

Introduction: We are living in a time when it seems everybody is at each other's throat. In reality, there may be about ten to twenty percent of people at each extreme who are constantly vilifying the 'others'. And, neither side has any desire to forgive the other side in order to gain reconciliation. The result is the majority in the middle is left feeling unsettled almost to the point of being incapacitated. Those who would rather fight than forgive are unproductive. *** So, everyone suffers and has a lower standard of living than they would if they could all be reconciled through forgiveness. So from general reasoning we can understand that **no one can afford un-forgiveness**. *** In our passage for today, Jesus teaches both from the day-to-day challenges of living as part of God's community, and by way of a parable, the high cost of un-forgiveness. The desired end is always reconciliation and forgiveness; but, Jesus knows some people do not desire, nor will they choose, to forgive and be reconciled. He says they must be put out of the community. *** Further, in response to a question, He sets a very high standard for the extent of forgiveness He requires: seventy times what people think is a high standard. *** Lastly, He shows that the Great King of Creation will give unlimited forgiveness based on His compassion on any who will humbly beg for it; but He will be harsh to those who, having been forgiven much, are unwilling to forgive a trivial debt of their fellow servants of God. *** So, let us now approach God's teaching on forgiveness and reconciliation with humility.

I. Jesus teaches on sin among God's people, binding and loosing, and forgiveness. (*Matthew 18:15-22*)

A. A four-step process concerning sin among God's people. (*Matthew 18:15-17*)

1. If thy brother sin against thee, thou must go and tell him alone; if he may hear thee, thou have won over thy brother. (*Verse 15*)

Brother sins: In the community of God's family brothers sin against others from time-to-time.

Go alone: The first step when this happens is to go to your brother alone – one on one.

Hears, win: If he hears you, agrees and is reconciled to you this is a gain for both of you.

2. But if he will not hear, then thou must take with thee yet one or two, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every single word may be established. (*Verse 16*)

Not hear: If he refuses to be reconciled to you, bring along witnesses who will confirm his sinful refusal to repent and reconcile.

3. And if he may refuse to hear them, thou must tell the ecclesia. (*Verse 17a*)

Ecclesia: Jesus is talking about the assembly, or community, of God's people. Before the Cross and Pentecost it was a synagogue. By the time Matthew was written it was the Church of Jesus.

4. If he also refuses to hear the assembly, he must be to thee as a non-Jew or tax collector. (*Verse 17b*)

Tax collector: After rejecting every level of reconciliation, a sinner must be treated as an unbeliever or a person exploiting his own people in selfish greed.

B. Binding and loosing by God's people who ask together in His Presence. (*Matthew 18:18-20*)

1. Truly, I say to all of you, as much as you all may bind on earth, it will be bound in heaven; and as much as you all may loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (*Verse 18*)

Bind and loose: This has to do with reconciliation. When God's family works to loose a brother from sin to be forgiven by God he is restored to both God and God's family; but, when he insists on staying in bondage to sin, he will be bound over to satan. Put out of the community.

2. Truly again I am saying to you all that if two of you all may agree on earth concerning any matter which they may ask, it will be done to them from My Father in the heavens. (*Verse 19*)

Agree: Agreement of people in asking God is in the context of reconciliation among God's people.

3. For where they are being, two or three having been gathered together in My Name, there I am being in the midst of them. (*Verse 20*)

Presence: This presence of God with His gathered people is the heart His covenant with them, that He will be their God and they will be His people. This is the greatest blessing, and the fruit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

C. Jesus tells Peter to forgive a brother who sins against him up to five hundred times. (*Matthew 18:21-22*)

1. Peter having come to Him said, 'Lord how often will my brother sin against me and I forgive him – up to seven times?' (*Verse 21*)

Seven times forgive: Since seven is God's number of completion, Peter assumes it will be the limit on the number of times he must forgive a brother sinning against him.

2. Jesus is saying to him, 'I am not saying unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven'. (*Verse 22*)

Seventy times that: Jesus raises the standard by a factor of seventy, literally meaning at least four hundred ninety times. Figuratively, He is saying forgive with no limit.

II. Jesus tells of a compassionate king who forgave his servant a myriad of debt. (*Matthew 18:23-35; Psalm 32:1-2*)

A. The Kingdom of Heaven resembles a king who forgave a myriad talent debt. (*Matthew 18:23-27*)

1. Therefore the Kingdom of the Heavens resembles a king who desired to settle matters with his servants. (*Verse 23*)

King and servants: This parable is about a man who is king and he is settling up with his servants, but at a deeper level it is about God and His people.

2. And having begun to settle one was brought to him, a debtor of ten thousand talents. (*Verse 24*)

Two thousand lifetimes: A denarius was a day's wages. A talent is six thousand denarii, or twenty years wages based on a six day work week. Altogether, the debt would require this servant to work two hundred thousand years, or two thousand lifetimes of one hundred years each.

3. He, not having to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold and his wife and children. (*Verse 25*)
Sold to slavery: So the servant and his whole family will be sold into separate slavery at a lesser return to the king than the outstanding debt.
 4. Having fallen down, the servant was giving him homage, 'Thou must have patience with me and I will pay thee all'; having been moved with compassion, the servant's lord loosed him and forgave the debt. (*Verse 26-27*)
Beg: The only action open to the servant was to beg for time with all that was in him.
Compassion: His lord was moved to compassion for this deflated servant.
Loose and forgive: Using the word Jesus used for God's people loosing their brothers by forgiving sin, the lord loosed his servant and also forgave him everything. The spiritual truth behind this action of the human king is God is willing to forgive sinners through the sacrificial love of His Son.
- B. But the forgiven servant threw a fellow servant into prison over a trivial debt, angering the king whose compassion was turned to anger. (*Matthew 18:28-34*)
1. But that servant, having gone out, found one of his fellow servants who owed him one hundred denarii and having taken him he was choking him, 'Thou must pay what thou are owing'. (*Verse 28*)
Trivial: This debt was less than four months wages, trivial compared to two hundred thousand years!
Choked: And he is choking his peer over this trivial amount after he was loosed from slavery.
 2. Having fallen down, his fellow servant was beseeching him, 'Thou must have patience with me and I will pay thee'. (*Verse 29*)
Beg: This fellow servant is begging with the same words this greatly forgiven servant had just used.
 3. He would not [be patient], but having gone out he cast him into prison until he might pay the debt. (*Verse 30*)
Bound: Even though he had been loosed, this servant bound his poor fellow servant. Note also, this fellow servant is not loosed by the end of the parable, he is still bound in prison. This is an injustice.
 4. Then his fellow servants, having seen what happened, they were very sorry; and, having come they told their lord all that happened. (*Verse 31*)
Peers: The peers were greatly grieved that the forgiven servant was so un-forgiving; and, went to tell the lord what happened, hoping he might make it right.
 5. Then his lord, having called after him, said, 'Wicked servant! I forgave thee of all that debt because thou begged, was it not being necessary also for thee to have mercy on your fellow servant even as I also had pity on thee. (*Verse 32-33*)
Wicked: The lord pulls no punches in addressing his wicked servant.
Were forgiven: He gives him a history lesson that he had received forgiveness of a great debt.
Mercy: The servant's actions toward a fellow servant were unmerciful, revealing a tragically flawed character.
 6. His lord, having become angry, delivered him over to the jailers until he may pay all that he was obligated. (*Verse 34*)
Angry – jailed: His un-forgiveness made his lord angry and resulted in imprisonment for life under tormenting jailers. This parable teaches that **no one can afford un-forgiveness**.
Impossible terms: The impossible debt was imposed again, and now he could not work to pay it off.
Let us learn from this un-forgiving servant that **no one can afford un-forgiveness**.
- C. The heavenly Father will severely punish His servants who do not act consistent with His blessed forgiveness of them. (*Matthew 18:35; Psalm 32:1-2*)
1. So also My heavenly Father will do to you all if you all may not forgive your brother from your hearts. (*Matthew 18:35*)
Heavenly Father: Jesus makes it clear that anyone His Father has forgiven will be likewise punished for not forgiving his brother. With this Jesus makes it clear: **no one can afford un-forgiveness**.
 2. Happily blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. (*Psalm 32:1*)
Happy blessing: The word that begins this psalm is the basis for the name of Jacob's son Asher. When Leah's handmaid bore a second son for her she said, 'Happy am I for women will call me happy', and she named him Asher. (*Genesis 30:13*).
Forgiven and covered: The happy blessing is because transgression and sin are forgiven and covered.
- God's forgiveness is a blessing*
3. Happily blessed is the man Yahweh will not reckon to him iniquity and there is no deceit in his spirit. (*Psalm 32:2*)
Yahweh not reckon: It is a blessing when God does not see a man whose heart is bent to do wrong.
Person not deceive: And, also this man is free from a spirit of deception of others.

Conclusion: Jesus gives a process for dealing with a brother who sins, then He charges His people to bind and loose sinners in His presence. Then, in response to a question He says people should be willing to forgive up to five hundred times. He concludes by illustrating that people who have been forgiven an insurmountable debt by a compassionate king can be incapable of forgiving a peer of a trivial debt, with devastating consequences.

No one can afford un-forgiveness