

**God's Forgiveness To You, and God's Forgiveness Through You***Forgiveness – Difficult to Put into Practice*

- Very difficult. Not to understand (God forgives us; we others – simple!), but to practice. I know difficult, because we've talked about people who've hurt you. Even if you haven't talked to me, you're maybe thinking of such people. You're Christian – want to forgive, like in parable. But hard to practice! Jesus knows: character trait of sinful humans, Christians, to have hard time forgiving. Why he tells such a captivating, powerful parable about merciful king and unmerciful servant – so that you can fully understand God's forgiveness to you and God's forgiveness through you.

*God's Forgiveness To You*

- Began with Peter, **vs. 21**. Generous? "I understand need to forgive. What's limit? Got to be limit, right? Is 7 generous enough?" Jesus, **vs. 22**. 77 or 70x7 (490). Number doesn't matter. Point: don't keep track; no limit; must always, under all circumstances, for all people, be willing to forgive.
- Difficult! Seems impossible! Limitless forgiveness? Serious?! We know he is: **"If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your heavenly Father will not forgive your sins"** (Mt 6:14-15). If we're Christian, this puts us in agonizing dilemma, moral tug of war between God's will and our sinful nature, because we know Jesus is serious about limitless forgiveness, but some people we don't want to forgive person because of what they've done – bully that picks on your kid, parents that left you when you were a kid, coworker that lied about you, spouse that had affair on you, drunk driver that killed child, jerk who insulted parent, creep who molested your child. Blood boil! Can't forgive!
- So Jesus tells parable about God's forgiveness to you. **Vs. 23-24**. Difficult to know ancient currency exactly; annual income x 100,000. ~\$5 bil; crushing debt! **Vs. 25-26**. Crazy; no way! **Vs. 27** (5 bil!).
- This is God's forgiveness to you. God, king; you, servant. Because of your sins – your wicked words, thoughts, actions; sinful nature born with; godless things you've done (which have made it hard for others to forgive you); godly things you fail to do (like forgiving others) – you have accrued a debt to God, a catastrophic, staggering, astronomical debt to God; could never pay. Fool to say, "Be patient, God; I'll pay back everything." Crazy, no way! You owe God, big time! Fully within his rights to repossess your soul and send you to hell to pay for your debt.
- But **vs. 27**. Jesus cancelled your debt! He took your debt statement, everything you've ever done wrong, came to earth to pay it off by living life of perfect obedience. Jesus had no debt, because never sinned, held grudge, refused to forgive – not even on cross when soldiers hammered nails through wrists and whipped skin off back and ridiculed him to dying breath; still said, **"Father, forgive them"** (Lk 23:34). Then said, **"It is finished"** (Jn 19:30). Been to enough GF services to know: word means "debt paid in full, nothing owed any longer, payment received, balance paid in full – it is finished!" Jesus paid cat., stag., astr. debt you owed God. This is God's forgiveness to you.

*God's Forgiveness Through You*

- Now, to you turns into through you. **Vs. 28a**. Again, ancient currency. Denarius ≈ day's wages, so 100 denarii ≈ 3 months wages, quarter of annual income. No small debt other person owed him.
- When another person hurts you, your family, your marriage, fills your life with sadness, pain – no small debt other person owes you. They've sinned against you in ways that made life more painful, less joyful. Hurt you; no small debt.
- In parable, servant reacts to that debt: **vs. 28b-29**. \$5bil impossible; this too, \$10ks, impossible, at least very difficult, to pay back. Makes you realize: when you commit grievous sin against someone, or they against you, probably impossible, at least very difficult, to pay them back or make up for wrong done. Can't make up for wrong! So, injured party find themselves in moral tug of war: either forgive or refuse to forgive. Parable: **vs. 30**. You know what happened next. King found out; furious; "my \$5bil vs. your \$15k;" withdrew forgiveness, reinstated debt, threw man in prison forever.

- Application here very easy to see: If we, who've been forgiven a cat., stag., astr. debt, refuse to forgive others the lesser debts they owe us, this infuriates God. We cannot be unaffected by God's grace. When God shows forgiveness to you, expects it through you. When none through you, that's despising it to you. When God's forgiveness is despised, eventually withdrawn, and debt reinstated.
- So if we've been sinned against, find ourselves in moral tug of war (forgive or not?), we need to always remember crushing debt God forgave us, because, honestly, it dwarfs debts owed us by others. We need to personalize this parable and recognize how much we've been forgiven by God. When we do that, then our Christian hearts well up with such gratitude that we can't help but forgive others. God's forgiveness to you motivates it through you.

### *Concluding Thoughts on How to be Better at Forgiving*

- I'm not saying easy thing to do, but Christian, necessary, because what Christ tells us to do, so it's what we want to do. As we conclude, a few thoughts to help us become better at forgiving others.
- 1) Get better at confessing. Focus less on them vs me, more on me vs them. If we've done wrong, learn to swallow pride, approach person we've hurt, and say, "I'm sorry; please forgive me." Not sugar coat it with excuses or gifts; just learn to make a sincere apology and get better at confessing.
- 2) Forgiveness = releasing, letting go. Helium balloon. Forgiveness is "letting go of my self-perceived right to get even." If someone wrongs me, true forgiveness means not holding grudge, not looking for ways to make them pay, not seeking revenge, not trying to ruin their reputation, not using incident as weapon against them, even not wishing ill on them. Forgiving someone else means letting go of part of you that really wants to make them pay. We have to let that go!
- 3) Forgiveness ≠ no natural ramifications. Sin results in natural ramifications; for babysitter that abuses children, thief in your house, man beating wife, wife cheating on husband. These are natural ramifications that keep us from being victimized. Forgiving someone doesn't mean allowing yourself to be victimized. That would be wrong, too. I'll admit: fine line between protecting yourself from being victimized and getting revenge; that line can be crossed easily. But we must forgive! No matter what anyone does to you, even if there are natural ramifications, we must forgive.
- 4) Finally, if that seems especially difficult, remember: forgiveness is not emotion but decision. When harmed, it hurts, for long time. As Christians we can't let our emotions get in the way; must make decision to forgive. Maybe every morning: "Still hurts; still forgive."
- Told you I'd be saying things very difficult. Not my advice. Jesus gave us parable of unmerciful servant because he knows forgiving others is hard when we've been wronged. But we wronged God, and he forgave us – that's the point of parable! So let's forgive! Let's challenge ourselves to forgive, without keeping track, because God's forgiveness to you means God's forgiveness through you.

### **Matthew 18:21-35 (NIV 1984)**

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

<sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

<sup>23</sup> "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. <sup>25</sup> Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

<sup>26</sup> "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.'

<sup>27</sup> The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

<sup>28</sup> "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

<sup>29</sup> "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

<sup>30</sup> "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

<sup>31</sup> When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

<sup>32</sup> "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. <sup>33</sup> Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' <sup>34</sup> In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

<sup>35</sup> “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.