

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

(Matthew 18:23-35)

Introduction:

1. Last week in our study of "matters pertaining to the heart," we pointed out from Matthew 18:35 that forgiveness involves the heart.
2. Today we are studying the parable that Jesus concluded with this statement.
3. Let us begin by examining . . .

Discussion:

I. WHY JESUS TAUGHT THIS PARABLE

- A. We learn from vs.21 that Peter asked Jesus a question about forgiveness.
- B. Jesus answered Peter's question in vs.22.
- C. It was this exchange with Peter that led Jesus to teach this parable.
- D. Now that we understand why Jesus taught it, let us turn our attention to . . .

II. (vs.23-35) THE PARABLE

- A. There are 3 main characters in this parable: a king and 2 servants.
 - a. One servant owed the king 10,000 talents.
 - b. The other servant owed 100 pence to the servant who owed the king.
- B. The king took account of his servants.
 1. The servant who owed the king 10,000 talents was brought before him.
 2. This man could not possibly pay his debt.
 3. This servant, his wife, his children, and all that he had were to be sold.
 4. At least the king would get back some of his money.
- C. (vs.26) The servant pleaded with the king to be patient with him.
 1. He fell down before the king and worshipped him.
 2. He said that he would pay the king all that he owed him.
- D. (vs.27) The king forgave the debt.
 1. He was moved with compassion toward the servant.
 2. He let the servant go [*forgive*: "to let go, give up"].
 3. The servant who owed his king such a tremendous debt was forgiven.
- E. (vs.28-30) Unfortunately, this servant would not forgive his fellow servant.
 1. His fellow servant owed him 100 pence, an insignificant amount of money.
 2. He took his fellow servant by the throat and demanded payment.
 3. This fellow servant made the same request that he had earlier made (vs.29b).
 4. However, there was no compassion shown, and the fellow servant was cast into prison until the debt could be paid.

- F. The king found out what happened, and he delivered the servant he had forgiven to the tormentors.
- G. Jesus concluded His parable by driving His point home in vs.35.
- III. MANY PASSAGES STRESS THE NECESSITY OF FORGIVENESS
 - A. Jesus made the same point in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:12, 14-15).
 - B. The Epistles emphasize forgiveness (Ephesians 4:31-32; Colossians 3:12-14).
 - C. To be members of God's kingdom we must practice forgiveness.
- IV. A FAILURE TO FORGIVE LEADS TO SERIOUS PROBLEMS
 - A. A failure to forgive can cause families to suffer great harm, as well as the church.
 - B. Unwillingness to forgive can be caused by:
 - 1. pride -- not being able to admit wrong
 - 2. a lack of faith (Luke 17:3-5)
 - 3. hatred toward someone who did wrong (see 1 John 3:15)
 - 4. a desire for vengeance (Romans 12:19-21)
 - 5. unwillingness to forget the past (bury the hatchet)
 - C. Great examples of forgiveness are Jacob and Esau (Genesis 33), Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 50), and Jesus (Luke 23:34).

Conclusion:

- 1. The Lord commands His followers to practice forgiveness.
- 2. In His parable Jesus showed very clearly how God's forgiveness is dependent upon our willingness to forgive others.