Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Learning to Forgive, Part 2
Scripture: Matthew 18:23-27
Code: 2334

If you've been at Grace Church for any length of time, you know that I thoroughly enjoy what I do. But maybe you don't know that I don't think I've ever enjoyed anything more than having the privilege of preaching Matthew 18 and Romans 6 and 7 at the same time. It's a challenge each week as I prepare and study and pray and meditate, but the truths that are in these two particular sections of Scripture are so heart gripping that I confess to you that this has been a very special, special joy and benediction in my own life. And I thank God for every new adventure, every new occasion of opening the word.

And I also thank Him that at this point in my life, whatever may happen in the future of my life, I'm still very much in the process of discovering the things of God's word as I'm coming through new chapters and seeing old chapters in new ways and it seems as though after all the years that have gone behind, you might sort of get to the point where you've got it all down and it's all understood and you really never do, because the Lord unfolds the riches of His word again and again and it's been such a wonderful, wonderful time for me and I trust for you as well.

Well, that takes us to Matthew 18 this morning and I would encourage you to open your Bible. We're looking at the final section of this chapter, verses 21-35. The title that we gave to the whole chapter is the Childlikeness of the Believer. The Childlikeness of the Believer. The Lord, of course, gathers His disciples around Him in a home in Capernaum and He takes a little infant into His arms and using the little infant as an illustration of spiritual truth, He says that we are spiritually like little children.

The disciples were and we are. And as little children there are certain things that we need to understand. First of all, we enter the kingdom like little children, then we are to be protected like little children. We are to be cared for like little children. We are to be disciplined like little children and then in our text verses 20-35, we are to be forgiven like little children just as children need frequent forgiveness so do we. And just as in a family you are very prone to forgive the failings of a child because of their youth and ignorance, so you are to forgive one another in the same way in the family of God.

So we're learning about forgiveness. We're learning about the importance of forgiving one another of not holding vengeance or grudges. Of freeing ourselves from the bondage of those kinds of things that we may forgive as we have been forgiven. Now we went into that in some detail last time and I trust the spirit of God has left enough of that message lingering your mind so that you can link it up

rather readily with what we're going to look at today. We started last week with what we called the inquiry about forgiveness in verse 21. "Then came Peter to Him and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times?" And remember I mentioned to you that Peter was sort of bouncing off Jewish tradition which said you forgive three times and that's it? And the fourth time you don't forgive again.

And Peter feeling the magnanimity of the heart of the Lord and the generosity and the mercy and the tenderness and the loving kindness and grace of our Lord was want to say well, do we go way beyond that Lord to seven times? Do we forgive each other seven times? Now that was the inquiry about forgiveness. The extent of forgiveness our second point came in verse 22 and the Lord's answer. "Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven." That's the extent in what the Lord is saying. As we saw last week is there's no limit to your forgiveness.

There are no boundaries to your forgiveness. You just keep on forgiving. Luke said, if he sins against you seven times in a day, forgive him. So we are to forgive one another over and over and over and over and over again endlessly, without limitation. We are to be engaged in the forgiving of one another, which is born out of love and tenderness and mercy and grace that ought to be ours because we understand how much God has forgiven us, right? And that was the meaning of Ephesians 4:32, "that we are to forgive one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us." As God forgives us continuously, no matter what our sin, in His grace so are we to forgive continuously each other when they even sin against us.

We also saw the effect of forgiveness last time, that third point in our little outline. And we said looking at Matthew Chapter 6, that the effect of forgiveness, that is when you forgive others, you will be forgiven also. Now it's important that you understand the meaning of that. You know, the Lord says in that prayer, "forgive us our debts as we have...or as we forgave others also." Then He says, if you don't forgive others, I won't forgive you. When you don't forgive someone else, the Bible says God does not forgive you in the relational sense. So you have a sin that puts a barrier between you and God.

And as long as that barrier exists, two things occur. One, you do not experience the joy of communion with God. Two, you do experience the chastening of God. And so there's an effect brought to bear upon the believer in this matter of forgiveness. So the inquiry led to the extent of forgiveness. The effect of forgiveness we saw as well. Now, let's look at the example of forgiveness. And this the last point and takes up the rest of the chapter. It's going to take us two weeks to deal with it, because it's a rather lengthy passage. It is a parable and I'd like to read it to you to start with. So follow along in verse 23. I think you'll get the message rather readily.

"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, who would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon one was brought unto him who owed him ten thousand talents. But for as much as he had nothing with which to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold and his wife and children and all that he had in payment to be made. The servant, therefore, fell down and worshiped him saying, lord have patience with me and I'll pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion and loosed him and forgave him the debt. But the same 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 thou owest. And his fellow servant fell down at his feet and besought him saying, have patience with me and I'll pay thee all. And he would not. But went and cast him into prison until he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry and came and told unto their lord all that as done. Then his lord after he had called him and said unto him oh thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou besoughtest me, shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant even as I had compassion on thee. And his lord was angry and delivered him to the tormentors until he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you if you from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother his trespasses."

Now that's a very straightforward, very clear, very obvious principle and we're going to see it unfolding both this Lord's day and in the following message which will be two weeks from today. There's a certain harshness in this parable. In fact, there is such severity in the attitude of the king in verse 34 and in the application in verse 35 that many people have studied the parable and concluded that it couldn't be speaking about Christians. Because how could the Lord get angry with Christians and how could He turn Christians over to the tormentors. How could he make them pay? It just can't be applied to Christians they say.

Well, let me tell you at the very beginning so you're not in the dark, that I believe it does apply to Christians and as we go through the parable verse by verse, I will point out in each point where it's germane why I believe it is true that this is in reference to Christians. If you do not forgive others you will not be forgiven. And if you do not forgive others and you are not forgiven, then you put yourself in the position to experience two things. You will not know the joy of communion with the Lord and you will know the chastening of the Lord and I see no problem with seeing what happens at the end of this parable as the chastening that comes to a sinning Christian. And we'll see that as we go. We should not be shocked that the Lord is harsh and stringent and firm and strong in dealing with His own, because that's part of how He conforms them to the holy standard of His revealed will.

That should not shock us. We also know very clearly from the 12thChapter of Hebrews that the Lord does chasten His own. He scourges them and even the terminology is somewhat parallel to the idea of tormentors in verse 34. But the key concept, at least for us, to begin with is to go back to verse 23 and let's look at how the parable begins. It begins with the word therefore. And that word links it with

the previous passage. And the previous passage is all about one Christian forgiving another Christian. It's all about my brother, verse 21, sinning against me and my attitude toward my brother and my forgiving my brother.

It's all about my brother or my sister who sins in the fellowship and needs to be restored and forgiven. And the parable is built on that principle and so I think the therefore lends itself well to an understanding that this, though a general principle to be sure which can be widely applied is primarily in reference to those within the family of God who need to understand the import of forgiveness. It is a very impactful parable. It is dramatic. It is powerful. It is potent and it's truth is utterly irresistible. It will be only a question of whether or not we choose to obey its application.

Now having said that, let's look at the parable in verse 23. "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king who would take account of his servants." Now the Lord likes to speak about His kingdom in terms of parables. They are veiled stories, stories from common every day life which carry a spiritual meaning. And the Lord does this often. And often he says that the kingdom of heaven is like this. The kingdom of heaven, and I don't want to spend a lot of time defining it, is simply the sphere of God's rule on earth through grace and salvation. The dimension of God's rule. We're in that kingdom. We who love Christ. We're under His control, under His power. We've been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son.

My kingdom, He's saying, is like this, the sphere of my rule on earth through grace and salvation is like this. This is how it is my kingdom. And again, I think that lends itself, although very frequently in Matthew, the kingdom is broader than the real people in the kingdom and doesn't include those who superficially attach. I think in this context talking to the disciples, He is speaking of the kingdom in its truest sense. People who are in my kingdom need to understand that my kingdom is like this. Now the man character is a certain king. Somewhere in your margin write that that's a reference to God and it's the first parable given in the New Testament in which God is likened to a king.

God is the king in this parable, obviously. "And this certain king had set a time to take account of his servants." The word servants, doulios, bond slave, bond servant. Now that word has to do with a servant who is in bondage to his master. It doesn't necessarily mean he's in chains. Some of them may have been chained. Some of them may have had very, very limited freedoms, but others of the bond servants, the doulios, would have had very extensive freedom and privilege. They were nonetheless bond to the one over them, whether they were slaves or household servants with more liberty than a slave or whether they were as in this case what you could call set traps. That is they were preventualgovernors who served the king by ruling certain areas of his kingdom, certain provinces.

And their responsibility was to report to the king, to rule in his behalf, primarily that came down to collecting taxes, which were then to be turned over to the king for the support of the entire kingdom

and for the royal treasury. So the term here is not in the usual sense, the household doulos or the bond slave doulos, but this preventual governor who has been given an area of dominion and rules as it were under the king himself to collect out of that part of the kingdom and give back to the king what is rightfully his. Now may I suggest to you that these have to do with men in general. That when God created man and put him in the earth, He gave man dominion over the earth. He made man a steward of all that he possesses.

And that's man in general, whether man knows Christ or does not. Men have been entrusted with the treasure given by God. Their very life and breath is a gift from God. He is the one who owns it. All that they possess belongs to God. All the money they have belongs to God. It is God who gives them the power to get wealth. All the talent they have really is God-given talent. All the capacity, capability and potential they have has been deposited in them and on them by God Himself. So that every man lives in the world even before he knows God with a stewardship committed to Him by God who created him the way he is, where he is, with responsibility that he has and with the treasure given into his care.

So I see this as the king who has all of these people who have been given certain commodities, which in fact, belong to the king and to whom they owe account for their use of those commodities. And that is why in verse 23 it says, that he would take account. Now I don't see this as the ultimate accounting. I see this as a...perhaps an annual accounting. Some period of time when the king wants to take an inventory, maybe every year or every other year or every half year, these preventual governors had to bring into him all the taxes that they had collected. They had to show where the taxes came from. They had to give the king and his kingdom in the royal treasury the proper percentage and keep for themselves in their own operation what was rightful for them.

So there was a periodic accounting and what we see in the passage is that God calls men to a periodic accounting. It isn't necessarily the accounting of the great white throne judgment which is final judgment, but is the accounting of a time of great conviction when men are called to face God for what they're doing with their life. And that's the heart of the interpreting of the first few verses of the parable.

God calls men to an accounting for their lives. For some people that might be happening today in this very service, for the first time or the hundredth time. But periodically through the flow of life as men possess in their hands the stewardship of the things that God owns they are called to give an account for their life. And there will be many such accountings before that final judgment verdict is rendered at the great white throne.

In Romans Chapter 1, it says that God has deposited in man the knowledge of Himself. That God has given to man the environment around him enough information that he may follow that path to the knowledge of God. That God has given man the intellectual capability to understand and reason and

see the truth. That God has presented to him the revealed word, the Holy Spirit. In other words, God has given a treasure to men that they are to perceive it from Him and they are to follow that perception to the full understanding of who He is and what He wants. And God periodically calls men to such accounting.

You could see the same concept here in John 16 where it says that the Holy Spirit has come to convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit periodically at the discretion of the sovereignty of God to call men to an accounting of conviction. You've been there at one of those junctures if you're a Christian, you came to Jesus Christ. You were called to an accounting. Someone preached a sermon. Someone confronted you with a sinfulness of sin. Someone showed you the law of God and how miserably short of it you were. Someone demonstrated to you that you had violated the law of God and you looked in your heart and by the convicting work of the Spirit and the word of God, you saw that it was so. And you saw yourself for what you are, a sinner, and you came for the grace of salvation.

And maybe for some of you that conviction was heightened by a physical illness. Or it was heightened by the death of someone you love very much or the loss of a job or a painful experience. But God calls men to such accountings. Whereby alarming circumstances or alarming truth or alarming guilt or penetrating awakening of the conscience, men who appeared to be asleep before are all of a sudden alerted to the sinfulness of their sin. And sometimes he brings along severe circumstances to heighten that intense awareness.

As we study tonight in Romans Chapter 7, we're going to see that's exactly what happened to the apostle Paul. He was going along in his life and it seemed as though everything was going well. And all of a sudden, God took him on the Damascus Road, slammed him in the dirt, blinded him, and called him to accounting. And I believe it was in that very interval of his life that Romans Chapter 7 became a reality to him and he looked inside his life and he saw the exceeding sinfulness of his sin.

He had sort of smugly gone on prior to that thinking that he could keep the law on his own. No doubt under a certain kind of conviction. No doubt wanting to be self-righteous and please God, but understanding not the exceeding sinfulness of sin, until he was slammed in the dirt, blinded and faced the reality of the fact that his sin was not just something you do or don't do on the outside, but sin was something that boiled in the very nature of the soul itself.

And when he saw the sinfulness of sin, he had a right response. Not all people did. The rich young ruler was confronted by Jesus Christ. He too thought that sin was only external issue of what you do or don't do. And when he was asked if he kept all the law. He said all those things have I done since I was young, and the Lord drove the point to his heart as if to say it isn't what you do or don't do on the outside, it's what's in you and what I see in you is covetousness and what I'm going to tell you to do is sell everything you have, get the money and give it all to the poor and the man walked away.

Why he was convicted, but he rejected the conviction. He had an accounting that day, but he rejected the accounting. He was told that he was covetous in the heart and that the sin problem wasn't something on the outside, it was something deep on the inside. And at the moment of his accounting, he turned his back and walked away. Paul on the other hand was held to an accounting and he saw the law of coveting. He saw the law of lust. He saw the law of evil desire. Only instead of turning and walking away, he embraced the Savior who alone could deliver him from his sin and he was redeemed.

But all men come to that same accounting and it may happen again and again. And it may be rejected again and again and for all of us who know Christ at one time, it was accepted and we entered into eternal life. And so what we have here then is God calling men to the accounting of conviction of sin. And just to help you know how sinful sin is, look at verse 24. "And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents." It's the time of conviction. And one is brought, because these people don't come voluntarily. They usually come kicking and screaming. They do not come voluntarily. He would never have come if he had not been called. Why would he want to be discovered as an embezzler? He would never have showed up, but he was brought. And the debt that he owed is ten thousand talents. Now it gets almost humorous when you read about this and you read the backgrounds and so forth as people try to figure out much this was.

Because from one nation to another and from one time period to another and one point in history to another, values change so much. All we can say is this was a lot; a lot. And comparative figures might help. This preventual governor in the parable owed ten thousand talents. As a fascinating comparison, you might want to know that at the same period of time, the time around the life of Jesus, the total revenue collected by the Roman government from Idumea and Judea and Samaria, the total revenue was 600 talents.

The total revenue collected from Galilee was 300 talents. So if this guy had collected, embezzled and wasted ten thousand talents, that is an astronomical figure. If it's taken just as a fact that it was actually ten thousand. You might want to know that when the tabernacle was built, the Lord said to them, I want you to overlay all these elements in gold. You know, arc of the covenant and many other things had to be overlaid in gold. You might want to think back on that and imagine all of that precious gold that overlaid all of those factors in the tabernacle and if you're curious about that, it tells us in Exodus Chapter 38, verse 24, that there were 29 talents of gold.

And then when the temple was built, there were 3,000 and the whole place was overlaid in gold and that was only 3,000. Ten thousand talents is astronomical. People have estimated anywhere from 16 million to two billion and everything in between. You might want other comparisons. The Queen of Sheba, she came to visit Solomon one time and she wanted to give him a gift that was

commensurate with his incredible wealth and so she gave him 120 talents, 1 Kings 10:10.

The king of Assyria laid upon Hezekiah 30 talents of gold as a magnanimous amount. Now what is this talking about? You want to know what it's talking about? Sin. Sin is the debt. Ten thousand is the amount. But let me take you on a little journey in your thinking. In Daniel Chapter 7, verse 10, we read this. And this is a vision of the glorious son of man coming in his second coming and look what it says. "A fiery stream issued," Daniel 7:10, "and came forth from before him," that is before the throne of God, here it comes, "a thousand thousands ministered unto him and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him." What does that refer to? Angels. Ten thousand times ten thousand. Now go to Revelation Chapter 5, verse 21...verse 11. There aren't 21 verses.

"And I beheld and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders." How many? "And the number was," what, "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands." Now you find it in the Old Testament, you find it in the New Testament. By the way, you'll find such usages of the thousands and the ten thousands in Song of Solomon 5, in Ezekiel 45, I think also and Ezekiel 48. You find it a couple of places in 1 Corinthians also. Let me tell you something, the largest term, the largest numerical term in the Greek language is that term, ten thousand. It's the term murion. And so when they used the term murion, it is not always a technical term so that when you're looking at angels and it says ten thousand times ten thousand, you're supposed to multiply ten thousand times ten thousand. You know exactly how many angels there are.

It simply means myriads upon myriads. It would be the...it is the highest term that could be used. It would be like us saying he owed the king zillions. It's just a term that is almost taking us beyond numeration. And I see it in that sense rather than a technical sense of exactly ten thousand talents. What it's saying is he owed a myriad. He owed an inestimable, incalculable, unpayable debt beyond any ability to pay, beyond any ability even to calculate. Now think with me on this because this is really a profound truth. This is our sin, people. That's what He's talking about. We are brought before God in a moment of conviction. And we are faced with the fact that our sin is inestimable. It is incalculable. It could not even be counted. It cannot even be numbered in its volume.

The sum of our sin is beyond comprehension. Now that's what happens. And that's what God intends to happen when you come to be convicted by the power of the Spirit through the word of God. When a person comes to the accounting time of conviction before God, it is so that they may see the utter sinfulness of sin. And we're right back to Romans 7 again. Paul says, "When I saw what I really was, when I saw God's law and I looked at my sin," he says in 7:13, "I saw the utter sinfulness of sin." Or the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

And that is a critical element in bringing someone to true salvation. Everyone of us must be brought to the point where we see this mountain of sin incalculable. It's a littler wonder when Job was brought

there that he said, "I abhor myself." It's little wonder that when Ezra was brought there, he said, "oh my God, I am ashamed and blushed to lift my face to thee my God." And he had his face in the ground. "For our iniquities are increased over our head and our trespasses gone up to heaven." It's the same kind of attitude that we find in the heart of David who even though He was a man after God's heart prayed with the tear-stained face, "Oh Lord for thine own name sake, pardon my iniquity."

You see our sin is a debt and it is a debt that is beyond calculation. It's so great that we can't even estimate it and it let alone pay it. Now look at verse 25 and see what happened. "So the man was brought to accounting, for as much as he had nothing with which to pay." Now this is the most dire circumstance imaginable. "His Lord commanded him to be sold and his wife and children and all that he had and payment to be made." Now this is just punishment friends. This is a real debt, not an artificial one.

The parable indicates that the man had embezzled the money from the king. He didn't even have any of it to pay. There was no way to recover it. The punishment is very severe, very severe. Sell the man into slavery, sell his wife into slavery, sell all his kids into slavery, get what you can. Sell his house and everything he owns, get what you can and we'll take that and apply it toward the debt which is unable to be fully repaid, but we'll get everything we can out of him. And there's no complaint made by the way because it's just. There's no complaint. The man has not complained. He does not beg for justice. This is justice. This is even better than justice, because the debt can't be paid.

Now this kind of picture is very interesting and is somewhat unique to Israel. We don't find this kind of thing commonly in Israel. There are few places in the Old Testament where there were special circumstances in which a person could be sold into the service of another one to repay a debt. But this was primarily the way the pagan world operated and the people in and around Israel who were not a part of the nation Israel will be very familiar with this kind of thing. So would the Jews because they had seen the Pagans do this.

If you couldn't pay a debt, you instantly became a slave. And you paid your debt by working off what you could. Your wife became a slave and all your kids became slaves. And everything you owned was sold and turned into cash for the one to whom you owed the debt. That was not uncommon. That's sort of like the indentured servant kind of thing. And since the man had been defrauded, he had a right to claim back all that he could claim. I think if we had such laws today it might affect some ways things are done in our society where people are a little bit more free with the bankruptcy law than they be if they knew that they would all have to go to work for the one in whom...to whom they were indebted. It might be a good approach. Tend to keep us from getting too far out on our credit.

Now keep in mind that the debt could never really be paid anyway. And if you ask yourself what this means, let me tell you what I believe it's referring to here. I think this is a picture of hell. That's right. I think verse 25 is talking about hell in spiritual implications. Where else are men sent to pay for their sin? Where else do people go as punishment for the debt they owe to God? This is talking about hell. It's talking about eternal hell. Now listen very carefully and you'll learn something about hell. People go to hell to pay for their sins, but one thing you need to know is all eternity in hell will still not pay for their sins. They just go there to pay what could be paid by spending all eternity there which could never pay the full debt.

What the parable is saying is the debt is unpayable. It is so vast that it could never be paid. You could never recover what was lost. The glory stolen from God could never be returned to God. There is no way that men forever in hell could pay the debt off, but they're going to spend forever there paying as much as they can anyway. And the sad fact is that men who have spent eternities in hell will be no better for their payment than they were when they began, so they'll be no more fit for heaven at the end of that time were there end, than they would be at the beginning when they started it.

The debt is unpayable, but they will pay and all that could be exacted from their incapacity will be exacted from it. It's a very stringent word here. And when people are sent to hell, it is just, because God is a just God who says that sin is an unpayable debt and I will take from an all that I can get even though I can't get all in return. The utter bankruptcy of every son of Adam makes it impossible for him to pay off the debt that he owes to God. And his inability to be made any better by the punishment that he suffers in hell, means that throughout all eternity he'll never become able to do it, nor will he ever be any more fit for heaven than he was when he was first sent to hell.

The terrible picture. And the king is not a tyrant, he is a just king. In fact, he's been merciful in not calling this individual to an accounting long before he did. You know that life in itself is an act of mercy. You could have been sent to hell as soon as you born, true? But God has been merciful and maybe He's called and convicted your heart again and again and again and again. And always you've rejected and ultimately when He sends you to pay for the sin that you wish to hold to yourself, He will be a just God.

Look at verse 26, "The servant therefore," now as soon as he heard this he knew that it was the end, "fell down and worshiped him, saying lord, have patience with me. I'll pay thee all." That's kind of an interesting prayer really. First of all, he was in the right position, he fell down. And that's a very devastating thing. He was broken. I think the man was devastated. I think he was totally shattered. I mean, I think he was at the end. He knew what he faced. He couldn't pay the debt. He was going to lose his freedom. He was going to be in permanent bondage, because he could work his whole lifetime, you see, and never pay it off. Just like hell, you can work eternity and never pay it off. So you never get out of it. Once you go into the service of that man to pay off that debt, you're in abject

slavery till the end and he could see that. And there was no way out. He doesn't plead for justice. He got justice. He doesn't deny his sin. He admits it. He fell down, crushed, broken, prostrate, humble. He was in the right attitude, the attitude where God wants men to be when He convicts them of sin, right?

Overwhelmed with his sinfulness, shattered by the debt that he could never pay. Facing an eternity of inability. No relief in sight. And knowing full well that once he got into the service of the king, he'd never have the freedom to earn the money to pay the debt back. And then it says, he not only fell down, but he worshiped. And that is literally to kiss toward. It comes from kissing the hand, the knee, the foot of the monarch for whom...or to who you plead for mercy.

And so he's pleading for mercy. He's admitting his sin, he's broken, he's humble, he's in the very spot that God wants to bring every man. On his face, in the dust, like the publican beating his breast saying "Lord be merciful to me, a sinner. I see a debt I cannot pay. I see a mountain of sin that can never be eliminated. I face an eternity of hell and eternity of hell of inability." And so he is a broken man. And like so many broken men, he doesn't really understand everything. And so he says, "have patience with me." Pleads for compassion for the lord's patient endurance. For the lord to just wait and give him a chance and he'll do better.

See, he'll...I'll pay you all. I'll do better. You say, yeah, but you couldn't pay it and he knows it. But this is a highly emotional moment, boy and he's going to think of some ways to do it. Now this is like folks who are under conviction. The first response that comes to them when they are empowered...overpowered by guilt, when they're confronted with the sinfulness of sin is I've got to shape my life up. I've got to get my life better. I've got to get rid of the guilt. I think I can be a better person. I want to turn over a new leaf. I want to make some resolutions. I want to sort of moralize myself and reform myself. He's admitted his sin. He's seen the lossness of his condition and he really doesn't quite understand how that the debt could ever be paid and so he just says just give me a chance at. I'll do the best I can and he's like people who in the midst of their convictions seek to be religious.

That's not uncommon. They want to be better. And before they know they can come to Christ and receive a gift from Him, they usually want to make themselves better. Do you understand? That's all part of that same kind of process. This is sort of a pre-salvation conviction. But He's got a Beatitude attitude. He's humbled, he's broken, he cries for mercy, he sees the enormity of his sin, and he knows the king is the king and has control. And he says, just be patient with me. Just show me a little patience and I'll do everything I an to pay it back. I want it to be right. He's saying I want to be different. I'm sorry about what I did. The heart attitude is right. Everything is there. It's just that he doesn't understand the grace of forgiveness yet. So the lord has him right where he wants him.

Martin Luther wrote about this passage, "These profound truths. Before the king drew him to account, he had no conscience. Does not feel the debt and would have gone right along, made more debt and cared nothing about it. But now that the king reckons with him, he begins to feel the debt. So it is with us. The greater part does not concern itself about sin, but goes on securely, fears not the wrath of God. Such people cannot come to the forgiveness of sin for they do not come to realize they have sins. They say indeed with the mouth that they have sin, but if they were serious about it, they would speak far otherwise. This servant too says before the king reckons with him, so much I owe to my lord, namely ten thousand talents, but he goes ahead and laughs.

But now that the reckoning is held and his lord orders him, his wife, and his children and everything to be sold, now he feels it. And so too we feel in earnest when our sins are revealed in the heart. When the record of our debts is held before us and then the laughter stops. And then we exclaim I am the most miserable man. There is none as unfortunate as I on the earth. Such knowledge makes a real humble man, works contrition so that one can come to the forgiveness of sins."

Now like the man who is convicted of sin, he sees his sin, he cries for mercy, he doesn't fully realize that he can't do what he thinks needs to be done. And so he's in a dire situation. The convicting power of the law of God has smashed and crushed him. He cries out for patience. And I want you to notice that king has no comment on the utter impossibility of what he says in verse 26. He doesn't say oh silly man. You can't pay. Foolish. He doesn't say that. That's obvious. What does he say? I love this. Because I've been here and so have you.

Verse 27, "Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion and loosed him and forgave him the debt." Oh what a marvelous. Oh the grace of that verse. Write it somewhere in your Bible, grace. Oh the grace of that verse. You know, I know some people, somebody owes them a couple of thousand bucks and they're going nuts about it. And he forgave an absolutely incomprehensible debt in a moment out of compassion for the debtor. He loosed him. What does it mean? He released him from the obligation. He freed him from the debt. Why did he do that? He was moved with what? Compassion. And where does compassion come from? It comes from love. This man happened to love that servant. As God loves all men.

And when he saw him in a situation where there was no remedy, it didn't change his love. And even though the debt was incurred against him and even though he had been violated and even though his kingdom had been robbed and even though he had personally been sinned against in a way beyond anything you've ever dreamed, you could be sinned against. He still forgave him. Oh the magnanimity of God's forgiveness. And would you notice a wonderful touch at the end of verse 27, "he forgave him." And the Greek says the loan. The loan? What do you mean the loan? Well, the king is so tenderhearted he considers it as a loan instead of a debt embezzled.

He cancelled the loan. He released the obligation. You say well what did the guy do to deserve that? He didn't do anything. But you know how you get the forgiveness of God? You know how you receive the forgiveness of God? Well, you come to God with a broken heart over your utter sinfulness knowing you could never pay the debt. Crying out to God for mercy and patience in a dire situation and facing eternal judgment and saying Lord please. And in the midst of that brokenness does God come in His tender forgiving grace and loving kindness and forgive your debt.

Now all that possibly could be said about salvation isn't said here, but there's something wonderful said here that may not be said very many other places in the Bible about that. And so it is a marvelous, marvelous parable. I believe the moment the sinner recognizes his sin, the moment he comes to the only one who can possibly deal with that sin, the moment he confesses that in and repents that sin and admits that sin and worships the God who alone can forgive that sin, the moment he does that and the moment he hungers in his heart for some way to pay that sin back, that's when God rushes in with the forgiveness made available in Jesus Christ who already paid the debt Himself anyway.

And in that sense, God absorbed the loss on His own account. And so God is like Joseph or Joseph is like God. Calls his brothers and he just pours the guilt on them. Remember the story? Until they are devastated with guilt. And then he reveals himself and gives them grace. And that's how it is in salvation. God comes first as a fire. First stirring up the sinfulness of sin. First drawing people to an accounting where they face the utter sinfulness of sin. God will forgive, but He also will have the sinner know what and how much is forgiven. And that's why Isaiah said that first of all "there had to be from God a come now, let us reason together though your sins be as scarlet." Before we can talk about making them His will, let's talk about how really bad they are.

Let's reason together about your sin. That's where the gospel begins. The sinner must know that there is a mountain of sin that is never able to be repaid by that sinner, before he can ever be cast into the deep see of God's mercy. And we must first have the sentence of death in ourselves before the word of life means anything to us. But oh how comforting at the moment we come with a merciful seeking heart, a mercy seeking heart, the Father forgives. Do you see yourself there? Such a salvation should cause us to rejoice. We have escaped eternal hell. We have been forgiven a debt we could never pay.

To draw this to a conclusion, look at Luke 15. And I want to illustrate this with a familiar story. Luke 15, and I want to pick it up in the middle of the story. It's the story of the prodigal son. He wanted his father to die, to be honest with you. He'd just assume have his father dead because he wanted the inheritance, but since his father wouldn't accommodate him and die, he just went and said give me what I'm due. I can't wait for you to die. I'll take it now. So he took it. Split and enter into riotous living, dissolute, wasted all of his money. Wound up slopping pigs, a rather demeaning task for a noble Jewish boy.

Verse 17, "He came to himself," came to his senses said, "how many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare and perish with hunger." My father's hired servants, he said, are better off than I am. You know what a hired servant was? Not a household slave. Not a family slave. A day laborer. Walked in the morning, gave him a job, paid him off, and sent away at the end of the day. The lowest of the low. No part in the family life. Just a hired servant. He said, they're better off than I am. "I'm going to go," verse 18 says, "I'm going to go to my father and I'm going to say father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee." Now here we find a contrite sinner. Here he knows. He's been broken. He's been shattered. He's faced accounting day. And he found his accounting day in the pig slop.

And it got him there. The Spirit of the Lord did His work and while he was there slopping the pigs and he looked at his own life and he saw the wretchedness of his own life and he saw the unpayable debt that he owed the father and he knew there was no way to pay it back and he knew he'd taken all of his inheritance and he'd run with it and he affrontedthe love his father too wishing him dead and all of those things could never be repaid. He knew that. And he'd wasted it all. He had nothing to pay it back with. He could never give back the Father what he owed him, what was due him. And so he went back and said look I'll just offer myself as a hired servant and until the day I die, I'll try to work it off. And I won't ask for a thing. I don't even want to be treated as part of the family. And he was saying essentially what this man in the parable was saying in Matthew 18, I'll come back and I'll do my best to work it off.

You see that's the attitude of the sinner. He's crushed over his sin. He's shattered over his sinfulness. He's broken over it. He knows he has a debt to God he can't pay. And he says, I'll just do all I can to pay it. And he figures maybe the father will let him be a hired servant. Verse 19, "I'll tell him I'm no more worthy to be called your son, make me one of your hired servants."

Verse 20 says, "He arose and came to his father and when he was a great way off, his father's looking down the road," and there was probably a lot of people on the road and maybe people working in the fields and maybe the little village was there as well, and way down the road this father's looking. Well, what's his father doing looking? Well, he's been looking a long time. He's been looking every day. He's always looking down that road. He's always...because he's always waiting for that son to come. And he looks and sees him in the distance. And then he does something that just shows no class. None at all, he had compassion. You say how could he have compassion to such a wretched kid who wanted you dead? Who's the Father in this parable? It's God. And who's the wretched kid? The sinner.

And then the father did this, "and ran." You know what the Greek word is? It's not just a normal word ran, he raced. Now, you know, there's something about being an older man, a noble man. You walked with a slow sort of dignified gait. And in the east there was a lot of dignity. Did you ever try to

run full speed down a road with a robe as long as your feet dragging on the ground? You couldn't do that. You know what the father must have done? One writer...I read a book this week, he said that the father must have gathered up the whole garment into his arms and thus exposed his undergarments, which was the shame of all shames for a man. And here is running down the road while everybody's looking and saying what is that crazy guy doing running down the road like that? He is shaming himself. He is humiliating himself. Pursuing that wretched kid of his.

Do you see God there? Do you see God who looks down the road and sees the sinner coming and who humiliates himself by embracing that sinner? Do you see God coming into the world in the form of Jesus Christ, as it were and picking up the robes of His regal splendor and showing His undergarment as it were in the humiliation of Jesus Christ as He pursues the sinner down the road? Well, what happens when they meet? Why he fell on his neck and he began to kiss him tenderly and repeatedly, the indication of the text is. Over and over again, he didn't just say oh listen if you'd like a job I can maybe work it out. No, he kisses him, embraces him tenderly and what does do? He says, "Father, I've sinned against heaven in thy sight and I'm no more worthy to be called thy son." And the father says, "stop that speech, kill the fatted calf. Put a ring on his finger, my son is home." And that's the forgiveness of God, you see.

The sinner thinks if you'll just let me try to work off and God embraces him and makes him a son. That's the gospel. And that's what God has done for us. Now listen. If God has so forgiven you, what is the parable saying? Are you forgiving each other? And if you're not, that is the height of evil that you should take so much forgiveness and give so little. God puts away the enormity of our sin and even though He appears to speak in anger and judgment, it is only to convict us that He may us show us love, compassion, and grace. It is as in nature says Arnowhere lightenings flashed through the horrid gloom and thunders which rend the skies are preludes of the rain that descends in copia showers on the parts of thirsty ground. Or it is as on that night of old when a frail and lonely bark watched by the Savior's eye was battling for life in a headwind on the sea of Galilee and Jesus came in the tempest that agitate the soul. He's wrapped in the dark mantle of the night. He advances over the stormy billows. And there along filling the trouble heart with a holy calm, His voice is heard saying, "It is I, be not afraid."

And it reminds me of the wonderful parable in Luke 7 of the woman that says of that woman, "she forgives much because she was," what, "forgiven much." And if we have been forgiven so much, how much should we forgive? That's the second half of the parable. That's for next time.

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