

Venom: Forgiveness: The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, Matthew 18:27b-33

The king forgave the slave his debt. We can pile up sins on top of sins and do so repeatedly over a long period of time in status quo carnality. If the Lord required us to retire the debt from our own devices, we would not be able to do so. Therefore, he has longsuffering and compassion and forgives us our sins when we confess them to Him.

Let's now see if the recipient of much grace can through genuine humility execute a grace mental attitude towards his fellow believer.

Matthew 18:28 - But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.'

Please note that it was impossible for the forgiven slave to pay back to the king what he owed him. The application for us is that we are totally incapable of paying our sins debt to God. God was free to forgive us our sins by means of the work of Christ on the cross. All the sins of an entire lifetime were wiped out in a moment of time through faith alone in Christ alone.

We were wrong, God was right yet Christ paid the price in our place through grace and we were forgiven by a merciful God. If God and Christ are willing to forgive us the entire debt we owe them, can we forgive one wrongdoing by a fellow believer? How did our slave do under these circumstances? He in reality harbored bitterness towards one of his creditors.

Upon seeing him there was no longsuffering—no *makrothumia*. He instantly dropped the *makro*-and went with the *thumia*. This exploded instantly into violence. He began choking his debtor and demanding payment.

In order to get the message of the parable here we need to realize that the debtor was obviously in arrears and had taken advantage of the forgiven slave. We know this from the progressive imperfect of duration from the verb *opheilo*: "to owe." This tense contemplates the action as having gone on in past time up to the time denoted by the context which indicates that the process has not yet been completed.

The forgiven slave was therefore being wronged by his debtor but not nearly so much as the king had been wronged by him. The king had just forgiven him of a debt which could have been as much as 10-million dollars. Yet he himself was owed by his debtor a mere hundred denarii—about 20 bucks.

Matthew 18:29 - So his fellow slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.'

Peter should now begin to see the impact of our Lord's advice back in Matthew 18:21, "*I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*" The king, who represents a forgiving God, forgave his servant of an unpayable debt by means of Christ.

Peter's idea of forgiveness had limits. His initial thought was, "*After so long a time, I am justified to take action, become violent, and shout my adversary into compliance under the authority of the law.*" If Peter is discerning at all he must have picked up on the fact that he is the servant of whom much has been forgiven.

In Matthew 18:26 this servant had pled with the king, "*Have patience with me: makrothumia,*" an appeal for longsuffering.

Yet Peter's debtor in Matthew 18:29 makes the very same request of him, "*Have patience with me—makrothumia—and I will repay you.*" Peter was forgiven a debt he could not pay. His debtor, although past due, was capable of paying his if Peter would grant him the same patience, longsuffering, and compassion shown to him by the king. Nevertheless, Peter's character chose to ignore grace and stay with the law.

Matthew 18:30 - He was unwilling however, and went and threw him in prison until he should payback what he owed.

What the forgiven servant did was very legalistic. He was right that his fellow slave was past due on his debt. He was right from a strict legal standpoint to send him to prison. But what was the forgiven servant's obligation to his fellow believer? To show the same grace to that man that the king had just shown to him.

We can all be legalistic watchdogs. However, that is not our assignment. We are to have compassion, show longsuffering, and be prepared to forgive wrongdoing in a spirit of grace orientation. So blatant was this contrast between grace and legalism that other slaves were motivated to inform the king about it.

Matthew 18:31 - So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened.

Matthew 18:32 - Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me.'

Matthew 18:33 - Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?'

The principle which becomes crystal clear in these verses is that our God has forgiven us an unpayable debt and done so in grace through Christ. We are to be ever mindful of that forgiveness as we move through life and encounter others' failures along the way.