

# **Matthew 18 - Humility; Gnostic Gospels; Parable of the Lost Sheep; Age of Accountability; Church Discipline; Forgiveness**

III. King's interim kingdom program (Matt 13:1–20:28)

(3) Christ trains the disciples (Matt 14:13–20:28)

(N) Sermon on humility (18:1-35)

(a) Necessity of childlike humility (18:1-4)

(b) Necessity of not stumbling a disciple (18:5-14)

(c) Necessity of exercising church discipline (18:15-20)

(d) Necessity of forgiveness (18:21-35)

## **Matthew 18**

(N) Sermon on humility (18:1-35)

(a) Necessity of childlike humility (18:1-4) (Cf. Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48)

**1** At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

**1** At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

**1** At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom from heaven?"

**1** At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

- The preceding revelations about the King and kingdom led the disciples to express interest in who would be the greatest in the kingdom

— Jesus taught that there would be distinctions in the kingdom (5:19; 10:32-33)

**2** And He called a child to Himself and set him among them,

**2** And He called a child to Himself and set him before them,

**2** Calling a little child forward, he had him stand among them.

**2** And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

- Using a child as an example for adults to follow was shocking for that time

- People of that time regarded children as inferior to adults; children were instructed to look to adults as examples, not vice versa
- Now Jesus turned the tables and urged His disciples to follow the example of a child. To do so would require humility.

3 and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you change and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

3 and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

3 Then he said, "I tell all of you with certainty, unless you change and become like little children, you will never get into the kingdom from heaven.

3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

- Another verse that implies that the kingdom is still future...

4 So whoever will humble himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

4 Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom from heaven,

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

- Children have characteristics that distinguish them from adults—dependence and trust—but based on the context (the disciples' concern about greatest in the kingdom, v1), humility is clearly in view

— Little children have little concern about their personal prestige and position in relation to other people

— The disciple who humbled himself as a little child would be greatest in the kingdom

(b) Necessity of not stumbling a disciple (18:5-14)

5 And whoever receives one such **child in My name**, receives Me;

5 And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;

5 and whoever receives a little child like this in my name receives me."

5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

- "...child" - refers to a disciple who has humbled himself and become childlike, not the child Jesus was using as the example (v2)

— Jesus taught the importance of receiving a little child in Mark 9:36-37 and Luke 9:48

- "...in My name" - whoever does this welcomes the disciples because they are one of Jesus' disciples, not because they are personally superior, influential or prominent

The disciples abandoned a humble attitude when they became concerned about their status in the kingdom (v1). They needed to return to their former childlike attitude. Similarly, they had exercised great power through simple faith in Jesus, but as time passed, they got away from depending upon Him, lost their power, and needed to return to dependent faith.

### **The Seriousness of Impeding the Progress of a Disciple**

**6** but whoever causes one of these **little ones who believe in Me** to sin, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depths of the sea.

**6** but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

**6** "If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a large millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned at the bottom of the sea.

**6** But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

- This verse is the antithesis to v5: rejecting or ignoring a disciple
- Withholding supportive encouragement would cause a disciple to stumble in the sense that it would make it harder for him to do his work
- Jesus was not speaking of causing the disciple to stumble by leading them into apostasy
- "...little ones who believe in Me" - refers to a disciple who has humbled himself and become childlike, not the child Jesus was using as the example (v2)
- Discouraging a disciple amounts to rejecting the Master
- Consequently, drowning at sea is preferable for the offender than having to face Jesus' condemnation in hell for rejecting Him (v8-9)

**7** "Woe to the world because of *its* stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to the person through whom the stumbling block comes!

**7** "Woe to the world because of *its* stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!

**7** How terrible it will be for the world due to its temptations to sin! Temptations to sin are bound to happen, but how terrible it will be for that person who causes someone to sin!

7 Woe unto the world because of offences: for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.

- Jesus pronounced woe on the world because it is the source of opposition to Him and His disciples, and the source of much stumbling and stumbling blocks

### **Failure in Self-Discipline (Cf. Mark 9:43-50)**

8 "And if your hand or your foot is causing you to sin, cut it off and throw it away from you; it is better for you to enter life maimed or without a foot, than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into the eternal fire.

8 "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire.

8 "So if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life injured or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire.

8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

- Jesus warned His disciples of the possibility of them doing what the world does, namely making it difficult for another disciple to fulfill their mission for Jesus

9 And if your eye is causing you to sin, tear it out and throw it away from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fiery hell.

9 If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.

9 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell fire.

9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

- The point of this section is the seriousness of rejecting or opposing Jesus' disciples in their work of carrying out His will

10 "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones; for I say to you that **their angels** in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

10 "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

10 "See to it that you do not despise one of these little ones, because I tell you, their angels in heaven always have access to my Father in heaven.

**10** Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

- Jesus warned His disciples not to look down on His followers who were humbly following Him

— The disciples were in danger of using worldly standards to measure and give value to their fellow disciples

- "...their angels" - possessive, meaning these "little ones" have guardian angels in heaven responsible for them. Jesus taught that these angels have access to Him because of God's love for His own.

**11** [For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.]

**11** [For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.]

**11** For the Son of Man came to save the lost."

**11** For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

- This verse does not appear in the earliest copies of Matthew's Gospel

### **Parable of the Lost Sheep (Cf. Luke 15:3-7)**

**12** "What do you think? If any **man** has a hundred **sheep**, and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains, and go and search for the one that is lost?

**12** "What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying?

**12** "What do you think? If a man has 100 sheep and one of them strays, he leaves the 99 in the hills and goes to look for the one that has strayed, doesn't he?

**12** How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

- Having taught the disciples on the importance of humility, Jesus now illustrates it with a parable

— Jesus taught the same parable on a different occasion to teach a slightly different lesson (Luke 15:3-7). His purpose there was evangelistic; His purpose here is pastoral.

- "...man" - God

- "...sheep" - those who follow Jesus

- God has concern for every one of His sheep, and seeks to restore those who wander away from Him

**13** And if it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that have not gone astray.

13 If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray.

13 If he finds it, I tell all of you with certainty that he rejoices over it more than over the 99 that haven't strayed.

13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

- He has such great concern for a backslidden sheep that when they return to Him, He rejoices more than over the sheep who did not stray

— This does not mean that God loves His wayward sheep more than He loves His faithful sheep. It means that when wayward sheep return to Him, it gives Him special joy.

— Since God has such great concern for His disciples who go astray, His disciples should be very careful not to do anything that would cause one of His sheep to go astray

14 So it is not *the will* of your Father who is in heaven for one of these little ones to **perish**.

14 So it is not *the will* of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.

14 In the same way, it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost."

14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

- God doesn't want a single sheep to walk away from Him because someone has discouraged, rejected or opposed them

— He does not want His disciples, of all people, to be responsible for this

— "...perish" - in this context, does not mean loss of salvation, but the ultimate result of failing to achieve God's goal for them (i.e. a wasted life)

(c) Necessity of exercising church discipline (18:15-20)

15 "Now if your **brother** sins, **go** and **show him his fault** in private; if he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

15 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

15 "If your brother sins against you, go and confront him while the two of you are alone. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother.

15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

- "...brother" - encourages a humble approach by those who are confronting a wayward disciple

- Contextually, the sin in view is probably despising a fellow believer, however Jesus did not specify this specifically, and implied that it could be any sin that takes a disciple away from the Shepherd.

- "...go" - Jesus commanded initiative to "go" to such a person and reprove ("tell him his fault")
- "...show him his fault" - *elencho*, to convict, in the sense of producing awareness of guilt, not in the sense of lording it over someone (Cf. 1 Cor 9:19-22; 1 Peter 3:1)
- The objective is always restoration, not the glorification of the initiator or the one faulted (Cf. Luke 17:3-4; 2 Thess 3:14-15; James 5:19-20)
- This approach was also taught in the Mosaic Law (Lev 19:17)

It is hard to receive a rebuke, even in private; it is harder yet to deliver one in loving humility.

*The possession of humility is proven not by passively waiting for one to beg for forgiveness then granting it. It is manifested by actively seeking out the erring brother and attempting to make him penitent.* [Toussaint]

Sin, in whatever form, is not to be tolerated within the disciple community, but is to be dealt with when it is noticed. But this is to be done with sensitivity and with a minimum of publicity.

16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that ON THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE **WITNESSES** EVERY MATTER MAY BE CONFIRMED.

16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.

16 But if he doesn't listen, take one or two others with you so that 'every word may be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'

16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

- Step 2: get 2-3 others and confront again

- The Mosaic Law also advocated this step (Deut 19:15); however, Jesus broadened the field of civil law that this OT passage covered to include any sin about which a disciple might need to rebuke

— Jesus was not perpetuating the Mosaic Law; He was simply carrying over these provisions in the Law that He declared were now binding on His disciples

- "...WITNESSES" - the function of the 2-3 witnesses is to confirm that both sides (the confronter and the confrontee) handle the situation appropriately, and to witness the erring disciple's reaction to the confrontation

— This seems to have been the purpose in the Deut 19:15 passage

— Their presence would be an added motivation for the erring disciple to repentance and a return to the fold of the faithful

— These are witnesses to the confrontation, not to the sin. If the erring brother/sister was unrepentant, the initiator would move to step 3 (v17), where witnesses to the confrontation may be necessary.

17 And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the **church**; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, he is to be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

17 If, however, he ignores them, tell it to the congregation. If he also ignores the congregation, regard him as an unbeliever and a tax collector.

17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

- Step 3: Bring the issue before the local congregation

- Step 4: Excommunication; removal from fellowship

- "...church" - this is the second mention of *ekklesia* in Matthew, and the only other mention in all four Gospels (Cf. 16:18)

— Since the Church did not exist at the time Jesus spoke these words, the Twelve probably thought Jesus meant the other members of the Twelve who were not one of the 2-3 witnesses

— Applying this today, in most situations, means making the announcement in a local church congregation that the wayward brother is a part

- If the erring brother does not respond to the church's encouragement to repent and return, Jesus instructed the disciples to treat the person as an unbeliever and a tax collector

— This does not mean the disciples would treat them as Jesus treated these people (8:1-11; 9:9-13; 15:21-28). The context, as well as other NT instruction, show that Jesus had exclusion in mind (Cf. Rom 16:17; 2 Thess 3:14)

— Jesus used unbelievers (Gentiles) and tax collectors because Jews would typically withdraw from them and did not have fellowship with them. This is what He wanted His disciples to do in this instance.

### **Church Discipline** Church Discipline

There are several places in Scripture that state the necessity for church discipline as well as the categories that require discipline:

1. Difficulties between members of a local church could require church discipline (Matt 18:15-17).
2. Discipline is necessary to avoid divisions.

- Paul instructs elders to mark out those causing divisions for the purpose of discipline. If the leadership fails to discipline those causing divisions, then the church is going to face an unnecessary church split (Rom 16:17-18).

3. Discipline is necessary for the purity of the church.
  - This provides a category for church discipline: immorality. A person practicing or living in immorality must be disciplined by the local church (1 Cor 5:9-13).
4. A necessity for church discipline is to bring the offender to repentance.
  - If discipline is not exercised, repentance may never come (2 Cor 2:5-11).
5. A necessity for church discipline is to avoid disorderly conduct.
  - The category requiring church discipline given by this passage refers to those who refuse to work. They should be disciplined by the church. The church has no responsibility to meet the needs of a member who refuses to work for a living (2 Thess 3:6-15).
6. Church discipline is necessary in cases of false teaching.
  - Anyone who has begun to teach falsely and is blaspheming is subject to church discipline (1 Tim 1:8-20).
7. Church discipline is necessary to avoid crass sins.
  - Sometimes in the exercise of church discipline, it is necessary to reprove someone in the sight of all, even as Paul had to do with Peter (Gal 2:11-14; 1 Tim 5:20).
8. Church discipline is necessary to avoid the spread of false teachings.
  - If the church lets a false teacher go undisciplined, the false teachings will naturally spread. If the church disciplines the false teacher, then the false teachings will stop one way or another. Either the false teacher repents or he leaves (2 Tim 2:17-18).
9. Church discipline is necessary to avoid factious perversions (Titus 3:9-11).

The procedure for Church discipline is outlined in Matt 18:15-17. The procedure given in this passage requires four specific steps:

1. There must be a private confrontation by the offended one with the offender.
  - The offended one has the responsibility to approach the offender and show him the problem. If the offender responds, that settles the case right there.
  - If the offender refuses to respond, then comes the second step.
2. The offended must approach the offender again, but this time with two or three witnesses.
  - According to Gal 6:1, the two or three witnesses must be men who are spiritually mature. They cannot be new or young believers, and it might be wise that these two men be elders of the local church.
  - If the person responds to the admonition of the two or three witnesses the matter ends there, but if he does not then on to the third stage.

3. Bring it before the entire local church.
  - This point is reemphasized in Rom 16:17; 2 Cor 2:6; 2 Thess 3:6-15.
  - If he still refuses to respond, then comes the critical fourth step.
4. Excommunication or, as it is put in the Matthew account: *let him be unto you as the Gentile and the publican*, meaning "untouchable."
  - Excommunication means that he is placed outside the local church; he is expelled from the local church. People in the local church are admonished not to fellowship with him, not to ease the pain of excommunication; he is no longer under the protection of the prayers of the saints or the prayers of the local church.
  - Furthermore, according to 1 Cor 5:1-5, he is placed back under Satan's authority for the destruction of the flesh, although the passage goes on to clearly state that his spirit will still be saved.

18 Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

18 Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

18 "I tell all of you with certainty, whatever you prohibit on earth will have been prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will have been permitted in heaven.

**18** Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

- The injunction of v18 concerns the same principle as that of 16:19 except here it is addressed to all of the disciples, not Peter exclusively
- This is another passage (Cf. 16:18-19, see notes there) where the simple future tense is confused with the perfect tense periphrastic
- The authority of pastors and elders for exercising church discipline is only going to come from discerning what God has already revealed and acting according to that revelation.

**19** "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about **anything** that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.

**19** "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.

**19** Furthermore, I tell all of you with certainty that if two of you agree on earth about anything you request, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven,

**19** Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

- Scripture contains many promises on prayer (7:7-8; 21:22; John 14:13-14; 15:7-8,16; 1 John 5:14-15, et al), but this is not one of them

- "...anything" - in this context, refers to any judicial decision involving an erring believer that the other disciples (or church) may make corporately
- God always stands behind His judicial representatives on earth when they carry out His will (Cf. Ps 82:1). This is a great promise: God will back up with His power and authority any decision involving the corporate discipline of an erring believer that His disciples may make after determining His will.

20 **For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."**  
 20 **For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."**  
 20 **because where two or three have come together in my name, I am there among them."**  
 20 **For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.**

- This verse is usually cited to build confidence for group prayer
- "For" - a hint that this verse doesn't stand alone, but rather is a concluding statement at the end of a line of reasoning
- Verses 15-20 form a unit of instruction on Church discipline, sandwiched between other lessons on repentance (v12-14), forgiveness and restoration (v21-35)
- His point in this verse is that when the Church follows the specific procedure He outlines to resolve the issue of sin in the Christian community, then the leadership can rest assured He is "with them" in their decision.
- Indeed, Jesus is "in the midst of them" conferring His authority to the process. It's the promise of divine sanction of a procedure for discipline, not divine presence in group prayer.
- "...two or three" - refers back to v16 (the person confronting the erring brother plus 1-2 more equals 2-3
- The interpretation of this verse by the spiritual warfare movement is to get a couple of believers together and "command" something out of existence...an abortion clinic, a strip club, or something else that God doesn't approve of, and because of this passage, God is obligated to remove it.
- Verses 19-20 doesn't mean that if 2-3 believers are gathered, they can agree to something, then God will rubber stamp it in approval
- When people talk about binding Satan and demons, etc., this is the verse they point to for their authority; see [James 23\\_Binding and Loosing \(James 4:7\)](#) for additional details on binding and loosing Satan.

In this passage, the Lord is indicating to His disciples that, in the church, divine guidance is the rule to follow. The Lord promises divine direction to them as they carry out church

discipline according to His revelation. If they discern God's mind properly, they would have all authority; if they didn't discern God's mind properly, they would not.

(d) Necessity of forgiveness (18:21-35)

### **The Parable about an Unforgiving Servant**

**21** Then Peter came up and said to Him, "Lord, how many times shall my brother sin against me and I *still* forgive him? Up to seven times?"

**21** Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

**21** Then Peter came up and asked him, "Lord, how many times may my brother sin against me and I have to forgive him? Seven times?"

**21** Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

- After instruction on discipline, Jesus proceeded to stress the importance of forgiveness

— We should not be so zealous about church discipline to neglect the importance of forgiveness

- Jesus was talking about excluding rather than forgiving (v17), which led Peter to ask how often he as a disciple should forgive an erring brother

— The rabbis taught that a Jew should forgive a repeated sin three times, and after that, there need be no more forgiveness (Amos 1:3; 2:6)

— Peter suggested "seven times," and probably felt very good about himself for doing so, significantly exceeding what the rabbis required

**22** Jesus \*said to him, "*I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy-seven times.'*

**22** Jesus \*said to him, "*I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*

**22** Jesus told him, "*I tell you, not just seven times, but 77 times!*

**22** Jesus saith unto him, *I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*

- 77 times [NASB20, ISV, NIV, ESV] vs 70 times 7 [KJV, NASB95]; the discrepancy is likely a translation error in the KJV and NASB, since Jesus quoted the LXX version of Gen 4:24 exactly, which has "77 times"

— Even though the difference between translations is large numerically, it's not an important difference. Jesus was not specifying the maximum number of times His disciples should forgive others. His point was that humble disciples should not limit the number of times they forgive one another, or limit the frequency that they forgive each other.

— The following parable clarified this point

### **The Example of Lamech (Gen 4:24)**

Jesus' response in v22 alluded to Gen 4:24, where ungodly Lamech claimed to have taken more revenge on the man who struck him than God had taken on Cain for killing his brother Abel. In that passage, after killing a man for bruising him, Lamech said that if Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech 77 fold. Jesus turned Lamech's bad example around and urged His disciples to practice generous forgiveness when their brothers hurt them.

**23 "For this reason the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his slaves.**

**23 "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.**

**23 "That is why the kingdom from heaven may be compared to a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.**

**23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.**

- This parable illustrates kingdom conditions, which will prevail when Jesus returns to establish His kingdom

— Jesus is not saying the kingdom was in existence at that time. He argued that kingdom conditions should be those that the King's disciples should seek to follow in their lives now, since they already live under the King's authority

- The whole parable deals with repeated personal forgiveness and the reason for it. The King had already forgiven them much more than they could ever forgive their fellow disciples.

**24 And when he had begun to settle *them*, one who owed him **ten thousand talents** was brought to him.**

**24 When he had begun to settle *them*, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him.**

**24 When he had begun to settle the accounts, a person who owed him 10,000 talents was brought to him.**

**24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.**

- "...ten thousand" - *myria*, the largest numeral for which a Greek term exists

- "...talents" - the largest known amount of money at the time

— When *myria* and talent are combined, the effect is like our "billions"; an incomprehensible amount of money

- The point is that the servant had amassed such a huge debt that he could not possibly ever repay it

25 But since he did not have *the means* to repay, his master commanded that he be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment be made.

25 But since he did not have *the means* to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made.

25 Because he couldn't pay, his master ordered him, his wife, his children, and everything that he owned to be sold so that payment could be made.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

- The king commanded that the servant be sold, along with everything he had, to compensate him, even though the proceeds from this would be only a small fraction of what the servant owed

26 So the slave fell to *the ground* and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.'

26 So the slave fell to *the ground* and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.'

26 Then the servant fell down and bowed low before him, saying, 'Be patient with me, and I will repay you everything!'

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

- The servant pleaded for time, promising to repay everything, an obvious impossibility considering the amount of debt

27 And the master of that slave felt compassion, and he released him and forgave him the **debt**.

27 And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.

27 The master of that servant had compassion and released him, canceling his debt.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

- Moved by compassion for the hopeless servant, the king graciously cancelled the entire debt

- "...debt" - *daneion*, loan; evidently, the king decided to write off the indebtedness as a bad loan rather than view it as embezzlement, another indication of his grace

28 But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and *began to choke him*, saying, 'Pay back what you owe!'  
28 But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and *began to choke him*, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.'  
28 "But when that servant went away, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him, seized him by the throat, and said, 'Pay what you owe!'  
**28** But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

- The reaction of the forgiven servant was appalling, especially considering Col 2:13-14  
- He proceeded to try to collect a small debt from a fellow servant, even resorting to physical violence to extract repayment

29 So his fellow slave fell to the ground and *began to plead with him*, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.'  
29 So his fellow slave fell to the ground and *began to plead with him*, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.'  
29 Then his fellow servant fell down and began begging him, 'Be patient with me and I will repay you!'  
29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.  
- Both servants appealed to their creditors similarly (v26,29), yet the servant creditor remained unmoved

30 But he was unwilling, and went and threw him in prison until he would pay back what was owed.  
30 But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.  
30 But he refused and had him thrown into prison until he could repay the debt.  
30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.  
- He threw his fellow servant debtor into prison until he could extract the full amount of debt owed

31 So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their master all that had happened.  
31 So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened.

31 "When his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were very disturbed and went and reported to their master everything that had occurred.

31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

- Other servants of the king were aware of the situation, disturbed by it, and reported the situation back to the king

32 Then summoning him, his master \*said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that **debt** because you pleaded with me.'

32 Then summoning him, his lord \*said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.'

32 Then his master sent for him and told him, 'You evil servant! I canceled that entire debt for you because you begged me.'

32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

- The report of the situation led the king to call in the creditor servant to remind him of the merciful treatment he had received

- "...debt" - *opheile*, a sum owed, a debt; the Greek word used to describe the wicked servants debt (v27) is different than the Greek word used to characterize the debt owed to him (a loan)

33 Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?'

33 Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?'

33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?'

33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

34 And his master, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he would repay all that was owed him.

34 And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.

34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers until he could repay the entire debt.

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

- The king now took a different view on the servant's debt. Instead of forgiving him, the king turned the unforgiving servant over to "the tormentors."

35 My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

35 My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

35 This is how my heavenly Father will treat each one of you unless you forgive your brother from your hearts.

**35** So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

- Jesus drew crucial comparisons in applying this parable to His disciples: God forgives graciously, yet punishes ruthlessly

— Jesus did not mean that people can earn God's forgiveness by forgiving one another

- Some are disturbed by the idea of God delivering His servants over to endless torment. Some have even concluded that one can lose their salvation if they do not forgive. That is obviously a false conclusion.

— Many genuine believers do not forgive their brethren as they should

— Perhaps the punishment takes place in this life, not after death, and amounts to divine discipline

— Another possibility is that Jesus had in mind a loss of eternal reward