

Jesus Illustrated How Some Have an Unforgiving Attitude

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children the importance of forgiving, by our example. Jesus went on to give an illustration of why it is so important for us to forgive others. In this topic, we will see what Jesus taught the disciples about forgiveness, through this illustration.

Jesus told the disciples about a master that showed compassion to his servant. Matthew 18:23-27 says, “Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 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. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.” A talent was a weight that was used to weight precious metal like gold and silver. A talent is estimated to have varied in size from fifty-five to eighty pounds. Today, the value of gold is given per ounce with sixteen ounces making a pound. In New Testament times, the number ten thousand was often used to speak of a number so large that it could not be counted.

In this illustration that Jesus gave, a king decided to settle accounts with his servants. Since this was a king, “servants” of the king probably refers to the governors who collected taxes for the king in the various parts of the kingdom. However, this servant apparently spent the money he had collected for taxes, so he did not have the money to give to the king. This debt owed to the king was so large that it was impossible for the servant to pay the king. As a result, the king commanded that the servant, his wife and his children, plus everything that the servant owned, be sold to pay at least a small part of the debt. The servant immediately realized that he was in very serious trouble and fell down in front of the king to beg for time to pay the debt.

The debt was so large that it would have been impossible for the servant to even pay interest on the debt during the time that he tried to gather money to repay the debt. However, the servant still said, “Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.” Then, we see that the master was moved with compassion and instead forgave the entire debt. That is exactly what God did with our sins, because we could never pay the penalty for our sins. Colossians 2:13-14 says, “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” Here, we see our condition before God forgave our sins.

We were dead in our trespasses and sins, so we had no spiritual life. Then, we see that God forgave all of our trespasses. We see that God gave us spiritual life. Further, we see that God wiped out the handwriting of the requirements against us. God told Israel in Isaiah 44:22, “I have blotted

out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.” Peter said as he preached in the temple, in Acts 3:19, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Comparing this verse with Colossians 2:14, quoted above, we see that our sins are blotted out (the ink that was used to write our sins was removed). This means we have no sins even listed in the books that will be used to judge those who do not believe.

When we are unwilling to forgive others, we are like this servant who had just been forgiven. Matthew 18:28-31 says, “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!” So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.” And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 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.” A denarius was one day’s wages. As a result, one hundred denarii were the wages a person was paid in three to four months. That was a very small debt compared to the huge debt that the first servant had been forgiven.

The first servant showed no love as he went to this servant who owed him one hundred denarii. He laid his hands on the second servant and grabbed him by the throat. Then, he demanded that the second servant pay him, immediately, the one hundred denarii that he owed. The second servant said the same thing that the first servant had said to the king, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.” Since the debt of the second servant was between three and four months’ wages, he would have been able to pay it, if the first servant would have given him time. However, the first servant was hard-hearted and showed no compassion to the second servant. Instead, the first servant threw the second servant in prison until he could pay the debt.

We see that the other servants were very grieved when they saw what the first servant had done. Here, we see that we should show love when another Christian shows a rebellious spirit. This is what Paul did in 2 Corinthians 2:4 where he wrote, “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.” Paul used this same word when he wrote later, in 2 Corinthians 7:8-10, “For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” Paul was grieved and wrote so that the Corinthian Christians would come to repentance. This was the desire of the other servants for the first servant. That was why they told the master what the first servant had done.

We see the response of the king when the servants told him what the first servant had done. Matthew 18:32-35 says, “Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, “You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?” And his master was angry, and

delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” God is holy and cannot look at sin with approval, even in the life of a follower of Christ.

The king reminded the servant that he had forgiven the debt that would have been impossible for the servant to pay. Instead of showing the same love and compassion, that servant had gone and mistreated another servant who owed him a small debt. The king told the servant that he should have shown the same compassion to the other servant as the king had shown to him. The king called his servant a wicked servant and the king could not allow that sin to be ignored. We see that the king was angry at the sin of his servant and delivered him to the torturers. The word translated “torturer” is the word used of a soldier or other individual who would torture a prisoner to get him to tell the truth. In 1 Corinthians 11:30-32, we read, “For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” These verses show us one reason why we, as Christians, are to remember the death of the Lord with a communion service.

One reason we have communion is to remind us of the infinite cost that Jesus paid as He shed His blood and gave His life to pay the penalty for our sins. That is why we are to examine ourselves before we take communion. We are to examine our lives to see if we are showing the same love and compassion to others, and if not, to confess that sin to the Lord and ask Christ to give us His strength to forgive those who have sinned against us. Ephesians 4:32 says, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” We see, from the verses in the previous paragraph, that many in the church at Corinth were experiencing the discipline of the Lord, because they took communion in an unworthy manner, with unconfessed sin in their hearts. Such sin is often an unwillingness to forgive another person from the heart.

That is why Jesus concluded this illustration by saying, “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” A Christian with unwillingness to forgive another person, from the heart, will experience the discipline of the Lord here on earth, but will not be judged eternally. 1 Corinthians 5:5 says, “Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” God will allow emotional upset and physical sickness to change an unforgiving heart of a Christian. God may even take the physical life of that person. The Father will do whatever is necessary to conform our lives to the image of Christ. As we see in this verse, the goal of God is to save the spirit of a sinning Christian in the day of the Lord Jesus.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that God will discipline them, in love, if they have an unforgiving heart toward another person. God disciplines His children because He loves them. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand the purpose for godly discipline of His children.