

Real Forgiveness

What does it mean to *really* forgive?

- I have really forgiven you when I don't see you as in debt to me anymore.
 - When I believe and act that you no longer have an unsettled account toward me.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

Matthew 18:21 – 35

21 Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”

- The Rabbinical teaching of their time set a standard limiting the forgiveness of a repentant brother to no more than three times.
 - Therefore, Peter’s seven times is quite generous, but Jesus’ reply does away with all limits and calculations to “manage forgiveness.”

22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

- This is an allusion to the numbers of **Genesis 4:24**, contrasting Lamech’s unlimited vindictiveness with the unlimited forgiveness expected of Christ’s disciples.

23 “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.

24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.

- Commentators list the modern value of 10,000 talents as anywhere between \$12 million and \$1 billion USD. The figure clearly represents an unpayable debt.

25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’

- The promise of the servant makes no sense. He spoke as if all he requested was patience.
 - As if he were given enough time, he could actually pay this massive debt.
 - The disciples listening to Jesus would have thought this was humorous.
 - He didn’t need patience; he needed forgiveness!

27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’

- This debt was also real. 100 denarii were roughly equal to 100 days’ wages.
 - This was *not* an insignificant amount, but it was almost nothing compared to the debt forgiven by his master.
- It was actually 1/600,000 of the debt owed to the master by the first servant.

29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’

30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.

31 When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.

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32 Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.

33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’

34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.

35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

- God has forgiven us of such an outstanding debt that any debt owed to us is insignificant in comparison. No man can possibly offend me to the extent that my sins have offended God.
 - This “forgive as you’ve been forgiven” principle must be applied in the little offenses done to us and the great offenses done unto us.
- When you won’t forgive someone else his debt while claiming to love the God who forgave yours, it’s just pure hypocrisy. You’re acting like God was a fool for forgiving you.

Do We Believe These Verses Mean What They Say?

Matthew 6:12 - 15

12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,

15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

- We are in a state of unrepentant sin before God, whenever we think we are right not to forgive.
 - And we are very far from the Father’s heart.
- Forgiveness must be from the heart; if we forgive in words only but not from our hearts, we remain under the same condemnation.

Perhaps the Most Neglected Command Every Sunday Morning

Matthew 5:23 - 24

23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,

24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

- Note the command: “your brother has something against you”
 - How often do we excuse ourselves because we feel we are “fine with it?”

Do Not Confuse Forgiveness with Trust

Luke 23:34 – 35

34 And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments.

35 And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!”

- Real Forgiveness is desiring the good, not the ruin, of the one who wronged you.
 - In spite of the wrong, you won’t let their wrong strangle your love.
- You won’t let their sin make you sin. Lay it down and pray for their good.