Devotional Scripture: Colossians 3:12-17

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND KEY VERSE OF THE LESSON

Key Verse: Matt 18:33
Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary
Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

RECEIVING FORGIVENESS (MATT 18:21-27)

Frequency of forgiveness (vs 21-22)
No fixed number of times (Barnes Notes)
Forgive others as often as God forgives us (Matt 6:14-15)
Forgiving is overcoming evil with good (Rom 12:21)
Forgive each day so as to not give the devil a foothold (Eph 4:26-27)
Forgiving is commanded (Eph 4:32)
Forgive with love (Col 3:13-14)
It is to man's glory to forgive (Prov 19:11)

Need for forgiveness (vs 23-25)
How Much Do You Owe? (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)
Forgiveness is needed because all will face judgment (Heb 9:27)
Forgiveness is needed because of being accountable to God (Rom 14:12)
Forgiveness is needed because God will avenge (Rom 12:18-20)
Forgiveness is needed because although we cannot repay God, it is one way of showing our gratitude (Ps 116:12)
Forgiveness is needed because of remembering God's blessings (Ps 103:2-3)

Requirements for forgiveness (vs 26)
Humility (James 4:10)
God's Patience (2 Peter 3:15)
Faithfulness of God (1 John 1:9)

Results of forgiveness (vs 27)
God's compassion (Ps 86:15)
Sin will never be counted against us (Rom 4:7-8)
There is no longer any need of another sacrifice (Heb 10:18)
Answered prayer (James 5:15)

GIVING FORGIVENESS (MATT 18:28-35)

Everyone owes something (vs 28)
We owe the government (Mark 12:13-17)
We owe something, even if it nothing but respect (Rom 13:7)
We owe everyone love (Rom 13:8)

Forgiveness requires patience (vs 29-30)
Requires patience because it is one of the fruit of the Spirit, which is needed to forgive (Gal 5:22-23)
Requires patience because it allows us to bear with others (Col 3:12-13)
Requires patience because it is one of the elements of love (1 Cor 13:4-8)
Requires patience because it is commanded (Eph 4:2)
Requires patience because it keeps us from grumbling with others (James 5:7-9)

Someone always watches how I treat others (vs 31)
Some watch for recognition (John 18:26)
Some watch intently to see sincerity (Acts 6:15)
Some watch for knowledge (Acts 4:13)
Some watch the words used (Acts 8:6)
Some watch for advantages (Acts 8:18)
God judges me on how I forgive others (vs 32)
God judges based on how we judge others (Matt 7:1-2)
God forgives us in proportion to how we forgive others (Mark 11:25)
Being merciful triumphs over judgment (James 2:12-13)
Being angry with others makes us subject to God's judgment (Matt 5:22)

Forgiveness requires compassion (vs 33)
The Heart of Forgiveness (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)
Compassion to answer the cries of the poor (Prov 21:13)
Compassion from being in unity with the Holy Spirit (Phil 2:1)
Having compassion because of being one of God's chosen people (Col 3:12)
Compassion that makes us look out for the interest of others (Phil 2:4)
Compassionate because it is commanded (1 Peter 3:8-9)

There are consequences for not forgiving others (vs 34-35)
Consequence of possible imprisonment (Matt 5:25)
Consequence of God's punishment (2 Thess 1:8)
Consequence of being ostracized (2 Tim 3:1-5)
Consequence of being judged by God and sitting against His law (James 4:11-12)
Consequence of sin (James 4:17)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM HAMPTON KEATHLEY IV
THE PASSAGE:
THE PARAMETERS
Remote Context
Immediate Context
THE PROBLEM
THE PROGRESSION
THE PRESENTATION
The King and Servant
The Unforgiving Servant and another servant
The King and the Unforgiving Servant
Jesus' Concluding Statement
THE POINT
THE RELATIONSHIP TO THE KINGDOM PROGRAM OF GOD
THE PARTICULARS
PRINCIPLES:
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY
PRACTICAL POINTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR COMMENTARY

Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson
The lesson reveals to us that Christlike forgiveness has no limits through the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. The study's aim is to learn to forgive others just as God has forgiven us. The study's application is to be prepared to forgive others without reservations.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Matt 18:33
Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

18:21-22. Peter then asked Jesus... Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? Peter was being generous here, for the traditional Rabbinic teaching was that an offended person needed to forgive a brother only three times. Jesus' reply was that forgiveness needs to be exercised to a much greater extent. Not just 7 times, but “70 times 7” (NIV marg.), that is, 490 times. Jesus meant that no limits should be set. Then to complete the idea, He told a parable.
18:23-35. Jesus told about a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. One servant owed a large amount, 10,000 talents. This probably equaled several million dollars, for a talent was probably a measure of gold, between 58 and 80 pounds. When he could not... pay, the master ordered that the servant and his wife... children, and possessions be sold so he could repay as much of the debt as possible. The servant pleaded with his master, begging for time to repay his master. The master took pity on the servant, canceled the debt, and set him free.

But shortly thereafter this servant went out and found another servant who owed him a much smaller amount, 100 denarii. A denarius was a Roman silver coin, worth about 16 cents; it represented a laborer's daily wages. The first servant demanded payment and refused to show mercy toward his debtor. In fact he had the second servant thrown into prison until he paid the debt. The other servants, aware of all that had happened... were greatly distressed (elypēthēsan “grieved or sad to the point of distress”; cf. 14:9; 19:22) by this turn of events and told their master what had transpired. The master called back the first servant and jailed him for failing to show mercy to a fellow servant when he had been forgiven a much greater debt. The Lord was teaching that forgiveness ought to be in direct proportion to the amount forgiven. The first servant had been forgiven all, and he in turn should have forgiven all. A child of God has had all his sins forgiven by faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore when someone sins against him, he ought to be willing to forgive... from the heart no matter how many times the act occurs (cf. 18:21-22; Eph. 4:32).

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

As a boy, I remember watching a particular old family show on television. Many of the stories had a distinct moral lesson, often very simple but also very compelling. Some of the Lord's parables have similar qualities. The fact that they are easy to understand does not undermine their power to teach and convict. Our text is part of the Lord's response to Peter's powerful question about forgiveness in Matthew 18:21. The Lord could have answered very simply by saying something like, "Be forgiving of others since God has been forgiving toward you," which is, after all, the point of the Lord's answer. However, the Lord instead told a simple but powerful story, with a point so obvious that all should grasp it quickly. It is the story of the unforgiving servant. The key to understanding this parable is to see the contrast between the attitude and behavior of the king toward his servant and that same servant's attitude and behavior toward his fellow servant. The unforgiving servant owed the king a vast sum he could not pay—ten thousand talents (Matt. 18:24). The king demanded a reckoning but elected not to punish the servant after he pled for mercy and humbly asked for more time to pay. The king exhibited "compassion," a term that points to feelings of pity toward someone in trouble or affliction. When confronting a fellow servant who owed him a rather paltry sum (a hundred pence), however, that same servant did not respond with the same compassion. He had him cast into prison. A more striking contrast could not be imagined. The king forgave a great debt, while the very servant who received that forgiveness would not turn around and forgive a relatively small debt. The language of Matthew 18:33 points to the heart of the issue. Should not the servant have been compelled to extend the same forgiveness he had received? Those who receive mighty forgiveness should extend grace to others. If this does not happen, there has been a failure to internalize God's justice and mercy. We are called to live justly and with forgiveness. Why would we not do this? Have not we as sinners been forgiven a great debt? We must be forgiving to other sinners, particularly our brothers and sisters in the Lord. The terms "compassion" and "pity" are used in our text. However, in the original language, the same term is behind both words. Because we are guilty of sin, we should have genuine sympathy and understanding toward our fellow sinners. No one has everything in life in order. We all fall short. Because God has been forgiving toward us, so we should be forgiving toward others. That is the lesson of the powerful parable of the unforgiving servant. There is a bit of a warning at the end of the Lord's comments (Matt. 18:35). Our relationship with our Heavenly Father is not in the right place if we are failing to forgive others. Who do we need to forgive—a family member, friend, pastor, church member, or a coworker? The Lord does not want us to do what the unforgiving servant did; to do that would displease our merciful Heavenly Father.
Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Many car insurance companies include “accident forgiveness” in their policies. The specifics vary, but the foundational idea is that the insurance company will “forgive” a policyholder’s first accident by not increasing his or her premiums. Some companies offer accident forgiveness as a reward for anyone who chooses to be insured by them. Some offer it to customers who have been with them for a certain length of time, etc. At the same time, there are limits to this kind of forgiveness. Just because an insurance company forgives your at-fault accident does not mean that the points added to your driving record are removed. That part of your driving record is separate from what the insurance company can promise to do for you. Accident forgiveness does have its limitations. In today’s text, Peter asks Jesus a question about limits on forgiveness. The gist of Jesus’ initial response is that there should be none. The master teacher then proceeds to tell a parable that challenges Peter (and us) to think not only of forgiving others but also of how much we have been forgiven by our heavenly Father. The measure of the latter should affect our perspective on the former.

The parable of the unforgiving servant, which Matthew alone records, was spoken during the third year of Jesus’ earthly ministry. By that time he had become much more direct in speaking to his disciples of his coming death and resurrection (Matthew 16:21; 17:12, 22, 23). Such predictions led to Peter’s ill-advised rebuke of Jesus’ intentions (Matthew 16:22), a glimmer of understanding (17:13), and great sorrow (17:22, 23). Into this mix was a debate among the Twelve as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven (18:1-5; compare Mark 9:34-37). Immediately preceding the parable of the unforgiving servant (today’s text) is Jesus’ teaching about how to deal with a brother who sins against you. Jesus outlined the steps to be taken, then climaxed his teaching on this subject by highlighting the power of prayer when even two or three are gathered in his name (Matthew 18:19; 20). Peter appears to have been especially attentive to Jesus’ counsel on confronting another who has sinned. Perhaps Peter was thinking of the recent argument regarding “who was the greatest” (Mark 9:34). One commentator speculates that Peter desires clarification about how much forgiveness Jesus expects because Peter has taken offense at one of the Twelve who has challenged Peter’s worthiness to receive the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19). This theory is indeed speculative; no evidence exists to support it.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Note: Outline and points copied from previous SS Lesson dated 07/24/2005

Receiving Forgiveness (Matt 18:21-27)

21 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"
22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.
23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.
24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.
25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.
26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'
27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

Frequency of forgiveness (vs 21-22)

No fixed number of times (Barnes Notes)

The meaning is, that we are not to limit our forgiveness to any fixed number of times. See Gen 4:24. As often as a brother injures us and asks forgiveness, we are to forgive him. It is, indeed, his duty to ask forgiveness, Luke 17:4. If he does this, it is our duty to declare that we forgive him, and to treat him accordingly. If he does not ask us to forgive him, yet we are not at liberty to follow him with revenge and malice, but are still to treat him kindly and to do him good, Luke 10:30-37.
Forgive others as often as God forgives us (Matt 6:14-15)
14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Forgiving is overcoming evil with good (Rom 12:21)
21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Forgive each day so as to not give the devil a foothold (Eph 4:26-27)
26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.

Forgiving is commanded (Eph 4:32)
32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Forgive with love (Col 3:13-14)
13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

It is to man's glory to forgive (Prov 19:11)
11 A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

Need for forgiveness (vs 23-25)

How Much Do You Owe? (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)
We are all familiar with debt. It is a part of life. Banking systems would collapse if no one borrowed money. Monetary debt touches all of life. However, it is probable that you do not know the actual amount of your country’s national debt. It is likely that you do not know the exact amount of the debt of your church. It is even possible that you do not know the precise amount of your own personal debt. Neither do we know the magnitude of our debt to God. We know that we have a huge sin debt. But it is possible—indeed, it is likely—that we have committed some sins unaware. Our debt of sin is so great that it required the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The good news is that the debt is now paid. A hymn says, “The old account was settled long ago.” Another hymn says, “Jesus paid it all!” No one is going to pay your personal debt for you. It’s rare for an individual to pay a church’s debt all by himself or herself. We must all participate. No country will come along and pay our national debt. It will be up to us. But the good news is that the sin debt we could never have paid has been paid—in full. “Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe.”

Forgiveness is needed because all will face judgment (Heb 9:27)
27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

Forgiveness is needed because of being accountable to God (Rom 14:12)
12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Forgiveness is needed because God will avenge (Rom 12:18-20)
19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Forgiveness is needed because although we cannot repay God, it is one way of showing our gratitude (Ps 116:12)
12 How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me?

Forgiveness is needed because of remembering God's blessings (Ps 103:2-3)
2 Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits-- 3 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,
Requirements for forgiveness (vs 26)

_Humility (James 4:10)_

10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. **Repentance (2 Cor 7:10-11)**
10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. 11 See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.

_God's Patience (2 Peter 3:15)_

15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

_Faithfulness of God (1 John 1:9)_

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Results of forgiveness (vs 27)

_God's compassion (Ps 85:15)_

15 But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

_Sin will never be counted against us (Rom 4:7-8)_

7 "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

_There is no longer any need of another sacrifice (Heb 10:18)_

18 And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

_Answered prayer (James 5:15)_

15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

Giving Forgiveness (Matt 18:28-35)

28 “But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'
29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'
30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.
31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.
32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.
33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'
34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.
35 “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”
Everyone owes something (vs 28)

We owe the government (Mark 12:13-17)

13 Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. 14 They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? 15 Should we pay or shouldn't we?" But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." 16 They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. 17 Then Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."

We owe something, even if it nothing but respect (Rom 13:7)

7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

We owe everyone love (Rom 13:8)

8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

Forgiveness requires patience (vs 29-30)

Requires patience because it is one of the fruit of the Spirit, which is needed to forgive (Gal 5:22-23)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Requires patience because it allows us to bear with others (Col 3:12-13)

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Requires patience because it is one of the elements of love (1 Cor 13:4-8)

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails.

Requires patience because it is commanded (Eph 4:2)

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Requires patience because it keeps us from grumbling with others (James 5:7-9)

7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Someone always watches how I treat others (vs 31)

Some watch for recognition (John 18:26)

26 One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove?"

Some watch intently to see sincerity (Acts 6:15)

15 All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.
Some watch for knowledge (Acts 4:13)
13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

Some watch the words used (Acts 8:6)
6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.

Some watch for advantages (Acts 8:18)
18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money

God judges me on how I forgive others (vs 32)

God judges based on how we judge others (Matt 7:1-2)
7:1 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

God forgives us in proportion to how we forgive others (Mark 11:25)
25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

Being merciful triumphs over judgment (James 2:12-13)
12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

Being angry with others makes us subject to God's judgment (Matt 5:22)
22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Forgiveness requires compassion (vs 33)

The Heart of Forgiveness (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)
At the heart of the word forgiveness is the little word give. Often we cannot forgive until we give up something. Sometimes it is our pride that we must give up. Sometimes it is our delusion that we are always right. Sometimes we must give in so that we may forgive. We cannot always have our own way. We cannot always win. To hold on to power may make it impossible for us to forgive. Sometimes we must give over. We cannot control the lives of others and we should not try. So we give people over to themselves and to God. Controlling persons find forgiveness very difficult. Sometimes we must give way. We must allow others the freedom that God has already given them. That includes the freedom to make choices that may not always be the best choices. It includes the freedom to make mistakes. But if we would be forgiving we must never give out. That is a natural inference of what Jesus is saying. We should not tire of forgiving others. What if God became tired of forgiving us? What if God set a time limit and we would have exhausted his forgiveness after one year or ten or twenty? We may rest secure in the knowledge that God forgives us without limit upon our sincere repentance. When we forgive others, we, in a way, show them the nature of God. This is not a burden; it is a privilege.

Compassion to answer the cries of the poor (Prov 21:13)
13 If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.

Compassion from being in unity with the Holy Spirit (Phil 2:1)
2:1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,
**Having compassion because of being one of God's chosen people (Col 3:12)**

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

**Compassion that makes us look out for the interest of others (Phil 2:4)**

4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

**Compassionate because it is commanded (1 Peter 3:8-9)**

8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

**There are consequences for not forgiving others (vs 34-35)**

**Consequence of possible imprisonment (Matt 5:25)**

25 "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.

**Consequence of God's punishment (2 Thess 1:8)**

8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

**Consequence of being ostracized (2 Tim 3:1-5)**

3:1 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

**Consequence of being judged by God and sitting against His law (James 4:11-12)**

11 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you-who are you to judge your neighbor?

**Consequence of sin (James 4:17)**

17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.
Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts from Hampton Keathley IV

The Passage:
Matt 18:21-35

The Parameters
Remote Context
This parable is sandwiched between the broader context of Jesus’ teaching on church discipline and the topic of divorce and remarriage. Both issues involve forgiveness.

Immediate Context
Peter asks Jesus how many times he must forgive his brother when he sins against him. (18:21). Jesus’ answer is directed to the Peter and the rest of the disciples who believe in Christ, therefore this parable is directed to the saved. Jesus answer basically means - an infinite number. The parable illustrates His answer.

The Problem
How many times must we forgive others? Perhaps the unspoken question and problem is how can we forgive others an infinite number of times? What happens if we don’t forgive? So Jesus gives the following illustration:

The Progression
Biographical

The Presentation
The King and Servant
The situation The king was owed an amount so large the servant could never repay.
The servants’ plea The servant admitted his debt and begged for mercy.
The response He felt compassion on the servant and released the debt.

The Unforgiving Servant and another servant
The situation The Unforgiving servant had a fellow servant (one of his peers) who owed him a small amount. The servant grabs his fellow servant and chokes him! No mercy, no compassion.
The servants’ plea The indebted servant begged for mercy.
The response He refused to release the debt and demanded payment, but ironically, he put him in a situation where he would never be able to repay. (This is an important detail.)

The King and the Unforgiving Servant
The situation The king heard of the ungrateful servants refusal to forgive another servant what was owed him.
The king’s response …to the ungrateful servant - He tortured him until he could repay.

Jesus’ Concluding Statement
God will do the same to us if we do not forgive our brother from our heart.

The Point
“Unlimited forgiveness ought to be demonstrated with mercy toward others because it is the reflection of a right relationship with the Father.” Or to state it another way. God’s forgiveness of our sins should motivate us to forgive those who offend us.
The Relationship to the Kingdom Program of God

Since the audience is Peter and his companions, this parable is addressed to believers; therefore, the truth is for present day relationships. The king’s forgiveness for an enormous debt illustrates God’s forgiveness of the believer for his sin. The unforgiving servant’s refusal to release the debt illustrates one who has not appreciated his own forgiveness. The punishment for the unforgiving servant shows God’s efforts to help the believer appreciate his forgiveness. The story illustrates an improper attitude of one who is destined for the kingdom of God.

The Particulars

- 10,000 talents is an impossible amount to repay. This is important because it points out that our debt to God is one we could never repay. That is why hell lasts for eternity.
- The image of being released from a debt is a great illustration of what it is to forgive. You’ve heard the phrase, “Forgive and forget.” People are confused. They think that forgiveness = forgetting. But it doesn’t. You know they owe you, but when you don’t make them pay, you know that it cost you. We don’t forget. We can’t forget, but we don’t hold a grudge. We don’t bring it up again.
- It is interesting to note that the unforgiving servant did not admit his inability to repay. In fact, he said he would pay it off. I think that is significant because it shows that he didn’t really appreciate his own forgiveness. Then he turned around and refused to forgive another servant a debt owed him. We are so much like this servant. We feel like we can’t let another person off the hook. When we do that, we put ourselves in God’s place.
- The unforgiving servant sent his fellow servant to prison where he could not repay the debt. This is important because no one can ever repay you for harm done. You’ve heard the phrase, “I don’t get mad, I get even.” You can’t get even.
- In this parable the unforgiving servant is sent to the torturers by the king (God) for his unwillingness to forgive others. In the broader context of understanding the law of love, and the immediate context of forgiveness, I think this means that if we are unwilling to love well and forgive others, God will “torture” us. I interpret torture as causing us to live and fail by our own efforts, to face our evil, recognize our sin and appreciate God’s forgiveness of us. Then we will in turn forgive others because we will see that we are just as bad as them and capable of doing the same thing they did to us.
- This parable illustrates the principle of Isa 55:8. Isaiah is not talking about God’s infinitude, omnipotence and omniscience. He is talking about forgiveness in the immediate context. In the previous verse he says, God has compassion and will “abundantly pardon.” We are not like that. We are like the unforgiving servant. God’s ways are not our ways.
- Why did Jesus say 70x7? What is the significance of that number? It equals 490. That is how many years Israel stayed in the land without obeying the Sabbath year. God forgave Israel 490 times before he finally sent them to Babylon. Also compare Daniel’s prophecy. God is going to forgive Israel for 490 more years - 70 weeks of years... God does not ask us to do anything that He isn’t willing to do.

Principles:

- When we are injured by another, it establishes a debtor relationship.
- We forgive by canceling the debt someone owes us for wrong done. We don’t expect them to pay us back. We don’t try to get even.
- My motivation to forgive is my own forgiveness. I can never repay God what I owe. When someone else does evil to me, they can never repay either. But when I recognize my forgiveness, I won’t hold them accountable for their evil. When we refuse to forgive someone else, it is the same as saying. I would never do such a thing. When we realize our own evil, we know that we can and will do the same things to others.
- Misery is assured if I fail to forgive.
• What about the person that does not come seeking forgiveness and repent? Jesus forgave the people while he was on the cross and they had not repented. They did not know what they were doing. Until they repented there could be no remission of sin and no relationship, but what forgiveness does is release the other person from me. It turns the problem over to God. I no longer hold it in my power to judge.

(Adapted from URL: https://bible.org/seriespage/parable-unforgiving-servant)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Because Peter was the one who raised the question about forgiveness, it is interesting to follow up on what happened later to him concerning forgiveness. After Peter had denied Jesus three times, in spite of his bold claims that this could never happen, he wept bitter tears (Matthew 26:69-75). It is hard for us to fathom the measure of remorse Peter felt at that moment and throughout the course of that day when Jesus was crucified. Perhaps Peter resigned himself to being confined to the “prison” of his failure for the rest of his life. — But three days later the startling news began to circulate that Jesus was alive. The message was first conveyed by the women who had come to Jesus’ tomb to pay their respects, only to find no corpse there. Then came the words of an angel with a message for the women to pass along: “Go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you’” (Mark 16:7). This specific reference to Peter was not accidental. It was Jesus’ way of letting him know that forgiveness was more than a topic to be discussed in a parable. It was real. Jesus, the king of life and death, was declaring Peter forgiven. He did not have to remain bound in the prison of failure and defeat, because Jesus did not remain bound in the prison of the grave. The King had forgiven his servant of his debt. Peter was free to go.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. There should be no end to the forgiveness we extend to others (Matt. 18:21-22)
2. We will be held accountable for every wrong we have done and careless word we have spoken (vss. 23-25)
3. God freely bestows His grace and forgiveness when we throw ourselves on His mercy (vss. 26-27)
4. When we are given the opportunity to show kindness to others, we should do so (vss. 28-30)
5. Failure to show the compassion we have been shown leaves a bad testimony (vss. 31-34)
6. True forgiveness starts in the heart (vs. 35)