

Sermon Reflections

The Value of Forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35)

Summary: God's family, the church, is held together by mercy and forgiveness. Put down your grudges and forgive, as God in Christ forgave you.

Four questions to help us understand what this text teaches about Christ-like forgiveness:

1. Does Forgiveness Have a Limit? (vv. 21-22)

- When Peter asks Jesus if a person should forgive a brother seven times he was being generous because the traditional Rabbinic teaching was that the offended person needed to forgive a brother only three times. Jesus' reply was that forgiveness needs to be exercised to a much greater extent, i.e. *no* limit should be set. Do you find it difficult to accept this teaching? Do you ever hesitate to forgive someone who comes to you for forgiveness?
- 1 Corinthians 13:5 (NASB) says that "... Love does not take into account a wrong suffered." Do you ever have a concern that if you really applied this verse and the teaching of Jesus in verse 22 that people might be prone to "take advantage" of you and that you might become a "door mat"?

2. Does God's Forgiveness Have a Limit? (vv. 23-27)

- The servant's debt to his master/king was approximately \$6 Billion in today's money. In verse 27 the master/king, out of pity for the servant, forgave all the debt of the servant.
- What was the price that our God paid for the debt we owed? What did it cost Him? See Colossians 2:14. What does it mean that God nailed our debt to the cross?
- How should the truth of God's payment on our behalf affect the way we live life? How should this affect the way we respond to others when they offend us? How does the debt that we owed to God compare with the debt that other people owe to us?

3. Do I Put Limits on My Forgiveness? (vv. 28-30)

- The fellow servant's debt to the first servant was approximately \$12,000 in today's money. The first servant refused to forgive a debt of \$12,000 even though he was forgiven of his debt of \$6 Billion. Because of this, what can you conclude regarding the heart of the first servant? How does the first servant view mercy? Grace? Justice?

4. Do I Show the Limitlessness of the Father's Forgiveness? (vv. 31-35)

- The Lord was teaching that forgiveness ought to be in direct proportion to the amount forgiven. The first servant had been forgiven all and he in turn should have forgiven all. See Ephesians 4:32.
- How has Matthew 18 helped you in how to biblically forgive those who have offended you?