

Series: Matthew

New Years

TITLE: Forgiveness

TEXT: Matthew 18:21-35

I would like to share with you this morning, God's compassion and love as experienced in the word "forgiveness." One of the greatest lessons on forgiveness ever given by our Lord was given to Peter in answer to a question Peter ask: HOW OFTEN SHOULD I FORGIVE?

Turn with me to Matthew chapter 18. Matthew chapter 18 beginning at Vs 21.

(Read Matthew 18:21-35)

Prayer

+++++

I am asking a simple question this morning. WHAT IS FORGIVENESS? WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN TO FORGIVE SOMEONE? Obviously Jesus was telling us what it is by this story. Peter has ask the question: "If my brother sins against me, how often should I forgive him?" And then Peter suggest 7 times.

And what Peter was actually saying in his answer to his own question was that he would be willing to go beyond the acceptable standard for forgiveness. You see, many people do not understand this. They read this and they ask: Why did Peter mention 7 times. Why 7?

The answer is found in the customs of that day. The religious leaders felt that the extent to which a person should go to forgive someone was 3 times. In fact, there is a statement within Rabbinical law that says, "You will forgive a man once. Then you would forgive twice if he offended in the same thing. And then the third time. But, if he offended once more you would not forgive him anymore."

So, if you know this background, and then you read this story, you can imagine Peter. Peter being a man of his day certainly knew this teaching. The religious leaders of his day felt that you should forgive three times. Then the fourth time ... slap it to him.

So, Peter, having been with the Lord and having heard him teach was responding in a positive way. "Lord! How about 7 times?" This is certainly going a lot further than most people would go. So, Lord, is this right? 7 Times. But, Jesus said, NO! Peter, I want you to forgive 70 times 7. In other words, you never stop forgiving.

And this causes me, as a believe knowing this, and knowing that my

relationship with others is very important to my own testimony. And desiring to do what God wants me to do. And knowing that God wants me to forgive others. Then, I must ask myself: What is forgiveness?

As I have studied this passage, I believe there are four principles involved in <sup>The meaning of</sup> forgiveness. There maybe more. But, there are at least four principles as to the meaning of the word "forgiveness."

(1 ) Number one, forgiveness is an acceptance of someone no matter how great the offense. It is an acceptance of someone no matter how great the offense.

In this story, the king of these <sup>SLAVES</sup> ~~servants~~ is obviously the Lord Jesus, himself. For he says in vs. 23, "the kingdom of heaven maybe compared to a certain king." So, he is talking about Himself. The king, the Lord of the <sup>SLAVES</sup> ~~servants~~, is God, himself.

Now, He brings this <sup>Slave</sup> ~~servant~~ who owes him 10 thousand talents, unto himself. And notice, that he is not concerned with how much he owes or how great the offense. He doesn't consider the fact that he owes 10 thousand talents. He accepts the person as he is and forgives.

And it occurs to me that in the concept of forgiveness God accepts us just like we are. (Isn't that great)

Now, the extent of sin is not a relative question with God. He doesn't look at one person and says, "you have committed 100 sins, therefore, it is going to be a little harder for me to forgive you than this person over here who has only committed 10 sins. God does not look at sin in that way. His forgiveness has no boundaries..it has no limitations. He accepts us as we are.

You know, it is hard to accept people as they are. Isn't it? But, if Christians are to forgive as God wants us to forgive, we must forgive each other no matter what the offense has been.

(2 )But, Let's take this a step further Forgiveness is not only an acceptance of someone no matter how great the offense. It is also an act. It is an act whereby we are releasing a person from the obligation of paying a debt. When it says that the Lord forgave him, obviously, he is forgiving him of the debt to pay what? The 10 thousand talents. <sup>So</sup> Forgiveness is an act of releasing a person from the obligation to pay the debt.

You know, a lot of us insert our own rights in this, don't we? Let's be honest. This person owes me this. He owes me an apology. He owes me money. He owes me a retraction of what he said...OH, NO! Forgiveness is an act of releasing a person from his obligation to pay a debt.

Maybe that person in his accountability to God owes us something. Maybe he owes us an apology in his own accountability to God. But, from our standpoint, if we are looking for that, we do not know the meaning of forgiveness.

Forgiveness is an act of releasing a person, completely, from the obligation to pay this debt. Which is exactly what this servant did not do for the man who owed him 100 denarii. WHAT A CONTRAST BETWEEN 10 THOUSAND TALENTS.

If you want a comparison of this. It is like a man owing 10 million dollars and the other man owing 10 dollars. Tremendous contrast.....

Many of us will not forgive another person for a small act. When God has released us from the greatest obligation and debt the world has ever known. And that is our own sin. God has completely forgiven us.

There is no condemnation. ~~for~~ <sup>to</sup> those who are in Christ Jesus. His blood was the final payment to God once and for all.

Forgiveness is an act whereby we are releasing a person from the obligation of paying a debt.

Now, third forgiveness is an acknowledgement on our part that we are under obligation to God and to one another. Let me explain this. Turn over to Romans chapter 1. The book of Romans chapter 1 and verse 14....

(Read Romans 1:14-17)

Now, Paul says in Vs 14 that he is under obligation to both the Greeks, <sup>Notes</sup> the cultured civilized society, and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. And it is obvious from what he says in Vs 15 and 16 that he is talking about his obligation, his debt, to bring men the Gospel of Christ Jesus.

WHAT IS THE POINT? That forgiveness in the life of every Christian must be an acknowledgement that we are--first of all--under obligation to God. And secondly..because of that, we are under obligation to one another.

Now, keep that principle in mind and come back to Matthew 18. I want you to notice four things in being under obligation to God and to one another.

(1) First, the little word "talents" in Vs 24 is referring back to the word "sins" in Vs 21. If my brother sin against me how often should I forgive him. And then Jesus uses an illustration of money or talents. So, talents represents sins. And it indicates that the source of our obligation is sin.

(2) Then, secondly, the scope of our obligation is 10 thousand talents. And what Jesus is trying to say to Peter is this: "Peter..you are under obligation to God more than you realize. Your sin is like owing 10 thousand talents.

You know, I sure hope I am communicating to you. But, let me tell you what this meant to me. As I was studying and praying, it began to dawn on me what God is trying to say.

LB

Bill, you owe me. Everything you are. It is like I owed God 10 million dollars. And the thought was really impressed upon my mind. It is no wonder that we cannot forgive one another. Because we haven't got a hold of the first truth, yet. And that is that we are indebted to God. "Jesus paid it all," the song writer says, "all to him I owe." Oh, we sing it so simply. But, we don't really believe it. If we did, we could not possible with hold our forgiveness to a brother or sister who has offend us. 10 thousand talents. And the Lord choose that figure to impress upon Peter's mind what God had done for him. We are indebted to God. That is the scope of our debt to the Lord. 10 <sup>million Bucks</sup> ~~thousand talents~~.

(3 ) But, there is a third principle involved in this acknowledgement of our obligation. Vs 25 says, "But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made."

Notice, the slavery that follows because of that debt. And dear friends, I wonder if you fully realize the slavery that Jesus has delivered you from? The slavery of sin. Some of us know the slavery of a bad habit. But, the slavery of sin. Being in bondage to sin is like this case, Jesus said. It is like a man being put in jail because he cannot pay his debt. He had to sell everything he had, including his wife and children in order to pay his debt. *Wow!*

I wonder if we see the full impact of forgiveness as God has forgiven us. WHAT WAS OUR SIN? WHAT WAS THE SLAVERY WE HAD? DO WE UNDERSTAND THIS? DO WE SEE WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US? *dear friends*

7

Someone has rightly said: "Salvation doesn't cost us anything. But, it cost God something. It cost Him his own son." Jesus bore our sins on the cross. He delivered us from the bondage of sin. What kind of bondage? Paul writes in Romans that it is the bondage of death and an eternal separation from God in a place called Hell. That bondage, God has delivered us from. And this began to dawn on me. What tremendous forgiveness God had for me. I have done nothing to earn God's favor. I am a sinner and a slave to sin. Yet, God has bought me with his own precious blood, *and set me free.*

(4 ) Then, fourth, I notice in Vs 27, "And the Lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt." Notice, those two words: RELEASED and FORGAVE. Let me try and share with you what those two words are saying.

Let's suppose that a man owes you 10 dollars. And you met this man one day and you said, "Friend, you haven't paid me the 10 dollars you owe me. But, I tell you what. I am going to release you from the obligation to pay this money."

But, then under your breath you say. "But, I will never forgive you. And I certainly will never loan you 10 dollars again."

Do you see the point? There is a real difference isn't there ? But, both words are included in the love of God. He released him from the obligation of ever having to pay a dime. And PRAISE GOD that we will never have to pay one dime for our sin. Jesus has saved us through his own blood. He has delivered us completely. He has released us from our obligation to pay a thing.

But, Praise God, Jesus has, also, forgiven us. And dear friends, I hope you can see the difference. Many of us might release a person from his obligation to pay a

(S)

debt. But, then we go off and say, "I will never forgive him. But, not so with Jesus. When he died on the cross there was complete release from sin and complete forgiveness...

(4 )And this brings us to one final principle that I see here, which is really the heart of forgiveness. And that is ... Forgiveness is an attitude of compassion towards the one who offends you. Of course this is the whole point of the story.

Notice, Vs 27: When the Lord forgives the servant who owed him 10 thousand talents, it says, "He was moved with compassion."

Now, look down at Vs 32. When the Lord called this servant back to him after what he had done to the other servant, it says: "Then summoning him, his Lord said to him, 'You wicked slave. I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. Should you not, also, have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?' And the Lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. So shall my heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

Now, there is a great lesson, <sup>and warning</sup> here, so follow carefully. In Vs 27, the word "compassion" is used only of Jesus Christ. No one else. A form of that word is applied and used by Jesus to the Christian. Such as in Paul's letters. But, the basic verb form "moved with compassion" or "felt compassion" is used only of Jesus. HE WAS MOVED WITH COMPASSION. And the word means: "a tearing or pulling apart of one's emotions. We might say: "HIS HEART WAS TORN APART."

For example: in Matthew chapter 9 when Jesus saw the multitudes, the Bible



says that He was moved with compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

Now, notice Vs 33: Here, the word "MERCY" is used . It is a different word then the word translated "Compassion." It means "pity". I pity you.

Then in Vs 35, He talks about "forgiveness from your heart." And once again we have the seat of emotions.

Now, let me put it all together. Back in Vs 27, it is the compassion of Christ that is being emphasized. It is that kind of love. You see, we can have pity. But, Jesus has compassion. And the point that Jesus is making is a contrast. He is saying to this servant: "Don't you think you could at least of had pity as I had pity? I at lest had that." But, the point is that Jesus had much more. He was moved with compassion. He forgave from the heart.

Dear friends, please understand. The LOVE OF GOD IS SO TREMENDOUS. I don't know if you are getting a hold of this or not. I sure hope you are. Just sit back and think of the tremendous love that God has for you. His love not only released you from the debt of sin. But, His love caused him to completely forgive you. And the lesson that Jesus is trying to get us to see and apply to our life is the need for compassion in forgiveness. In fact, when Jesus taught on the Sermon on the Mount, he said that if you cannot forgive, why should you expect your heavenly Father to forgive you of your sins.

It is like the man who came and had a sin against his brother and went to offer this gift to the Lord in Church. But, Jesus said to that man to go and first be

reconciled to his brother and then bring your gifts. You see, so often we are trying to cover up for what the basic problem is inside. We are trying to get things straightened out. But, it is all external. And internally we don't really love. We don't really have compassion. We cannot really forgive because there is something wrong on the inside. And what Jesus is doing is getting down to the real sore spot in all of our lives. And that is that there is something wrong internally. The problem is not external. It is internal. We have a heart problem. And only God can solve the heart problem.

Oh, my dear friends, compassion comes from the heart. It is so easy to say that we release you from an obligation. But, it is another thing because of love and compassion to forgive and to forget.

And I thought, Man! wouldn't it be fantastic if everyone of us as Christians went out this coming week and really loved people this way? To forgive people the way Jesus forgave us. WOW!! Talk about filling this church. We would have standing room only. WHY? BECAUSE FOLKS WOULD SEE THE FORGIVENESS OF CHRIST IN US.

Now, I believe Jesus wants us to do three things today.

(1 ) Number one, We must start by saying, "THANK YOU JESUS FOR YOUR FORGIVENESS." I mean, from the heart, really thank God for his love and forgiveness.

(2 ) Then secondly, to go out and to really forgive others. You ask: How can I do that? There is only one way. Daily yield yourself to the power of the Holy Spirit. You see, we must release ourselves to the Holy Spirit of God. We must come to the point in our lives when we say: "God, I want your way in my life. I want your love and



compassion." Then, you see, we can start acting toward others as God acted toward us. And dear friends, we are bothered by this all the time. People say things. And we wonder what other are thinking. Little unkindnesses happen all the time. We carry our feelings on our coat shelves. Whether it is 10 thousand talents or an unkind word, I don't know. But, I do know, that love and compassion comes from daily yielding ourselves to Christ. His love is then free to work in us.

(3 ) Then third, if you have never experienced God's wonderful forgiveness, then Jesus wants you to come to him. To confess your sin and receive Him as your savior. He wants you to experience <sup>His</sup> release and forgiveness.

WOULD YOU COME TO HIM, RIGHT NOW?

Let's close in prayer