

Church of God Sunday School

PARABLES OF JESUS: THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

Matthew 18:21-35

One day Peter came to Jesus and asked Him a question about forgiveness. Peter asked how many times he should forgive someone who had done wrong to him. Peter wondered if he should forgive someone seven times. (Possibly, Peter thought this was very generous, for Jewish tradition limited forgiveness to three times. Peter was offering to forgive more than twice as much!) Jesus was not impressed with Peter's generous offer. He said, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven [490 times]."

Peter must have wondered how it was possible to forgive someone so many times. Then Jesus told a parable (story) to help Peter understand. Jesus said that there was a certain king who took "account of his servants." One of his servants owed him "ten thousand talents." (Some have estimated this to be as much as 12,000,000 dollars! How do you think the servant ran up such a huge debt?)

The servant could not pay back the money he owed. So, the king ordered the servant, his wife, his children, and all that he had to be sold. The servant fell down before the king and pleaded with him, saying, "Lord have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." (Was it possible to pay back such a massive sum of money?)

The king had compassion on his servant, and he forgave him the debt. He did not give the servant more time to pay off the debt (no doubt the king knew this was impossible). But he forgave the entire amount! The servant would not have to pay any of it back!

Do you think this servant was happy and thankful? A wonderful thing had just happened to him! He and his family had been spared a lifetime of slavery. But when the servant left the king, he went



looking for another servant who owed him money. This fellow-servant owed the first servant "an hundred pence." (This was about seventeen dollars.)

When he found this fellow-servant, "he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest."

The fellowservant "fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." This was almost exactly what the first servant had said to the king. But this time, no mercy was shown. The first servant cast his fellowservant into prison, "till

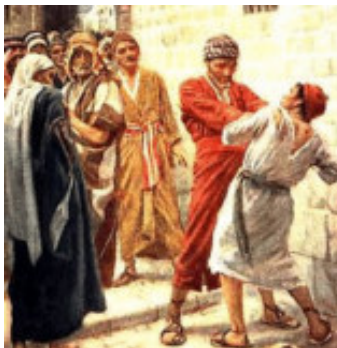
he should pay the debt." He who had received great mercy and forgiveness failed to show his fellowservant the same.

When the king was told what had happened, he was angry. He called for the unforgiving servant to come to him, and he called him "thou wicked servant." The king reminded him of how he had forgiven his great debt, because he had asked him to. He told him he should have had compassion on his fellowservant, just as the king had shown pity for him.

Then the wicked, unforgiving servant was delivered to the tormentors, "till he should pay all that was due unto him." There was no mercy this time. The servant could not be forgiven of his debt because he had failed to forgive others.

Jesus ended this parable by saying that God will not forgive us if we do not forgive everyone who has done us wrong.

The great debt in this parable is like the great debt of sin we have before we are saved. When we ask God to forgive us our sins (a debt that cannot be paid), He will forgive us of those sins. We never have to worry about those sins again. They are cast "into the depths of



the sea" (Micah 7:19). God has removed those sins "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12).

How does God expect us to treat others? If someone has done you wrong, how should you treat him or her? Think of how God must have felt when you sinned against Him. Was He sad? Did it hurt God? Of course, it did! Then think of how wonderfully God forgave you when you asked Him to. That is how God wants us to forgive others.

Should we only forgive a few times (or seven times, as Peter asked)? No! When Jesus told Peter to forgive "seventy times seven," did He mean Peter should forgive 490 times and then no more? No, Jesus was telling Peter that he should have endless forgive-

ness. Don't keep track of how many times someone offends you, but forgive as God forgave you.

Do you find it hard to forgive others? Do feelings of anger and unforgiveness try to come into your heart? You need God to help you. If you ask Him, God will give you the love and compassion you need to forgive others.

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."*  
—Ephesians 4:32  
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Matthew 18:21-35



"The kingdom of heaven [is] likened unto a certain _____"



"which would take _____ of his servants."



"one was brought . . . which owed him ten _____ talents."



"Lord, have _____ with me, and I will pay thee all."



"Then the Lord . . . _____
him the debt."



"The same servant . . . found one . . . which
owed him an _____ pence."



"Have patience with me, and I will pay thee
_____."



"He . . . cast him into _____,
till he should pay the debt."



"His lord . . . delivered him to the
_____, till he should pay."