

A PARABLE OF CONTRASTS

Matthew 18:21-35

Introduction: In one of the times Jesus explained in private things to His disciples Peter asked Jesus a question about forgiving others. Peter's logic was the same as anybody else's as well as ours today. If the law gave a limit of times a person had to forgive somebody, then perhaps adding another time or two would be even more gracious so Peter said how about seven (7) times instead of just the three (3) that the law required. Peter thought that a person would be overly kind to do such a thing. Jesus however replied to Peter, not just seven (7) but 70 times 7. Of course that stunned Peter and the others who were listening. Jesus was telling Peter and everyone else to always be ready to forgive and it was not a matter of how many times but of one's attitude in forgiving.

I. IN JESUS PARABLE, A KING CALLED HIS STAFF IN TO SETTLE ACCOUNTS

1. One owed a great sum, ten thousand talents, many thousands of dollars. There was really no excuse for such a debt.
2. Unable to repay the King, the man and all he had, family and all was sold.
 - It was a common act, in keeping with the Mosaic law.
 - The servant knew the King had the right to do what he did.
 - The servant asked for mercy and more time to repay the debt, and in an act of mercy, the King erased the servant's debt.
3. The same forgiven servant was owed by a fellow servant also.
 - The debt was about twenty dollars, much smaller than what the other servant owed the King.
 - The small amount could have been repaid much easier than the larger debt to the King.
 - The servant who had been forgiven his debt refused to have mercy to the one who owed him the small amount and had him put into prison.
4. All this made its way to the King which upset him greatly.
 - The servant whom the King had forgiven who had owed so much had refused to forgive a fellow servant of an insignificant amount of some twenty dollars.
 - The King then had the servant whom he had forgiven and erased the debt taken and cast into prison after telling him that he should have done the same thing to the one who owed him that was done to him, he should have forgiven the debt.

II. PARDON RECEIVED FROM GOD OBLIGATES ONE TO EXTEND PARDON TO OTHERS

1. It is natural for people to be condemning in their judgments of others.
 - As the forgiven servant treated his fellow servant who owed him but couldn't pay his little debt.
 - It was customary to take the debtor by the throat and take him to court.
 - Greeks spoke of "choking the life out.." meaning that they were making a person pay his debt.
 - What a picture of human nature: a man who had been freed from his gigantic debt grabbing a fellow man by the throat because he couldn't pay a small amount.

- The unmerciful servant expected from his fellow servant that which he, himself, did not have to do - repay a debt.
2. It is easy to see the failures and weaknesses of others.
- It is mistakes, sin in others but only faults in us.
 - It is meanness in others but only mischief in ourselves.
 - It is harshness in others, but only being frank in ourselves.
 - It is selfishness in others, but only being thrifty in ourselves.
 - In the work of the Church, we often expect much more of others than we do ourselves.
 - We expect others to take the lead, others to do the work and we are quick to criticize if they don't.
 - We need to remember Jesus' teachings on condemning and judging others. **Matthew 7:1-5.**
 - We are so quick to point out a speck in someone's eye but have a big stick in our own.
 - We need to be as gentle and understanding and kind to others as we are to ourselves.
3. The nature of Divine forgiveness is merciful and just.
- In the parable told by Jesus, the king represents God as He owns everything, the debt owed represents "sin" and the servant represents every human being.
 - The king showed pity to the servant who was so indebted - so God, the Father shows mercy to all.
 - **Psalm 130:7; Isaiah 1:18; Psalm 103:12; 1 John 1:9**
 - God is merciful, BUT God is also Just.
 - The heart of the parable is that God will not forgive us our sins UNLESS we freely forgive others their offenses against us.
 - Forgiving others is truly a Christian "grace."
 - The Laws of Moses did not obligate such forgiveness.
 - Jesus taught that it was DUTY to forgive.
 - We are to forgive one another 70 times 7 or unlimited times, every day.
 - God does not pass lightly nor overlook sin, nor should we.
 - Sin is to be rebuked, regardless of who commits it.
 - **"..Forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors..."**
 - From Jesus' example of prayer, it is a very clear fact that we must forgive before we can be forgiven.
 - Divine forgiveness is wonderful, but God forgives AS we have forgiven.
 - Who can really pray the Lord's Prayer daily without a guilty conscience?
 - For a person who can never forgive, let it be hoped that he/she never sins.
 - God's forgiveness and man's forgiveness are eternally, inseparably joined.
4. The nature of human debt to the Divine is unpayable.
- The parable teaches that all people are debtors to God, no difference, no exception.
 - **Romans 3:23 - "...all have sinned..."**
 - **Isaiah 53:6 - "...all we like sheep have gone astray..."**
 - Man's relationship to God is one of debtor to creditor. We owe more than we can ever pay.
 - The two debts in the parable are exact amounts:
 - 100 denari - \$20.00 - 20 cent coin (multiplied out)
 - A Talent - \$960 - \$9 million, 600 thousand. (multiplied out)

- So it is with our obligation to God. How much do we owe the Lord?
 - Some don't think that they owe God anything.
 - They breath God's air, receive His sunshine and rain.
 - Yet never give God a passing glance or an ounce of thanks in return.
 - Others acknowledge that they might owe God something, while some confess that they owe God much.
 - The parable Jesus told smacks at man's vanity and self-reliance for it says to us:
 - "You owe the Lord far more than you can ever pay..."
- Therefore, if our debt to God is enormous and we have nothing really with which to pay our obligations, THEN salvation is of divine GRACE and not of HUMAN MERIT.
 - WE ARE DEBTORS TO GOD, EVERY ONE OF US.

CONCLUSION:

1. Peter's figures were those of human reasoning, human nature when he added some to what the law required, he thought he was being generous, but the Lord's reasoning was far different, for it required an unlimited, infinite amount.
2. Consider the two debts: One was a very small, insignificant amount while the other was so large it was unpayable.
 - The wrongs done to us and the injuries we receive from others are insignificant and so tiny in comparison with the magnitude of our wrongs and sins against God.
3. Look at the two creditors: The great, mighty king forgave the great debt owed him. The lowly servant to whom a tiny amount was owed did not forgive.
 - If God is willing to forgive us the more, then we should be willing to forgive the less.
4. Christian! You have been forgiven by God a vast, uncountable amount, uncountable times. Have you been just as forgiving for lesser amounts and times?