THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT.

MATT. 18:23-35.

This parable has been urged by some as in opposition to the necessity of Jesus' death as our ransom, or substitute, in the settlement of the Adamic penalty. They argue that this parable teaches the contrary, that God FREELY FORGIVES all Adamic sin, and hence neither requires men to pay it, nor yet that Jesus should pay it for us, the just for the unjust. But this is a false presentation of the teaching of this parable, and results either from having a theory which they seek to prop with some seeming scriptural evidence, or from a too careless examination of the parable.

The parable does not relate to dealings between God and the world of sinners; but between God and his covenanted children, called here, as elsewhere, "bond-servants." They are those who have already been justified from Adamic guilt by Christ's ransom, and who have consecrated themselves to God to be his servants forever. These are acquainted with the will of their king and know how, through weakness of the flesh and temptation, they have failed to render to God all which their covenant calls for, and when they have gone to the Father and asked [as members of the body of Christ – in the name of their head] for mercy, they have always found him very merciful and he forgave them and said, Go in peace: as Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He will do it."

In return, it is expected that such shall be ready to exercise the same leniency toward their fellows. If they do not, they need not expect any leniency from their Father in the matter of their covenant keeping, but must be kept to the strict letter of it, and will be

delivered over to trouble and distress in the present life sufficient to make them sympathize with the weak and erring.

The same lesson is taught in the Lord's prayer. Forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. It is the church which prays "Our Father" – the church already made free from Adamic guilt.