

## Matthew 18

This chapter has one theme that runs throughout the text: respect for others. First, the disciples argue over who is the greatest and Jesus points to a child (18:1-5). Secondly, Jesus warns against not causing a “little one” (using the phrase as a term for His disciples) who believes in Him to stumble (18:6-9). Thirdly, Jesus gives a parable to illustrate how much love God has for His sheep; disciples should imitate the love of God for others (18:10-14). Fourthly, when there is sin between Christians, there is a right way to handle it (18:15-20). Fifthly, for Christians who desire to bear a grudge and not forgive, Jesus gives a warning in the form of a parable (18:21-35).

### TRANSLATION - 18:1-5:

**1** In that hour, the disciples came to Jesus saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of the heavens? **2** And after summoning a child, He stood him in their midst **3** And said, ‘Truly I say to you, Unless you turn around and become as the children, you will not at all enter into the kingdom of the heavens. **4** Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this child, this one is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. **5** And whoever may receive this child in My name, receives Me.’”

### GREEK WORDS:

See 3:2 on the phrase “kingdom of heaven” (ver. 1). “To summon” (ver. 2) was first used at 10:1. “To turn” (ver. 3) or “to turn around” is found 21 times in the NT; 6 times in Matthew: 5:39; 7:6; 9:22; 16:23; 18:3; 27:3. “Child” is used 52 times, 18 times in Matthew. The verb “to humble” (ver. 4) is found 14 times in the NT, three times in Matthew: 18:4; 23:12. “Name” is used 230 times in the NT; 22 times in Matthew.

### PARALLELS:

This conversation has its parallels at Mark 9:33-37 and Luke 9:46-48. Verse 5 has its parallel in Matthew 10:40.

### COMMENTS:

“In that hour” (ver. 1) connects this conversation with the most recent events. However, we do not know exactly what prompted this discussion. Only three apostles were taken on the mountain for the Transfiguration (17:1). When the apostles could not cast out the demon at 17:14-18, it may have prompted arguments over the greatest apostle.

Regardless, Jesus uses the moment to teach them a lesson. He summons a child from the crowd from somewhere and sets him in the middle of the arguing apostles.<sup>1</sup> Then He states emphatically that unless they turn their attitudes around and be like children, they will not at all enter heaven. Children were generally neglected and overlooked in the first century Roman culture. Disciples must humble themselves, which means setting the other person and their importance above one’s own, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. It could also be that, given the low status children were held in the first century, Jesus is telling His apostles they need to accept a lower status, or at least act like they have a lower status, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. To say the same thing in another way, Jesus says that if someone receives a child and serves him in the name of Christ, he will also receive Jesus Christ (see also 10:40-42).

### APPLICATION:

Humility is a key attribute God expects from His followers: Luke 14:11; 18:14; 1 Cor. 14:20; 2 Cor. 11:7; 12:21; Phil. 2:1-11; 4:12; Col. 1:24; Heb. 10:32-38; James 4:10; 1 Peter

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<sup>1</sup> There is absolutely no basis for the later belief that this child is Ignatius of Antioch. It is irrational to believe something without a basis for such a belief.

2:21-25; 5:5-6; Rev. 1:9. It has already been introduced in Matthew (5:3, 5; 11:28-29; 12:17-21; see also 21:5). Man needs to be humble relative to his fellowman and relative to God Himself. Jesus also teaches the importance of serving, even serving children, in His kingdom. Of course, Jesus will illustrate a humble attitude when He washes His disciples' feet in John 13.

John encourages Christians to welcome other disciples, the "little ones," in the name of Christ: 2 Cor. 7:15; Gal. 4:14; Col. 4:10; John 13:20; 2 John 9-11; 3 John 5-10.

#### TRANSLATION - 18:6-9:

**6** And whoever may offend one of these little ones believing in Me, it would be better to him that he might have hung a millstone of a donkey around his neck and may drown in the depth of the sea. **7** Woe to the world from the offenses; for it is necessary to come the offenses; nevertheless woe to the man through whom the offenses are coming. **8** And if your hand or your foot offends you, cut it off and cast from you. Good to you it is to enter into life crippled or lame or two hands or two feet having, to be cast into the fire, the eternal one. **9** And if your eye offends you, tear it out and cast from you. Good to you it is one-eye into life to enter than two eyes having to be cast into the hell of fire.

#### GREEK WORDS:

"To offend" (ver. 6) was seen first at 5:29-30. It is used three times in this context (18:6, 8-9). "Little ones" is found 46 times in the NT; 8 times in Matthew. "To hang" is used 7 times: Matthew 18:6; 22:40; Luke 23:39; Acts 5:30; 10:39; 28:4; Gal. 3:13. "Millstone" is used in Matthew 18:6; 24:41; Mark 9:42; Rev. 18:22. "Donkey" is found only here and Mark 9:42. "Neck" is found in Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 15:20; 17:2; Acts 15:10; 20:37; Rom. 16:4. "To drown" is only found at 14:30 and 18:6.

"Woe" (ver. 7) was first seen at 11:21. It is used 46 times; 13 times in Matthew. "World" is used 186 times. It was first seen at 4:8. "Offenses" or "scandals" was used first at 13:41; 16:23. "Crippled" (ver. 8) was used first at 15:30-31. "Lame" was used first at 11:5; 15:30-31. "To tear out" (ver. 9) was used first at 5:29. It is also used here; Acts 7:10, 34; 12:11; 23:27; 26:17; Gal. 1:4. "One-eyed" is one word; it is found here and Mark 9:47. "Hell" (the Greek word for hell is *gehenna*) is found first at 5:22, 29-30.

#### PARALLELS:

This paragraph is paralleled in Mark 9:42-48; Luke 17:1-2. Jesus has already presented similar ideas in 5:29-30.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

There were two "millstones" (ver. 6); one was large enough it was moved by a donkey. The other could be used by hand (24:41). To have such a millstone hung around one's neck would assure death and, for those who believed strongly in the need for a burial, it would prevent a peaceful afterlife.

#### COMMENTS:

Continuing His discussion on offending others, Jesus warns about offending a young one with faith in Him. He suggests it would be better to have a huge chunk of rock tied around one's neck so that he drowns in the sea than to offend a little one. This passage warns against directly leading someone to sin against Christ. Offenses will happen; we are fallible (cf. 1 Cor. 11:19). But, it should not happen intentionally and we should correct our behavior if we have done so. Jesus utters a "woe," a curse so to speak, on those who cause offenses. It will happen because humans do not always behave as they should. But "woe" to that person who causes offenses!

Then turning to the individual disciple, Jesus warns that if some aspect of our lives (He uses "hands," "feet," and "eyes" as examples) causes us to sin against Christ, we ought to cut ourselves off from the source of temptation. Clearly He does not speak literally since we all

know that sins do not originate in the hands, feet, or eyes. His point is that we might need to cut ourselves off from others and other things that are leading us to sin against Christ. It would be better to hinder our earthly existence, our physical lives in some way, if that is what is necessary for us to stay faithful to Christ.

Notice that “eternal fire” (ver. 8) is parallel to “the gehenna of fire” in verse 9. For further comments on the nature of hell, see comments at 5:22.

#### APPLICATION:

Paul teaches Christians to put to death their members on the earth that lead to sin (Col. 3:5). Earlier (16:25-26), Jesus had said that heaven is worth all that a man is or has. He gave parables to illustrate the same point (Matt. 13:44-46). Christians need to take seriously this call to recognize our own weaknesses and then take steps to guard those weaknesses against Satan’s temptations. For example, if pornography is a temptation, the Christian man or woman might need to simply restrict his or her access to the internet if that is what is necessary. One can go to heaven without the internet; one cannot go to heaven without a pure heart (Heb. 12:14). Paul will also emphasize how important it is for Christians not to cause a fellow Christian to stumble: Rom. 14:13, 21; 1 Cor. 8:9-13.

#### TRANSLATION - 18:10-14:

**10** Beware you do not despise one of these little ones; for I say to you that their angels in heaven through all see the face of My Father in heaven. [**11** - See below under “Archaeology”] **12** What do you think? If it may be some man [has] one hundred sheep and there may wander one from them, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountain and after leaving, he will seek the one wandering? **13** And if it may be to find it, truly I say to you that joy at it, rather than the ninety-nine of those not having wandered. **14** Thus it is not the desire before your Father in the heavens that one of these little ones may be lost.”

#### GREEK WORDS:

“Beware” (ver. 10) is found first at 5:8; 8:4; 9:30. “To despise” was seen first at 6:24. It is only used again here in Matthew. It is also used at Luke 16:13; Rom. 2:4; 1 Cor. 11:22; 1 Tim. 4:12; 6:2; Heb. 12:2; 2 Peter 2:10. “Angel” was first seen at 1:20. It can also refer to an earthly (human) messenger. “To think” (ver. 12) is used first at 3:9. “Sheep” was seen first at 7:15; 9:36. “To wander” is used here (18:12-13); 22:29; 24:4-5, 11, 24 in Matthew, out of 39 total uses in the NT. “To leave” was first seen at 3:15. “Joy” was seen first at 2:10; 5:12. “To be lost” (ver. 14) or to “be destroyed” was first seen at 2:13; 5:29-30.

#### PARALLELS:

This parable is also found in Luke 15:3-7. We have seen before that God is man’s shepherd, which is fulfilled in the person of Jesus: John 10:11-18; Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Pet. 1:5; 2:25. Others shepherd under His guidance: John 21:15-17; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:2-4. Matthew has also portrayed followers as sheep: 9:36; 10:6, 16; 12:11-12; 15:24; 18:12; 25:32-33; 26:31.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

Verse 11 is not found in the earliest manuscripts and appears to be an accidental admission from Luke 19:10, in order to provide a link between verses 10 and 12-14.

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

For passages which are sometimes used to defend the idea of “guardian” angels, see Gen. 24:7, 40; 48:16; Psa. 91:11-12; Dan. 10:13; 12:1; Acts 12:15. It is clear from reading these texts, however, that there is no support for such a concept. Although God uses angels to protect certain persons, this does not mean He uses them to protect all persons or children.

The OT talks about shepherds frequently; one of the most in-depth pictures is Ezekiel 34. See also Psalm 119:176; Jer. 23:1-4; 50:6; Isa. 53:6. The earliest use of the imagery of God

as a “shepherd” is Genesis 48:15; 49:24. Israel is also pictured as sheep: Psa. 23; Ezek. 34; Jer. 23; Micah 2.

#### COMMENTS:

Continuing His thoughts on the little ones whose humility needs to be imitated by His disciples (18:1-6), Jesus warns His disciples not to despise little ones. These “little ones” might be children; they might also be adults who have the humility of children (18:4), who might have a child-like faith. Jesus states that their “angels,” their “messengers” look at the face of His Father in heaven. We do not know what this means; some suggest it refers to “guardian angels.” That does not seem to be the point of the passage. These angels are not on earth and they are not guarding anyone. The angels are in heaven, in communication with the Father. Rather it suggests that God knows what is happening with each disciple, each child, on earth. Their messengers communicate with God what is transpiring on earth (compare Job 1:6; 2:1).

The love God has for these “little ones” is comparable to a shepherd who has 100 sheep and loses one. One wanders away from the flock. So the shepherd leaves the 99 sheep and searches for that one lost sheep and experiences joy when he finds it, a joy he doesn’t experience when his flock are safe and sound in their sheepfold.

The shepherd is comparable to God the Father. He wants the “little ones,” the children, the humble to be in heaven. Therefore, His disciples ought to be careful not to despise or offend them!

#### APPLICATION:

There is no other context in the New Testament which might be understood to refer to “guardian angels.” That argues also that this passage is not referring to such an idea. This whole context deals extensively with not offending others and causing them to lose their faith in Christ. See above at 18:1-6 for additional passages in the NT relative to not offending others. There is no evidence, and contrary evidence, that humans become angels when they die. Rather, humans are separate created beings than angels (Matt. 22:30; Luke 20:36). One passage teaches what angels are doing in the modern world: Hebrews 1:14. Yet, it is very general, presumably because God doesn’t want humanity (Christians) trusting or worshipping angels. We certainly should not be worshipping or venerating angels or anyone else besides God (Acts 10:26; Col. 2:18-19; Rev. 19:9-10; 22:8-9). We should trust God, worship Him, and serve Him and allow Him to use angels as He sees proper.

Christians should also be careful not to “despise” fellow Christians who are different or who might have a weaker faith: Rom. 14:3, 10, 15; 1 Cor. 11:22; 1 Tim. 4:12. Christians are also urged to confront fellow Christians in sin, with a spirit of humility and gentleness (Gal. 6:1; see Heb. 3:13; James 5:19-20; 2 Pet. 3:9). God does not want anyone to be lost (John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9; 2 Thess. 1:6-10). Neither should Christians.

#### TRANSLATION - 18:15-20:

**15** And if anyone, your brother, may sin [against you], go, rebuke him between you and him alone. If he may hear you, you gained your brother. **16** And if he may not hear, take with you yet one or two, in order that by the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. **17** And if he disobeys them, tell to the church; and if also he disobeys the church, let him be to you as a pagan or a tax collector.

**18** Truly I say to you, ‘Whatever you may bind on earth is, having been bound in heaven, and whatever you may have loosed on earth will be, having been loosed in heaven. **19** Again, I [truly] say to you that if two speak together from you on the earth concerning all things that they may ask, it will be to them from My Father in the heavens. **20** For where there are two or three assembled together in My name, there I am in their midst.

#### GREEK WORDS:

The verb “to sin” (ver. 15) is related to the noun which means to “miss the mark” or “fail expectations.” It is used here for the first time in Matthew (18:15, 21). It is used 43 times in the NT; in Matthew again only at 27:4. “To rebuke” or “to reprove” is used here for the only time in Matthew; it is used 17 times in the NT. “To gain” was used first at 16:26. “Witness” (ver. 16) is used here for the first time; in Matthew again only at 26:65. It is used 35 times in the NT. “To be established” was used first at 2:9; 4:5. “Word” was used first at 4:4; 12:36.

“To disobey” (ver. 17) also suggests to “not hear.” It is only used here and at Mark 5:36. “Church” was first used at 16:18. See comments there. “Pagan” was used at 5:47; 6:7; 18:17; but only again at 3 John 7. “Tax collector” was first used at 5:46. “To bind” was first seen at 12:29 but observe the comments at 16:19. “To speak together” (ver. 19) is found here; 20:2, 13; Luke 5:36; Acts 5:9; 15:15. The Greek word gives us the English word *symphony*. “Thing” or “affair” or “matter” is used 11 times; only here in Matthew. “To ask” is used 70 times; first at 5:42. “To assemble” (ver. 20) was used first at 2:4; 3:12.

#### GREEK GRAMMAR:

The Greek construction translated “is, having been bound / loosed” is repeated from 16:19; see comments there.

#### PARALLELS:

This parable is also found in Luke 17:3. Other passages will also teach the concept of “two or three witnesses:” 26:60; John 8:17; 2 Cor. 13:1; Heb. 6:18; 10:28; Rev. 11:3.

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

The Law of Moses required two or three witnesses for a matter to be established in court: Deut. 17:6; 19:15.

#### COMMENTS:

Jesus has been talking throughout this chapter about offending others. Now He reaches an answer to the question: What do you do with those who *have* offended others? If one sins against a brother, the offended needs to go to the offender and confront him and point out his error. If the sinner hears, and repents (which is understood; see 18:3), then the brother’s relationship has been preserved, or gained.

If the offender refuses to listen, then the offended needs to take a couple or three witnesses to the sin. In that way, two or three witnesses might have the power to encourage the offender to repent and change his behavior. If there are no witnesses, then the offended must wait for God to vindicate him. If the sinner refuses to hear the testimony of three or four witnesses, then the church assembled must be informed. If the sinner still refuses to hear the church’s plea for repentance, then the sinner must be disciplined. The church must treat him as if he is no longer a faithful brother in Christ but as a pagan or as the first century Jew would treat the tax collector. The apostles will elaborate on what that means in their letters to the churches.

In verse 18, Jesus gives all the apostles the same authority as He did Peter in 16:19. Whatever they required on earth had already been required by God in heaven. The authority resides in heaven, in the preached word from the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 14:37), not in the apostles themselves. Elaborating on that point, in verse 19, Jesus says that if two or three of his followers have endeavored to implement church discipline correctly, He is with them in their efforts. In fact (ver. 20), wherever two or three are assembled in the name of Jesus (doing things according to His commands), He is with them in their efforts. “In My name” means with or by Jesus’ authority.

#### APPLICATION:

Jesus is “God with us” (Matt. 1:21). Here, He promises to be with His church as they implement discipline. While the apostles still do not give all the details that modern Christians

might like relative to implementing church discipline, Jesus has given further information about how it is to be done.

First, there is to be a face to face confrontation about the sin, done in love and humility (Gal. 6:1).

Second, if the sinner does not repent, one should take two or three witnesses (2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19).

Third, the church ought to be told, sometimes even publicly if the sin is serious enough (Gal. 2:11-14).

Fourth, the sinner, if he does not repent, must have fellowship withheld from him, a spiritual condition which God says He will recognize, if the discipline is done according to His will. This behavior should always be done with the view of saving a fellow Christian from his or her sins (1 Cor. 5:4, 9-13; 9:19-22; 2 Cor. 2:6-7; Phil. 3:8; 2 Thess. 3:14-15; 1 Tim. 1:19-20; Titus 3:1-10; 1 Pet. 3:1).

Christians ought to always be humble (James 3:17).

This passage is often quoted to suggest that Jesus is present where two or three gather to worship Him. While we believe that Jesus accepts worship when one (alone) or more praise His name, this text is not about worship. It is about discipline in the church.

#### TRANSLATION - 18:21-35:

**21** At that time, after coming, Peter said to him, "Lord, how many times will my brother sin against me and I will forgive him? Until seven times?"

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

**23** „On account of this the kingdom of heaven is comparable to a man, a king, who desired to settle accounts with his slaves. **24** And after his beginning to settle, there was brought to him one debtor of ten thousand talents. **25** And him not having [anything] to repay, the master commanded him to be sold and the wife and the children and all which he had, and to repay. **26** And after falling the slave knelt to him, saying, "Be patient with me and all I will repay you." **27** And after feeling compassion, the master of that slave released him and the debt he forgave him.

**28** „And after going out, that slave found one of his fellow-slaves, who owed him one hundred denarius, and after grasping him he choked [him] saying, "Repay if any you owe." **29** Therefore, after falling, his fellow-slave was begging him saying, "Be patient with me, and I will repay you." **30** But he did not desire [it] but after going away, he cast him into prison until he might repay that being owed.

**31** „Therefore his fellow-servants seeing that happening, they grieved greatly and after going they announced to their own master all the things happening. **32** At that time, after summoning him, their master said to him, "Evil slave, all that debt I forgave to you, because you begged me. **33** Was it not necessary even for you to show mercy to your fellow-slave, even as I also showed you mercy?"

**34** „And after becoming angry, his master handed him over to the torturers until when he may repay all that being owed. **35** Thus even My Father in heaven will do to you, if each does not forgive his brother in your heart."

#### GREEK WORDS:

"To sin" (ver. 21) was used at 18:15. "To forgive" is used first at 3:15, out of 143 times. "King" (ver. 22) was used first at 1:6. "To settle" (ver. 23) is used here (18:23-24; 25:19) only. "Account" is simply the word "word" (*logos*). "Slave" was first used at 8:9; 10:24-25. "To begin" (ver. 24) was used first at 4:17. "Debtor" was used first at 6:12. "Talents" is used only in Mathew, 14 times, all (except once here) in Matthew 25.

"To repay" (ver. 25) is used extensively in this text (18:25, 26, 28-30, 34). It was first used at 5:26, 33. "To command" was used at 8:18; 14:9, 19, 28. "To sell" was used first at

13:46. “To kneel” (ver. 26) is the word normally translated “worship.” That is not the connotation in this context. The word was used first at 2:2, 8, 11. The verb “be patient” is used 10 times in the NT: Matthew 18:26, 29; Luke 18:7; 1 Cor. 13:4; 1 Thess. 5:14; Heb. 6:15; James 5:7-8; 2 Peter 3:9.

“To feel compassion” (ver. 27) was used first at 9:36; 14:14; 15:32. “Debt” or “loan” is used only here. “To forgive” is the word used earlier for the concept of forgiving sins. “Fellow-slave” (ver. 28) is used 10 times: Matthew 18:28-29, 31, 33; 24:49; Col. 1:7; 4:7; Rev. 6:11; 19:10; 22:9. “To owe” is used 35 times in the NT; in Matthew, at 18:28, 30, 34; 23:16, 18. “Denarius” is used 16 times; in Matthew, at 18:28; 20:2, 9-10, 13; 22:19. “To choke” was used in the parable of the sower (13:7); 18:28; Mark 5:13.

“To beg” (ver. 29) was first used at 2:18. “Prison” (ver. 30) was seen first at 5:25. “To grieve” (ver. 31) was first used at 14:9. “Greatly” was used first at 2:10. “To report” or “to announce” is used twice: Matthew 13:36; 18:31. It suggests a detailed explanation. “To summon” (ver. 32) was used above at 18:2. “Evil” was first used at 5:11, 37, 39, 45. “To show mercy” (ver. 33) was first used at 5:7.

“To be angry” (ver. 34) was first used at 5:22. It is used 8 times, in Matthew also at 22:7. “Torturer” is used only here. “Heart” (ver. 35) was used first at 5:8, 28. It is used 156 times in the NT.

#### GREEK GRAMMAR:

“To choke” (ver. 28) and “to beg” (ver. 29) translate verbs in the imperfect tense, showing these were continuous actions in the past.

#### PARALLELS:

This parable is not found in any other Gospel. But, Jesus has taught on the need to forgive if one desires to be forgiven (6:12, 14).

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Jews could “sell” themselves into slavery if they needed to pay a debt (Exo. 21:2-11; 22:2-3; Lev. 25:39, 41; 2 Kings 4:1; Neh. 5:5, 8; Amos 2:6; 8:6).

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

“Talent” (ver. 24) was the highest standard in Roman currency. The word translated “ten thousand” (*myriads*) is the highest number that could be used. A talent of gold or silver could weight anywhere between 75 and 100 pounds. To word this another way, one talent was equivalent to 6,000 denarii (ver. 28); one denarius was a day’s wage. One talent would buy a slave of high value. Typically slaves would cost 1/10 of that amount, maybe 500 denarii. To put this into a modern value, at the price of gold of \$2,050 per ounce, 75 pounds would be \$2,460,000 (100 pounds would be \$3,280,000). Compare what was spent on the temple in 1 Chron. 29:3-7.

#### COMMENTS:

The talk about forgiving one who sinned against him (18:15-18) motivated Peter to ask about the limits of forgiveness. Rabbis had taught that three times was sufficient. Peter thought seven times would be sufficient. Jesus multiplied that by 10, in essence suggesting that forgiveness ought to be unlimited! The Greek phrase “until seventy-times seven” is found in Lamech’s curse in Genesis 4:24. The phrase in Genesis carries the idea of “seventy-seven times.” That is its likely meaning here although it could mean “seventy times seven.” Each of us desires God to forgive us regularly. Jesus tells us we ought to be willing to forgive others without end.

To emphasize His point, Jesus tells another parable. As a king reckons his accounts, he finds one slave who owes him an amount that would be impossible to pay. Debtors prison was the destination for such an individual, including his wife and children, until he pays off the debt.

This slave fell on his knees and begged the master not to do so, making the ludicrous claim that he would repay it, and the master had compassion on him and forgave him all the debt. He wiped out the debt. "Debt" was used in the Bible as a metaphor for sin; see 6:12; Luke 7:41-43.

But this slave did not have the same heart of compassion (see 9:36; 14:14) as his master. He found one of his own slaves who did not owe as much as he did and choked him. This slave fell on his knees as well and begged in the same words as the first slave did! But these words did not fall on compassionate ears. The slave threw his fellow-slave into debtors prison until he could pay what he owed. Other slaves of the master, the king, reported to the king what the slave had done.

This news infuriated the king who then chose to hand over the unforgiving slave to the torturers until he paid what he owed, completely reversing the compassion he had earlier experienced. Jesus summarizes the parable by warning His disciples that His heavenly Father would also deliver others to the "torturers" (the eternal fires of hell) if disciples do not, with their heart, forgive those who sin against them. A clearer message could not be presented. The difference between discipline (18:15-17) and forgiveness (18:21-22) is repentance.

#### APPLICATION:

We all want to be forgiven. But it seems that we are not often willing to extend forgiveness to others. Maybe we believe they need to "pay" for their transgression. Maybe we feel a moral superiority to others when they sin against us. For whatever reason, Jesus warns that an unforgiving attitude will receive an unforgiving response from the Father in heaven (see Rom. 1:31; 2 Tim. 3:3). The death of Christ on the cross is the event which will ultimately provide the forgiveness of sins: 26:28.

God expects us to treat others the way He has treated us: Luke 6:36-37; Matt. 5:7, 43-48; 6:12, 14; 15:8; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13; James 2:13; 5:9; 1 John 4:11.

Also Jesus does not suggest an incompatibility between the wrath of God, portrayed in verse 34, with a God of love and forgiveness. We need to reconcile those two concepts in our own minds as well: Romans 11:22.