

Luke 7:42

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

Analysis

The outcome: 'And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both' (Greek 'mē echontōn autōn apodounai, amphoterois echarisato'). The verb 'echarisato' (forgave) relates to 'charis' (grace)—freely given, undeserved favor. Neither debtor earned or merited forgiveness; both received it as pure grace. This is gospel essence—justification by grace through faith, not works. Romans 3:23-24 states 'all have sinned... being justified freely by his grace.' The equal treatment—both forgiven despite different debt amounts—shows that salvation is equally gracious for all, whether one's pre-conversion sins were 'respectable' or notorious. Reformed theology emphasizes that all salvation is 100% grace, 0% merit.

Historical Context

Debt forgiveness was rare in ancient economy—creditors had legal right to full repayment. Jubilee year (Leviticus 25) included debt forgiveness, but this was exceptional. The parable's 'frankly forgave' (freely, graciously forgave) emphasizes the gift's unexpectedness. For first-century audiences, the scenario was economically unrealistic, highlighting that it illustrated spiritual reality—God's grace exceeds human patterns. Early church preached this radical grace, scandalizing both Jews (who emphasized law-keeping) and Gentiles (who emphasized philosophical virtue).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does understanding forgiveness as pure grace (not earned or deserved) transform our relationship with God?
2. Why is it important that both debtors received equal forgiveness despite different debt amounts?
3. How should the graciousness of our forgiveness affect how we forgive others?

Interlinear Text

μὴ	ἐχόντων	δὲ	αὐτόν	ἀποδοῦναι	ἀμφοτέροις	
nothing	had	And	him	to pay	them both	
G3361	G2192	G1161	G846	G591	G297	
ἐχαρίσατο	τίς	οὖν	αὐτόν	εἶπὲ,	πλεῖον	αὐτόν
he frankly forgave	which	therefore	him	Tell me	most	him
G5483	G5101	G3767	G846	G2036	G4119	G846
ἀγαπήσει						
will love						
G25						