



## Forgiving Others: A Believer's Response of Thankfulness\*

Those who do not believe in Christ legitimize their refusal to forgive others for self-oriented reasons. Believers in Christ can also fail to forgive because of self-interest.

Believers, however, primarily refuse to forgive biblically because they do not realize the magnitude of their forgiveness from the Lord. As a result, they do not fully appreciate God's work on their behalf.

Jesus addressed this issue in Matthew 18:21-35 in response to a question from Peter, notably the most outspoken of the original twelve disciples of Christ.

**Matthew 18:21-35**, Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?"<sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."<sup>23</sup> Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.<sup>24</sup> When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.<sup>25</sup> And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.<sup>26</sup> So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'<sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.<sup>28</sup> But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.'<sup>29</sup> So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'<sup>30</sup> He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.<sup>31</sup> When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.<sup>32</sup> Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.<sup>33</sup> And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'<sup>34</sup> And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.<sup>35</sup> So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

In this parable, Jesus reminds us that each person's debt of sin is beyond one's own ability to redeem. To demonstrate this truth, Jesus said the "impossible debt" was ten thousand talents, an amount estimated to be as high as 70 million dollars. God, the king in the parable, mercifully released the debtor from this overwhelming debt of sin.

Yet, when this forgiven debtor had opportunity to forgive another person of a much smaller debt of 100 denarii (estimated to be about 70 dollars), his lack of awareness and thankfulness for his own debt-free status was profound!

Think about it . . . forgiven of \$70,000,000 yet unwilling to forgive \$70! That is hard to believe, isn't it? Yet, believers in Christ who refuse to forgive others are similar to the unthankful debtor in the above parable.

Believers who will not forgive display staggering ingratitude for God's forgiveness of their overwhelming debt of sin pardoned through the sacrifice of Jesus. The Apostle Paul reminds us of this sacrifice in Romans 5:7-10 and Ephesians 1:7.

**Romans 5:7-10**, For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

**Ephesians 1:7**, In Him (Jesus) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

### A believer's forgiveness of others expresses thankfulness for personal salvation

The most profitable step believers can take when faced with the supposed "impossibility" of forgiving others is to review their own salvation and the price Jesus paid to forgive them.

As believers grow in their understanding of God's forgiveness, their thankfulness will increase accordingly. Their growing thankfulness for Christ's sacrifice on their behalf will overshadow any personal cost they may incur in forgiving others.

There is no activity of Christian life that is more closely aligned to the love of God and the willing sacrifice of Christ than forgiving others. Believers who consistently forgive others are simultaneously demonstrating thankfulness to Jesus Christ for His sacrifice that provided forgiveness to them.

\*Excerpted from [Forgiveness: The Possible Impossibility](#)