

# **Biblical Forgiveness**

## **The Spirit of Forgiveness**

### **Introduction**

- Last time, we looked at the setting of Matthew 18 Christ's model for resolving conflict.
- Today, we will look at the spirit of forgiveness that a Christian should possess

### **The Reason for the Parable**

- Last week we examined the general flow of events leading into Matthew 18 and saw reasons that there was strife among the disciples (see vs. 1).
- We noted the many times Peter was involved in events which could make him an instigator.
- It is Peter that asked the question in vs. 21 about how many times you should forgive someone.
  - John Gill provides these two quotes from rabbis that explain where Peter was coming from:
    - "A man that commits a sin, the "first" time they pardon him; the 'second' time they pardon him; the 'third' time they pardon him: the 'fourth' time they do not pardon, according to Amos 2:6."
    - "he that says I have sinned, and I repent, they forgive him 'unto three times', and no more."
  - As with most things in the Law, the Jews created artificial limitations for righteous actions where God intended the development of the heart to righteousness.
- What does Christ say? "Seventy times seven"
  - This is not a strict limit of 490.
  - This is such a high number that it is impractical if not impossible to reach it.

### **The Story for the Parable**

- A king takes account of his servants.
- One servant owed the astronomical sum of 10,000 talents.
  - If these were silver talents (most likely), that is \$840,000,000 today.
  - Historical perspective: One of the richest men of the era, Crassus (115-53 B.C.), is said by Pliny the Elder have been worth 200,000,000 sesterces. Plutarch says 7,100 talents. These numbers convert reasonably even to each other.

- The king orders him and his family to be sold as slaves and their possessions sold to recover the great debt.
- The man begs for mercy, and the king is moved to grant it.
- The man leaves and finds someone who owes him 300 *denarii* (\$960)
  - 1 talent = 6,000 denarii.
  - This man was owed .0016% of what he had been forgiven.
- The man has no mercy and throws this borrower into debtor's prison.
- The people saw this and reported it back to the king.
- He calls the man to account for his actions, for being unforgiving in a small matter when he had been forgiven an incalculable debt.
- The king turns the man over to be tortured until he could pay the unpayable debt.

## The Point of the Parable

- Matthew Poole (1624-1679) makes these 10 observations:
  - That as men, by the law of nature and God, and the laws of men, may be debtors to us, to our reputation, to our estate; so we are all debtors to the glory, honour, and justice of God.
  - That it is a vast debt we owe to God's honour and justice, to which no debt owing by any to us can bear any proportion.
  - That we have nothing to pay to God, in satisfaction for our debt.
  - That God hath a right to demand a full satisfaction of us.
  - That God, for Christ's sake, upon our application to him for mercy, will forgive us our debts.
  - That we are not so ready to forgive our brethren their little injuries, as God is to forgive us.
  - That our difficulty to forgive our brethren, after God's liberality in forgiving us, is a great charge, or will be a great charge against us in the court of heaven.
  - That we ought to set before us God's compassion towards us, and free love in forgiving us, potently to move us to forgive those who have done us injury, and to forgive them out of that consideration.
  - That we ought from our hearts to forgive men their trespasses; that is, so as not to hate them, bear them any grudge or malice, seek any private revenge upon them, or public satisfaction, beyond what they are able to give, but be ready to do them what common offices of kindness in their straits are in our power.
  - That the not doing of this will be an ill evidence to our souls, that God hath not indeed forgiven us, as well as a bar against such forgiveness; and an ill omen, that some punishment from God expects us in this life, to bring us to a temper more conformable to the gospel, and if not, this life, yet in the life which is to come.
- The bottom line is that we who have been forgiven so much in salvation should be as willing to forgive others as God to forgive us.