

# Forgive, or Pay the Price

Love Like Jesus, Message #3, Matthew 18:31-35

## INTRODUCTION

INFLATION...

That word carries much meaning for us, especially in the time we are living in right now.

Let's return to the scene found in Matthew 18. We have examined Matthew 18:21-35 for a couple of weeks now because we are looking at what it means to love like Jesus.

Jesus taught His disciples His desire for them and His church to live in forgiveness. We will be hurt, done wrong, gossiped about, mistreated, etc. In all these experiences, we should forgive.

To teach this, Jesus illustrated through the parable recorded here. He presented a servant whom his master forgave an impossible debt. The servant represents each of us who come to Jesus and have our sins washed away by the blood of the Lamb. The master represents God, Who forgives all who come to Him through Jesus.

This same servant, forgiven all the impossible debt, refused to forgive a fellow servant who owed him a much smaller debt. This represents when we experience the hurts of life. Refusing to forgive the debt of another signifies refusing to forgive them when they have wronged us. It demonstrates holding on to resentment. The example teaches us to expel resentment from our lives.

Is there a negative impact of holding on to our resentment? Of refusing to forgive when someone else has wronged us?

That question will be answered in our final look at this parable. The message is titled *Forgive or Pay the Price*.

## ILLUSTRATION

Have you seen the humorous, graphical representations of inflation lately?

*Show pictures.*

Several friends have taken up raising chickens for the eggs. Some have even threatened, "Do this, or pay the price."

## **INTRODUCTION**

When others wrong you, you need to forgive. Refusing to forgive comes with a high cost. As we conclude our examination of the parable in Matthew 18, we'll learn the price of unforgiveness.

## **BIBLE**

'So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.'

Matthew 18:31-35

<https://my.bible.com/bible/1/MAT.18.31-35>

## **1. THE RECIPE OF UNFORGIVENESS**

### **EXPLANATION**

When others became aware of the events between their fellow servants, they informed the king, who called his servant to account for his actions.

### **APPLICATION**

Remember, recognizing that we will all stand before God is a key to expelling resentment. When someone else wrongs you, they will give an account of it to God. When you refuse to forgive, you hold yourself accountable to God.

#### **A. A FAILURE TO RECEIVE WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU (V. 32)**

### **EXPLANATION**

The king reminded his servant of their transaction. Though the servant owed such an impossible debt, forgiveness was his for asking because he desired it.

### **APPLICATION**

Remember, God's forgiveness is available simply for the asking. You don't buy it. You don't earn it. His forgiveness never runs out. He never says no. Just ask. He'll forgive!

If you don't know Jesus Christ as your Savior, God forgives of all trespasses when you come to Him by faith in Jesus Christ. He longs to cover you with His love and grace and forgive all your sin. Trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If you know Jesus Christ, remember the love and grace of God that provides forgiveness and salvation. When we hold on to unforgiveness, we fail to receive what God has done for us. We have been saved, but we have failed to understand its experience, power, and transformation.

## **B. A FAILURE TO REFLECT WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU (V. 33)**

### **EXPLANATION**

The king showed his servant that he should have demonstrated to his fellow servant the same compassion the king offered him. Expelling resentment necessitates reflecting on my forgiveness through Christ so that I can reflect what He has done for me to others.

Note that "have had compassion" is one word in the original language and is a verb. This reminds us that compassion is not an attitude only; it is an action.

### **APPLICATION**

Friends, loving like Jesus cannot be just an attitude. We can't just talk about it, make it a nice platitude for 2023, or even pray about it. We need to get active. It is doing to others, for others, and in others what Jesus has done to, for, and in us. Not just those we know, like, are like us, etc., but also those who wrong us. God calls us not to do unto others as they have done unto us, but unto others, as we would have them do unto us and even more to do unto others what God has done unto us.

What has God done for you?

How have you reflected it to others?

Dr. Tony Evans defined forgiveness as "the decision to no longer credit to the account of the offender" (Dr. Tony Evans, <https://youtu.be/gGsTp3HJ6bc>).

When someone wrongs you, you have to choose to continue while no longer crediting the wrong to the offender. Forgiveness means to stop keeping score.

What if the offender has not asked for forgiveness?

Dr. Tony Evans further described two stages of forgiveness that I agree with and find helpful.

One is transactional forgiveness, which happens when both parties desire reconciliation and restoration of the relationship. In this stage, the offender repents and wants restoration prompting transactional forgiveness (Dr. Tony Evans, <https://youtu.be/gGsTp3HJ6bc>).

If the offender has not or cannot ask for forgiveness, the second stage of forgiveness is unilateral forgiveness. Unilateral forgiveness is given when the person hasn't asked for it or repented. Why would you do this? Unilateral forgiveness is granted so the person giving it can keep going (Dr. Tony Evans, <https://youtu.be/gGsTp3HJ6bc>).

Regardless of the offender, we should forgive because the price of unforgiveness is just too high.

## **2. THE RESULTS OF UNFORGIVENESS**

### **EXPLANATION**

Look again at Matthew 18:31.

### **BIBLE**

'So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.'

Matthew 18:31

<https://my.bible.com/bible/1/MAT.18.31>

### **A. UNFORGIVENESS AFFECTS OTHERS OUTSIDE OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES (V. 31)**

#### **EXPLANATION**

"Sorry" means to distress, be sad, cause to be sad, or grieve. Those fellow servants who were involved or became aware of the situation were affected by it.

#### **APPLICATION**

Something we often do not think about is the others who are hurt by situations of this kind. Wrongs often damage more than those directly involved, as does unforgiveness.

## **B. UNFORGIVENESS PLACES ME IN BONDAGE (VV. 34-35)**

### **EXPLANATION**

Scholars and commentators have vastly different views of v. 35, primarily swinging to two extremes: the unforgiving servant was never really saved (thus never really forgiven) or forgiven then stripped of forgiveness (thus loss of salvation). J. B. Coffman even said that “The sine qua non (essential element or condition), without which no man can be saved, is a forgiving heart” (Coffman, *Coffman’s Commentaries*).

A statement like this is foreign to the Bible.

Are we making it both too simple and unbiblical?

If we applied similar theology to other areas, who could be saved?

Also, how can we suggest that the unforgiving servant was never really saved?

Was forgiveness not really offered?

Did he not experience forgiveness?

These ideas are unsensible to me. If the King represents God, He knows whether someone is truly forgiven. Similarly, the King said that forgiveness was available simply for the asking. If forgiveness was available simply for the asking, then being forgiving cannot be a requirement of forgiveness. That is, being forgiving cannot be a requirement of salvation because then salvation would no longer be about grace; it would be about works. Thus, one extreme denies the security of salvation, and the other denies the grace of salvation.

I agree that an individual who claims to be saved and never senses regret, conviction, or otherwise over their sin is, at least likely, unsaved. A saved individual will experience these senses because the in-dwelling Spirit will produce them. However, it is unlikely that every true believer would practice God’s level of forgiveness in every circumstance.

What if the price to be paid (v. 35) is forgiveness? The King, then, requires not the original debt to be paid but forgiveness to be given to be forgiven and released from prison.

### **APPLICATION**

In further describing unilateral forgiveness, Dr. Tony Evans explained that “It keeps the person granting it from being held hostage by something another person refuses to get

right. Refusing to do so is allowing yourself to be held hostage by something you can never change” (Dr. Tony Evans, <https://youtu.be/gGsTp3HJ6bc>).

“Unforgiveness blocks you from the supernatural. There are two sides to our story, the need to forgive and the need to be forgiven. Forgive is a beautiful word when you need forgiveness. It is an ugly word when you need to give forgiveness” (Dr. Tony Evans, <https://youtu.be/gGsTp3HJ6bc>).

“He’s not talking about your salvation; He’s talking about your fellowship” (Dr. Tony Evans, <https://youtu.be/gGsTp3HJ6bc>).

Unforgiveness places me in prison until the time that I forgive.

When I forgive, God can forgive me and release me from the prison of unforgiveness.

## **CONCLUSION**

We all enter occasions where we must choose to forgive or not forgive. Carefully consider the price you will pay for unforgiveness.

When we choose not to forgive, the price we have to pay for unforgiveness is great.

When we fail to forgive, others outside the circumstances will be hurt.

When we fail to forgive, we place ourselves in bondage.

Consider your own heart deeply. Whom do you need to forgive?

Failing to do so will only inflate the price you have already paid.

### **Christ Follower**

Recognize any remnants of unforgiveness in your heart. Repent of unforgiveness as a sin against God. Ask Him to develop His heart in you to enable you to forgive others as He has forgiven you.

### **Christ Seeker**

God forgives of all trespasses when you come to Him by faith in Jesus Christ. He longs to cover you with His love and grace and forgive all your sin. Trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.