

**The Unmerciful Slave**  
or  
*The Importance of Forgiveness in the Life of a Believer*  
(Matthew 18:21-35)

**Introduction**

- + Have you ever experienced a time when you felt you have been wronged in an emotionally painful way?
- + Have you ever felt that forgiveness was almost an impossibility?
- + Should you forgive someone even if they are oblivious they have wronged you?

**A. The Question of Peter. Is there a quota on forgiveness? (Matt. 18:21-22)**

1. There was a background to Peter's question. That background is recorded in Matthew 18:15-20. What do we learn from that paragraph?
2. What was Peter's question of Jesus? (Matt. 18:21)
3. What was Peter's suggested quota? (Matt. 18:21)
4. What was Jesus' surprising reply? (Matt. 18:22)

**B. The Master's Treatment of a Deeply-Indebted Slave (Matt. 18:23-27)**

1. What is the context of this parable? (Matt. 18:23)
  - a. What is the setting?
  - b. Who is the leading character?
  - c. With whom was he dealing? <sup>1</sup>
  - d. With what does the phrase "settle accounts" have to do (in terms of a long-term interpretation)?

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. 18:23 - "servants." This is really the word "slaves." (plural of *doulos*, [1401](#))

2. There was a slave brought before the King. (Matt. 18:24)
  - a. What is the outstanding feature about this slave?
  - b. How much is 10,000 talents? <sup>2</sup>
  - c. How likely could this debt be repaid?
3. What did the King decree to resolve the hopeless indebtedness of this slave? (Matt. 18:25)
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
4. What did the slave do? (Matt. 18:26).
5. Was there any likelihood he could make good on his promise?
6. What did the King do? (Matt. 18:27)
7. Why?

**C. The Forgiven Slave's Treatment of a Fellow-Slave Who Owed Him Money. (Matt. 18:28-30)**

1. It appears the forgiven slave immediately set out to find one of his fellow slaves who owed him money (Matt. 18:28).
2. How much money did this slave owe him? <sup>3</sup>
3. Was this an amount that could realistically be paid off over time?

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<sup>2</sup> Matt. 18:24 - ten thousand talents: According to the NASB footnote, a single talent was worth 15 years' wages. Was there any possibility this slave could pay back the King?

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 18:28 - a hundred denarii: According to the NASB footnote, a denarius was a single day's wage.

4. How did the creditor slave treat his fellow slave? (Matt. 18:28)
5. What did the indebted slave implore of his creditor slave? (Matt. 18:29)
6. What was the response of the creditor slave? (Matt. 18:30)

**D. The Report of the Fellow Slaves to the King. (Matt. 18:31)**

1. What did these slaves witness?
2. What was their emotion?
3. What did they do?

**E. The King Has a One-Sided Conversation with the Unforgiving Slave. (Matt. 18:32-33)**

1. The King summoned the slave. How did he assess the slave's character? (Matt. 18:32)
2. What had the King done with this slave's debt?
3. Why had he done so?
4. How should this slave have treated his fellow slave? (Matt. 18:33)
5. Why?

**F. The King's Disposition of the Ungrateful Slave (Matt. 18:34)**

1. What was the King's emotion? (Matt. 18:34)
2. To whom did the King hand over his slave? <sup>4</sup>
3. How long would his sentence last?

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<sup>4</sup> Matt. 18:34 - jailers (ESV). NASB reads "torturers." The ESV footnote reads as follows: Greek *torturers*. According to [Friberg](#), the Greek word *basanistês* (930) is used "as a legal technical term, one who examines by using torture *judicial examiner, tormenter*; in the NT jailer, torturer, prison guard (Matt. 18:34)".

**G. Jesus Makes the Application (Matt. 18:35)**

1. What would His Father do to the disciples?
2. What would be the cause of this punishment?
3. What kind of heart attitude would they need to exhibit?

**H. What is your response to this parable?**

1. Personally, I find it more than a little convicting.
2. How about you?