

THE FINE ART OF FORGIVENESS

The Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35)

- A. “To err is human” – we know all too well – but the last part of that couplet is also true: “to forgive is divine!”
 - 1. Christians are never more beautiful & noble in the eyes of their Heavenly Father than when they are forgiving, for then they are most like Him.
- B. **However**, when it comes to our desire to forgive we are often less like our Father than we ought to be.
 - 1. We expect others to forgive us, but when the tables are turned forgiveness is a very remote thought in our troubled minds

[Matthew 18 reveals the startling truth that we are to act toward others as God has acted toward us. If we refuse, we lose – we lose the compassion & forgiveness of God, which we so desperately need each day.

First, Jesus spoke of man’s need for God’s forgiveness.

I. THE NEED OF FORGIVENESS (18:1-22)

- A. **Because You Will Offend** (18:1-14); & when you do there will be...

1. The Need For Humility (18:1; cf. 17:22-23).

1 Peter 5:5-6 – Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, & be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

2. The Example Of Humility (18:2-6).

- a. An unspoiled child will accept instruction & correction, & is quick to forgive others.

3. The Cost Of Humility (18:7-14).

- a. The cost of child-like humility requires a very adult-like action.

[So first of all we are warned not to be a stumbling block to ones spiritual service to God.

But what about those times when **WE** are offended?

When that happens we are sometimes quick to assign evil motives to the one who has offended us; we are too quick to charge him with the worst offense.

That's why it's so important to follow the steps Jesus outlines in these verses.]

B. **Offenses Will Come To You** (18:15-20), but it's not a time to walk away & pronounce judgment.

1. **Keep The Matter Private** (Gal 6:1).

2. **Ask For Help From Others.**

3. **Ask The Church For Help.**

a. The goal is not winning an argument but winning a brother & the repairing of a relationship in Christ.

[This teaching is what caused the Peter to ask a question about forgiveness.]

C. **Forgiveness Is Unlimited** (18:21-22).

1. **Was Peter Being Generous?**

a. Yes, compared to the Rabbi's teaching on forgiveness (cf. Amos 2:4): "man can not be more gracious than God".

2. **Peter's Mistakes:**

a. First, he was sure his brother would sin against him, but NOT he against his brother!

b. Secondly, he expected the Lord to set a limit on forgiveness; the Lord exposed that fallacy.

c. Paul put it this way, "Love keeps no record of wrongs" (1 Cor. 13:5).

[At this point Jesus tells a parable to illustrate the importance of forgiving others who injure our feelings.]

II. THE LACK OF FORGIVENESS (18:23-35)

A. **He Was A Debtor** (18:23-27) to a compassionate & forgiving King.

Just to give you an idea of his debt (10,000 talents) – **One** talent would buy you a slave. **One** talent was 20 years' wages! **The** annual tax bill for all of Palestine was only 800 talents. **It** would take 200,000 years to pay this debt of 20 million. – **There** was no way to repay the debt, which is just the point!

1. Imagine all your creditors telling you that you were released from all your debt.

B. **He Was A Creditor** (18:28-30) who lacked the compassion & forgiving spirit that was shown to him.

1. He demanded immediate payment of a debt that could have been worked off (100 denarii is \$20).

C. **He Became A Prisoner** (18:31-34) of his own devices.

[The Lord's application, "*So My heavenly Father also will do TO YOU if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses*" (35).

We cannot have our sins forgiven by the blood of Christ until we are baptized into the death of Christ (Rom 6:3-4). And we cannot continue to have God's forgiveness, as we need it from day to day, unless we willingly forgive others.]

III. THE LESSONS OF THE PARABLE

{...from the heart}

A. **GOD FORGIVES US WHEN WE FORGIVE OTHERS.**

1. The way we treat others has a profound influence on how God will deal with us.
2. Since the purpose of Jesus giving His life for us was to provide for our forgiveness, does it not seem logical that He would expect us to practice forgiveness toward others?

Matt 5:7 – Blessed are the *merciful*, for they shall obtain mercy. **6:12** – Father, *forgive* us our debts as we have *forgiven* out debtors. **6:14-15** – For if you *forgive* men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also *forgive* you. But if you do not *forgive* men their trespasses, neither will your Father *forgive* your trespasses.

3. God so desires us to live in a state of harmony with each other that He said He would not accept our worship if we bear a grudge (**Matt 5:23-24**).
4. Someone once said, “I’ll never forgive!” & another replied, “Then, I hope you never sin.” – How true; How virtually impossible.

B. COMPASSION IS THE FUEL OF FORGIVENESS.

1. The wicked servant illustrates those who deal with others out of *justice* – as we are likely to do.
2. The king illustrates those who deal with others out of *compassion* (**18:26, 32-33**) – as Jesus (**Luke 23:34**).

C. OFFENSES AGAINST US ARE SMALL COMPARED TO OUR OFFENSE AGAINST GOD.

1. The Lord made a dramatic contrast between the two debts in this story to drive home that point.

D. WE OFTEN EXPECT FROM OTHERS WHAT WE ARE NOT WILLING TO GIVE.

1. Lightfoot: “How easy it is to see other’s failures. *Mistakes* in others are *sins*, in us they are only *faults*. What is *meanness* in others is *mischief* in ourselves; what is *harshness* in others is *frankness* in ourselves; what is *selfishness* in others is *thrif*t in ourselves.”

E. FORGIVENESS IS ACTING AS THOUGH THE OFFENSE NEVER HAPPENED.

1. When the king forgave the servant there were no strings attached; He forgave him, released him & forgot the money owed to Him – that is how God forgives us (**Heb 8:12**).

F. IMPORTANCE OF REPENTANCE TO FORGIVENESS.

1. Did you notice that it was the repentance of the wicked servant that brought out the compassionate forgiveness in the king.
2. And it was the repentance of the fellow servant that SHOULD HAVE lead the wicked servant to forgive, but he didn't.
3. While this parable primarily teaches us to be quick to forgive (to take the difficult steps to do so) it also teaches us the need for repentance in order to obtain the forgiveness of sin ([Luke 17:3](#)).

Tell Me The Story Of Jesus: Tell of the cross where they nailed Him, writhing in anguish & pain; tell of the grave where they laid Him, tell how He liveth again. Love in that story so tender, clearer than ever I see; stay, let me weep while you whisper, "Love paid the ransom for me." Tell me the story of Jesus, write on my heart every word; tell me the story most precious, sweetest that ever was heard.

[It would be hard to sing those words & to bear a grudge.]

GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR SALVATION:

Hear the gospel of Jesus Christ; read it in your Bible: Acts 2; 3; 13; Rom 10:17

Believe Jesus to be Lord and Christ, the Son of God and Savior: Acts 2:36; John 3:16; 8:24; 20:30-31; Acts 4:12; Titus 1:4

Repent of your sins: Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 1 John 3:4

Confess your faith in Jesus Christ: Matt 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom 10:9-10

Be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins: Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21

Be obedient to the Lord, He will be your Judge: Titus 2:11-12; Heb 5:9; 2 John 9; Rev 2:10; John 12:48