

N. Wilm. Bockrath Fellowship Group

May 9, 2003

Matthew 18:21-35 (NIV) – *The Unmerciful Servant*

²¹Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

²²Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

²³"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

²⁶"The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

²⁸"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

²⁹"His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

³⁰"But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

³²"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

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

Questions for Discussion:

1. Think of an example of a time when you selflessly forgave another. What makes that a good example of forgiveness? Think also of an example where you completely dropped the ball in forgiving another? What makes that a poor example of forgiveness?
2. How much debt did ten thousand talents represent? What does the master's response tell us about the master of this parable?
3. How much debt did 100 denarii represent? How does this compare to the ten thousand talents of v. 24? How does the servant respond and what does this tell us about the servant of the parable.
4. The servant's fellow servants report his behavior to the master, who in turn prescribes rather harsh penalties and words. Which words particularly strike at your own heart? Why?
5. Does the ending of the parable teach a works based gospel? If not, then what is the meaning of the parable?