

Spc148 – Divine Forgiveness (2018) – Matthew 21-35

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Open your Bibles. Title of the message, “Divine Forgiveness – 2018.” The first time I taught this message was in 2000, however, this is a message we need to hear again. We are going to Matthew Chapter 18 and the incredible parable of the unforgiving servant from verses 21-35.

In the Bible MERCY is “*compassion in action*” toward someone who doesn’t deserve it.

2 Corinthians 1:3 calls God *the Father of Mercy*, and *the God of All Comfort* and all that Jesus has done for us – to save us, to give us new life, to make an eternal home for us – has all come from his mercy, his compassion in action towards those who don’t deserve it. In the most sacrificial way possible, the Lord of Glory acted in eternal compassion toward those who *did not, could not* and *never will* deserve his mercy. That’s us.

God’s mercy is *compassion in action* towards those who don’t deserve it.

And the Bible’s level of mercy that leads to divine forgiveness is not something we can produce from our own nature. We cannot “work it up” ourselves. This is not something that we “figure out,” that we “reason” or “use logic.” The only way we can have this level of mercy that leads to divine forgiveness is through the life of Jesus Christ living *in us* and *through us*. It is our only hope – we have none without him.

It is Christ living in us and Christ living through us that allows us to live in divine forgiveness. And how important is it that we live in this level of divine mercy, this compassion in action towards those who don’t deserve it? How important is this?

James 2:13 (NLT)

13 There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.

Matthew 5:7 (ESV)

7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

In Matthew 18 – this mercy – we call *divine forgiveness*. It’s forgiving that person in our lives who *doesn’t deserve it*.

And we’ll see today, God calls us to divine forgiveness for *our own good* to free us from the *torture of unforgiveness*. God has made a way to save you from the self-inflicted prison of unforgiveness and the sins that come with it – bitterness, resentment, anger,

wrath, malice – all those things that come as unforgiveness grows deeper and darker in our hearts.

By offering the Lord offering us his own divine forgiveness we can receive it personally and by him being that divine forgiveness in us we can give it to others who don't deserve it, just like we don't deserve it.

Let's pray. *Lord Jesus, please, even now begin to bring up – as we pray – by your Holy Spirit that person, that situation, that circumstance that you would call us to a higher calling in, that you would call us to divine forgiveness, to divine mercy. Lord we pray that our hearts would be healed of unforgiveness and all of the destructive, torturing sins that come with it, that our hearts would be healed and made new today. That we would receive your mercy and that we would embrace it to the extent that we are able to give it out, for healing, Lord. For healing. We pray you would speak it to us today, for your glory and in your name, Jesus, amen.*

Unforgiveness and the sins that come from it bring bondage and destruction into a Christian's life. And God has given us his mercy in order to free us from the torture of unforgiveness.

Although I know some here have had very serious and very traumatic events in their lives and I am *not* saying that divine forgiveness is *easy* or *instantaneous*, but I am saying God desires to free you from the bondage and destruction of unforgiveness in your life.

And so I'd like you (right now) to ask God to show you that person that you need to forgive and that situation you need to forgive. And as we go on please allow the Holy Spirit to continue to bring up that person or situation in your mind.

And so I want to show you three *supernatural steps* to experience divine forgiveness in your life – all of which we get from this parable in Matthew Chapter 18.

Three Supernatural Steps to Divine Forgiveness

- #1) We must **receive God's mercy.**
- #2) We must **make the comparison.**
- #3) We must **give out God's mercy.**

First we must receive God's mercy. We must receive it positionally so that we can be saved, though we don't deserve it. And we must receive it in the sense of embracing it, of owning it, of allowing our lives to be filled and controlled by it.

And then we must make the comparison. This is what crushes our pride and leads to brokenness so that we can take step number three.

Step three is giving our God's mercy that he has poured into our lives.

Three supernatural, transforming steps that will enable you to walk in divine forgiveness and will save you from the continual hardening of your heart in unforgiveness which leads to torture and ultimately destruction of a Christian's life.

In Matthew 18 Jesus had just finished the section on how to "correctly" correct another believer. The ESV titles that section – "**If your Brother Sins Against You.**"

Then in Matthew 18:21,

Matthew 18:21 (ESV)

21 Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?"

That certainly sounds reasonable – seven times? In fact from Peter it might even sound a little prideful. Peter was never afraid to open his mouth or stick his foot in it and so Jesus corrects him in Matthew 18:22.

Matthew 18:22 (ESV)

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

The NLT (and other translations) says **seventy times seven**. *The original can be translated both ways.*

But whether it's seventy-seven or seventy times seven, everyone is in agreement – Jesus is saying we are called to forgive "*an unlimited amount of times.*" And then Jesus tells us a parable to help us understand just how high a *priority* God puts on us living in his divine forgiveness.

All three steps to divine forgiveness are in this parable.

Three Supernatural Steps to Divine Forgiveness

- #1) We must **receive God's mercy.**
- #2) We must **make the comparison.**
- #3) We must **give out God's mercy.**

Let's read through it and you'll see each of the steps.

Matthew 18:23–24 (ESV)

23 “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.

24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.

Jesus says “**Therefore**” to connect the parable to the previous teachings. **The kingdom of heaven may be compared** – this is a crucial opening phrase to many of the parables. It’s saying, look. You can understand the Kingdom of Heaven by understanding this parable.

So let’s set the stage correctly. The King is *God*. The servant with the debt is *you*.

And Jesus says in verse 23 ***the kingdom of heaven may be compared to THIS situation***. You owe *God* a debt of 10,000 talents. 10,000 talents is an absolutely unrepayable debt amount. The ESV footnote says *20 years wages*. The NLT footnote says *375 tons of silver*.

You owe the King of Heaven an *unimaginable and unrepayable debt*. And so Matthew 18:25 says,

Matthew 18:25 says (ESV)

25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold (as a slave), with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.

This was the normal and customary response at the time. In fact this was the correct and “righteous” response when a debt like this could not be re-paid.

In the same way the wrath of God’s judgment is the correct and “righteous” response to your debt of sin.

Then, continuing in Matthew 18:26,

Matthew 18:26 (ESV)

26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’

Could he really? Could the servant *ever pay* this “unrepayable” debt? No – of course he could *never* repay it just as we could never repay God for the debt of our sin. But sometimes that is us to God – “God I’ll do this for you, I’ll do that for you. I’ll make it right for you.” No. No you *can’t* pay it. It is an unrepayable debt. You have no hope of getting back to zero with God.

And so the master responds in Matthew 18:27.

Matthew 18:27 (ESV)

27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

The master – the King of Heaven – had *pity* on you and released you and forgave your debt. Most of the translations use the word *COMPASSION* here (pity). ***“The master was moved with compassion”***

Harper’s Bible Dictionary: This word (pity) describes a person showing significant kindness to someone who *does not* deserve the kindness and *cannot* repay it.

This is step #1 – **We must RECEIVE God’s mercy.**

We “receive” God’s mercy when we are forgiven and released from our debt of sin. *That* is what God has done for us. (We cannot earn it, we can’t deserve it, we can’t “try harder.” We are hopeless and helpless and we receive his mercy and kindness when we can’t deserve it).

If you are saved today (by putting your faith in Jesus Christ) God has not given you what your sin deserves. Instead (in his mercy) God has released you and forgiven the unrepayable debt that you owed him.

And so first – **we must receive God’s mercy.** We must receive it both positionally so that we can be forgiven but we must receive it in the sense of embracing it, of bringing it into our lives, of acknowledging that this is the nature of God in my life.

And we’ll talk more about receiving God’s mercy when we talk about step #3 – **giving God’s mercy.**

Now we move to you and your dealings with the person who has wronged you.

And we see step #2 – **we must make the comparison.**

Matthew 18:28(A) (ESV)

28 But when that same servant went out(that’s you), he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii . . .

So, you went out and *found* one of your fellow servants – you went *looking* for him on purpose. And that person owes you 100 denarii. You went our looking for someone after you were forgiven an unrepayable debt, and you found someone who owed you 100 denarii (three months wages).

Now in the previous verse – you were just forgiven a debt of 1,040 months wages (20 years) over 300 times *more* than this person owes you and then in the second half of verse 28 we see what you do when you find that person who has wronged you.

Let's read the full verse of Matthew 18:28.

Matthew 18:28 (ESV)

28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.'

That doesn't seem right, does it? Jesus is comparing how much God has forgiven you with how much you have forgiven others.

*How are we doing making the comparison? As *freely forgiven Christians* how are we doing in *freely forgiving* those who have wronged us?*

Is there a chance that we are actually holding someone who has wronged us in some sort of prison, even if it's in a prison just "in our own minds even as we refuse to even consider forgiving them?"

*So in our parable you track down your fellow servant, get them in a chokehold and they try to say to you exactly what *you* said to *God*.*

Matthew 18:29–30 (ESV)

29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'

30 (but) He (that's you) refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.

*This "servant's servant" asked for the same mercy that the servant had just received. But the servant who had been forgiven so much shows no mercy to the one who owes him *much less* and then he throws his fellow servant into prison until he pays for what he's done.*

*For us the most dangerous prison we can put people in who have wronged us is the prison of our own minds. We hold them there and we try to make them pay. But what happens most often is *we* are the ones who end up *in bondage*.*

And then I think verse 31 may possibly be the saddest verse in the entire parable because in verse 31 I imaging the angels going to Jesus on this whole thing.

Matthew 18:31 (ESV)

31 When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.

Can you see the angels in disbelief going to Jesus and saying, “Lord, it cost you so much to forgive that person and you gave them that forgiveness so freely. But then they hunted down a person who had wronged them and they choked them out and threw them in prison to make them pay. Lord, something doesn’t seem right in all that.”

And so in verses 32-33 Jesus “**Makes the Comparison.**”

Matthew 18:32-33 (ESV)

32 Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.

33 And shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant, AS I had mercy on you?’

The NLT for verse 33 says, *Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?*

The words *just as* (or *as* in ESV) mean *in the same way, or to the same extent*.

Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant, [in the same way, to the same extent, as] I had mercy on you?

Shouldn’t *we* be showing mercy to others *in the same way* that God has shown mercy to us?

We must make this comparison.

And I know sometimes this seems *impossible* to do and I know there are situations that make this *unimaginable*.

But what if I told you that *showing mercy* and giving *divine forgiveness* in your life was actually for *your own good*? What if God is calling us to live in divine forgiveness in order to keep us from being tortured by our *unforgiveness*? What if I told you that Jesus is trying to save you from all of the sins that come from unforgiveness – the anger, the bitterness, the resentment, the wrath, the malice and all the darkness that comes?

Regarding the servant who would not forgive in the same way as he had been forgiven we read the following in Matthew 18:24.

Matthew 18:34 (ESV)

34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.

The ESV translates this word “*jailers*.” But if you look at the “Footnote” in your ESV it says “*torturers*.”

The NLT just writes it as it is.

Matthew 18:34 (NLT)

34 Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt.

What do you mean *to be tortured* until he had paid his entire debt? That seems a little radical doesn't it? Is God saying that *will happen to me* if I refuse to forgive those who have wronged me in my life?

All we can do is read the next verse.

Matthew 18:35 (ESV)

35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

So also means -**That's what** *my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart*

Seriously Jesus? You would allow *that* to happen to *me*? I mean, remember how much you love me and all... Are you saying I will be *tortured* if I refuse to forgive in the same way that you have *forgiven me*?

Please hear me – *hardened unforgiveness* becomes *permanent* mental and emotional torture in your life.

We think we are all “in control” by *not* forgiving. But our unforgiveness *always* ends up *controlling us* and our unforgiveness will become a *ruthless torturer*.

But God doesn't leave us with *just* the command. God never leaves us with *just a command* as if we could accomplish any of this on our own. By his life taking over our life Jesus Christ *becomes* divine forgiveness *in us*. This is not something we can work up or try harder to attain. This is something we *surrender* to the Lord and Jesus Christ living inside of us *becomes* our *divine forgiveness* – *for us*.

We can't work this up. We don't have this in us. The love of God, Romans 5:5 says, is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Up until that point you “ain't got any.” None! But the Lord has said to you that he will come into your life and if you will surrender to

him, then he, living inside of you, will become divine forgiveness through you and for you.

Sometimes it seems “flippant” or “trite” when people say “Oh, no, that’s the Lord.” “Oh, no, that’s the Lord. That’s the Lord.”

Listen, when you’ve got something that is *really tormenting you* and you receive the miracle of divine forgiveness – *it IS the Lord!* It is the Lord. And when he does that it’s a miracle that happens in your life, and you’re transformed forever by it. And you become a testimony for the Lord – which is what we’re supposed to be.

Jesus says I’ve given you myself as the power for you to be freed from the *torture of unforgiveness*. Your part is to *continually choose* to walk in the new life of divine forgiveness that Jesus Christ has given to you.

And so, step #3 – **we must give out God’s mercy.**

- 1) We’ve **received God’s mercy.**
- 2) We’ve **made the comparison** in order to crucify our flesh
- 3) Now we **give God’s mercy** that is inside us.

We allow the divine nature of God to replace our sin nature. We allow God’s mercy living inside us to “*replace*” our unforgiveness and then... we give *that* out! We give *divine forgiveness* from the new life of Jesus Christ living inside of us.

God calls us to forgive *in the same way* as he has *forgiven us*...

Colossians 3:13 says,

Col 3:13 . . . *AS (just as) the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*

And we forgive “*just as*” the Lord has forgiven us because it’s the Lord doing the forgiving *inside us*. This is *not* something *we* do. It’s something Jesus Christ does – *in us* and *through us*.

We’ve got to give up – our right to hold on to the cancer of *unforgiveness* in our hearts. We’ve got to give it over to God the things we *can’t fix* and the things we *can’t control* and we’ve got to replace those things with *his mercy* leading to *divine forgiveness*.

And let me say one more time – *I KNOW* this is *not* always *EASY*. *I KNOW* this is *not* always *IMMEDIATE*.

But I know how big and how merciful *our GOD is!!* I know that God is merciful enough to give you the mercy to free you from the torture of your own unforgiveness. And I know if you belong to Jesus Christ today that he is transforming you – *from glory to glory* – into his own image... Wherever you're at now – he wants to move you to the next level of holiness, to the next level of transformation – from glory to glory into his own image.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NLT)

18. . . And the Lord - who is the Spirit - makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

Would you pray that the Lord will transform you in *this* area and you would trust him to *do it*? Would you pray “Lord Jesus, make me more like you? I willingly crucify my own nature, my own will, my ‘self’. And As I do Lord, Would you take over? Would you pour your life into me to such an extent that your life in me would forgive what I can’t forgive?”

Would you trust him to do that? It’s a faith thing. Will you trust that Jesus Christ can do that great a miracle in your life?

And would you continue to *cry out* to him to *give you divine forgiveness...* for that *PERSON* specifically and for that *SITUATION* specifically or *CIRCUMSTANCE* specifically in your life *until* you have been transformed into *his image* – until you experience his *divine forgiveness*?

God wants to free you from the *bondage* and *destruction* of your *unforgiveness* – from the *torturing prison* of unforgiveness and all the sin that comes with it. He wants to *RENEW* and *RESTORE* and *TRANSFORM* you and give you the gift – of *divine forgiveness* and *free you* from this.

You have to let him. You have to join him in what he’s doing. Would you do that?

Let’s pray. *Lord right now, God, we just need to step into that right now. We can go through our whole lives playing like everything is good, like we don’t have that blackness, that hard black heart of unforgiveness. But Lord, you promise, that when we seek you we will find you and that you would take out that heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh that, Lord, we would be dead with you. That our nature, our old man would be rendered inoperative and that we would be raised to walk in newness of life with you. And Lord, this matter is a litmus test matter. Would you flood us, right now,*

with your Holy Spirit to bring us to the point of receiving your mercy and giving out your divine forgiveness?

As we wrap up, I just want you to pray right now that person, that situation, that circumstance, that trauma, that experience, would you just have the courage to put it up to the Lord? To just raise it up or raise that person up and say –

“Jesus, I need you in order to be free of the bondage that this has created in my life. I need to be free of the unforgiveness, Lord that I am imprisoned by. Would you come like a flood and bring your mercy to replace my unforgiveness? Would you deal with me on this right now, Jesus, please?”

Please deal specifically with the Lord on this matter that he’s been talking to you about.

We just pray that the Holy Spirit would wash over us. That we would experience the divine and miraculous healing of the bitterness that’s in our heart.

Would you take this opportunity to make a stand, and say *“Lord this is an area I need healing in. This is an area I need to be free of, Lord.”* He is chasing you because he loves you. His love is reckless for you. He will chase you – wherever you go he will chase you down. *“Thank you Jesus. Thank you for your love for us. Your love is overwhelming Lord, your love is overwhelming. Thank you Jesus. Thank you Lord.”*

Take a stand right now and say, *“I need this. I need this healing in my life.”*

“Lord we know that you want to tear this out of us because of your love for us, Lord. That you want to heal this in us for our good, Lord. And we know that there is nothing that can stop you from reaching us with your love, Lord. And so today we stop covering up and denying and justifying and rationalizing our sin of unforgiveness. Instead we recognize that as a sin and say Lord please take it from me. Please heal me from it, Lord. Please replace my hard heart with your heart of mercy and compassion and forgiveness, Lord. Thank you, Lord. Lord you’ve been so good to us! How can we keep this from you? Your love knows no bounds. Thank you Jesus. Bring healing as you wash through our life. Bring healing, bring forgiveness, bring new life into us. Lord do a miraculous work in us to restore us, to use us, to work through us, God. Radically save us and radically transform us we pray. Thank you Jesus. Nothing will stop you from reaching us. Lord you’re coming for us on this one. Chase us, Lord, chase us down. Reach our hearts on this matter. Transform us, Lord. Thank you Jesus! Praise your name. Nothing will stop your love Lord, pour it out on us. Lord meet us right here and transform us, fill us with

your Spirit, save us from ourselves. Lord we pray healing over our hearts. Praise your mighty name. Holy is your name in this place, Lord.

Would you right now make a commitment to the Lord? Would you say, "Lord? I surrender. I confess. I repent. I repent Lord from the anger, the pride, that's keeping me thinking I'm right. I repent, Lord. God break me down so that you can save me. Lord, I forgive, I forgive. I forgive that person. I forgive you, Lord. I've blamed you for that situation, Lord, for that event and Lord I'm sorry. I repent. I'm sorry Lord."

There is nothing that will stop God from getting to you. Give in. He's coming for you. He's coming for you. "Thank you Jesus. Nothing will stop you. You're coming to save us, Lord. And you're not going to give up. Thank you, Jesus. Praise your name, Lord. Lord we stand before you just as we are. With all that you've changed and all that you still desire to change in us Lord. Right where we're at, we stand in your grace. We stand in your mercy, Lord and we pray as you fill us Lord, that we would give your mercy out to those around us. And through it, Lord, continue to transform us into your image and save us from the torture of unforgiveness. We thank you for doing it, Lord. Thank you, Jesus. For your glory in our lives, and in your name, amen."