

Matthew 18

No copyright materials are used in this text

The summary and interpretation of the specific chapter and verses are from the Bible, they are religious text that is in the public domain.

Free to Copy and Distribute: Spread the Word!

(Peter Lok) 駱沅祺

lokpeter@outlook.com

Bibleao.com

Matthew 18

Why did Moses say that he would pay his debts? Jesus asks for forgiveness?

The Old and New Testament teachings on debt and forgiveness may seem contradictory, but they actually reflect the balance of God's requirements and grace for man.

In the Old Testament, the Mosaic Law did require people to pay debts, which reflected the principles of fairness and good faith. The law prohibits creditors from exploiting the poor, from usury, and even forgives debts in Sabbath years. These provisions are aimed at protecting vulnerable groups and upholding social justice.

However, Jesus' teaching of forgiveness in Matthew 18 does not negate the responsibility to pay debts, but rather emphasizes deeper spiritual truths:

God's Forgiveness for Us: Jesus illustrates that each of us owes a great debt to God through the parable of the unforgiving servant, and that God has forgiven us.

Scope of forgiveness: When Peter asked about the number of times he forgives, Jesus replied, "seventy seven times.", indicating that forgiveness should be unlimited. Reflect God's character: As favored people, we should imitate God's mercy and treat those who have sinned against us in the same way. This teaching is not intended to abolish the legal or economic order, but rather to call believers to live out God's love and grace in their daily lives. Jesus' teachings remind us that when dealing with relationships, we should not only consider law and fairness, but also show God's mercy and forgiveness. The Old Testament principle of repayment and the New Testament teaching of forgiveness are not contradictory, but rather complement each other, pointing together to God's expectation of both righteousness and mercy.

Serve him a prison sentence and ask him to pay off all his debts?

This is a symbolic expression that in the trial, those who refuse to forgive others will face severe punishment. The servant owed a huge debt that he could not pay and was sent to prison until it was paid

off. This parable highlights the unforgiving reality that if we refuse to forgive others, we will not receive forgiveness from God.

Matthew 18

Jesus' teaching to pursue the will of the Father, rather than status and power, is reflected in His emphasis on humility and service to others. He taught his disciples that if they wanted to be great in the kingdom of heaven, they should be servants to all. Such values are contrary to secular notions of power and status. Jesus emphasized the importance of inner character and doing God's will, rather than worldly glory and power. This teaches us to focus on spiritual and moral values rather than on transient worldly gains.

Jesus used the little ones as an example of humility because the little ones were seen as powerless and statusless in ancient societies. Thus, the little child symbolizes innocence, absence of ambition, and dependence on the Father. Jesus wanted his disciples to be humble as little children and to be constantly dependent on God instead of seeking worldly status and glory.

We should not belittle or exclude anyone at will, because we cannot truly understand the heart and value of others. Jesus taught us to treat all people with tolerance and love, because each person has unique value in God's eyes. Acceptance and tolerance of others is the embodiment of humility.

Jesus used the lost sheep as a metaphor for those who have strayed from the right path or from God. He emphasized God's concern and desire for every lost person to bring them back to the right path. This parable illustrates God's unconditional love and His willingness to work to save every lost soul.

Jesus taught how to deal with conflicts between brothers. First, talk to the other person privately and point out the mistakes of the other person with love. If they don't listen, invite one or two other witnesses to admonish them. If that doesn't work, bring the problem to church. If the other party still does not listen to the persuasion, he is considered an outsider. This teaching emphasizes the importance of communication, patience, and seeking reconciliation.

The power of one-heart prayer is powerful because it represents the unity of the will and faith of believers. When people pray with one heart, it's not just an individual prayer, but the whole community coming together to show a shared faith in God. This collective power of prayer brings believers closer together and makes it easier to feel God's presence and blessings.

We pray

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Your unconditional love and grace that You have forgiven us while we were still sinners.

Give us a heart willing to forgive,

Let us learn to imitate Jesus, who does not care about human transgressions,

Let not resentment bind our hearts,

Instead, choose to respond to hurt with Your love.

Lord, we admit that sometimes forgiveness is not easy,
There is still pain and grievances in our hearts,
But help us to let go,
Because we know that true freedom lies in forgiveness.
May Your Holy Spirit guide us,
Give us strength,
that by faith we may be,
To love, to tolerate, to forgive,
As You forgive us.
In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

Matthew 18

Amplified Bible, Classic Edition

18 At that time the disciples came up and asked Jesus, Who then is [really] the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

² And He called a little child to Himself and put him in the midst of them,

³ And said, Truly I say to you, unless you repent (change, turn about) and become like little children [trusting, lowly, loving, forgiving], you can never enter the kingdom of heaven [at all].

⁴ Whoever will humble himself therefore and become like this little child [trusting, lowly, loving, forgiving] is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

⁵ And whoever receives *and* accepts *and* welcomes one little child like this for My sake and in My name receives *and* accepts *and* welcomes Me.

⁶ But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in *and* ^[a]acknowledge *and* cleave to Me to stumble and sin [that is, who entices him or hinders him in right conduct or thought], it would be better (^[b]more expedient and profitable or advantageous) for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be sunk in the depth of the sea.

⁷ Woe to the world for such temptations to sin *and* influences to do wrong! It is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the person on whose account *or* by whom the temptation comes!

⁸ And if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble *and* sin, cut it off and throw it away from you; it is better (more profitable and wholesome) for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into everlasting fire.

⁹ And if your eye causes you to stumble *and* sin, pluck it out and throw it away from you; it is better (more profitable and wholesome) for you to enter life with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the hell (Gehenna) of fire.

¹⁰ Beware that you do not despise *or* feel scornful toward *or* think little of one of these little ones, for I tell you that in heaven their angels always are in the presence of *and* look upon the face of My Father Who is in heaven.

¹¹ [e] *For the Son of man came to save [d]from the penalty of eternal death] that which was lost.*

¹² What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray *and* gets lost, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountain and go in search of the one that is lost?

¹³ And if it should be that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not get lost.

¹⁴ Just so it is not the will of My Father Who is in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost *and* perish.

¹⁵ If your brother wrongs you, go and show him his fault, between you and him privately. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother.

¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take along with you one or two others, so that every word may be confirmed *and* upheld by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

¹⁷ If he pays no attention to them [refusing to listen and obey], tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a pagan and a tax collector.

¹⁸ Truly I tell you, whatever you forbid *and* declare to be improper and unlawful on earth must be [e]what is already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit *and* declare proper and lawful on earth must be [f]what is already permitted in heaven.

¹⁹ Again I tell you, if two of you on earth agree (harmonize together, make a symphony together) about whatever [anything and [g]everything] they may ask, it will come to pass *and* be done for them by My Father in heaven.

²⁰ For wherever two or three are gathered (drawn together as My followers) in (into) My name, there I Am in the midst of them.

²¹ Then Peter came up to Him and said, Lord, how many times may my brother sin against me and I forgive him *and* [h]let it go? [As many as] up to seven times?

²² Jesus answered him, I tell you, not up to seven times, but seventy times seven!

²³ Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a human king who wished to settle accounts with his attendants.

²⁴ When he began the accounting, one was brought to him who owed him 10,000 talents [probably about \$10,000,000],

²⁵ And because he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and his children and everything that he possessed, and payment to be made.

²⁶ So the attendant fell on his knees, begging him, Have patience with me and I will pay you everything.

²⁷ And his master's heart was moved with compassion, and he released him and forgave him [cancelling] the debt.

²⁸ But that same attendant, as he went out, found one of his fellow attendants who owed him a hundred denarii [about twenty dollars]; and he caught him by the throat and said, Pay what you owe!

²⁹ So his fellow attendant fell down and begged him earnestly, Give me time, and I will pay you *all!*

³⁰ But he was unwilling, and he went out and had him put in prison till he should pay the debt.

³¹ When his fellow attendants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and told everything that had taken place to their master.

³² Then his master called him and said to him, You contemptible *and* wicked attendant! I forgave *and* cancelled all that [great] debt of yours because you begged me to.

³³ And should you not have had pity *and* mercy on your fellow attendant, as I had pity *and* mercy on you?

³⁴ And in wrath his master turned him over to the torturers (the jailers), till he should pay all that he owed.

³⁵ So also My heavenly Father will deal with every one of you if you do not freely forgive your brother from your heart *his offenses*.

Matthew 18 is one of the most significant chapters in the Gospel of Matthew, where Jesus teaches His disciples about humility, avoiding sin, seeking the lost, resolving conflicts, and the necessity of forgiveness. This chapter provides foundational principles for Christian community life, emphasizing love, accountability, and mercy.

Overview of Matthew 18

This chapter can be divided into five main sections:

1. **Humility and the Greatest in the Kingdom (verses 1-5)**
2. **Avoiding Sin and Not Causing Others to Stumble (verses 6-9)**
3. **The Parable of the Lost Sheep (verses 10-14)**
4. **Dealing with Sin in the Church (verses 15-20)**
5. **The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (verses 21-35)**

Each section contains profound teachings that shape Christian ethics, relationships, and spiritual growth.

Detailed Explanation and Key Verses

1. Humility and the Greatest in the Kingdom (Verses 1-5)

Key Verse: Matthew 18:3

"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Explanation:

- The disciples asked Jesus, “*Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*” expecting an answer about power or status.
- Jesus responded by bringing a child before them and teaching that true greatness in God’s kingdom comes through humility, dependence, and a childlike heart.
- In God's kingdom, the greatest are not those with status but those who are humble and serve others.

Spiritual Influence:

- Encourages believers to embrace humility and trust in God like a child.
 - Challenges pride and the pursuit of power within Christian communities.
 - Calls for a servant-hearted attitude toward others.
-

2. Avoiding Sin and Not Causing Others to Stumble (Verses 6-9)

Key Verse: Matthew 18:6

"If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

Explanation:

- Jesus warns about the serious consequences of leading others into sin.
- He uses strong imagery (cutting off a hand or foot, plucking out an eye) to emphasize the need to remove anything that causes sin.
- This shows the radical commitment required to live a holy life.

Spiritual Influence:

- Encourages believers to be mindful of their influence on others, especially new or weak Christians.
 - Calls for self-examination and removing sinful habits.
 - Emphasizes God’s judgment on those who lead others into sin.
-

3. The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Verses 10-14)

Key Verse: Matthew 18:12

"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?"

Explanation:

- This parable illustrates God’s love and concern for every individual.
- Even if one person strays, God actively seeks to bring them back.

- Jesus emphasizes that God does not want anyone to perish.

Spiritual Influence:

- Highlights God’s relentless pursuit of sinners.
 - Encourages believers to seek and restore those who have drifted from faith.
 - Shows the deep personal love of God for each individual.
-

4. Dealing with Sin in the Church (Verses 15-20)

Key Verses: Matthew 18:15-17

"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church."

Explanation:

- Jesus outlines a step-by-step process for resolving conflicts and addressing sin in the church:
 1. Speak privately with the person.
 2. If they don’t listen, bring one or two others as witnesses.
 3. If they still refuse, take the matter to the church.
 4. If they persist in sin, they may be treated as an outsider.
- This passage emphasizes restoration, not punishment, aiming to bring people back into right relationships.

Spiritual Influence:

- Encourages biblical conflict resolution rather than gossip or avoidance.
 - Emphasizes accountability and discipline within the Christian community.
 - Demonstrates that the church has a responsibility to maintain holiness and unity.
-

5. The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Verses 21-35)

Key Verse: Matthew 18:22

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

Explanation:

- Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone—*"Up to seven times?"*
- Jesus answered, *"Not seven times, but seventy-seven times,"* meaning unlimited forgiveness.
- Jesus tells a parable:

- A servant owed a king an unpayable debt (10,000 talents, equivalent to billions today).
- The king forgave the debt, but the servant refused to forgive a small debt from another man.
- The king then punished the unforgiving servant.
- The lesson: Since God has forgiven us completely, we must forgive others.

Spiritual Influence:

- Teaches that forgiveness is not optional for believers.
- Warns that an unforgiving heart leads to God's judgment.
- Encourages Christians to reflect on God's grace and extend mercy to others.

Overall Spiritual Impact of Matthew 18

1. **Encourages Humility** – True greatness in God's kingdom comes from humility and childlike faith.
2. **Promotes Holiness** – Believers are called to avoid sin and not lead others astray.
3. **Reveals God's Heart for the Lost** – God actively seeks and rejoices over those who return to Him.
4. **Teaches Biblical Conflict Resolution** – Jesus provides a model for dealing with sin and disagreements in the church.
5. **Demands Radical Forgiveness** – Just as God forgives us, we are required to forgive others completely.

Matthew 18 is foundational for Christian living, shaping how believers relate to God, to sin, and to one another. It calls for a transformed heart, reflecting God's love, mercy, and justice in daily life.