

Matthew 18:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times:
but, Until seventy times seven.

Analysis

Jesus' command to forgive 'Until seventy times seven' establishes unlimited forgiveness as the kingdom standard. This isn't literal (491st offense is unforgivable!) but hyperbolic—stop counting and keep forgiving. The number echoes Genesis 4:24 (Lamech's unlimited vengeance), transforming vengeance into forgiveness. This impossible standard highlights that we can't forgive like this apart from experiencing God's infinite forgiveness ourselves. The following parable (vv. 23-35) reinforces this.

Historical Context

Rabbinical law required forgiving three times; Peter's seven seemed generous. Jesus' 'seventy times seven' (or 'seventy-seven') removes all limits. This doesn't mean enabling sin but extending grace repeatedly. The command reflects God's character—He keeps no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5) but forgives fully and continually through Christ.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What hurt are you keeping score of rather than forgiving unlimitedly?
2. How does Jesus' impossible standard reveal your need for God's grace to forgive?

Interlinear Text

λέγω	αὐτῷ	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς	Οὐ	λέγω	σοι	ἕως	ἐπτάκις
I say	unto him	G3588	Jesus	not	I say	unto thee	Until	seven times
G3004	G846		G2424	G3756	G3004	G4671	G2193	G2034
ἀλλ'	ἕως	ἐβδομηκοντάκις	ἐπτά					
but	Until	seventy times	seven					
G235	G2193	G1441	G2033					

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 3:13 (Parallel theme): Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Mark 11:25 (Parallel theme): And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

Genesis 4:24 (Parallel theme): If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.

Romans 12:21 (Parallel theme): Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Micah 7:19 (Parallel theme): He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

Isaiah 55:7 (Parallel theme): Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Ephesians 4:26 (Parallel theme): Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

1 Timothy 2:8 (Parallel theme): I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

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