



Father, Forgive Them

Summary and Goal

Sin is deadly. Grace is not cheap. Jesus is both God's message and God's messenger. On the cross, all the sin of the world was placed upon the Lamb of God. Our sin is not a trifling thing—Jesus was killed for it. But on the cross, we see also God's willingness to extend mercy and grace. Jesus' first words on the cross demonstrate God's willingness to forgive our sins. And they call us to be people who continue in this path.

Main Passages

Luke 23:34 (Matthew 18:21-35)

Session Outline

1. Forgiving an Impossible Debt (Matthew 18:21-27)
2. Forgetting Desperation Leads to Ingratitude (Matthew 18:28-30)
3. Forgiveness Modeled Leads to Forgiveness Offered (Matthew 18:31-35; Luke 23:34)

Theological Theme

The forgiveness Christ modeled on the cross is to be the mark of those who follow Him.

Christ Connection

In the midst of His torture and crucifixion, Christ prayed for His persecutors to be forgiven. In this light, there is no one so treacherous that Christ-followers are not to offer and intercede for forgiveness.

Missional Application

In a society in which personal offense and outrage are continuously escalating, the model for Christ-followers is to offer forgiveness to others in light of the forgiveness that they themselves have received.

Historical Context of Matthew

Purpose

Matthew probably wrote his Gospel in order to preserve written eyewitness testimony about the ministry of Jesus. Matthew's Gospel emphasizes certain theological truths. First, Jesus is the Messiah, the long-awaited King of God's people. Second, Jesus is the new Abraham, the founder of a new spiritual Israel consisting of all people who choose to follow him. This new Israel will consist of both Jews and Gentiles. Third, Jesus is the new Moses, the deliverer and instructor of God's people. Fourth, Jesus is the Immanuel, the virgin-born Son of God who fulfills the promises of the OT.

Author

The author did not identify himself in the text. However, the title that ascribes this Gospel to Matthew appears in the earliest manuscripts and is possibly original. Titles became necessary to distinguish one Gospel from another when the four Gospels began to circulate as a single collection. Many early church fathers (Papias, Irenaeus, Pantaeus, and Origen) acknowledged Matthew as the author. Papias also contended that Matthew first wrote in Hebrew, implying that this Gospel was later translated into Greek.

Setting

Determining the date of composition of Matthew's Gospel depends largely on the relationship of the Gospels to one another. Most scholars believe that Matthew utilized Mark's Gospel in writing his own gospel. If this is correct, Matthew's Gospel must postdate Mark's. However, the date of Mark's Gospel is also shrouded in mystery. Irenaeus (ca AD 180) seems to claim that Mark wrote his Gospel after Peter's death in the mid-60s. However, Clement of Alexandria, who wrote only twenty years after Irenaeus, claimed that Mark wrote his Gospel while Peter was still alive. Given the ambiguity of the historical evidence, a decision must be based on other factors.

Special Features

This Gospel was written from a strong Jewish perspective to show that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.



Session Plan

Father, Forgive Them

Introduction

- ❓ What do you think the public perception of forgiveness is in our society today? Why do you think so?
- ❓ How do you respond when forgiveness is difficult for you? Who in your life encourages you and challenges you to be faithful in following Jesus this way?

In this week's session, Jesus' first saying from the cross was a prayer for the forgiveness of those that tortured and crucified Him. As a way of understanding Jesus' concept of forgiveness, Matthew's recording of the parable of the unforgiving servant clarified the extent to which forgiveness should be offered. The forgiveness Christ-followers are to offer is the result of realizing the immeasurable forgiveness they have already received.

1. Forgiving an Impossible Debt (Matthew 18:21-27)

Hot on the heels of His teaching on the biblical manner of resolving conflict in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus answered a question from the ever-beleaguered Peter. The familiar question asked by Peter regarding the number of times he should offer forgiveness to someone who wronged him was pitched in such a way that his self-provided answer—"As many as seven times?"—was to be a display of unimaginable grace and long-suffering. According to Michael Wilkins, the Jewish teaching of the day was that "three times was enough to show a forgiving spirit. Rabbinic Judaism recognized that repeat offenders may not really be repenting at all."² Peter's magnanimous offer, then, more than doubled what even the strictest rabbi would have suggested.

- ❓ How does the notion of repeated forgiveness to the same person measure up with the ethic of our culture? Do you find forgiveness or revenge to be more commonplace?
- ❓ Application: When you are hurt or betrayed by someone, how easily do you forgive? Is it an immediate decision or one you slowly have to arrive at? How do you determine if someone is worthy of forgiveness?

2. Forgetting Desperation Leads to Ingratitude (Matthew 18:28-30)

Understanding the degree of indebtedness and the magnanimity of the grace that led to its forgiveness, one would expect the newly freed servant to express an equally transformed view of everyone around him. That was precisely the expectation Jesus set the parable up to elicit. Verse 28 begins with “that servant” to ensure that the connection was made between the man so lavishly forgiven and the events that would immediately follow.

- ❓ When you read about the ingratitude of the forgiven servant, what is your initial gut response? Why do you think that is so?
- ❓ Application: What has been the best way you've discovered to not forget the desperation and hopelessness Jesus delivered you from? Why do you think it is so easy to lose sight of that gratitude in the course of daily living?

3. Forgiveness Modeled Leads to Forgiveness Offered (Matthew 18:31-35; Luke 23:34)

Jesus' hearers would have mimicked the response of the other servants in the parable in their emotional turmoil over the events of the narrative. In the parable, the other servants were “deeply distressed” over witnessing the treatment of their fellow servant. There was nothing to indicate that they had a particularly fond relationship with the servant who had been choked and thrown in prison, so their distress was purely over the unspeakable treatment of one servant to another.

- ❓ What does the wicked servant's response to grace indicate about the proper effect of grace on a person's life? How did Jesus' parable answer Peter's question about how often to forgive one who wrongs him?
- ❓ Application: How does the recognition of what Jesus has forgiven you for impact your readiness to forgive others? How have you seen that change over the course of your walk with Jesus?

Conclusion

- ❓ If someone were to ask you why Jesus had to die in order for you to be forgiven, what would you say? How does understanding the depth of what you were forgiven of help the explanation?
- ❓ Describe a time in which your willingness to forgive someone else restored a relationship that was previously irreparable. What moved you toward being willing to forgive that person?

❓ For Further Discussion

How do you distinguish between forgiving someone who wrongs you and repeatedly leaving yourself vulnerable to the same mistreatment? Why is that distinction important?



Expanded Session Content

Father, Forgive Them

Introduction

Forgiveness, when witnessed by others, has the power to simultaneously fill the heart with wonder and stop it in humility. Stories of those who exhibit extraordinary levels of forgiveness spread quickly and leave indelible marks on those who retell them. The reason for such impact is the divine reality that every created human being is so desperate for forgiveness. In an article published by listverse.com in June 2014, several such scenarios were recounted. One of those instances was the incredible grace exhibited by Corrie Ten Boom at the end of World War II.

Corrie Ten Boom is a remarkable woman who risked her own life to save the lives of others during the Holocaust. She worked in her family's business as a watchmaker. After the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, Ten Boom and her family became involved with the Resistance, providing shelter for Jews. A false wall was built in her bedroom to provide a hiding place for those seeking shelter.

On February 28, 1944, the Gestapo, on the basis of information obtained through an informant, raided the Ten Boom home and the family was arrested. Those who were hiding in the home at the time were able to avoid detection and escape. Sadly, Ten Boom's father died a few days after the arrest.

Ten Boom and her sister, Betsy, were deported to the Ravensbrueck concentration camp in September 1944. It was there at Ravensbrueck that Betsy died in December of that same year. Later that same month, Ten Boom narrowly escaped death herself when she was mistakenly released from Ravensbrueck due to a clerical error. Her release came just days before all the women her age were killed.

While at a church service in Munich, she came face-to-face with one of the former Ravensbrueck prison guards. Ten Boom had just delivered a message of God's forgiveness and the former guard, not recognizing her, asked Ten Boom personally for forgiveness for the atrocities that he had committed. Ten Boom struggled within herself and found that she could not forgive him, but she quickly prayed and found the strength to accept his extended hand.¹

Of all the incredible aspects of the account, perhaps this most helpful for readers is the fact that forgiveness was not simple. There was no quick prayer that led to a sudden evaporation of hurt, hostility, resentment, and rage. Forgiveness is a commitment to follow the example of Christ in unspeakably difficult circumstances.

- ❓ What do you think the public perception of forgiveness is in our society today? Why do you think so?
- ❓ How does it impact you to know that, even in the life of a celebrated Christian leader like Ten Boom, forgiveness was not easy or immediate?
- ❓ How do you respond when forgiveness is difficult for you? Who in your life encourages you and challenges you to be faithful in following Jesus this way?

Session Summary

In this week's session, Jesus' first saying from the cross was a prayer for the forgiveness of those that tortured and crucified Him. As a way of understanding Jesus' concept of forgiveness, Matthew's recording of the parable of the unforgiving servant clarified the extent to which forgiveness should be offered. The forgiveness Christ-followers are to offer is the result of realizing the immeasurable forgiveness they have already received.

1. Forgiving an Impossible Debt (Matthew 18:21-27)

Hot on the heels of His teaching on the biblical manner of resolving conflict in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus answered a question from the ever-beleaguered Peter. The familiar question asked by Peter regarding the number of times he should offer forgiveness to someone who wronged him was pitched in such a way that his self-provided answer—"As many as seven times?"—was to be a display of unimaginable grace and long-suffering. According to Michael Wilkins, the Jewish teaching of the day was that "three times was enough to show a forgiving spirit. Rabbinic Judaism recognized that repeat offenders may not really be repenting at all."² Peter's magnanimous offer, then, more than doubled what even the strictest rabbi would have suggested.

As so frequently occurred, Jesus responded in such a manner that demonstrated an entirely different level of grace. His response of "seventy times seven" was not meant to be a literal 490 times, as such exacting of grievances would be contrary to the nature of God's grace. Rather, His response emphasized that the forgiveness of the apostles should be in

Ten Thousand Talents

The talent was the greatest denomination in currency in the Roman Empire, so the amount was incredible to be measured in those terms. According to Craig Blomberg, "Ten thousand was the highest number for which the Greek language had a particular word."³

- ❓ How does the notion of repeated forgiveness to the same person measure up with the ethic of our culture? Do you find forgiveness or revenge to be more commonplace?
- ❓ Application: When you are hurt or betrayed by someone, how easily do you forgive? Is it an immediate decision or one you slowly have to arrive at? How do you determine if someone is worthy of forgiveness?

Faced with the consequences of his massive debt, the servant fell to the ground in a position of great humility and desperation. His only source of hope was the mercy of the king; no schemes or efforts would ever be able to pay back the debt. Even still, in the delusion of his own indebtedness, he begged for mercy with an impossible promise to eventually pay back the debt. The amount was equivalent to several lifetimes of work, so the king would have known immediately that the promise was empty and could never be realized.

Incredibly, no negotiation occurred on the heels of the promise of the debtor. Instead, the king immediately and compassionately canceled the entirety of the debt and set the servant free. However, he did not only set the servant free, he set the servant's entire family free. They were no longer forced to bear the weight of his indebtedness with their enslavement. The level of sheer grace on display in this one act could never be overstated. The debt was impossible, the available help was nonexistent, and the likelihood of anything other than justly deserved enslavement was nil. Trying to understand the feeling of life-changing relief in that moment would stretch the boundaries of the imagination for Jesus' hearers as He told the parable.

2. Forgetting Desperation Leads to Ingratitude (Matthew 18:28-30)

Understanding the degree of indebtedness and the magnanimity of the grace that led to its forgiveness, one would expect the newly freed servant to express an equally transformed view of everyone around him. That was precisely the expectation Jesus set the parable up to elicit. Verse 28 begins with "that servant" to ensure that the connection was made between the man so lavishly forgiven and the events that would immediately follow. The same scenario unfolded as the newly forgiven debtor encountered one who owed him money. The denarii would have been equivalent to a day's wage. The amount owed in this second scenario would have been slightly over three months wages. While certainly not an insignificant amount in its own right, the amount was miniscule in comparison to what the king had forgiven the first servant.

The newly forgiven servant grabbed the man who owed him money and began physically assaulting him, demanding that payment be made. Already the contrast between his earlier encounter with the king and his treatment of this man was glaring and disturbing. Intensifying the matter was the response to a plea for mercy and leniency. When the second servant asked for mercy to pay back his own debt—a debt that actually was capable of being paid back, incidentally—the first servant refused. The second servant was thrown in prison until the debt could be paid.

- ❓ When you read about the ingratitude of the forgiven servant, what is your initial gut response? Why do you think that is so?
- ❓ Application: What has been the best way you've discovered to not forget the desperation and hopelessness Jesus delivered you from? Why do you think it is so easy to lose sight of that gratitude in the course of daily living?

The first servant fell into the trap of being a recipient of grace without being a conduit of grace. His self-absorption, focusing only on his own debt-induced plight, closed him to the magnitude of the one that extended grace to him in the first place. Where his appropriate response should have been to imitate the character of his master out of gratitude for his mercy, his selfishness confined him to merely moving onto the next relationship in which he might better himself. As Jesus would make clear in the continuing parable, the consequences for living in such a way are dire.

3. Forgiveness Modeled Leads to Forgiveness Offered (Matthew 18:31-35; Luke 23:34)

Jesus' hearers would have mimicked the response of the other servants in the parable in their emotional turmoil over the events of the narrative. In the parable, the other servants were "deeply distressed" over witnessing the treatment of their fellow servant. There was nothing to indicate that they had a particularly fond relationship with the servant who had been choked and thrown in prison, so their distress was purely over the unspeakable treatment of one servant to another. The servants were moved enough to go and inform the king of what had occurred. Again, there was no indication in the parable that the servants were privy to the events between the king and the forgiven servant. The witnesses were simply disturbed and felt that someone had to do something, so they did.


When the king discovered the treachery of the servant he had just extended such mercy to, he was enraged. Summoning the servant back to his presence, the demeanor of the king changed dramatically. The emphasis in the original text was on the word "all," emphasizing the degree of forgiveness that the wicked servant had been offered. Because of


One Hundred Denarii

According to Blomberg, "The estimates of the value of a talent range from sixty to ten thousand denarii, so that the ratio of one hundred denarii (second servant) to ten thousand talents (first servant) could be anywhere from six thousand to one to one million to one. The servant's severity in choking his fellow servant and demanding repayment appears all the more despicable in light of this disparity of debts."⁴

the extravagant grace the wicked servant had received, he ought to have shown similar compassion.

Because the king was exceedingly angry, he not only revoked the offered forgiveness, but he handed the man over to the jailers to be tortured. This was a grim response but completely in keeping with regal behavior of the day to torture someone that had severely angered a ruler. The second sentence was even worse than the first. Prior to the offer of grace, the punishment was being sold into slavery and perhaps hard labor. Having spurned the offer of grace, the second sentence was not simply going to jail, but with the additional descriptor of being there for the purpose of torture. Just like his fellow servant whom he had sent to prison, the wicked servant was placed in prison until his full amount could be paid. Since there was no way to make money while being tortured, the implication was that he would never be free.

-  What does the wicked servant's response to grace indicate about the proper effect of grace on a person's life? How did Jesus' parable answer Peter's question about how often to forgive one who wrongs him?

-  Application: How does the recognition of what Jesus has forgiven you for impact your readiness to forgive others? How have you seen that change over the course of your walk with Jesus?

Remembering what was happening to Jesus when he uttered, "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing," is astonishing. Nails had been driven through His hands and feet, securing Him to a splintered tree, after hours upon hours of beatings, mocking, torture, and abandonment. Even the thieves that were crucified alongside Him targeted Him with their jeers. Still, in the midst of unspeakable spiritual, emotional, and physical pain, as His clothes were divided among the soldiers for keepsakes, Jesus pled for their forgiveness. Jesus pled for a forgiveness they did not deserve and never even asked for. Certainly such a forgiveness, that demanded immeasurable sacrifice, also warrants that those who are impacted by it to demonstrate proportionate grace out of unceasing gratitude.

Conclusion




Biblical forgiveness always changes people. That message is underscored again and again in Jesus' parable of the unforgiving servant. Here are some key points to consider when pondering one's own forgiveness.

First, the debt that Jesus paid was a debt that we could never pay ourselves. The atonement that He secured on the cross was precisely the one humanity's sin demanded, but because of that sin humanity could

not provide it. The cost of humanity's freedom was Jesus satisfying God's righteous wrath toward humanity's sin. St. Athanasius explained it this way, "He became like us to make us like Him." Divine grace extended to humanity cost Jesus His life, and He paid it without hesitation.

Second, when believers fail to remember the depth of grace extended to them, forgiving others grows more difficult. One of the great litmus tests for a believer's spiritual health is the readiness and willingness to forgive those who have wronged them. That is not to say, of course, that doing so is easy. It is to say, though, that the desire and commitment to demonstrate the love of Christ to others through forgiveness is a vital part of what it means to follow Christ. When believers are healthy, forgiveness is a discipline. When believers lose sight of what they have been forgiven of, entitlement and unforgiveness creep in.

Third, meeting with God regularly through Scripture and worship helps the believer remain attentive and open to the grace extended to them. Doing so places the believer in a posture of humility before God that makes forgiveness a priority. When a believer realizes the depth of his or her own forgiveness, the idea of not forgiving another repentant person creates spiritual dissonance.

-  If someone were to ask you why Jesus had to die in order for you to be forgiven, what would you say? How does understanding the depth of what you were forgiven of help the explanation?
-  How do you distinguish between forgiving someone who wrongs you and repeatedly leaving yourself vulnerable to the same mistreatment? Why is that distinction important?
-  Describe a time in which your willingness to forgive someone else restored a relationship that was previously irreparable. What moved you toward being willing to forgive that person?

Prayer of Response

Close in prayer thanking God for the grace of forgiveness He has shown you. Ask Him to guide you to show this same level of forgiveness to others who have offended you.

Additional Resources

- *The Truth About Forgiveness* by John MacArthur
- *The Gift of Forgiveness* by Charles Stanley
- *The Seven Sayings of the Saviour on the Cross* by A. W. Pink

For Next Week

Session Title

- Today You Will Be With Me in Paradise

Main Passages

- Luke 23:43 (Luke 19:1-10)

Session Outline

1. The Least Likely Suspect in the Least Likely Place
(Luke 19:1-2; Luke 23:43)
2. Recognizing the Need for Jesus (Luke 19:3-6)
3. From Desperation to Salvation (Luke 19:7-10)

Memorize

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing." And they divided his clothes and cast lots.

-Luke 23:34

Daily Readings

- Monday - 2 Peter 3:9
- Tuesday - Luke 15:1-7
- Wednesday - Luke 15:8-10
- Thursday - Luke 15:11-32
- Friday - Titus 3:4-5
- Saturday - Acts 1:8

Extended Commentary

Matthew 18:21-35

18:21-22. Peter again spoke for the Twelve. His question could easily have sprung out of Jesus' teaching on church discipline (18:15-20). Peter may have wondered how long he should forgive his sinning brother before casting him out of the church, especially when the sin was against him personally. According to some Jewish tradition, a brother was forgiven three times for the same offense. The fourth offense, however, need not be forgiven, because it would be evidence that the brother had not repented. Peter thought he was being generous in forgiving up to seven times.

But the king showed that Peter, even in his "generosity," was thinking human thoughts, not the thoughts of God (16:23). There is some debate over whether Jesus' response should read "seventy times seven" (490) or seventy-seven, but the exact number is not important. The numbers involved are presented for emphasis only. "Keep on forgiving endlessly; don't carry a grudge" is what Jesus was saying.

18:23. Therefore was Jesus' way of introducing the parable to illustrate the principle he stated in 18:22. He told the disciples first that they were going to learn something about the kingdom of heaven (18:1-4), and he set the scene by introducing the characters (a king and his servants) and explaining the king's desire to settle accounts with his servants—to collect from them what they owed him. The king represents God, and the servants represent fellow believers.

18:24-25. It was not uncommon for servants and indebted free men to be sold as slaves to cover debts they could not pay (Lev. 25:39; 2 Kgs. 4:1). In Israel, these slaves were freed every fiftieth year, in the year of Jubilee, in accordance with the Mosaic Law. In some cultures, even their families and possessions were sold if the debtor did not bring enough money to cover the debt. Such was the case with a certain servant of this king. He owed an astronomical amount. No free laborer, let alone a slave, could ever hope to repay this amount in a thousand lifetimes.

18:26. The servant fell on his knees before him (8:2; 9:18; 15:25), displaying humility and desperation and casting himself on the mercy of the master. The servant's plea for patience and his promise to pay back everything were so unrealistic that they could only be the words of a desperate man. His promise might be compared with a factory worker today pledging to pay off the national debt of the United States by himself. It could not be done.

It is important to keep in mind here that we are not dealing with forensic forgiveness (justification, salvation), but family forgiveness. This deals with sin committed since entering into the family of the king. The issue is brother-to-brother forgiveness.

18:27. The servant's master (that is, the king of 18:23) felt his heart going out to the man. He took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. The servant was undeserving, but the king acted with mercy (withholding punishment that was deserved) and grace (giving a great gift that was not deserved).

So it should be among brothers and sisters in God's family. All of a Christian's sins are forgiven and forgotten forever (see Ps. 103:12; Jer. 31:34). What this parable reinforces, therefore, is the Christian's duty to forgive others (Matt. 6:12,14-15; 2 Cor. 2:10; Eph. 4:32) in the same way he has been forgiven. This entire passage addresses forgiveness within the family of God.

18:28. The word but contrasts the first servant and his relationship with a second servant. The two were alike in only one way—the debt each owed gave the creditor power over the debtor's life. But in every other respect, the situations were opposites, highlighting the contrast between the first servant and the king. The servant had not understood family principles. But he was about to learn.

The amount the second servant owed the first was insignificant when compared with the debt the first servant had just been forgiven. One hundred denarii was one hundred days' wages. The first servant had owed more than half a million times as much to the king! Rather than imitating the mercy of the king, the first servant mistreated the second servant (began to choke him) and demanded repayment of the debt.

The second servant's debt to the first was not insignificant. It would take some time for any of us to pay more than a quarter of our annual earnings while also paying for daily living expenses. The debt was substantial, and the first servant was certainly entitled to what he was owed.

Similarly, when a brother offends us, it is logical to think that we are entitled to just recompense. There is legitimate restitution. But what we forget, when we fail to release a brother from an offense by forgiving him, is that relationships in the family of God go beyond strict justice. God himself started this pattern by forgiving us a debt we could never hope to repay. This should cause us to forgive others for good reason—we now belong to him. Jesus essentially bought back (“redeemed”) our life. So we should live as he says—or, more significantly, as he lives.

18:29-30. The actions and words of the second servant were almost identical to those of the first servant in 18:26. This servant also fell to his knees in humility, asking for patience and offering to repay the debt. But the first servant refused to give the second servant a chance to repay the debt.

We tend to forget our king's grace, often refusing to forgive even the most trivial of offenses against us. Such behavior among God's family is infantile. It is time for us to grow up! When we refuse to forgive our brothers, we hold punishment over their heads, and they are affected by our decision. But the person who is truly imprisoned is the one who refuses to forgive. Long-term bitterness is a grinding burden.

18:31. The other servants of the household recognized the cruelty of the first servant toward the second. This grieved them deeply. How deeply do we grieve when we see bitterness and grudges between fellow believers? Such discord in the family of God causes great sorrow to the Father. As we share his heart, we will not be able to stand by and watch indifferently. Told is a strong verb which means “explained in complete detail.” These servants reported the matter to the king.

18:32-33. The angry king held one more audience with the first servant, this time to bring him to account for failing to follow the merciful king's example. God the Father values his children for different reasons. Like this king, the Father does not want any of his children harmed or taken out of his service through mistreatment by others.

We will answer to the Father for our stewardship of the relationships he has entrusted to us—particularly those with other children in his family. Keep in view here the Father's zealous oversight of his "little ones" earlier in Matthew 18. He is protective of all his children—sin and all—and this includes mistreatment from other children in the family.

18:34. The king was so angry at the first servant's mistreatment of the second that he rescinded his previous order to release the first servant and forgive his debt. He imprisoned the servant and turned him over to the jailers to be tortured. The parable reveals the anger of the king and his refusal to tolerate an arrogant lack of forgiveness among his family. But notice there is nothing said here about eternal damnation. These are family issues. Family forgiveness restores what was lost (relational intimacy) and is unrelated to what can never be lost (imputed righteousness and therefore eternal salvation).

18:35. Jesus' closing application was sobering. Each of you brings the focus to the level of individual responsibility. We can imagine Jesus scanning the faces of the disciples as he closed his discourse. We can also imagine him looking out through the words of Matthew into our hearts with his warning lingering in our conscience. Jesus insisted that his servants be characterized by forgiveness.

In this parable Jesus spoke in hyperbole about his anger toward an arrogant, rebellious child. The language may be exaggerated to cause us to take the teaching on forgiveness seriously. This passage warns about the consequences of failing to forgive others. The point is that every Christian has a duty to be forgiving toward others, just as the Father has been forgiving toward us.⁵

References

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2. Wilkins, Michael J. *Matthew*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.
3. Blomberg, Craig L. *Matthew*. NAC. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992.
4. Ibid.
5. Anders, Max. *Matthew*. Holman New Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 1998.

Author Bio

Michael J. Wilkins (Matthew)

Michael J. Wilkins is Distinguished Professor of New Testament Language and Literature and former Dean of the Faculty at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University. He has been on the faculty at Talbot/Biola since 1977, first as an adjunct professor, then full-time since 1983. He has an M.Div. from Talbot and a Ph.D. in New Testament from Fuller Theological Seminary. A Viet Nam veteran and husband of Lynne for 45 years, they have two daughters and two granddaughters. He is also the author of numerous books.

Craig Blomberg (Matthew)

Craig Blomberg is distinguished professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary.

Max Anders (Matthew)

Dr. Max Anders is the author of over 25 books, including the bestselling *30 Days to Understanding the Bible*, and is the creator and general editor of the 32-volume *Holman Bible Commentary* series. He has taught on the college and seminary level and is a veteran pastor. Max provides resources and discipleship strategies at www.maxanders.com to help people grow spiritually.

John MacArthur (The Truth About Forgiveness)

John MacArthur has served as pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, since 1969. His ministry of expository preaching is unparalleled in its breadth and influence. In more than five decades of ministry from the same pulpit, he has preached verse by verse through the entire New Testament and several key sections of the Old Testament. He is Chancellor of the Master's University and Seminary, and can be heard daily on the *Grace to You* radio broadcast (carried on hundreds of radio stations worldwide). He has authored numerous bestselling books, including *Twelve Ordinary Men* and *One Perfect Life*.

Charles Stanley (The Gift of Forgiveness)

Dr. Charles F. Stanley is a *New York Times* bestselling author who has written more than sixty books, with sales of more than ten million copies. He has been senior pastor of the First Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia since 1971, and his outreach ministry—*In Touch*—reaches more than 2,800 radio and television outlets in more than fifty languages. Dr. Stanley was inducted into the National Religious Broadcaster's (NRB) Hall of Fame in 1988. Dr. Stanley's goal is best represented by *In Touch* Ministries' mission statement: to lead people worldwide into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and to strengthen the local church. This is because, as he says, "It is the Word of God and the work of God that changes people's lives."

A.W. Pink (The Seven Sayings of the Saviour on the Cross)

Born in Nottingham, England in 1886, Arthur Walkington Pink was converted to Christ while a spiritualist medium. He briefly attended the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois, in 1910, before taking up his first pastorate at Silverton, Colorado. Little-known to the outside world, he pastored other churches in the United States and Australia before finally returning to his homeland in 1934. Settling in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, there he died almost unnoticed in 1952. By that date, however, the magazine he had started in 1922 – *Studies in the Scriptures* – was feeding several of the men who were leading a return to doctrinal Christianity, including Martyn Lloyd-Jones and Douglas Johnson (founder of *Inter-Varsity*) and, in book form after his death, his writings became very widely read across the world. The Trust publishes his *The Sovereignty of God*, *Gleanings from Paul*, *Profiting from the Word*, *The Life of Elijah*, and a number of titles which have been translated into Spanish.