

Forgive One Another

Dr. Douglas W. Cho

[Matthew 18:23-33] 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. 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 [e]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."

The key lessons of this parable by Lord Jesus are the following: First, the followers of Jesus Christ must forgive the offenses of others because God has forgiven our sins. Secondly, if a Christian, whose sins have been forgiven by God, does not show a merciful and forgiving spirit to others, his/her forgiveness could be retracted by God—a very serious warning!

There are a few important facts we need to learn from this parable. First, the first servant owed the king a large sum, a huge debt of 10,000 talents of gold. How big is the present-day value of this debt? Since a talent of gold is 33 Kg (about 72 lbs), and today's trading price of one kilogram of gold is \$59,000, one talent of gold is worth approximately \$1,947,000. Therefore, the present-day value of 10,000 talents of gold is no less than \$19.4 billion! This is a huge amount of debt, which symbolizes what each of us owes to the Almighty God who created all things. It is not an amount of debt we can pay back through our efforts unless perhaps Bill Gates decides to donate his entire wealth to us. Jesus Christ, however, paid the price for absolution of our debts by dying on a cross and shedding His precious blood for all our sins. Forgiveness of our sins was granted to us through His sacrifice.

Secondly, the parable points to the equivalence between debt and sin. The Greek word for 'forgive' is '*aphiemi*,' which means 'to send away, to let go.' What God does to our sins and our debt to Him is the same—He sends our sins and debts away from His accounting book; He lets them go from His cognizance. Our sins and debts are no longer relevant when He sees us, that is if we have repented and received absolution of sins from Him.

The parable points to the seriousness of our sins for not believing God, not obeying Him, and ignoring Him as the Almighty Creator. Although most unbelieving people are not aware of this seriousness, God reminds us that we owe such a huge debt to Him according to His accounting. But He allows His grace to take effect when we go to Him in repentance believing in Jesus Christ. Then, all our debts are forgiven because God is God of grace and mercy.

This servant who owed a huge debt to the king had no resources for paying back his debt. And he was given an indefinite jail sentence. But he pleaded to the king for mercy saying he will pay back. So, the king let him go unconditionally. This kind and merciful treatment of the king toward this indebted servant tells us of God's grace of forgiving all our sins. But then, this servant went out and demanded a fellow servant, who owed him 100 denarii, which is worth about \$60 in today's money, to pay back his debt. However, he was very poor and could not pay back the debt of only \$60. He put this poor servant into jail until he paid the debt. Through the way he treated the poor fellow servant, this unforgiving servant betrayed and debased the grace and mercy of the king. This made the king angry with him.

Now, Lord Jesus tells us a surprising, frightening warning to unforgiving Christians in the ending part of this parable. The king was so angry with the unforgiving servant that He brought back the forgiven debt into His accounting book and threw the servant into the jail. The king demanded this servant pay back all debt owed to him. And Lord Jesus tells us that God the Father will do so to unforgiving servants.

Does this mean that we will lose our salvation if we do not forgive our neighbors' offenses? I do not think so. Although this unforgiving servant failed to show the king's mercy and kindness, he was still a servant of the king. Once we are saved, our salvation is secure, and nothing can take away our salvation. However, this parable indicates that there is a provision in heaven for punishing unforgiving people of God. Such Christians will be banished to a corner of heaven where he/she will be kept away from the joy and glory of Lord Jesus and His church.

Christians look forward to the second coming of Lord Jesus. And we wish to hear His kind word of praise for our faithful service and of welcome to His joy and glory – *“Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things... Enter into the joy of your lord [Matt 25:21].”* It will be very sad if we cannot receive such a reward but rather be reprimanded by Him and be subjected to a long banishment because we have been unmerciful and unforgiving toward our brethren and neighbors.

[Ephesians 4: 31-32] Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

As the apostle Paul admonished the saints of Ephesus, let us be kind-hearted and forgiving to one another, no matter what offenses were inflicted on us, either materially or psychologically. Let all such offenses go away from your mind and even be forgotten from memory. Compared to the grace we have received from our Heavenly Father the offenses of our neighbors are nothing and must be forgiven so that we can joyfully enter the joy and glory of our Savior Jesus Christ when He returns soon. Amen.

www.douglaschoministry.net

Thank you for your kind support:
PO Box 501, Cross Junction, VA 22615
Or Paypal to dwcho4771@gmail.com

In Korea: Shinhan Bank 110-008-655930 [조덕운]