, in Acts 7:60 said, "Lay not this sin to their charge." Not all people will receive forgiveness, but the attitude in the heart of a Christian should be always to offer it.

Jesus tells a parable about forgiveness when he continues in verse 23, "Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of [make a reckoning with] his servants, And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. [The Living Bible says that is like ten million dollars.] 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. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." Now here's the situation: There is a man who actually owes ten million dollars to his master. There is no way he can pay it—he knows he can't and the master knows he can't. In those days you couldn't claim bankruptcy like you can in United States—they'd sell you, your wife, your children, and everything you had, and you'd go into slavery. You would be sent to prison until everything was paid, and if it never was, you'd stay in prison all your life. This man did the only thing he knew to do: he got down on his knees and cried for mercy, "Oh, master, please be patient with me! Please, I beg you. I'll repay you everything, just be patient!" Notice what happened in verse 27. It says the master was moved with compassion for him, and he forgave him his debt.

We had a debt we could not pay. The Bible says (Romans 3:23) that the wages of sin was death—separation from God for eternity—all the silver and gold in the world couldn't redeem us. Then God in His compassion and in His grace sent His son Jesus Christ to earth to pay the debt we couldn't pay. God looked upon us in His compassion and mercy and said, "I forgive you that debt."

This man who had just been forgiven ten million dollars was owed something like twenty dollars by a fellowservant. He found him and said, "I've just been forgiven ten million dollars, and what is twenty dollars to me? I want you to be as free as I am! Just let it go, it's okay, for I've been forgiven ten million dollars!" That is what should have happened, but it didn't. Let's read what really happened in verses 28-31. "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 what thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told

unto their lord all that was done.” He threw that man into prison for twenty dollars after he’d just been forgiven ten million dollars! Can you imagine that?

Verses 32-34 say, “Then his lord, after he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.” This man was then thrown into prison because of the way he treated his fellow servant, and thus forfeited his original forgiveness. Jesus said in verse 35, “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” Isn’t it foolish, having been forgiven all our sin—the wages of which are death and separation from God for eternity—to refuse to forgive? We beseech God saying, “Forgive me and have mercy on me through Jesus Christ,” receive forgiveness, and then turn and refuse to forgive someone else for a little thing we think is so big—after having received forgiveness for all the things we’ve done. God’s says that’s wickedness.

I pastored a church awhile back, and there was a young woman in the congregation who was able to see things in the future. She came to me one day and said, “Is it the Holy Spirit telling me things to come, and showing me things in the future? I know when people are going to die and when someone is going to have a car wreck, and things like that.” I said, “You won’t like my answer, but I don’t believe that’s the Holy Spirit. I think it’s a spirit of divination, the same spirit that followed the Apostle Paul around in Acts 16. He finally rebuked it and commanded it to come out of that girl and she lost her ability to tell fortunes.” I went on to tell her that I wasn’t God, and said, “I want you to go to Jesus and ask Him, ‘Lord, what is telling me things and giving me information, even before I was saved, is it your Holy Spirit, or is it something else?’” She came back to me one day and said, “I talked to the Lord about it, and I think it’s alright.” I said, “Whatever the Lord says is alright—I’m not the Great Shepherd.”

This was in early 1986, and do you know what happened in 1986? We had a space shuttle called the Challenger, and eight people went up in it. One of them was a woman schoolteacher. As this young lady was watching television, she saw the woman saying, “Tomorrow I’m going up in the Challenger,” and talking about it. A spirit spoke to her and said, “She’s going to die, she’s going to die.” The next day when the Challenger was launched, it blew up as the whole world watched, and all of the crew perished. The young lady came back to me and said, “Brother Don, I think what’s talking to me and giving me information may not be the Holy Spirit. Would you pray for me?”

Following the service that night, after everyone left, I took her by the hand and said, “You unclean spirit of divination, come out of her!” Nothing happened. Jesus’ disciples tried to cast an unclean spirit out of young man once and couldn’t do it, and Jesus said, “Bring him to me.” So I said, “Lord, I thought I knew what was going on here, but I bring this lady to you. Show us what’s going on.” My wife was praying with us and God gave her a word of knowledge. She said, “It has something to do with her mother.” I said to the woman, “Will you forgive your mother?” The moment I said that, a voice screamed out of her, “NO! She gave me away!” Then I said, “I bind you, you unclean spirit,” and asked the woman again if she would forgive her mother. She then forgave and released her mother, and let her go by the grace and help of God. She was able to let go by making the decision to forgive, and then she received her deliverance and freedom.

Just like Jesus said in the parable in Matthew 18, I'm saying that if we do not forgive from our hearts, after we've been forgiven such a great debt by our heavenly Father, we will be delivered into the hands of the tormenters. What are the tormenters? They can be all kinds of things—demonic strongholds; oppression, sickness, depression, disease, and many other things. The root is unforgiveness, not forgiving after we have been forgiven, allows Satan a foothold in our lives. The Bible says we have to make the decision to forgive. In the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-11) Jesus said to forgive as we've been forgiven.

Mark 11:25-26 says that when we pray, if we have anything against anyone, we're to forgive. What does that mean? Unforgiveness should stay in our hearts how long? Only as long as it takes us to go to the Lord and pray. And if we have the slightest bit of unforgiveness against anyone, we should release them and say, "God, I'm letting them go today. I'm forgiving them. I'm making a choice, because You forgave me such a great debt."

Lord, I pray for anyone reading this lesson that has unforgiveness in their life to make a decision right this moment to let that person go, to forgive them whether they are living or dead. I pray they will let it go and let that hurt be healed by your power and your grace today, Lord. I thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

FORGIVENESS (Outline)

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? ²²Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. ²³Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. ²⁴And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵But 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. ²⁶The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ²⁷Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But 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. ²⁹And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ³⁰And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. ³¹So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. ³²Then 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: ³³Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? ³⁴And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. ³⁵So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”

There is an indefinite amount of offenses that a person can experience in one day. Forgiveness should be continuous. It should be the real attitude of a Christian. Luke 23:34, “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.” Also Stephen, the martyr, said in Acts 7:60, “Lay not this sin to their charge” as he was being stoned.

Not all people will receive forgiveness, but the attitude and heart of a Christian should always be to offer forgiveness.

We had a debt that we could not pay. The Bible says that the wages of our sin is death, or separation from God for eternity. All the silver and gold in the world couldn't redeem us. God in His grace and compassion sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the debt we couldn't pay. God looked on us in compassion and said, “I forgive your debt.”

When you make a decision to forgive and let go of the hurt with the help of God, you then can walk in deliverance and freedom.

If we don't forgive others from our hearts, when we've been forgiven so much by God, we'll be delivered to the tormentors. The tormentors can be demonic strongholds, sickness, depression and many other things the root of which is unforgiveness.

Mark 6:12 says, "And they went out, and preached that men should repent." Jesus said in the Lord's prayer to forgive as we've been forgiven. Mark 11:25 says, "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought [anything] against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." If we have the least bit of ought against anyone, we should release him and ask God to help us let that person go and forgive him, because He forgave us such a great debt.

FORGIVENESS (Teacher's Guide)

1. What is Jesus saying in Matthew 18:21-22 about forgiveness?

That forgiveness should be extended to others, with no limits.

2. What does Psalm 103:10-14 show us about God's love in forgiving us?

Because of God's mercy, we do not get what we deserve. As far as the east is from the west, He has removed our sins from us.

3. A. What does Matthew 18:11-14 show us about God's concern for the lost?

He is not willing that any perish.

- B. Why should we forgive others, according to Ephesians 4:32?

Because God, for Christ's sake, forgave us.

- C. What does James 2:13 show us about having mercy towards others?

We will be treated the way we treat others.

4. A. What did Jesus say about forgiving others in Matthew 6:12?

He will forgive our sins, as we forgive those who have sinned against us.

- B. When should you forgive others according to Mark 11:25?

When we pray.

FORGIVENESS (Detailed Teacher's Guide)

Note: The following information may be read out loud (a numbered section at a time) with the person(s) being disciplined. After each numbered section is read, pause and ask the question(s) that correspond to the paragraph(s), and then discuss them.

Read Matthew 18:21-35 (out loud).

¹Peter thought he was being very generous by offering to forgive his brother seven times in one day, but Jesus said he should forgive him 490 times in one day. It would seem impossible to have someone sin against you 490 times in one day. Jesus is actually saying that there should be no limit to our forgiveness.

²Regardless of how many times someone sins, if he repents each time (Luke 17:4), we are supposed to forgive him and confirm our love unto him (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

If God expects us to forgive our brother who has trespassed against us 490 times in one day (actually an unlimited number of times), certainly He who is love (1 John 4:8), will do no less for us.

³The word "therefore" that Jesus begins this parable with in Matthew 18:23, ties this teaching with His previous statement on forgiving (verse 22), and God's compassion for the lost (Matthew 18:12-14).

The main thrust of this parable is that when people wrong us, we should remember God's great mercy that He has shown to us, and respond in kind (Ephesians 4:32). Any debt that could be owed to us is insignificant compared to the debt we have been forgiven. We should have compassion for others as Christ has for us (Colossians 3:13, and James 2:13).

¹ What is Jesus saying in Matthew 18:21-22 about forgiveness?

² What does Psalm 103:10-14 show us about God's love in forgiving us?

³ (a) What does Matthew 18:11-14 show us about God's concern for the lost?

(b) Why should we forgive others, according to Ephesians 4:32?

(c) What does James 2:13 show us about having mercy towards others?

⁴If we fail to forgive others as we have been forgiven, then this parable teaches that we can, once again, become liable for the debt that was forgiven. This could also pertain to a person who has been saved, but renounces his faith, becomes reprobate, and perishes (Hebrews 10:28-29).

It is certain that not every part of this parable can be applied literally because the lord of this servant commanded this man's wife and children to be sold as part of the payment of the debt. It cannot be applied to the spiritual meaning of this parable in light of the scriptures' teaching that every man or woman will receive judgment for his own sins and not another's (Deuteronomy 24:16, 2 Kings 14:6, Jeremiah 31:29-30, and Ezekiel 18:19-32).

Therefore, caution should be used when drawing conclusions from this parable about judgment. The main point is the necessity of forgiving others and the severe consequences if we don't.

⁴(a) What did Jesus say about forgiving others in Matthew 6:12?
(b) When should you forgive others according to Mark 11:25?

FORGIVENESS (Discipleship Questions)

Read Matthew 18:21-22

1. How many times did Peter think that he should forgive?
2. How many times did Jesus say we should forgive?
3. Was that a literal number of times that we should keep track of offenses, or should we just forgive every time someone sins against us?

Read Matthew 18:23-35

4. What did the servant beg for in verse 26?
5. What was the master's feeling towards him?
6. Because of the master's compassion, what did he do for the servant?
7. Right after this servant was forgiven, what did he go out and do?
8. Did he show mercy and compassion for his fellowservant?
9. What happened when the master found out about this?
10. What does Jesus speak to each of us about forgiveness in verse 35?

Read Psalm 103:2-3

11. What is the first benefit we are told not to forget in verse 3?

Read Psalm 130:3-4

12. Why is it that God may be feared in our lives?

Read Ezekiel 18:20-22, 30-32

13. Shall the son bear the sins of the father?
14. What happens when a wicked man turns from his sin?
15. Will any of his transgressions be held against him?

Verse 30-32

- 16. What does God command us to do in verse 30?
- 17. What are we to get in verse 31?
- 18. Does the Lord have pleasure and want any to perish or be lost forever?

Read Matthew 18:11-14

- 19. What has the Son of Man come to save?
- 20. Who does He rejoice over, the 99 who did not stray or the 1 who was lost and then found?
- 21. What is NOT the will of God?

Read Acts 3:19

- 22. What two things must we do to have our sins blotted out [forgiven]?
A. _____ B. _____
- 23. What comes from the presence of the Lord?

Read Acts 13:38

- 24. What is preached through Jesus?

Read Ephesians 1:7

- 25. What do we have through Jesus' blood?
A. _____ B. _____

Read Ephesians 4:31-32

- 26. What are we commanded to "put away" from ourselves?
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
D. _____
E. _____
F. _____
- 27. How are we to be towards one another instead?
A. _____ B. _____ C. _____
- 28. How are we to forgive?

Read 1 John 1:9

29. What is Jesus faithful to do if we confess, or repent, from our sins?
A. _____
B. _____

Read Matthew 6:9-15

30. In the Lord's Prayer, verse 12, if God forgives us, what should we also do?
31. What will happen if we forgive men their trespasses?
32. What happens if we do not forgive others?

Read Mark 11:25-26

33. When should we forgive others?

Read Colossians 3:12-13

34. As the "elect of God, holy and beloved," what are we to "put on"?
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
D. _____
E. _____

35. Is it a request or a command to forgive one another? (Circle one)

Read John 2:5

36. What are we commanded to do in this verse?

FORGIVENESS
(Discipleship Questions)

1. Seven times
2. Seventy times seven
3. Forgive every time
4. Patience
5. Compassion
6. Forgave him and released him
7. Went to one of his fellowservants who owed him money and demanded payment
8. No
9. He was angry and imprisoned him until his debt was paid
10. We need to forgive others from our hearts because Jesus has forgiven us
11. He forgives all our iniquities (sins)
12. Because He is the only one who can forgive my sins
13. No
14. He shall live and not die
15. No
16. Repent, and turn away from all your transgressions
17. A new heart and a new spirit
18. No
19. That which was lost
20. The one
21. That any should perish
22. A. Repent
B. Be converted
23. Refreshing
24. Forgiveness of sins
25. A. Redemption
B. Forgiveness of sins
26. A. Bitterness
B. Wrath
C. Anger
D. Clamor
E. Evil speaking
F. Malice
27. A. Kind
B. Tenderhearted
C. Forgiving
28. Forgive as God in Christ forgave us
29. A. Forgave our sins
B. Cleanse us from all unrighteousness
30. Forgive others
31. God will forgive us

32. God won't forgive us
33. Whenever we pray or look to God
34.
 - A. Tender mercies
 - B. Meekness
 - C. Kindness
 - D. Longsuffering
 - E. Humbleness
35. Command
36. Whatever He says to you, do it!

FORGIVENESS (Additional Information)

Text: Matthew 18:21-35.

(Matthew 18:22) Peter thought he was being very generous by offering to forgive his brother seven times in one day, but Jesus said he should forgive him 490 times in one day. It would seem to be impossible to have someone sin against you 490 times in one day. Jesus is actually saying that there should be no limit to our forgiveness.

In context, this principle applies to church discipline. Regardless of how many times we have to discipline someone, if he repents each time (Luke 17:4), we are supposed to forgive them and confirm our love unto him (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

If God expects us to forgive our brother who has trespassed against us 490 times in one day (actually an unlimited number of times), certainly He who is love (1 John 4:8) will do no less with us.

(Matthew 18:23) The word “therefore” that Jesus begins this parable with, ties this teaching to His previous statement on forgiving (verse 22) and, indeed, on the related topics of church discipline (verses 15-20) and also God’s compassion for the lost (verses 12-14). This parable simply illustrates what He already said.

The main thrust of this parable is that when we have people who wrong us, we should remember God’s great mercy He has shown to us and respond in kind (Ephesians 4:32). Any debt that could be owed to us is insignificant compared to the debt we have been forgiven. We should have compassion on others as Christ had on us (Colossians 3:13, and James 2:13).

If we fail to forgive others as we have been forgiven, then this parable teaches that we can, once again, become liable for the debt that had been forgiven. This could be illustrating the church discipline spoken of in verses 15-20. This man’s fellowservants brought him before his master for judgment, similar to Christ’s instructions about how to discipline a brother. This could also illustrate a person who has been saved, but who continues to renounce his faith, and becomes reprobate.

It is certain that not every part of this parable can be applied literally because the Lord of this servant commanded this man’s wife and children to be sold as part of the payment of this debt. This cannot be applied to the spiritual meaning of this parable in the light of the scriptures’ teaching that every man or woman will receive judgment for his own sins and not another’s sins.

Therefore, caution should be used when drawing conclusions from this parable about judgment. The main point emphasized is the necessity of forgiving others and the severe consequences if we do not.

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