

HOW SELFISH CAN YOU BE?

Matthew 18:21-35

INTRO: Let's look at the Book of Matthew today. The Gospel of Matthew, the first book of the New Testament. Turn to chapter 18.

Let me give you a quick backstory to where we are in scripture. We are nearing the end of Jesus' ministry. He is on His way to the cross. It's in the region of Syro-Phoenicia at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus tells His disciples, the time of His death has come, and He begins the journey to Jerusalem where He will die. Here in chapter 18, Jesus and His disciples are in the sea port city of Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee. He will eventually make His way to the region of Judea, beyond the Jordan, to Jericho, and then finally up to Jerusalem where He will die for the sins of the world, and three days later be raised back to life.

It's on this journey that Jesus seems to give all the last minute advice and instruction He can to His disciples. He takes advantage of every opportunity to share a teaching moment. In Matthew 18:21-35, He gives us both, a word of instruction, and a word of warning, as He seems to ask the question, HOW SELFISH CAN YOU BE?

Today, I want to talk to you about FORGIVENESS.

The Word of God has a lot to say about forgiveness...

Ephesians 4:32 *"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."*

Mark 11:25 *"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."*

God makes a big deal about the fact that we are obligated to forgive people who have wronged us. The fairly obvious reason that He can ask so much of us, is that, He forgave us! And it cost Him His Son to do it.

Ephesians 1:7 *"In whom (in Christ Jesus) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;"*

Here, in our text, Jesus has just spoke to His disciples about church discipline and how it works. About how the church is to handle one who is wrong in their behavior, and has wronged others. It's immediately after this that Peter asks Jesus, *"How many times should I forgive my brother who has wronged me? Up to seven times?"* NOTICE...

I) THE RESPONSE: **vv 21-22** *"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother who sins against me? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not just seven times, but seventy times seven."*

ILLUS: There was a cartoon in which little George Washington was standing with an axe in his hand. Before him, lying on the ground, is the famous cherry tree. He has already made his smug admission that he did it -- after all, he "cannot tell a lie." But his father is standing there exasperated saying, "All right, so you admit it! You always admit it! The question is, when are you going to stop doing it."

Do you have anyone in your life that is always doing stupid? They are always hurting you, always making excuses, always apologizing but never correcting. Aren't they a blessing?

THE RESPONSE: vv 21-22 CONTINUED Peter must have had someone like that in his life. Because when he hears Jesus speak about church discipline for those who wrong people without repentance, he makes his way to the front of the line to ask a question. He says in v 21, *“Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother who sins against me? Up to seven times?”* LOL, I'm thinking Peter has already forgiven this dude 6 times, and now he's thinking, maybe just one more time, you know, so I look good, then I'm going to drop the hammer on this cat! BUT THEN JESUS JUST BLOWS HIS MIND with His response. No Peter, not seven times but seventy times seven! WOW, what did he just say? Here, Jesus uses a Greek word that isn't used anywhere else in scripture. It's a long fun word, hebdomēkontakis (heb-dom-maykon-tok-es) Everyone say that with me :) The definition of the word means seventy times, or countless times. Some translations render the word seventy seven times, while others have it as seventy times seven. It's not really about the number, it's more about the heart. Jesus is saying to Peter, and those listening to Him, just find a way to keep forgiving.

Wow, what a RESPONSE. Now notice...

THE RELEASE: vv 23-27 Okay, it's at this point, after he had corrected Peter, that Jesus tells a parable. Parable is the Greek word, Parabole (par-ob-ol-ay') it literally means “to cast alongside”. Jesus' parables were stories that were “cast alongside” a truth in order to illustrate that truth. Someone has said it this way, a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Let's read...

vv 23-27, *“Because of this, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlements, a debtor was brought to him owing ten thousand talents. 25 Since the man was unable to pay, the master ordered that he be sold to pay his debt, along with his wife and children and everything he owned. 26 Then the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Have patience with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ 27 His master had compassion on him, forgave his debt, and released him.”*

It's really hard for us to appreciate what's going on here until we have a more complete understanding of the value involved. V 24 states that this man owed the King ten thousand talents. A single talent had a value equal to 20 years wages for a common laborer. One talent equaled 20 years wage. And this man owed 10,000 talents! And the bible says that the King, after hearing the mans appeal, had compassion on him and FORGAVE his debt and RELEASED him.

Can you imaging what that would feel like? The weight of the world just lifted from you! Oh my, what a blessing! He was on his way to prison, no chance of ever getting out, then the King, in a gracious moment, decides to FORGIVE his debt and let him go.

WHAT AN EXAMPLE! Are there people in your life that you need to forgive and release? I know they're guilty as sin! But it's not about them, it's about you! There are always going to be people in your life that do you wrong. We are fallen people living in a fallen world. But God tells us to live above this world as Christians.

Matthew 6:15 *“But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”*

Colossians 3:13 *“Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.”*

) THE RESPONSE: vv 21-22

II) THE RELEASE: vv 23-27 **CONTINUED** Listen to me, some of you need to let go of some things. You need to release some people! You're not hurting them holding on to your grudge. You're not keeping them up at night. You're not giving them ulcers. **YOU'RE DOING THAT TO YOURSELF!** And it's not worth it. But just in case you think it is, let me tell you what else it's costing you. It's costing you a right relationship with God. And all the hatred and grudges in the world isn't worth that. **RELEASE IT TODAY,** Let go of the anger, the hurt. Cast it all upon God. He cares about you and wants you to know joy unspeakable and full of glory. Not this misery you've been burdened with. God has a better plan for you.

So we've seen the RESPONSE and the RELEASE. Now notice...

III) THE REFUSAL: vv 28-30 *"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe me!' 29 So his fellow servant fell down and begged him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you back.' 30 But he refused. Instead, he went and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay his debt."*

Can you imagine this? This guy, we'll call him servant 1 (or idiot), he has just had a 10,000 talent debt forgiven. We can't even calculate that. 1 talent was equal to 20 years wage. I can't even do the math for 10,000 talents. Tens of millions of dollars??? But the amount doesn't even matter now, it's all been forgiven, wiped clean. **THANK THE LORD!**

He leaves the King's palace. He's whistling, singing, skipping a little. It's a glorious moment. Then he sees a guy walking down the street. And immediately his joy turns to rage. This guy owes him 100 denarii. Now, a denarii is equivalent to one day's wage, and he owes him 100 denarii, a little over 3 months worth of wages. (Let's say you make \$20 per hour. Times 40 hours is \$800 per week. That's \$3200 per month. Times 3 months and a few odd days, comes out to about \$10,000) Now, that's not chump change, but he's just been forgiven 10,000 TALENTS! (Millions and millions of dollars). And when he sees this guy, he instantly goes from celebrating and thanking Jesus, to grabbing this man and choking him, screaming at him, "pay back what you owe me!"

That's what hatred and an unforgiving spirit will do to you! Some of you have an unforgiving spirit that is tearing you apart. Your health is deteriorating, your life has been robbed of its joy. You have lost your peace of mind, and you have the audacity to believe it's someone else's fault. But it's not, it's your! **LISTEN TO ME,** Forgiveness is not a feeling, it's an attitude, it's a choice! And you can choose to forgive anyone at anytime.

There are three things that keep us from forgiving.

Revenge: "I'm going to get even!"

Resentment: "I'm going to stay angry!"

Remembering: "I'll never forget!"

Don't live your life in that place. Nothing good ever comes from holding grudges. It will wreck your health, and destroy your relationship with God.

I) THE RESPONSE: vv 21-22

II) THE RELEASE: vv 23-27

III) THE REFUSAL: vv 28-30

Notice what happened to this man when he REFUSED to forgive...

IV) THE REPRIMAND: vv 31-35 *"When his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and recounted all of this to their master. 32 Then the master summoned him and declared, 'You wicked servant! I forgave all your debt because you begged me. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should repay all that he owed. 35 That is how My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."*

You wicked servant, shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had on you? I wonder when we stand before God on the day of Judgement, if He will say those things to us? Will you be able to bear the weight of that responsibility?

vv 34-35 *"In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should repay all that he owed. 35 That is how My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."*

What can I say about that? Do I need say anything at all?

CONCLUSION: 1 John 1:9 *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Luke 6:37 *"Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;"*

Luke 6:27 *"But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,"*

Proverbs 10:12 *"Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins."*