

**Venom: Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, Matthew 18:34-35; Guidelines for Biblical Forgiveness, 1-10**

It must also be remembered that these other believers also observe our failures along the way. Each of us therefore remain in debt to each other to forgive each other's transgressions as God in Christ has forgiven us. The fact that Christ has set us free means that our freedom takes on responsibility and obligation.

It is easy for believers to fight with each other as if they remained citizens of a fallen world. But we have been given assets and problem-solving devices which allow us to rise above the mundane.

Believers have a sophisticated system of problem solving which does not involve the sins of arrogance and emotion, the verbal expressions of anger and hatred, or the actions of uncultured heathen. We fight on a higher level of thought which forbids us to function from the trends of our sinful natures or submit to the pressures of the cosmic system. The believer makes a tragic mistake when he chooses to do so because he stumbles in front of the business end of divine goals.

**Matthew 18:34** - And the lord moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers [*basanistes*] until he should repay all that was owed him.

**Matthew 18:35** - So shall My heavenly Father also do to you if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.

*Tormentors: basanistes*—Normally the bankrupt debtor was sold into slavery. In extreme cases when concealment of assets was suspected, the defaulter was sent to prison until restitution should be made. Prison was considered torment in itself and the tormentors were the jailers. *Basanistes* means: to test by the proving stone; to test the genuineness of something; to apply torture to find the truth.

What the arrogant servant did by throwing his debtor into prison was legal, but it was not grace oriented. What the king did to him for having done so was legal and it was just.

A question arises: if we are to forgive without fail our fellow believer, then why does God punish him for his wrongdoing? In other words, why didn't the king forgive the man for throwing his fellow slave into prison since what he did was legal?

Here are some very important principles which explain all this and hopefully brings this issue into final focus: We are not in the business of adjudication, judgment, vengeance, retribution, discipline, punishment, penalizing, retaliation, reciprocity, reprisal, or getting even. God is in the business of justice and will, along with longsuffering, compassion, and forgiveness, manage the affairs of men in a fair and just fashion. God through Christ has judged the sins of the entire world. He forgives pre salvation sins at the moment of one's salvation and post salvation sins at the moment of a believer's confession. He does not however forgive sins of a believer until they are confessed.

The slave before him has exhibited a mental attitude of legalism. He has taken grace for himself and imposed legalism on others. In doing so he has also exhibited impulsive and chronic sins through violence, inflexibility, implacability, and legalism.

He may be legally right before human law, but he is in opposition to God's plan through mental attitude, verbal, and overt sins. These remain unconfessed and are disciplined. This is just treatment to a reversionist and a just adjudication of the case with respect to his victim.

This man did not, as Matthew 18:35 requires, “*forgive his brother from his heart.*” Again, it is the mental attitude that counts. He continued to function under chronic sins. He took advantage of grace. He came under the hammer of justice. To whom much is given, much is also required.

### **E. Guidelines for Biblical Forgiveness**

The command for us to forgive others is a clear indication that we are going to be victims of other peoples’ wrongdoing. We are to use God’s forgiveness of us through Christ as a motivation and model in our forgiveness of others.

When God forgives the unbeliever’s sins at salvation and the believer’s sins at rebound, He is not saying that what they did was all right with Him. What He is saying is that He is free to pardon these individuals because of what Christ did on the cross. It’s not that He is saying they can get by with sin, His integrity recognizes that the penalty for those sins have already been paid.

A mark of pure justice is that when one pays the penalty clause attached to his wrongdoing, he is no longer held accountable. Since Christ took our place on the cross and received the judgment for our sins in our place, then God is free to pardon the individual who seeks it.

We seek pardon when we come to God through Christ by means of faith for salvation. God in turn forgives us our pre-salvation sins. We seek pardon when we come to God through Christ by means of confession of sins. God in turn forgives us our post-salvation sins. All of these principles must be applied to believers who wrong you.