

Redeeming the Time - Part 3

FORGIVING SAINTS Matthew 18:21-35

STIMULATE

** In our study last time we learned that it is imperative for us to be the "**Fertile Soil**" which receives the seed of the gospel and bears fruit to the glory of the Father. How did you do with your list of God's fruit in your life?

Galatians 5:22-23 are all attributes of my life. By God's grace I have been privileged to learn, apply and share the Word of God with others and to then enjoy watching their growth in Christ.

** We also learned the three errors made by the world which leads them into a lifestyle of wasting their time here on earth. Do you recall those three errors?

- 1) **Hardening their hearts against God!**
- 2) **Making personal comfort their god!**
- 3) **Maintaining a worldly lifestyle, loving money!**

MOTIVATE

** As we press on in our study of "**Redeeming the Time**", we are going to be learning the types of things that hinder us in our efforts and how to avoid them. For today, in Part 3 we will hear our Lord teach us on the subject of forgiveness. Without a doubt one of the most challenging areas for us as human beings, as Christians we should excel in obeying the Lord in this area of our lives so that we will become known as "**Forgiving Saints**".

Please join me in Matthew 18, verses 21-35 as we see Jesus teach Peter and the disciples on this very sensitive issue.

Read passage (V.21-25) (V.26-30) (V.31-35)

Opening Prayer

Forgiving Saints

INVESTIGATE

V.21 ** What preceded Peter's coming to Jesus and asking his question on forgiveness?

The disciples had asked the Lord about a subject they were very preoccupied with, "Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven"? (V.1)
cf. Mark 9:30-34, Luke 22:17-24.

Jesus answers their question by describing the childlikeness of the believer. Matthew 18:3-20

** After hearing about how his brothers in Christ can get caught up in sin, what question does Peter ask of Jesus?

"Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

** Peter is trying to please the Lord with his magnanimous effort to forgive. From where do you suppose he got the number "seven"?

Jewish tradition of the day and the teaching of the Rabbi's was that you are obligated to forgive someone three times, if they continue to sin against you. But, should it happen a fourth time, you do not have to forgive. Peter was taking the standard of the day and doubling it, and then even adding one more. Surely the Lord would be pleased!

V.22 ** How does Jesus respond to Peter's offer?

"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

** Knowing that Jesus brought in the era of "grace and truth" (John 1:17), is He here setting up a system of legalism as to how many times we are to forgive?

Absolutely not! "He simply picked up on Peter's number and multiplied it by itself and then by ten, indicating a number that, for all practical purposes, was beyond counting".

[John Mac Arthur]

Christians are not to be involved in record keeping when it comes to an offense against them, but instead they are to freely forgive. cf. Matthew 6:12

V.23 ** To illustrate His point, Jesus tells a parable about a "certain" king. What did that king want to do?

"...who wished to settle accounts with his slaves"

** Because this parable is to be a comparison with "the kingdom of heaven", who does the king represent?

God, Almighty!

** What does Jesus mean by the king settling accounts?

Kings would regularly bring their subjects before them to have them pay what they owed, not at all unlike our income tax of today.

V.24 ** What did the slave of our parable owe to the king?

Ten thousand talents!

** How much is that?

Your Bible margin may tell you about \$10,000,000.00 in silver, but that is not the point here. The word used here is "murias" and was the largest numerical term in the Greek language. It was used figuratively to represent a vast, uncountable number. We get the English word "myriad" from it and its usage is clarified in Revelation 5:11-12. (All see)

** As we apply this parable to our relationship to God, what does this huge debt represent?

The incalculable, unpayable debt of our sin that every man owes God.

V.25 ** Can we pay the debt ourselves, even if we had all of eternity to do it?

No way! The payment could only be made by the spotless lamb of God! cf. 1Peter 1:18-19

** Can the slave in this parable pay his debt?

No, that too is impossible! "...since he did not have the means to repay..."

** What did the king do?

He ordered the slave, his wife and his children to all be sold. While this would not repay even a fraction of the debt, it would extract from the man all that he was and has.

V.26 ** How did the slave react to so harsh a punishment?

He fell down and "prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.'"

** Was this a genuine act of repentance toward the king?

No, the slave "did not have the means to repay" (V.25) and is only begging for forgiveness while offering a detestable display of phony worship.

V.27 ** Even though the slave was very insincere, how did the king respond?

He felt compassion! [splachnizomai] lit. "to be moved in the inward parts"

** For compassion to be genuine, what must follow?

Action in accordance with compassion!

** What two steps does the king now take?

- 1) He releases the slave!
- 2) He forgives the entire debt!

** When we say that we have forgiven someone for something they have done against us, are we willing to do those same two things?

If we are going to be like our Father who is in heaven, we must release our brothers and sisters from the bondage of their sin against us and completely forgive them for the offense. Rightly has it been said that we should forgive and forget! cf. Isaiah 43:25, Jeremiah 31:34, Hebrews 10:16-17

V.28 ** Having just been forgiven for such a huge debt, what attitude would you expect this slave to develop?

One of thankfulness toward the king and compassion toward others.

** What did this guy do?

He "went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.'"

**** How do you feel about this slave who was forgiven so much and yet cannot find it in his heart to forgive even a little?**

It is a disgusting display of hypocrisy! To be willing to ask for and receive forgiveness, but then after receiving it, to refuse to give it in the same measure is a deplorable act!

**** As you search your own heart, is there anything that you are refusing to forgive of another, after Jesus Christ has forgiven you of so much?**

Hopefully no, but if there is, you can resolve that with the Lord today. Let's continue now and learn how important that is to the Lord.

V.29 ** What did the next slave in our story then do?

The same thing that the first one did. He fell down (this time out of genuine respect) and said, "Have patience with me and I will repay you".

**** Was that a genuine statement? How long would one have to work to repay a debt of one hundred denarii?**

Yes, it was very genuine. He could repay that debt in just three and one half months! A denarii was equal to one days pay.

V.30 ** How does the wicked slave respond to this offer?

He refuses to be gracious or compassionate and throws his fellow slave into prison. Again, if that seems deplorable to you, that is exactly what we are doing when we fail to forgive others!

V.31 ** Does the wicked slave get away with it?

No, other slaves see his actions and are deeply grieved, so they go and report it to the king. Here is another great example for us to follow: Should we become aware of a brother or sister who is harboring unforgiveness in their hearts, we should take it to our Father and ask Him to grant repentance to our brother. cf. 1John 5:16

V.32 ** What does the king do next?

He calls the wicked slave back before him.

**** What was the motivation for the king to forgive the slave in the first place?**

Simply because he asked! Very much a parallel with us asking the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive our sin and become the Lord and Savior of our lives.

V.33 ** The king now explains what is the only acceptable response to having been forgiven so great a debt. What is it?

"Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?"

**** Did you catch the connection between God showing mercy to us and the mercy that we show to others?**

It is to be the same! (cf. James 2:13)

V.34 ** What is the punishment for not showing mercy?

He is handed over to the torturers (not the executioners) until he should repay all that was owed him.

****** This now introduces a new debt! Why can't this be the former debt?

Because our salvation is permanent. "No one is able to snatch" us out of our Father's hand.(John 10:29)

As we saw back in verse 24, the unpayable debt was our sin against a Holy God, paid for by Jesus Himself. But having been forgiven by the king, the debt now becomes a payable one, the debt of showing forgiveness to others, which we owe to our God!

V.35 ** What stern warning does Jesus give to His disciples?

His heavenly Father would do the same to them, if they did not forgive one another.

All see - Hebrews 12:6-11

Our God will use stress, hardship, pressure, health or other difficulties until our sin of unforgiveness is confessed and forgiveness is granted.

****** Now, back in Matthew 18:35, how do we know that our forgiveness of others must be genuine and total, not merely a superficial display?

Because it is to be "from your heart" and must match the type of forgiveness the He has given to us in Christ!
cf. Ephesians 4:32

EXTRICATE

****** If we truly wish to redeem the time for our Lord's sake, what must we avoid at all costs?

Failing to forgive others, especially in the light of how much we ourselves have been forgiven.

DELINEATE

****** If we refuse to forgive others, how will that hinder us in our usefulness to the Lord?

We will be under His loving chastening, and as such we will be preoccupied with our self inflicted woes rather than with the call of spreading to good news to the world around us.

EVALUATE

****** How are you doing? Are you known as a "**Forgiving Saint**" by your brothers and sisters in Christ? Does the unsaved world around you see you as a kind and gracious person or one who bitterly seeks revenge?

Is it your pattern to receive even a large offense lightly and then quickly forgive? Or do you receive a light offense poorly and then fail to forgive?

ACTIVATE

** The application of today's study is abundantly obvious. If you are doing well with this area of your Christian life, then excel still more. While you are doing that, be sure to pray for those that you become aware of who might be entangled in this particular sin.

If however, you find yourself stuck in a pattern of unforgiveness, choose to repent now and ask God for the grace to show His mercy to your fellow slaves. Become the "**Forgiving Saint**" that He redeemed you to be.

Closing Prayer