

Matthew 18:21-35: 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?"²² Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."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.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.'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.'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.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."

Intro: Chapter 18 is about how to relate to one another in the church – how to love one another in the church – how do deal with offenses and sins and temptations in the church – how to forgive one another in the church.

- **Verses 15-20:** Jesus has shown us how to pursue a straying brother or sister in love & for their own good.

- **Verses 21-35:** Jesus teaches us that God's lavish, infinite, measureless love & forgiveness of us is the key to our continual forgiveness of others who sin against us.

Last time, we saw that Jesus Christ, the God-Man, is present with His gathered church, & He gives His church the authority to declare who is & who is not trusting Him & living according to His commands, & thus who is and who is not a part of His church.

Today, we see that Jesus Christ, The God-Man, commands us to forgive, from our hearts, all those who sin against us for as many times as they sin against us (without limit!) because God has lavishly & lovingly forgiven us (without limit!) an infinite debt of sin.

Pastor: You are never more like God than when you forgive. You are never less like God than when you don't forgive: **Matthew 5:44-45:** But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

1. Peter Asks A Question About The Limits Of His Mercy

Matthew 18:21: 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?"

a. Peter asks questions – this is good: Pastor: People who ask questions get answers! They grow in knowledge and understanding! Do you have questions? Ask! We give thanks for people who ask questions!

b. Peter is asking because Jesus has been teaching His disciples about how do deal with a sinning brother:

Matthew 18:15: If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

c. Peter is wondering if there is a limit to the mercy he should have on sinners: How many times do I allow a brother to sin against me before I say: "That's it! No more mercy! No more forgiveness!"

Has this ever happened to you? It's the same person! Maybe the same sin! & they keep doing it over & over again!

d. Peter probably thinks he's being generous: Up to seven times?! Seven: number of completion, of perfection.

D. A. Carson: In rabbinic discussion, the consensus was that a brother might be forgiven a repeated sin three times; on the fourth, there is no forgiveness.

e. Notice this is a “brother” who is sinning against Peter: This is a fellow follower of Jesus who is sinning against Peter. Christians still sin! Those who most often sin against us & we sin against are those closest to us.

2. Jesus Commands Peter (And Us) To Show Limitless Mercy

Matthew 18:22: Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."

a. What Jesus does not mean: We are not obligated to let people run all over us in the sense of taking advantage of us and continually abusing us. We don't keep trusting people who show themselves untrustworthy. If someone keeps stealing from you in your own house, you can forgive them, but you are under no obligation to let them in your house again or to allow them to be in your house unattended until they build that trust back. (Consequences!)

Jesus is also not saying to do the multiplication (490) & then when you get to 491, then no more mercy!

b. What Jesus does mean: Jesus is commanding us to keep forgiving, keep loving, keep showing mercy as long as it takes – every time! We are not to hold a grudge; we are not to be bitter; we are not to hate others. We are to love our enemies & pray for them & hope for reconciliation & work for reconciliation. Like the prodigal son's father!

- **Luke 17:3-4:** Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, ⁴ and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, "I repent," you must forgive him.

- **Luke 23:34:** And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Jesus doesn't say "Just Do It!" Jesus doesn't tell us to just "Stop it!" (Bob Newhart illustration)

3. The Power To Show Endless Mercy Comes From The Fact That We've Been Shown Endless Mercy

Matthew 18:23-34: 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. ²⁵ And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife & children & all that he had, & payment to be made. ²⁶ So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, & I will pay you everything.'
²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him & 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, & seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.'
²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down & pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, & I will pay you.'
³⁰ He refused & went & put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, & they went & reported to their master all that had taken place. ³² Then his master summoned him & 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.

a. We see a servant who owes the King an amount of money that he is unable to pay in hundreds of thousands of life times: Ten thousand talents would be like billions of dollars today/200,000 years' wages

R. T. France: The *talent* was the highest unit of currency, and *ten thousand* the highest Greek numeral.

b. The King was going to sell the servant & his family as punishment & to at least get what money he could.

c. The servant begged the King for mercy.

d. The King has mercy and forgives the debt and lets the servant go free.

e. Then the servant who was just forgiven all this debt finds a fellow servant who owes him a much lesser amount of money, seizes him, starts choking him, and tells him to pay what he owes him.

f. This servant begs for mercy too, but the servant does not show him mercy and puts him in prison.

g. The servant refuses to show mercy to another servant who owes him a tiny debt compared to what he owed the King: This servant owed him 100 denarii. He owed the King 10,000 talents. There are 6,000 denarii in one talent! This servant's debt is one six-hundred-thousandth of the debt that the king was owed & was forgiven!

Commentators: The poor man owes the king more money than the whole country paid in taxes at the time! People would wonder: How could you get into such a debt! And how could the king allow such a debt!

h. The King is told what this servant did and says in: Verses 32-34: 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.

D. A. Carson: When the servant shows himself unforgiving toward a fellow servant, the king calls him wicked & . . . turns him over to the "torturers" (not merely "jailers," [NIV has "turned over to the jailers to be tortured"]); the word reminds us of earlier warnings in this chapter (vv. 6, 8-9). The servant is to be tortured till he pays back all he owes, which he can never do. [This is a picture of hell for us: torture, pain, & suffering under God's wrath.]

Matthew 18:6, 8-9: whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea . . .⁸ And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire.⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

D. A. Carson: Jesus sees no incongruity in the actions of a heavenly Father who forgives so bountifully and punishes so ruthlessly, and neither should we. Indeed, it is precisely because he is a God of such compassion and mercy that he cannot possibly accept as his those devoid of compassion and mercy.

Voddie Baucham: 1) Knowing the great magnitude of your sin against God is a key to true forgiveness;
2) Knowing God's holiness and greatness in light of your sin against God is a key to true forgiveness;
3) Knowing the amazing love, patience, mercy, and forgiveness of God in Christ for you in spite of your sin is a key to true forgiveness [God's love is more than unconditional – it's contra-conditional];
4) Knowing God's perfect justice on the cross and in hell is a key to true forgiveness;
5) Have you cried out to God to have mercy on you?

- **Verses 26, 29, 32:** So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, & I will pay you everything.'²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down & pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, & I will pay you.' . . .

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

Anthony Alston: Trust in Christ and never doubt for He alone will get you out!

Romans 12:19-21: Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Because of what God has done for us in Christ, we must forgive & we will forgive! We are sons of God!

4. Because Our Heavenly Father Forgives, We Must Forgive And We Will Forgive

Matthew 18:35: So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

Commentator: This parable teaches that God is merciful & patient, but it also teaches that God's mercy has limits.

God's mercy is limited to those who truly know, trust, & obey Him. If you refuse to forgive other people, your unforgiving, merciless heart is evidence that you have not really and truly come to know the living God! You have not truly believed in Jesus! You are not truly God's child by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone!

What does "forgive your brother from your heart" mean? Peacemakers Ministries: 1) I will not dwell on this incident; 2) I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you; 3) I will not talk to others about this incident; 4) I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

Jesus' teaching does not mean that you must earn God's forgiveness by forgiving others. It means that if you are unwilling to forgive someone, then you have never truly tasted God's forgiveness of your sins through faith alone by grace alone in Jesus Christ alone according to the Bible alone for the glory of God alone!

- **Ephesians 4:31-32:** Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

- **Luke 7:36-47:** Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is – that she is a sinner." Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

Jesus loved much more than anyone else in the universe, & yet He Who knew no sin was made sin for us! & He was not forgiven! He was not forgiven for sins He did not commit, but He was condemned on that cross in our place! (**Text:** if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him) God had every right to hold all of our sins against us, & yet He held everything against His own Son instead & did not forgive Him but condemned Him in our place. Jesus was turned over to the Torturer of all torturers – His own Father tortured Jesus, His own Son, on that cross with the infinite wrath of God so that we will never be tortured by God in the fires of hell! **Hallelujah! What a Savior!** And God raised Him from the dead so that we could be forgiven & then freely give forgiveness to all who sin against us, no matter what and for as many times as they sin against us!

- **Luke 6:27-28:** But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

- **James 2:13** For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.

- **Matthew 6:12-15:** 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.

What if someone senselessly & violently murdered the one person on earth you love the most & who you expected to spend the rest of your life with? Could you forgive the murderer? Love them? Even live with them & help them?

Ellen Vaughn (Elisabeth Elliot's journals): 5:45am March 16th: I've just had one of the most vivid dreams ever. The theme, the same old song, Jim came back! He & Pete & Olive – we were all in Moorestown going shopping. Jim was wearing his favorite coat; Elisabeth buries her face in his shoulder, holding on to him tightly; & she kept saying to them: "I'm so afraid that this is just another dream, & they're [saying] No, no, this is real. We're back. & then there's an odd discussion of how their bodies were found in the river. & it's like, "No! We really are here!" I could not keep my eyes off of Jim. He was handsome & cheerful as ever. I felt so happy that I had decided not to remarry because he was back. We went into a restaurant – I was telling Jim about my dream & how I had called my mother & told her that Jim was back, & he said, "It's real darling. This is really happening." & then I said to Jim in the dream, "Oh darling, if this turns out to be just another one of those dreams, I'll just die!" On that last phrase my voice choked to a sob, & he put his arm around me, & he squeezed me hard to reassure me that this was no dream. With that I woke. In the same hammock, the same gray mist, the same embered fire beside me. & the jovial voices nearby within the tribe of Dewy and Kimo, two of Jim's killers.

Jesus Christ, The God-Man, commands us to forgive, from our hearts, all those who sin against us for as many times as they sin against us (without limit!) because God has lavishly & lovingly forgiven us (without limit!) an infinite debt of sin.

**Jesus Cried Father Forgive
Then Died And Rose So You Could Live
And Now Forgiveness Freely Give!**

Forgive is what our Master did
His mercy-heart cannot be hid
He cried for mercy – made His bid
While into death's firm grip He slid
And now because of what He did
God's grace from us cannot be hid
He crushed death's grip – of sin we're rid!
All blessings flow – none He'll forbid!

Christ had the most against us all
Our sins against Him piled up tall
Between us stood a wrathful wall
Against the God above appall
And ever since Adam's great fall
We've loved our sin that treats God small
We've persecuted Him like Saul
And treated with contempt and gall
The One Who is the all in all!

Yet even in our sin so bad
That's made our infinite God mad
All our sins to Christ He'd add
And crush His Son – He's all God had
Now we will be forever glad
With no more sin to make us sad
For with Christ's righteousness we're clad
And God's our loving, patient Dad!

Now trust in Christ and to Him flee
He saves by faith alone – no fee
And this salvation is the key
To grant you a forgiveness spree
Oh there behold Him on that tree
He loved and died to set you free
He cast your sins into the sea!
And when this lavish grace you see
You'll love, forgive, and peace will be
No grudges hold – just sweet esprit
No matter what's been done to thee
All because the One in Three
Gave up Himself upon that tree!

Christ Jesus Forgave The Greatest Debt
Like Trillions Spent With Deep Regret
He Suffered Grief With Blood-Like Sweat
Then Took God's Fullest Hell-Fire Threat
And Died So We No Longer Fret
Then He Rose So We Shall Get
Eternal Life All Pleasures Met
In Him For He's Our Joy Beget
So Now When Others Sin And Threat
And Hurt And Owe Us A Great Debt
We Can Forgive And All Forget
Because Of Christ We're Free And Set
To Love By All The Grace We Get
For Christ Is All Our Advocate
Because He's Paid Our Every Debt!