

What does this parable say about the nature of God's Kingdom?

Bellevue Church of Christ – Auditorium Class
Matthew 18:21-35 – March 29, 2017

The rabbinic consensus said a brother should be forgiven a repeated sin 3 times.

1. Peter's Confident Question

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

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?"

What did Peter think about his proposed answer to his question?

2. Christ's Confounding Answer

²² Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." Gen 4:24

What is the significance of the # given by Christ?

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

a. A Ruler's Lavish Compassion

²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. I Chron 29:4-7

Lev 25:39
2 Kings 4:1

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.

What is the nature of the King's forgiveness of the servant's debt?

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.

b. The Servant's Lack of Compassion

3. Christ's Clarifying Parable

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.'

Denarii – a day's wage for a foot soldier or common laborer

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.

c. The Ruler's Rightful Retaliation

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.'

All of us have been forgiven far more that we can ever forgive.

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.

4. Christ's Clear Point

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

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Genesis 4:24 (ESV)

²⁴ If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold."

24–27 We glimpse some idea of the size of the indebtedness when we recall that David donated three thousand talents of gold and seven thousand talents of silver for the construction of the temple, and the princes provided five thousand talents of gold and ten thousand talents of silver (1 Chronicles 29:4, 7). Some recent estimates suggest a dollar value of twelve million; but with inflation and fluctuating precious metal prices, this could be over a billion dollars in today's currency. (For "talent," see on 25:15.)

Such indebtedness could not possibly be covered by selling the family into slavery (v. 25): top price for a slave fetched about one talent, and one-tenth that amount or less was more common. The practice of being sold for debt was sanctioned by the OT (Lev 25:39; 2 Kings 4:1), but such slaves had to be freed in the year of Jubilee (every fiftieth year). (For Jewish and Gentile slavery in Jesus' day, cf. EBC, 1:489 SBK, 4:697–716; Jeremias, Jerusalem, pp. 312ff., 345ff.)

In this parable selling the slave and his family does not mean the debt is canceled but rather highlights the servant's desperate plight. With neither resources nor hope, he begs for time and promises to pay everything back (v. 26)—an impossibility. So the master takes pity on him and cancels the indebtedness (v. 27). The word daneion ("loan," a hapax legomenon) suggests that the king mercifully decides to look on the loss as a bad loan rather than embezzlement; but by v. 32 he abandons that terminology and calls it a "debt."¹

1 Chronicles 29:1-9 (ESV)

¹ And David the king said to all the assembly, "Solomon my son, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced, and the work is great, for the palace will not be for man but for the Lord God. ² So I have provided for the house of my God, so far as I was able, the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, besides great quantities of onyx and stones for setting, antimony, colored stones, all sorts of precious stones and marble. ³ Moreover, in addition to all that I have provided for the holy house, I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver, and because of my devotion to the house of my God I give it to the house of my God: ⁴ 3,000 talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and 7,000 talents of refined silver, for overlaying the walls of the house, ⁵ and for all the work to be done by craftsmen, gold for the things of gold and silver for the things of silver. Who then will offer willingly, consecrating himself today to the Lord?" ⁶ Then the leaders of fathers' houses made their freewill offerings, as did also the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and the officers over the king's work. ⁷ They gave for the service of the house of God 5,000 talents and 10,000 darics of gold, 10,000 talents of silver, 18,000 talents of bronze and 100,000 talents of iron. ⁸ And whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord, in the care of Jehiel the Gershonite. ⁹ Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly.

¹ Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 406). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

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Leviticus 25:39-40 (ESV)

³⁹ “If your brother becomes poor beside you and sells himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave: ⁴⁰ he shall be with you as a hired servant and as a sojourner. He shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee.

2 Kings 4:1 (ESV)

¹ Now the wife of one of the sons of the prophets cried to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord, but the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves.”