

# The Unforgiving Servant: Forgiving as We've Been Forgiven | Matthew 18:21-35

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[0:00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we are encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. I'm Pastor Patrick Dailey, and each week I share sermons that balance the grace and love of Jesus Christ with the truth of the Word of God.

Together, we'll explore Scripture using observation, interpretation, and application. This helps us discover practical ways to live out our faith every single day.

Let's dive in together into God's Word. Well, good morning, everyone. You guys all have a very merry Christmas. I hope that all of you did. New year is going to be starting.

It's just phenomenal how fast time flies. Here we are at the end of this 2024 year. What a wild ride it's been.

We have the good, we have the bad, and let's be honest here, sometimes we have the ugly too, amen. You know, the really good encouragement in all of this is knowing the fact that no matter how rocky your year may be, no matter how crazy it is, God is in control.

[1:07] God is sovereign and he sits on the throne, and we turn to him in the highs and lows in every season of our life.

I'm reminded how in Ecclesiastes, chapter 3, it mentions that to everything there is a season, and we sure know about seasons here, don't we?

The four seasons, unlike some places in the world where they might have one or maybe two seasons, you have the warmness of summer.

I'm sorry if I'm teasing you guys here, right? The warmness of summer, the feeling of the sun on your body, right? The heat, you have the spring, the summer, and the fall, and the winter.

It reminds us about how God is in control of all seasons here on the earth, but also the seasons of our lives. And for some of us, we might have had a really rough year.

[2:05] Some of us might have been okay. It might have even been a really great year. But as we are coming to a close of this year, I want us to think of how God has worked in our lives, even if we don't recognize or see it.

How many of you like to watch Christmas movies around this time? One of my favorite movies that I like to watch, it always gets me teared up, I've got to be honest here, is *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Do you guys, have all of us seen it here? Yes? If you haven't, then go home today and watch it. It's a really good, it's a classic movie, and I'm actually really glad they never have redone that movie, and I hope they don't.

But you have the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, where George Bailey, you know him as, you know, growing up in the small town, and Bedford Falls, he has the building in Lone, and he helps out so many people.

And the whole premise of the movie is showing how beautiful or how wonderful one life can be. And we know that in this movie, there's that scene, and it always gets you, right?

[3:17] I think of Mr. Potter, right, when he's that mean old man, right? There's that scene where there's \$8,000 that's missing. You guys remember that scene?

And there's this \$8,000 debt that George Bailey can't repay. So much so that he wonders, is his life even worth it?

He goes to the bridge, and you guys know what happens, an angel named Clarence shows him the value of his life. And towards the end of the movie, spoilers, is that his friends step in and help him raise the funds that he couldn't do alone.

And this mirrors the today's parable of the unforgiving servant, where George Bailey, he couldn't do it on his own. There was divine intervention, as it were, an angel coming down from heaven to earth to help George Bailey realize how wonderful and how precious life is.

Maybe you have had those moments in life where you've questioned, is life even worth it? Maybe you've had those moments where you've needed divine intervention in your life.

[ 4 : 34 ] Or perhaps you have experienced those moments where your friends, your family, or maybe some sort of encouraging word or divine intervention has helped you change the trajectory of your life.

And what we must realize when we're looking at this parable of the unforgiving servant, I want us to see that just like how we've been going over the parables of Christ, things are very connected here. These are very simplistic parables, teachings from Christ that help us grow in our faith. As we've began in this series of parables, we've understood that we need to have good soil in receiving the seed, the word, and help us grow and cultivate our faith in our understanding of who God is.

And knowing a lot of these parables are so simple that yet even a child can understand it, but yet they're so profound and the implications, it's kind of like when people say, it's easier said than done. Because the parable we're about to read, if you want to open your Bibles now to the Gospel of Matthew chapter 18 verse 21 through 35, is how when you think about him, easier said than done, aren't there a lot of teachings of Christ that are easier said than done?

[ 6 : 02 ] Love one another. Love your neighbor. I can't stand my neighbor. Right? We all have a neighbor like that. And so here, we're going to turn to what the parable says.

We're going to observe what is happening within the text. And we're going to see what are the lessons that we can learn in our spiritual walk with the Lord. And then of course, as always, what do we do about this?

Let us be reminded that we believe in Jesus Christ by believing in him in faith and we grow upon that salvation, much like how we are called to do good in the name of Christ upon that salvation. So Matthew chapter 18, it's going to be verses 21 through 35. Keep in mind that this is right by the parable of the lost sheep. And if your brother sins against you where it's talking about the discipline in church.

So verse 21, then Peter came up and said to him, Lord, how often will my brother sin against me and I forgive him?

[ 7 : 07 ] That's a legitimate question. How many times is my brother going to sin against me? It's going to be a lot of times. And how often shall I forgive him? As many as seven times.

And Jesus said to him, I do not say to you seven times, but 77 times. Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.

When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him how many talents? Ten thousand talents. And we'll get to that in a moment. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold with his wife and children and all that he had and the payments to be made.

So the servant fell on his knees imploring him, have patience with me and I will repay you everything. And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

Praise God for that, for the releasing of him and the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii and seizing him and he began to choke him.

[ 8 : 17 ] That's quite a sight. He's getting physical with this guy. Choking him out. And he's saying, I mean, if you guys watch The Simpsons, when Homer does that thing with Bart, I'm kind of picturing that here for a second here.

He's saying, pay what you owe me. And his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him. That sounds kind of familiar, like what just happened earlier. Have patience with me and I will pay you. He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servant saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.

Then his master summoned him and said to him, good job. Oh, no. Now what did he say? He said, you wicked servant, I forgave all that debt because you pleaded with me and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you?

Shouldn't you have forgiven him his debt as I have forgiven him? That's the kind of question that's being asked. I mean, let's think for a moment. 10,000 talents compared to 100 Denarii. We will go into that in just a second here.

[ 9 : 26 ] Just think about that much greater debt, much smaller debt here. And in anger, his master delivered him to the jailers until he should pay his debt. So also this is important.

My heavenly father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

And this is very, a very difficult parable when we read this on the surface.

And so we have to think, let's go to that next slide is what exactly is happening here, right? We start off with Peter asking the questions. Well, number one, how often is my brother going to sin against me and how often do I got to forgive him?

I got sibling rivalry or something going on, right? How often shall I forgive? And Jesus is basically saying that there's no limit to forgiveness.

In your notes, you'll see this very strange 7 times 7 equals infinity, right? Or 7 times 70 or 7 times 77.

[ 10 : 23 ] And I want you to think for a moment, what is math? What in the world is pastor putting mathematic formulas in my notes here? I don't like math. What in the world?

You see in the eyes of God, numbers certainly can have very significant meaning. In representing completeness, completion. So when you have the implication of 7 times 7 or 7 times 70 or 7 times 77, think about this perfection upon perfection or completeness upon completeness.

In other words, when we see this forgiveness upon forgiveness or grace upon grace. Some of you have heard this language before. It's basically meaning here that there is no limit to the forgiveness that God has for you.

Can I get an amen for that one, right? It goes to show you the power and the limitlessness of the love that God has for us, the grace that comes from him.

And so we see here, Peter's asking that fundamental question. And I think that very often some of us can ask that question. How often should I forgive my brother? How often should I forgive my family member?

[ 11 : 34 ] How often should I forgive my friend? This is very difficult because again, easier said than done. It's definitely difficult for us, but it's going to show.

Look at how we can see this right off the bat. The amount of forgiveness that God has for us. Can we even but show a little bit to others?

Can we exhibit the love that God has for us? The forgiveness, the grace that comes from him. And so again, seven signifying perfection and Jesus is teaching perfection upon perfection, grace upon grace.

And so what you see here in this parable, it's the king's mercy, a servant that owes 10,000 talents. It's an unpayable debt.

Now for some of us, we may know some of those Bible scholars who are a little more familiar with studying scripture may know that there's three types of talents that are in scripture.

[ 12 : 36 ] You have gold, silver, and bronze. And the implication, bronze talent would not be a lot of money.

Most likely, it's most likely silver that's being weighed here. It could be gold and in either way, it's basically like the difference between 50,000 and \$150,000 if we looked at it in today's money.

But the idea of this, let's go to the next slide here, is that we have here, right, seven by seven equals perfection to forgive is always to forgive. Can we go to that next one?

So one talent, this helps us understand not only the parable of the talents, but whatever we find talents within scripture. Is that one talent equals a year's wages? And so I think it's very appropriate for us because it's not specified if it's silver or gold.

We know for sure it's not going to be bronze. That's a very small amount of money here. Well, we can think about us today when we have a year's worth of wages, right? And how hard we work to get our wages, right, in the real world.

[ 13 : 43 ] We work diligently. We receive our paycheck. Can you imagine? 10,000 talents? If you look at this at more of a literal view here, that's 10,000 years of a debt.

And I can't help but think, what in the world did this guy do to be in such debt where he's going to owe 10,000 years to the king, right? The point and the implication of this is that it's a debt he can't pay, right?

To me, this is like a jail sentence here, right? When you hear people who they're going to be locked away for 10,000 years or whatever it is. The point of this is to see that it's a debt he couldn't pay, right?

Much like how I mentioned in the beginning of this message about George Bailey missing out the \$8,000. I don't know how much that would be nowadays. It's definitely a lot of money. 8,000 back then was a lot of money.

It's the same idea here that we can think of. A debt that was so great that he could not pay it and he goes down and he's begging for forgiveness from the debt.

[14:50] What about the other servant? Three months of wages, how much would that be? A few thousand dollars nowadays, right?

So imagine millions or billions or however much years of wages compared to three months. Isn't that kind of petty if you think about it?

So the servant that just got forgiven these 10,000 talents is now choking out this guy and saying, give me my money. He's like, well, wait, wait just a minute here. You have been forgiven this huge amount.

I mean, think about this. A talent was about 75 pounds of silver or gold. It was around that about 75 to 100 pounds.

So you think about that, you get a kind of a mental image of what that looks like here. So just imagine being indebted for that, right?

[15:50] And the forgiven servant refused to give much smaller debt. And so because of this, what ends up happening is that he gets the king basically calls him wicked and he throws him into prison for the time.

And it's harsh language when you think about that. I want you to understand that when we are reading this, it's showing, number one, how great the love God, the Father has for us regarding forgiveness, but also how we should strive or at least do everything we can to forgive.

It's just like when we say the Lord's prayer, right? Forgive us our trespasses. As we forgive those who trespass against us, some of us may know the other variations.

Forgive us our debts, right? As we forgive those who have debts, right? It could be debts, it could be sin. It's the same implication. The love that God has for us is insurmountable.

It's everlasting, it's so powerful and it's for us to be able to exhibit that love and forgiveness. And so in this, then we have to think then, well, what does this text mean?

[17:07] We've gone over what we can observe on the surface. Well, the first thing, what can we learn, interpret from these verses is number one, God's forgiveness is beyond measure, amen?

That's a powerful thing, right? The servant's massive debt is symbolic here. It's symbolism. What kind of a debt can we possibly have that could be insurmountable that we could never pay?

It is the weight of our sins. That is why when we think of this idea of repentance, right? It's metanoia, the change of mind to who Jesus Christ is so that we understand that He is what we need.

We think of our sin. It's an insurmountable amount of debt, a debt that we cannot repay. However, God's forgiveness is an act of grace and it's made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

We think of the gospel message, his death, burial and resurrection, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses one through four, that it's in accordance with the scriptures here.

[18:15] All of this was made possible. The mystery that was hidden being revealed in Jesus Christ being born in a manger, his ministry, his miracles, his teachings, all of these things.

It's all part of the story here. We have to think sometimes, even even I at times think how can God live in the world and love me as a sinner?

But yet He does love me. And He wants each and every one of us to come to know Him, to grow in Him, and to be moved to share in the gospel story with others.

The second thing then is forgiveness reflects God's heart. We go on in here. The servant that was, the debt was forgiven.

It shows a failure to really grasp and to understand the grace he's received. When we forgive others, we are continuing what God has given to us.

[19:21] That's why when we think of things like giving back our time, talent and our treasure, we're giving back to God. It's the same thing when we are loving others, much as Christ has loved us.

We are giving to others, loving in the same manner and in the same way. We're talking about spiritual transformation, knowing that God will work in and through you every single day. That's why think about it. Believing in the Lord is the greatest step that you can make for your life. And upon that, be encouraged to grow, open your Bible, pray, be in community with the local body, the assembly with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

And forgiving others, again, it mirrors who, I want you to pay attention here, it mirrors who God is. We are to mirror the love of Christ. We are to mirror the grace that he gives us. And it also shows others that we are forgiven. There are some people out there. When you hear of how they've forgiven someone who's done wrong or someone who's forgiven a debt, sometimes we're like, well, why?

[ 20 : 40 ] Why would you do that? But it's supposed to point to how much more God loves and forgives us. It's a challenge for us.

And the third one, this is the more difficult one, is that unforgiveness leads to bondage then. The prison is a representation of the relational and the spiritual consequences of unforgiveness. Bitterness, anger, brokenness, broken relationships, a lacking of peace. When we've gone through the Advent season, we think of the hope that comes from Christ. We think of the peace that surpasses all understanding. We think of the love of God. We think of the unspeakable joy that comes from him.

Understand that God wants you to have peace that comes from him. Let be move those obstacles and those roadblocks.

[ 21 : 41 ] Now I want to make it very clear. It's not condoning what wrong they did. Okay. It's being able to move forward and allowing for God to continue to work in your life.

Do you understand? That's so important for us. It's not, it's about being fully connected and in the presence of God.

It's like if you had such anger and hatred towards somebody, sometimes it actually manifests in how you deal with others. When people say, why are you so angry?

Why are you so bitter? It's because you're harboring that resentment and stuff. And again, I cannot help but emphasize whatever wrong has happened to you.

It's not right what he, she, they did. What matters is you being connected with God, the Father. Be connected with him.

[ 22 : 42 ] That's why we praise God from whom all blessings flow. I want to have peace in my life. I want to have the joy that's inexhaustible.

I want to have the hope in Christ so that others know that there's a better way than what the world has to offer. That's what I want. And I hope that in the same way, that's what you want.

And so in this, then we go into the application. All right. The King forgives. The servant doesn't. And it's a lesson for us to be like this.

So what do I do with this? And we have three things here. The number, the first thing is to reflect on God's forgiveness in your life.

Sometimes I'm one of them. Sometimes we are harder on ourselves than how God is with us.

[ 23 : 42 ] Sometimes that's the case. And we have to understand that by us believing in the Lord, he forgives us. And he calls for us to do life a better way.

And yet sometimes we have, we still get hard on ourselves, don't we? Sometimes we're still like, well, why did I do this or that? But understand that God is here for you.

He's not going to abandon you. He's going to be there for you again. Like I mentioned in every season of life. And so reflect on Christ's forgiveness and the grace you received if you haven't believed in the gospel message, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ in accordance with the scriptures, that Christ is what you need in your life and all that you need.

The second thing is to forgive as an act of faith. Be moved to, like I said, to grow when we think of the imagery of the good soil being planted into the ground and growing so that you can bear fruit. Think about forgiveness as part of your faith journey in Christ. To forgive as we are forgiven. Just one of the beautiful things about parables is that the things that are, the lessons that come from heaven can be applied to our very lives.

[ 25 : 14 ] So think for a moment of how much God has forgiven you. Do you really understand the depth of the love that God has for you?

Now's a good time. The year's almost over. Bring God to handle justice and release the debt owed to you by others.

And finally, while like I said before, forgiving, it doesn't excuse the offense. It gives justice to God. Sometimes we've heard one of the verses that sometimes whenever someone has done wrong to me or done something against me, I think for a moment they will reap what they sow.

That gives me great comfort in knowing that you're giving it to God because God is just in the same way that he is loving and compassionate. A lot of people in the world don't understand that, but it's giving to God to carry out that justice as you release the debt from others.

[ 26 : 31 ] And the third thing is to reconcile before the new year. Take this season to seek reconciliation. Perhaps you may identify as the original servant and you may feel the weight and the pressures of the world wondering if there's something better for my life or you feel that there's something that is missing.

Perhaps avoid something that cannot be filled and you're seeking the pleasures of this world or the things of this world and you're wondering if there's something more to this life.

Seek God and be reconciled unto him. Be restored and know that your life matters. You're made in the image of God.

Perhaps you're one that needs to come to the King and realize, hey, I owe 10,000 talents. I need you Lord in my life.

I ask to receive you into my heart. Maybe that's where you're at in this life or maybe you're someone that's like the unforgiving servant.

[ 27 : 35 ] I pray that none of us are that way. But even if you are, keep in mind the magnitude of how God loves you and forgives you.

Forgive others as you have been forgiven. Seek reconciliation with God or forgive someone who has trespassed against you.

Be forgiven by God and forgive others. It's to let the grace of God overflow. We think of the idea of the bucket, right?

How many of you have heard that before? You want your bucket to be filled with love, right? We think of marriage. We think of children, right? The more you pour into your marriage, which you should be pouring into your marriages, the better things will be.

But when we think of the love that God has for us, you're talking about limitless love that's going to be poured out to us. And as we're being poured into, we pour out to other people.

[ 28 : 41 ] And so I want you to think of it like this when we think of the cross. We think of loving God and loving others, being forgiven by God and forgiving others in the same way.

It's a vertical thing, but also a horizontal thing. So the next time you want to think about loving God and loving others, think of that as the cross of Christ.

Such powerful and spiritualism that we can think of even today. And so in closing, let us be, let us exhibit the same love and forgiveness just as the King has done for us when we think of this parable.

Let us be encouraged not to be like the unforgiving servant. Let the love of God flow through you. But in order to do that, first come to know Jesus Christ.

Believe in him, be saved, grow in him. Be transformed, right? Like what it says in scripture, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, metanoia, the changing of your mind.

[ 29 : 52 ] That's where repentance comes in, where you change your mind and we continue to have our minds changed and our hearts transformed.

Think about this year. And if you want, if you need to forgive someone, the year's not over. Let this be a time for you to come to the Lord, know him, grow in him, and do good in his name.

And let's pray together. And Father, we thank you for forgiving us. We thank you for the love that you have for us, the grace that comes from you.

Father, I recognize that this is probably one of the harder parables that we think of when we're thinking of forgiveness, because we live in a fallen and broken world where there have been people that have wronged us, people that have done terrible, horrible things.

Father, I pray, number one, that we see that the love that you have for us is greater. Number two, I pray, Father, that there will be transformation in this place.

[ 30 : 59 ] If there's any bitterness or resentment, may you move them to forgive. Let there be healing in this place. Let there be healing in not only in our lives, but also in other people's lives as well.

Let your grace, let your love, let your forgiveness flow out. Again, we recognize how difficult this is. But may this just be an encouragement for us to forgive as we have been forgiven. As we have been forgiven. And as we close in this final song, we're going to sing the song, All Glory Be to Christ.

We thank you so much for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. And we thank you for the forgiveness, grace, love, and truth that comes from you.

It is in the name of Jesus Christ that the cornerstone of our faith that we pray and we all say together, amen. Amen. Thank you for listening for this week's message from Ontario Community Church.

[ 32 : 09 ] I pray that you are encouraged and strengthened in your walk with Christ. For more sermons and resources, visit [ontariocommunitychurch.org](https://ontariocommunitychurch.org).

May God bless you as you live out His grace and truth every single day.