

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 ἔχόντων δὲ αὐτόν ἀποδοῦναι ἀμφοτέροις

nothing **had** **And** **him** **to pay** **them both**
G3361 G2192 G1161 G846 G591 G297

ἔχαρισατο τίς οὖν αὐτόν εἰπὲ, πλεῖον αὐτόν

he frankly forgave **which** **therefore** **him** **Tell me** **most** **him**
G5483 G5101 G3767 G846 G2036 G4119 G846

ἀγαπήσει

will love

G25

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