

Abundant Forgiveness

Matthew 18:21-35

6/5 - 6/6/10

Intro

The gospels are full of precious teachings of Jesus that minister to our hearts in a tender way, such as “Do not hinder the little children from coming to me” and “Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest”. But the gospels are also full of Jesus’ bold and strong statements that challenge us to the very core of our being. Today we are going to have the opportunity to look at one of those strong statements: Jesus’ teaching on forgiveness from Matthew 18. No doubt we will be challenged by these Scriptures, but more importantly we will discover more about the nature of God’s loving character and the depth of His forgiveness.

I. WE ARE FORGIVEN MUCH

- I love Peter’s boldness because he asks the questions I think we would all like to ask. Whenever Jesus answers one of the disciple’s questions, it becomes a great *teachable moment* for us. This Scripture is no exception.
- 70x7=490! Translation: Abundant Forgiveness! This was also the number of years God was longsuffering and patient with the nation of Judah in the Old Testament before sending them into exile. It is symbolic of a patient and loving Father.

A. A Debt We Cannot Repay

- Ten thousand talents was a huge amount. To put it in perspective, eight thousand talents was the total raised to build the entire Temple. It was more than the sum of all of the countries’ economic GNP of that area. It is a picture of our own spiritual bankruptcy.

Ephesians 2:1 “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins”

Psalm 130:3 “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?”

- Put yourself in the place of that slave. He was about to lose all that was dear to him because there was nothing he could do to repay his debt. His last hope was to throw himself at the king’s mercy.

B. Seek the King’s Mercy

- The slave didn’t merely bow respectfully to the king, but threw himself at his feet in the most humble way possible in prostrating himself. That was his last hope. We need to have that same posture. Why? Because of the nature of our King.

Psalm 51:1-2 “Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”

Psalm 86:5 “For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.”

- Oh that we could respond to God like David! He knew how to seek his Lord and ask for forgiveness. In David we see a man with many faults, yet his intimate knowledge of God’s loving character is a big part of why he is called a man after God’s own heart.

C. Receive God's Forgiveness

- Verse 27: the lord felt compassion and forgave him the debt. What a beautiful picture of God's forgiveness when we place our faith in His Son Jesus Christ for salvation.

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

- What happened to the slave's debt? It didn't simply disappear. The King took it as a cost to himself. Similarly, the Lord took our debt. We received the benefit, and He took our penalty and paid the price.
- Receiving His forgiveness means putting your trust in that very truth: that Jesus paid the price you could not pay. Yet some people live their life and carry the burden of guilt as if they were still trying to pay off their debt

Illus – Imagine a person collecting cans on the streets their entire life to pay off a loan for one million dollars that was already paid off by their father.

II. **SO WE ARE TO FORGIVE MUCH**

- Verse 28 is an example of what *not* to do. The slave's first thought was about what was owed him and not the compassion he received. We may not throw people in prison, but have you ever treated someone coldly as a result of an unforgiving heart?

A. Forgive at Every Opportunity

- One of the subtle truths about Jesus saying we need to forgive "70x7" is that there are in fact many opportunities to forgive. In other words, we shouldn't be surprised when people sin against us. We need to be ready at all times to forgive.

Ephesians 4:32: "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

Proverbs 19:11: "A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression."

B. Remember the Mercy You Received

- Verse 33: That's the question the Lord has for our lives today. He knows this is the area we struggle with and that we need to hear this. It is not that the pain and hurt we feel from people's offenses is insignificant. Quite the contrary. It can be so painful that only by looking at it in light of the cross can we hope to forgive others.
- We can forgive much when we understand the depth of God's mercy and the cost Jesus paid on our behalf.

Illus – The cost that was paid on my behalf was never so clear during the time I served as a juror on a murder trial that had the possibility of the death penalty. As I saw the long list of transgressions the defense presented of why the defendant deserved the death penalty, I was reminded of my own list of sins that Jesus paid the price for.

Col 2:13-14: " When you were dead in your transgressions ... He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

C. Forgive from Your Heart

Proverbs 21:2: "Every man's way is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts."

- These last two verses are the most challenging. It is tempting to focus on how a loving Savior could make such a strong statement. But the real challenge is for us to be convinced by Scriptures how important it is to God that we have forgiving hearts. Jesus is saying that for us to forgive from the heart, we need to experience His forgiveness first.

Illus – Bathing in God's Forgiveness