

70 x 7  
(Matthew 18:21~35)

<sup>21</sup>Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? <sup>22</sup>Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. <sup>23</sup>Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. <sup>24</sup>And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. <sup>25</sup>But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. <sup>26</sup>The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. <sup>27</sup>Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup>But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. <sup>29</sup>And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. <sup>30</sup>And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. <sup>31</sup>So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. <sup>32</sup>Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: <sup>33</sup>Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? <sup>34</sup>And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. <sup>35</sup>So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.

I want to speak to you tonight, on the subject of *forgiveness*... If there's one characteristic that ought to be evident in every born again believers life, it should be that of a "*forgiving spirit*"... Given the abundant measure of grace, mercy and forgiveness that we've been shown from God, for our sins/transgressions, in turn, we should be quick to show others, that same grace, mercy and forgiveness, for the wrongs they may have done to us. That would only be fitting and right, don't you think? Matter of fact, given the enormous amount of sin/transgressions that God has forgiven us for, it would be downright evil for us not to forgive others, their sins/transgressions against us, would it not?

Well, that's exactly what I want to talk to you about tonight, for that is the very subject that Jesus is speaking to here in this story about the king and his servant, we just read. The story that Jesus tells here is birthed out of a question that Peter asked, concerning how many times he should forgive a brother who sins or transgresses against him. Jesus had been teaching the disciples the proper way to deal with a sinning brother, how that first they are to go to the brother one on one, and try and resolve the matter between themselves. If that doesn't work, they were to take two or three other brothers with them, and finally, if he still would not repent, they were to bring him before the church, and if he refused to listen to the church, and would not repent, in the words of Christ Himself, He says...*but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.* Point being, he is no longer to be treated as a "*brother in Christ*," because based on the fact he refused to acknowledge and repent of his sin, and the fact that he would not listen to the whole church body...that means this man is either lost and does not know Christ, or...he is in full blown, willful rebellion, and needs to be separated from fellowship with God's people until he repents. I know there are some who may see that as harsh or unloving, but it's not. Understood, the aim is not to condemn and cast out the individual, but rather, it is intended to be a loving chastisement, more as a final ditch effort to "*Gain the brother back.*" The bible is clear, whom God loves, He chastens. And here, it is also clear, that He has ordained the church body, to discipline or chastise its own. That's what Jesus means there when He says, where two or three are gathered in my name, I will be in the midst. It is to say, that they have the authority to carry out these things.

Now, there's a lot we could say on this matter, but for tonight, I want us to focus on Peter's response to all this, and the question he poses about forgiving a brother who has transgressed against us. Now Peter's question seems to be related to the first one of the three here, where Jesus said, "*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*" Now, that clearly seems to be the one, that Peter is alluding to here, when he asks, (Vs 21)..."*how many times shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?*" Let me just kind of paraphrase what Peter means by that, "*If my brother sins against me, and let's say I do go to him on the matter, and he repents, and tells me he's sorry...*(that's what it means there when it says, he hears you, and you have gained thy brother...that means the relationship is restored)...Peter says, *how many times do I do this, before finally I just say...I'm done with him.*" At what point is enough, enough? Is seven times enough? The answer Jesus gives, no doubt shocked Peter, and the rest... Jesus replies, *I say not unto thee, until seven times: but, until seventy times seven.* Jesus says, "*Not 7 times Peter...but 70 x 7*

times.” Now you can do the math here, and you come up with 490 times. But that is not what Jesus is saying here. He’s not suggesting the magic number is 490 times, but rather, the intent here is unlimited times.

You see, I’m convinced that the way Peter’s question is worded, that Peter thought 7 times was a lot. And no doubt, Peter was “shocked” to hear His Lord’s reply...not 7 times Peter, but 70 times of 7... Peter, I want you to give your brother forgiveness, 70 times over what you are thinking he deserves. You see the point? I believe Peter did, and was shocked. Compared to the 7 times Peter had in mind, 70 times that amount was almost an unbelievable amount. But here’s where this gets interesting. You see, at first, that does seem like an awful lot, to have our brother do us wrong that many number of times, and then...just forgive him? Well, the reason it seems like a lot to ask us to do, is because of the perspective we’re looking at it from. When you only consider it from our perspective, from the standpoint that if our brother do us wrong hundreds of times, and yet, we are supposed to forgive him...from that perspective it doesn’t seem right, even unfair. But...all that changes when you look at it from a different perspective...that’s not so much when you consider it in the light of the number of times the Lord’s forgiven us, and how much He’s forgiven us...it’s really not that much is it? Thus...the analogy Jesus gives us here.

Knowing that Peter was shocked at what He had said, and was thinking that 70 times 7 was an awful lot of times to forgive my brother...Jesus offers up this very simple little analogy to put it all in perspective.

*<sup>23</sup>Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants...*

This is the way it is in “*God’s kingdom*” Peter...if you look at it only from man’s perspective, it doesn’t seem fair, but when you look at it from “*God’s perspective*”...it’s really not that much to ask. Jesus goes on to share a story about a “*King*” who was taking account of His servants. And it just so happened that one was brought unto Him, that was greatly “*Indebted*” to Him. 10,000 talents, Jesus says. An astronomical amount, literally in our day equivalent to millions/billions of dollars. It was a debt that the servant simply could not pay. So the King ordered the servant, along with his wife and children, and all their belongings to be sold, to make restitution for the debt. But the servant fell down at the King’s feet and pleaded with Him for mercy, and time to repay Him. The King was moved with compassion, and forgave the man his entire debt. A very beautiful story... Now this is contrasted with the same servant, going out and finding a fellowservant who owed him a mere 100 pence, a very small amount, roughly around a hundred days salary. We are told, he demanded the man pay him his money, even grabbing him by the throat, basically threatening to kill him if he didn’t pay up. When the man could not pay, he threw him in prison, until he paid him what he owed him. Jesus then declares, that other servants saw what happened and came and told the King, who ended up turning this “*heartless servant*” over to the “*tormentors*” as He puts it, *till he should pay back all that was due Him...*

Now, I don’t want to read too much into this story, because to do so, we might miss the point... I think sometimes we over analyze this stuff, and take something meant to be simple, and make it complicated.

The parable is this...

**The King...represents God the Father...**

**The Servant...represents us...**

**The 10,000 talents...represent our sin debt before God...**

**The Fellowservant...represents our brothers and sisters out here...**

**The 100 ...represents their sins/transgressions against us...**

Point is...the number of sins/transgressions of our brother against us are extremely small, even insignificant when compared to the number of sins/transgressions we have committed against the Father. Point being, if God can forgive us such a massive debt, can we not forgive our brothers and sisters such a small debt? The “*Key verse*” here is found in verse 33...

*<sup>33</sup>Should not you also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?*

Given the number of times has shown us mercy, given the enormous debt God has forgiven us for...doesn’t it only seem reasonable that we forgive our brothers transgressions against us, which are

nothing compare to the enormous sin debt we've been forgiven? The transgressions of my brother toward me, thought it be 490 times...is nothing compared to what God has forgiven me for. You see that? That's the point of the comparison between the 10,000 talents and the 100 pence. My brother's sins against me is like an anthill, compared to the mountain of sin I have committed towards God! And if God is gracious enough to forgive me such a debt, and show such pity on me...should not I be more than willing to show the same kind of mercy and forgiveness to my brother?

That's a rhetorical question...the answer is automatically implied, yes! And not only is the answer yes, we should, Jesus takes it a step further and makes it clear, that more than simply knowing that we should forgive our brother, He makes it clear that we better do it, or we'll suffer the same consequences that this "unforgiving servant" here in our story suffered!

*<sup>32</sup>Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: <sup>33</sup>Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? <sup>34</sup>And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him... <sup>35</sup>So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.*

**I think the Lord's point is pretty clear here, right? Beloved, this is serious...<sup>35</sup>So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.**

Beloved, our Lord commands us to "forgive" our brothers their transgressions against us... Understood, this is not optional, this is not up for debate...there is no discussion in the matter. He simply says, do it! Making it crystal clear...if you desire mercy and forgiveness for your sin...you'd better show mercy and forgiveness to your brother.

**We see this same truth when Jesus was teaching His disciples "how to pray"...**

*<sup>9</sup>After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. <sup>10</sup>Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. <sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. <sup>14</sup>For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: <sup>15</sup>But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Mt. 6)*

Notice the "condition" there...<sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors... The key statement there is, "...as we forgive our debtors"...which is to say, "forgive us in proportion to the way we forgive others." That changes everything, right? "Forgiveness for our sins" is directly dependent upon "Our forgiveness" of our brother's sin. <sup>14</sup>For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: <sup>15</sup>But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses...

Beloved, this is serious...whether or not we receive mercy and have our trespasses are forgiven by God, is dependent on whether or not we show mercy by forgiving the trespasses of others against us. I don't think there's any way to misinterpret that, do you? It's one of those principles in life, one of those laws of nature sort of things, that simply stands as a guiding law for all men. Sort of a "reap what you sow" kind of thing. If you sow wheat, you get wheat, if you sow corn, you'll get corn, if you sow green beans, and you'll get green beans, and so forth. No one here would ever expect to sow wheat, and have green beans come up, right? Or sow tomato seed, and have corn pop up. No one here would ever expect that, nor has anyone here ever seen that, nor will we ever. Which makes what Jesus is saying here, all the more important to us. He that does not forgive the debts/trespasses of others, need not think that he will have his forgiven by God. "*Blessed are the merciful...for they shall obtain WHAT?*" Right...for they shall obtain mercy. Would you not agree that the opposite of that is equally true as well? What should those who are not merciful to others expect? Should they expect mercy?

The main point here in our passage this evening is, that it is only RIGHT that we forgive those who trespass against us. In light of the enormous amount of transgressions and sins that God has forgiven us for, simply because we cried out to him for it, to NOT forgive our fellow man his trespasses against us...which are very few, very little in comparison to what God has forgiven us for...to NOT forgive our brother in light of that...is JUST WRONG! And God cannot, and will not do it. It's just NOT RIGHT! Consider the parable again, and you tell me, the servant in this story, and how he owed such a great debt to the king, 10,000 talents/billion dollars let's say. And the fact, once forgiven his debt by the king, he

goes out and refuses to forgive a man and threatens to kill him, if he doesn't pay up his tiny debt against him. That's just not right is it? That is not just! Jesus was right in calling him "*wicked*," wasn't He? He'd be absolutely just to turn him over to the tormentors until he paid every last cent, right? It would be fitting and just for that man. Matter of fact, to help us understand the "*condition*" God places on forgiveness here, considering this story, wouldn't God be "*unjust*" to forgive a man like this? Absolutely...that's why He makes this stipulation...

Now having said that, we need to consider this story as it was meant to be considered...and that is, by putting ourselves in the place of this "*Servant*" here. I know He was speaking to Peter here, but the same truth applies to you and me as well. We've all be forgiven a huge debt to God. My sins, my transgressions were innumerable, and yet...God forgave me in Christ. Which is what the first part of that story depicts. But what I need to consider this evening is, the second part, and my response to my fellow man, in terms of his sin, his transgressions against me. Am I merciful, and quick to show forgiveness to others...or am I like this "*unforgiving, wicked servant*"?

**The question for all of us here tonight is this...** Is there anyone you know of, that you need to give forgiveness to, for something they've done to you? Are you harboring a grudge against anyone? Is there anyone here tonight, that has a brother/sister who has done you wrong...and you need to go them, and try and mend things? Beloved, based on what Jesus says here, it's a dangerous thing to harbor "*un-forgiveness*" towards anyone. As God's children, as those who have been forgiven MUCH...it's only right that we show that same forgiveness to others. Compared to all that God has forgiven us for, the sins/transgressions of my brother against me is so small, so insignificant, that it becomes a very small thing for us to forgive...even if they do it to us, 490 times...