

The Unforgiving Servant

Read Matthew 18:21-35

Jesus taught about forgiving others most vividly in His parable found in Matthew 18:21-35.

In the ancient world, slaves could become highly responsible and trusted members of the household, and thus a huge debt owed by a slave was plausible.

To understand “ten thousand talents” (v.24), consider this. One talent was what a laborer might earn in half a lifetime. The slave could not have paid this debt in five thousand lifetimes. Ten thousand talents was approximately three hundred tons of silver. But ten thousand was the largest numeral for which a Greek term exists, and a talent was the largest measure of money. Thus when Jesus, the master storyteller, talks about ten thousand talents, He is using the largest amount of money He could express. In our current slang, He might say that the servant owed a gazillion dollars.

The one hundred denarii owed by the second slave was only about three to four months wages, or 1/600,000 of the first servant’s debt. In asking for relief from his debt, the second slave used roughly the same words as the first (vv.26, 29). The response was different only because of the unforgiving heart of the servant.

In the end, their generous master would forgive a huge debt. But he would not forgive his servant’s refusal to share his generosity. The unforgiving servant wanted “justice,” so he got it.

Paul put the same teaching this way: “*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you*” (Ephesians 4:32, NIV).

But sometimes the wrongs done to us wound us on a deep, emotional level. We want to forgive, and perhaps we have forgiven on a rational level, but we continue to have ill feelings about the person who wronged us. If you struggle with this:

- Pray sincerely for the person every time they come to mind.
- Realize that the God you love, loves that person very much and understands them. Put their wrong on His account, and you will still owe Him more than you can ever pay.
- Bitter, angry thoughts are Satan’s temptations, pure and simple. Refuse to embrace them. Pray for God’s help every time those feelings arise.

Listen & Sing: [The Joy of Forgiveness](#) (from [LNWhymns.com](#))