

# Matthew 18:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

## Analysis

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Peter's question 'Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?' appears generous—rabbinical tradition required forgiving three times. Peter's seven seems magnanimous. But Jesus' response 'I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven' (or 'seventy-seven times,' v. 22) demands unlimited forgiveness. The point isn't literal counting (490 times) but forgiving without limit, as God forgives us. This introduces the parable of the unforgiving servant.

## Historical Context

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Jewish teaching required forgiving three offenses; Peter's seven doubled this plus one, seemingly generous. Jesus' 'seventy times seven' deliberately echoes Genesis 4:24 where Lamech vowed unlimited vengeance—Jesus transforms unlimited vengeance into unlimited forgiveness. Kingdom citizens forgive as God forgives—without limit or scorekeeping.

## Related Passages

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**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Psalms 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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1. Whose repeated offenses are you struggling to forgive unlimited times?
2. How does God's unlimited forgiveness of you motivate forgiving others?

## Interlinear Text

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Τότε	προσελθὼν	αὐτῷ	ὁ	Πέτρος	εἶπεν	Κύριε	ποσάκις
<b>Then</b>	<b>came</b>	<b>him</b>	G3588	<b>Peter</b>	<b>and said</b>	<b>Lord</b>	<b>how oft</b>
G5119	G4334	G846		G4074	G2036	G2962	G4212
ἁμαρτήσῃ	εἰς	ἐμὲ	ὁ	ἀδελφός	μου	καὶ	ἀφήσω
<b>sin</b>	<b>against</b>	<b>me</b>	G3588	<b>brother</b>	<b>shall my</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>I forgive</b>
G264	G1519	G1691		G80	G3450	G2532	G863
αὐτῷ	ἕως	ἑπτάκις					
<b>him</b>	<b>till</b>	<b>seven times</b>					
G846	G2193	G2034					

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 18:15** (Parallel theme): Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.