

No Boundaries in Forgiveness

Matthew 18: 23-35

This passage is known as the parable of the unmerciful servant. It is preceded by a conversation between Jesus and Peter. Peter is concerned about how many times he should forgive a brother who has sinned against him. The rabbi's taught that to forgive three times was sufficient. Peter hoped to gain the Lord's approval by revealing he was willing to forgive seven times! However, Jesus was not impressed with Peter's show of piety. The Lord responded that he must forgive until seven times seventy.

No doubt Peter wondered how he would ever keep up with a particular transgression that many times. That was the Lord's point exactly. Forgiveness has no limits. As Christians serving our Lord, we must be willing to forgive over and over again if that is what it takes. We are not here to keep score of all the times someone has hurt or wronged us. If we are to live a Christ centered life, we must be willing to forgive one another.

This is not a salvation passage. This parable deals with the lives of believers. It speaks of how we are to live and respond in everyday life. This parable has much to say to each of us. Adrian Rogers said, "Forgiveness is not an emotion; it is a choice." As we look at the [details](#) of this parable, I want to preach on the thought: [No Boundaries in Forgiveness](#).

I. The Reality of the Servant (23-27) – Jesus responds to the question of Peter with this parable. He uses a simple illustration to teach a profound truth in our lives. This parable could be divided into three scenes. This first scene deals with the reality of the servant of the king. Notice:

A. The Debt (23-24) – The king was taking account of the debts his servants owed and he realized that a certain servant owed him 10,000 talents. Some estimates suggest the debt would have been in the tens of millions in today's economy. The servant owed a debt he could never repay. It would be impossible for him to ever work out or obtain the money necessary to satisfy this debt.

- Is that not the same condition each of us found ourselves in? We all owed a debt we could never pay. There would never be enough time or resources to buy our salvation. We stood condemned before God because of the debt we owed. I want you to keep this enormous debt in mind as we move through these verses.

B. The Decree (25) – When it was revealed that the servant owed 10,000 talents, the king commanded the servant, his wife, his children, and all he had sold to pay the debt. This servant

stood accountable for the debt and he stood to lose it all. He and his family were to be sold into slavery. His home, land, and possessions were to be sold to go toward the debt. He was faced with bondage and a life of despair as long as he lived.

- Is that not how each of us was? Were we not all bound in sin, separated from God because of the debt of sin we owed? We would never be able to settle the debt we owed by simply being a bond-slave to sin. As long as we were in bondage, even as long as we lived, the debt would remain. We were hopeless to resolve the debt we owed within ourselves.

C. The Despair (26) – Upon hearing the news of his coming bondage, the servant humbled himself before the king. He fell on his face and worshipped, begging for patience and mercy. That was the only recourse he had. He had no means of settling the debt immediately. Where could he possibly come up with that much money? He did the only thing he could do, plead for mercy.

- I remember the day I was confronted about the debt I owed. I remember the day I realized the King of kings demanded that I be made righteous in His sight. I remember the horror of despair as I realized within myself I was hopeless. It was at that moment I bowed in humility before the King and begged for mercy. He was right. I owed a debt I could never repay. The only hope I had was in His righteous mercy. I did the only thing I could, plead for mercy!

D. The Deliverance (27) – The king was moved with compassion for the servant. He had pity on him in his desperate condition. No doubt the king considered the life of this man. He must've thought of his wife and children. With that the king did a marvelous thing: he forgave the debt, all 10,000 talents. He declared the debt forgiven. The servant was no longer accountable for his debt.

- What a picture we see of the mercy and forgiveness of Christ. He alone had the authority to forgive our debt. He alone had the power to pardon the sin that caused our separation. As He hung upon the cross He declared our redemption as He cried: **It is finished**. Jesus proclaimed that His work was through, man's debt had been settled and God was now satisfied!

- Isn't it amazing that Jesus would do that for us? He assumed our debt, paying it in full on the cross. We all know there is only one way to be reconciled to God and that is through Christ our Lord. But the amazing thing is that there is a way at all. God didn't have to send His Son to die for our sin and forgive our debt, but I rejoiced that He did!

II. The Response of the Servant (28-30) – This servant had certainly been forgiven much. You would think his life would have never been the same. Let's look now at scene two as we discover the response of the servant. It certainly isn't what we would expect to find from this man.

A. The Attitude Revealed (28) – The servant went out and found a servant who owed him 100 pence, approximately \$15. There was a difference in the debts these men owed of over a million to one. There was no comparison in the debts of these servants, and yet the unmerciful servant took him by the throat and demanded to be paid immediately. He soon forgot the enormous forgiveness he received and demanded his personal debts be paid.

- There is a great lesson for us in this verse. Consider all that Jesus did for you as He forgave your sin debt. Yet how many times are we unwilling to forgive a word that was said, or something that was done by mistake with no harm intended. Can you see where we behave just like the unmerciful servant? There is no comparison to what Jesus did for us and yet we cannot forgive. We soon forget our pardon because we are bent on having things our way, or getting even, or we allow anger and bitterness to invade our hearts.

B. The Appeal Requested (29) – This poor servant responded the same way as the unmerciful servant; he pled for mercy. He was willing to repay the debt and make it right if he only had the opportunity. Unlike the prior debt, this servant would be able to settle his debt. He just needed a little time, a little compassion, and a little cooperation.

- Have we not found ourselves in the same situation? Have there not been times when someone has wronged you and asked forgiveness? They knew there was a debt that needed to be settled and they just needed a little compassion and cooperation. How have you responded? Were you willing to extend the same forgiveness that Jesus gave to you?

C. The Actions Rendered (30) – Unlike the mercy shown by the king, this servant showed no mercy. He had been forgiven much, but he was unwilling to forgive little. He cast the man in prison until the debt was paid. He wanted to see this man punished for his failure to meet his obligation.

- It is easy to condemn the actions of others, but we often fail to realize what the Lord has done for us. We all deserved to be in hell today, but Jesus forgave our sin debt. The Lord showed compassion on those who could never have been forgiven apart from Him? How do we respond to a brother who has wronged us? Were we not guilty of the same or worse? We are often quick to judge and demand a harsh penalty for others, while overlooking our own transgressions.

III. The Retribution of the Servant (31-35) – We have come to the last scene, scene three of this parable. The unmerciful servant is brought back before the king to face his actions. Let's look in on that encounter.

A. The Reminder (31-32) – With the news of this atrocity, the king calls again for the servant to be brought before him. He reminds him of the debt he owed. It is likely that he reminded him there was no possibility the debt could ever have been paid. He reminded him of the compassion shown simply because the servant desired pity. He hadn't earned forgiveness; he just requested it.

- I think God would have us be reminded of His forgiveness. There is not a child of God here today who has not been forgiven. He has forgiven all our sin and pardoned us. We have been set free in the Lord. He did that for us because we came before Him with a humble heart. We didn't deserve it, but God gave it!

B. The Rebuke (33) – The king fully expected the servant to show the same compassion and mercy he had received. Should you not have offered the same mercy and pity I offered you?

- God expects us to offer the same forgiveness He has given us. Who among us has been wronged as God has? Who among us has given their son for the sins of others? Who among us has forgiven as God has forgiven? We cannot please God if we are unwilling to forgive. You will never live a victorious life in the Lord if you are unwilling to forgive. Maybe you need to forgive others and let go of resentment. Get is settled and move on for the glory of God.

C. The Restitution (34) – Because of his unwillingness to forgive a small matter, the servant was cast in prison until all his debt was paid. There would be no more mercy or pardon. Every penny of the debt was to be paid in full. He lived a life of bondage because he was unwilling to forgive.

- Keep in mind; this is not a salvation passage. You will not lose your salvation, but you can live in bondage to bitterness and anger because you are unwilling to forgive. God may remove His hand from your life and let you live it in your anger. He may allow you to spend the rest of your life in misery because you were unwilling to forgive another of something they have done. There are those who are out of God's will and even out of church today simply because they were unwilling to forgive. God forgave a multitude of sin in each of our lives and He fully expects us to offer forgiveness to our brethren.

Conclusion: Jesus closes this parable with the abiding lessons it gives, [v.35](#). If we are unwilling to forgive, God will punish us for that unforgiving spirit. He will never bless you if you can't forgive. You might argue that I don't know what others have done. Well, what did men do to Jesus? Have you suffered as He did? He was willing to forgive. We must as well!

Maybe you need to come and ask the Lord to forgive you for an unforgiving spirit. Maybe you need to go to someone and ask for or extend forgiveness. I would encourage you to do as the Lord leads. Maybe you realize you owe a debt of sin that you cannot pay. Has the Lord spoken to you in regard to salvation? Whatever the need is, I urge you to seek the Lord.