



Proper 19 ARTICLE NO. 2005.806 Mt 18:21-22

Avoiding Vengeance

A meeting Sunday March 29, 33 AD.
Matthew chapter 18 verse 21 to 22



*Then came Peter to him, and said, "Lord, how oft shall my brother **sin against me**, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him I say not unto thee, Until seven times but Until seventy times seven."*

The law stated that a man had to be forgiven three times for trespasses.

Peter was trying to be better than the Law by suggesting "seven times".

But Instead of answering Peter's question directly, (how often the Lord does this !) Jesus tells him something - a mystery to us - but clear to Peter because he recognizes the implied reference to Genesis (chapter 4 verse 24 in modern bibles) and it went something like this:

"Peter with your track record of committing sin, perhaps seven times won't be enough. Maybe I should afford you the same tolerance that Lamech expected from God of seventy times seven!"

Peter was probably offended, until he saw that the Lord was smiling.

Some other translation have missed the important point that Jesus was talking directly to Peter.^c

The KJV translation is very exact. And only the KJV gets the proper sense of the statement.

"I don't *forgive thee* (singular) *only* seven times but seventy times seven"

^c He obviously is not telling Judas that he will forgive him seventy seven times, as God exacts vengeance on Judas very soon after this meeting, for Judas hangs himself from a tree.

Refs

Ge. 4:24 If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech **seventy-seven** times."

Mt 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

The Greek text is (Textus Receptus)
ου λεγω σοι
εως επτακις αλλ
εως
εβδομηκοντακις
επτα."
I tell not
tothee until
seventimes but
until
seventytimes
seven.

Much of this tract is commentary - don't take it as Gospel. It is here to encourage meditation and study. Use your gift of discernment, to find the truth.

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Refs

Matthew chapter 18 verse 21 to 22

Now we know that Jesus has told us that we must forgive every trespass against us. There is no limit on the number of times we have to forgive the same offense. So, why seven, and seventy times seven here? (see page 8). This little 'aside' to Peter in a crowded room, is not meant as advice to all the disciples, or to any one else, it is just a joke between friends. And it's a funny enough story, once you are aware of what actually happened during that week (Peter denies Christ 3 times, and Jesus gives them all the authority to retain or remit the sins of others - without penalty). And I am sure that Peter told this story many times. Which is probably why it was written by the author of Matthew.

Jesus knew that Peter was thinking that after a fixed quantity of forgiveness, he would be justified in becoming angry with the brother,. Now, **it is very easy to turn anger at someone into vengeance.** "I'll get even with her!". But God has strictly forbidden man vengeance against a brother/sister.

Jesus knew that in a few days He will give Peter and the Apostles power to remit and retain sins, and they will have to make some difficult decisions, with no advice from Him. So, to squelch any idea of taking vengeance on a brother, Jesus goes on to tell all the Apostles in the room, a story that illustrates what will happen to them if they take vengeance on a brother.

It is clear from the story that vengeance will not to be forgiven by God. Not only is it not forgiven, but in this story God (played by the King) takes back His forgiveness for previous sin!

Matthew 26:34
"34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."

Deuteronomy 32:35
"35 To me (God) belongeth vengeance,

Ecclesiasticus 28:1-28:7 (KJV Apocrypha)

28:1 He that revengeth shall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will surely keep his sins [in remembrance.] Romans 12:19
"19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

Deuteronomy 32:35
"35 To me (God) belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste."

Additional Comments

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The important point of this chapter then is the parable that follows.

Executive summary of the Parable

The King has the option to punish or to forgive. He forgives. By the King's rule, his 'servant' is not allowed to punish a fellow 'servant', but he does it anyway. The King then punishes this 'servant' because of his action.

The King's punishment is many times more harsh than the punishment that the 'servant' meted out to his fellow 'servant'.

Jesus warns the Apostles, that God will behave just like the King.

Remember also that at this time, the Apostle had no authority to forgive **sin**, only to forget **trespasses** against himself. But each would soon have to make decisions like Jesus, which would include the refusal to forgive unpardonable sins, and the power to unforgive sins previously pardoned.^B

The ordinary man/woman has no authority to remit or retain sins. What we can do, is to forgive in our hearts (i.e. wipe out the memory of), trespasses against us.

Nothing **we** say or do, will change the condition of the brother or sister who has sinned against us. Only God, and those authorized by God to remit and retain sins, can forgive our brothers. And **some sins will not be forgiven**^B, (except God can make an exception even to this).

^B 1. Sins against the Holy Ghost. (excommunication results).

2. **Failure to forgive others their trespasses.**

Leviticus 19:18

"18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD."

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More Insight

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There are always several layers of meaning in Jesus's parables. In other words there are several stories within stories here. I can see two or three. There is what I call the **cover story**, **the moral**, and **doing theology**. Here is the 'cover story' of the parable in modern language.,

The King had calculated that tithes amounting to 1000 talents were owed to him (\$252,000,000 in today's money). His Finance minister had not collected the tithes as he was supposed to. The King was going to sell him, his wife and children into slavery and sell the man's property (these sales were not not reimburse the King, of course, but a were a punishment for breaking the King's fiduciary trust). The finance minister asked for more time to collect the money. The King 'out of compassion'^A relieved the man of his obligation to collect the tithes. The minister met a another businessman who owed him \$3,500, and was very angry with the man, and almost strangled him. He sent him to prison. Friends of the businessman complained (of the physical abuse?). The King became very angry and told the minister that he was wicked for punishing the man. Had he not understood the King's example? The King would not forgive the 'servant' his crime. He put the minister into the hands of the tormentors ('bill collectors' who would vex him until he paid the \$252 million).

Seems straightforward? One man is forgiven, but doesn't forgive another, so he is punished with no second chance? Why doesn't the King forgive both the men their debts? Why doesn't the King send his servant back to forgive the debts of his friend? What is really going on here?

^A It was "out of compassion" that the Samaritan healed the injured man on the road to Jericho.

The Views expressed here are strictly those of the author and probably disagree with what you have previously thought. Read other commentaries - meditate on the original KJV.

In this parable, perhaps the huge debt, 'owed' by the minister, is a metaphor for that debt owed by every man, for Adam's Sin. No man can pay this debt. Only Jesus can pay for it. And if I can paraphrase Jesus, I think this is what he was implying: "I offer you forgiveness for the debt of Original Sin, but the removal of the guilt for this sin is conditional on your becoming virtuous like Me. You must agree to forgive all trespasses against you, as long as you shall live and not take vengeance on your brother. But should you take vengeance against your brother instead of offering forgiveness, My Father will become angry and the guilt of Original Sin will not be forgiven you, He will make you pay the penalty and you will be in eternal torment".

The **parable** of the King is to illustrate to Apostles, the severe **consequences that result from doing vengeance**. It is a scary passage because it implies that **there is no repentance possible if your heart is full of vengeance**. Jesus makes it very clear that He will not forgive us if we do not forgive others. God can tell when we harbor a grudge, or plot vengeance, against a brother. With vengeance smoldering inside us, we are tormented by our hate, just as Jesus warned us, and our torment is demonstrated to our friends as: contention, irritability, and no 'peace' within us. Unless we forgive or forget the brother's sin, Jesus warns that we will become tormented **eternally**.

So you see that this parable is to warn the Apostles from taking advantage of their new powers and being vengeful. And is a warning to all of us in the ordinary course of our lives, not to let anger become vengeance, for if we do we are in deep trouble with God. For while we feel this way we cut ourselves off from God's love, and all our sins can come back to haunt us.

Matthew chapter
6, verses 14 and 15

Now we know that we must forgive all trespasses against us. and Jesus says nothing about repentance by the **trespasser** as a condition of **our** forgiving **him**. So, we understand that 'forgiveness' requires no action on the part of the wrongdoer. In fact the wrongdoer who is to be forgiven could be out of our lives completely, or out of the country and unreachable. It makes no difference - we must forgive the trespass against us in our heart.

The wrongdoer must work out his own repentance. Our job is to respond to acts of wrongdoing against us, **with love in our hearts**, just as God does for us.

If the wrongdoer **asks** for forgiveness we give it for his/her benefit; but we should already have healed the injury, and forgotten that we were ever crossed.

In our relationships with our brothers, we must look for the Christ within them: 'wink' at their childlike misunderstandings, lift them up when they stumble along the way; brush-off their small transgressions against us, smile at their forgetfulness; think the-best of their intentions towards us; guide them with loving kindness; and pray for their understanding.

So forgive the brother, or forget the debt. Act as though it never happened. Hate no-one, love your neighbors.

Ecclesiasticus 28:1 - 28:7 (KJV Apocrypha)

28:1 He that revengeth shall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will surely keep his sins [in remembrance.]

28:2 Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done unto thee, so shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest.

28:3 One man beareth hatred against another, and doth he seek pardon from the Lord?

28:4 He sheweth no mercy to a man, which is like himself: and doth he ask forgiveness of his own sins?

28:5 If he that is but flesh nourish hatred, who will intreat for pardon of his sins?

28:6 Remember thy end, and let enmity cease; [remember] corruption and death, and abide in the commandments.

28:7 Remember the commandments, and bear no malice to thy neighbour: [remember] the covenant of the Highest, and wink at ignorance.

Mt 5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment:

Mt 18:35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Eph 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

Eph 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Col 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye.

Mt 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Mt 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Mt 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

Mt 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Amori Christi et Ecclesiae –

Glen C. Miller OSV

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The expression ‘seven and seven times seventy’ found in the ‘King James Version’ (KJV) in **Mat 18:21** ^{KJV} comes from **Gen 4:24** ^{LXX}, in the Greek OT (Septuagint or LXX). The Hebrew Torah since c. AD 1000 has ‘seventy **and** seven’ NOT seventy **times** seven. In the King James, **Gen 4:24** ^{KJV} agrees with Torah, as do most other western bibles. - Here is just another example of the difficulties we find in tracing quotations in the KJV NT to the Old Testament in our Bibles - most of the OT quotations by the writers were from the LXX because that was the scripture they used daily. During the reformation, the Protestant Churches switched from the scriptures that the Apostles used, and adopted the Hebrew OT. Most corporate Protestant bibles today have ‘amended’ this NT verse to agree with the Hebrew OT. [what do you think Jesus actually said?]

In Gen. 4:24 ^{KJV} Lamech, an evil man who was the father of Noah, refers to the promise God made - that anyone who killed Cain would suffer a punishment of sevenfold severity for the crime . Lamech mocks this severity and says that since he was more evil than Cain, God should demand that his murderer be punished with a seventy-seven fold severity. All Jews would have known this passage, and reference to it was implied in the NT verse.

The numbers seven and seventy seven are numbers - not abstract ideas like infinity.

Ge 4:24 If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech **seventy-seven** times.”

Jud 8:14 He caught a young man of Succoth and questioned him, and the young man wrote down for him the names of the **seventy-seven** officials of Succoth, the elders of the town.

Ezr 8:35 Then the exiles who had returned from captivity sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel: twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, **seventy-seven** male lambs and, as a sin offering, twelve male goats. All this was a burnt offering to the LORD.

Mt 18:22 Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but **seventy-seven** times.

Jesus probably didn’t read the Greek; as his languages were Aramaic and Hebrew .

Recommended Books

ISBN



Peter (from Heaven):

“Matthew, I was there, remember?. I’ve told that story to everyone. You know that Jesus didn’t say seventy times seven to me. He said seventy seven times! “

Matthew:

“I know Peter, but He was quoting Genesis from the Temple scrolls (in Hebrew). The gentiles can’t understand a word of Hebrew and we all use the Septuagint (in Greek) and as you can plainly see, it says seventy times seven. What can we do? If we don’t quote it exactly as it is here, the brethren will think that Jesus made a mistake. I think we had better use the Septuagint verse - And you need to change your story from now on. In a few years nobody will remember your original story, anyway”