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FORGIVE SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN

– *DECEMBER 15.* – *MATTHEW 18:15-35.* –

"Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God, for Christ's sake, forgave you." – Eph. 4:32.

TO LEARN TODAY'S lesson well means a blessing for life to every true Christian, and might be said to ensure him eternal life – so fully would he be in accord with the Divine requirements. The lesson relates specially to the consecrated, to the members of the Body of Christ, the Church, of which He is the Head, although application, of course, may be made by others with profit.

The Master's rule for His followers is, If a brother injure you, go to him alone with the matter, striving to reach an agreement, an understanding. The probability is that *misunderstanding* is all that there is of it. But if this does not suffice and you consider the matter serious enough, ask two others to accompany you to the offender, without explaining to them the mission – leave their minds free to hear the case and to advise yourself and the person injuring.

The agreement of these brethren and their advice should be followed by both. If they disagree with you, you should acknowledge that you have erred and that the matter is evidently susceptible of this construction. If they agree with you, and your opponent refuses to heed their counsel and persists in doing you injury, and you still think it of sufficient importance to trouble the Church with the matter, you are then at liberty so to do. The Church's decision of the question is to be final, binding upon both. The one refusing to hear the Church is to be treated as an outsider, not in the sense of doing him injury, but abstaining from appointing him to any position, or honor in the Church, until his course shall be changed. How simple the Divine direction; what a blessing would come from following it!

FORGIVE "SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN"

St. Peter put a hypothetical question, of how many times a brother might trespass and ask forgiveness and [R5134 : page 359] yet be forgiven – would seven times be the limit? The Master practically declared that there could be no limit, that any brother confessing his fault and asking forgiveness must be forgiven, if it should recur four hundred and ninety times. There is no other position left; forgiveness is obligatory when asked for. We must not be too much afraid of the consequences of following the Master's direction; we must put the responsibility of the matter with Him, assured that His wisdom has not misdirected us.

Then our Lord gave a parable, to illustrate this matter, in respect to the Kingdom of Heaven class – the Church in the present embryotic condition. A certain king had a reckoning with his servants, and squared up all accounts. Amongst the others, one owed him ten thousand talents. His master commanded him to be sold, and his wife and all that he had, until the payment should be made. But the servant fell down at his master's feet and besought him to have compassion on him and he would pay the debt. And the master had compassion on him and discontinued further prosecution on account of the debt.

"OWED HIM A HUNDRED PENCE"

The servant thus released went out and began to look up some of those who were indebted to him, and found a fellow-servant who owed *him* a hundred pence, a very insignificant sum in comparison to the one which he had owed the master. He took his fellow-servant by the throat, saying, "Pay me the hundred pence thou owest." His fellow-servant fell at his feet and besought mercy, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." But he would not delay, and cast him into prison till the debt should be paid. The matter finally reached the ears of the master, who called him and said, "Thou wicked servant! I released thee from the penalty of thy debt because thou didst entreat me! thou shouldst also have had mercy upon thy fellow-servant, even

as I had pity upon thee." And he was angry, and delivered him to punishment till he should pay all that was due.

AN IMPORTANT LESSON HERE

What is the lesson? It is that we should have compassion upon one another, even as we desire that God for Christ's sake should have compassion upon us. The lesson [R5135 : page 359] is well expressed in our text. We should be kind one to another, tender-hearted – even as God also in Christ forgave us – and continues to forgive our trespasses day by day. The trespasses of others against us are trifling indeed in comparison to our obligations to the Lord. We should therefore be very willing to forgive all who ask us – "until seventy times seven." In thus exercising mercy we will be copying the Divine character. The influence upon our hearts and lives will be ennobling. Our Lord Jesus is the express image of the Father's person, and we in copying the qualities of generosity and Love become more Christlike, and therefore more Godlike.

SO ALSO DID GOD DO UNTO YOU

Our Lord Jesus explains that His parable teaches the principles along which the Heavenly Father deals with the members of the Body of Christ, which is the Church. If they are harsh and unsympathetic, if they hold their brethren to a strict account along lines of justice, then the Heavenly Father will so deal with them, and will hold them to account for all their shortcomings. It would seem that if God's people would realize the force of this lesson, the practice of forgiving the brethren of their trespasses and shortcomings would very generously and very generally be brought into play, for who of us could afford to have the Heavenly Father exact of us a full penalty for every imperfection, and refuse to remit any of the same?

We show our appreciation of God's mercy toward us by schooling ourselves in His character and becoming more and more merciful and generous toward all the Household of Faith. And if merciful toward the

brethren, naturally we would be generous also toward all men. In other words, as we remember and appreciate our own weaknesses and blemishes, it will make us sympathetic with the brethren and with all mankind. And mercy, generosity, sympathy, God delights in. Such as cultivate these graces of the Spirit will be pleasing in the Lord's sight, and they will thereby be fitted and prepared to have a share with Jesus in His Throne of Glory; for that great Messianic Kingdom will be established for the very purpose of showing mercy unto thousands of mankind who will return to Divine favor and blessing, under clearer knowledge and with the assistance that will then be afforded.

ADAM'S SIN IS NOT MEANT

We are not to understand this parable to refer to Divine forgiveness of original sin. The sin of Adam is not forgiven simply because we cry for mercy. Adam and the entire race might have called for mercy, and would have received none, except in the Divine way – through Jesus – through faith in His blood. Nor could this forgiveness be granted until Jesus had finished His sacrifice and ascended up on high, and there appeared in the presence of God on behalf of those coming to the Father through His merit.

This parable refers entirely to subsequent sins – sins referred to in our Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." This is shown also by the fact that the parable speaks of these as servants, whereas the world, as sinners, are not God's servants, but aliens, strangers, foreigners. The only ones whom God will recognize as servants are such as have come back into relationship with Him through Jesus – through faith and consecration. It is these who are servants of God and who are required to have mercy upon their fellow-servants – upon other brethren.

Each and every one of the New Creatures, sons of God, accepted through the merit of Jesus, is held responsible for his own weaknesses; but Divine Power has provided for the cancellation of these freely for Christ's sake, upon their acknowledgment and request for forgiveness.

But the forgiving of these trespasses of God's children is made dependent upon their having a spirit of forgiveness toward the brethren, for "if ye do not from the heart forgive one another's trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you." "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure" of benevolence ye mete out to others, the same shall be meted out to you. How wonderful are the Divine arrangements! How blessed, how profitable to us, how helpful to us in our preparation for the Kingdom!

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TRULY BEAUTIFUL

Beautiful hands are they that do
The work of the noble, good and true,
Busy for them the long day through;
Beautiful faces – they that wear
The light of a pleasing spirit there,
It matters little if dark or fair;
And truly beautiful in God's sight,
Are the precious souls who love the right.

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