

Free to Forgive

Key Verse: “*Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.*”
—**Matthew 18:27**

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 18:21-35

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Lord how often he should forgive a brother who had sinned against him. He probably felt he was being very generous when he suggested seven times as a maximum figure. Jesus’ answer, “Until seventy times seven,” was a symbolic way of emphasizing there should be no limit in extending this grace.—vss. 21,22

Believers who have been wronged should have an attitude of heart and mind to promptly extend forgiveness, even though a loving rebuke may sometimes be necessary before confession of the misdeed is made and a genuine expression of repentance is voiced.—Eph. 4:32; Luke 17:3,4

To illustrate this concept, Jesus spoke a parable about the kingdom of heaven, which is the church in its present embryonic state. “Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.”—Matt. 18:23-26

Although this servant was derelict in his duty, he acknowledged his wrongdoing and requested leniency. It is well to note the king in this illustration represents

the Heavenly Father, and the servant represents Christians who are following in the footsteps of the Master.

In our Key Verse, which follows, we see Divine mercy extended towards the errant believer who repented. “Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.”—Matt. 18:27

After receiving such benevolence and favor, this servant failed to exercise similar mercy towards another servant who owed him far less than his own debt. This was reported to the master by other servants and he was remanded to his previous condition until full payment of his debt was made. (vss. 28-34) The parable concludes with Jesus’ admonition, “Likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”—Matt. 18:35

The object of this lesson is not to teach a retaliatory spirit on God’s part towards his children who have erred in their treatment of others. Although justice is a very pronounced aspect of the Divine character, and believers should strive to emulate God’s attributes, we read, “Mercy rejoiceth against judgment.” (James 2:13) The Heavenly Father desires his children to grow into his character likeness so they can more freely be used in his service during Christ’s thousand-year kingdom, which will bring blessings to all the human family.

Believers who take this lesson to heart, while following Christ’s example when he sojourned among mankind, will be prepared to assist the world of humanity back to the full fellowship and perfection that was lost when the first pair—Adam and Eve—disobeyed God and plunged the entire race into sin and death.

All who love righteousness and mercy should look forward to the time of future blessings for obedient mankind. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—Rev. 22:17 ■