**Provisional Forgiveness**

Jesus told a story to help his followers understand what God’s forgiveness should do to us. God’s forgiveness is seen as provisional, he can take it back! Peter said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”(Matt. 18:21-22). Peter underestimated God’s forgiveness, and therefore came up short of it. “Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts” (18:23).

“When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. (Matt. 18:24). A talent is normally in silver, and weighs between 66 lbs up to 75 lbs, (per talent). So 10,000 talents of silver would bring between 2 and 3 billion dollars today. I can’t imagine owing that much to a bank or credit card, or a boss. To say, “stressful”, would be an understatement. What did the boss do? “But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. “So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.” (18:25-26). The boss didn’t laugh at such a statement, as I would have expected. “the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii ($45,000); and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’” (18:27-28). Unwilling to forgive a fellow servant of $45,000, he suddenly found himself brought back before the Lord who he had once owed over 2 billion dollars. This guy didn’t understand the provisional aspect of the Lord’s forgiveness. The Lord became angry and had him tortured (18:34). Forgiven, but then unforgiven. “My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.” (Matt. 18:35). God expects us to reflect his forgiveness towards others. We can practice this with our families first, members of the church also, and ultimately with the everyday people around me. If God expects this, then he has made us be to be able to do so. Granted, I ought to explain to them where they have sinned against me (Luke 17:1-4), but to forgive them, fully. “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.” (Mark 11:25). God’s forgiveness is provisional, it needs to change us. Dan Peters