

# Matthew 18:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

## Analysis

---

**His lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had**—Mosaic Law permitted debt slavery (Lev 25:39-46; Deut 15:12-18) with protections: Hebrew servants released in seven years, families protected. This parable depicts harsher Greco-Roman practice where entire households faced permanent bondage. The Greek *prathēnai* (πραθῆναι, 'to be sold') indicates sale into slavery for debt satisfaction.

**Payment to be made** (ἀποδοθῆναι, *apodothēnai*)—yet selling the entire family would yield perhaps 2-3 talents maximum, leaving 9,997+ talents unpaid. This highlights the unpayable nature of sin's debt: even our total forfeiture cannot satisfy divine justice. The household's sale represents the comprehensive destruction sin brings—affecting not only the sinner but all connected relationships.

## Historical Context

---

Roman law (c. 1st century AD) permitted creditors to seize debtors and their families. Unlike Hebrew debt-servitude (maximum seven years), Greco-Roman slavery was typically permanent. A healthy adult male slave sold for 500-2,000 denarii, a woman or child considerably less. The math of this parable deliberately shows the inadequacy of such 'payment.'

## Related Passages

---

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

## Study Questions

---

1. How does the futility of selling the family (gaining  $\approx 2$  talents against 10,000 owed) demonstrate the inadequacy of human works for salvation?
2. What does the threat to wife and children reveal about sin's collateral damage to those around us?
3. How should understanding your unpayable debt shape your view of Christ's atoning sacrifice?

## Interlinear Text

---

μὴ εἶχεν, δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀποδοθῆναι ἐκέλευσεν  
**not he had But forasmuch as him payment to be made commanded**  
G3361 G2192 G1161 G846 G591 G2753

αὐτοῦ ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ πραθῆναι καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα  
**him G3588 lord him to be sold and G3588 wife**  
G846 G2962 G846 G4097 G2532 G1135

αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ τέκνα καὶ πάντα ὅσα εἶχεν, καὶ  
**him and G3588 children and all that he had and**  
G846 G2532 G5043 G2532 G3956 G3745 G2192 G2532

ἀποδοθῆναι  
**payment to be made**  
G591

## Additional Cross-References

---

**Nehemiah 5:5** (Parallel theme): Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our

daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards.

**2 Kings 4:1** (References Lord): Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.

**Luke 7:42** (Parallel theme): And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

**Leviticus 25:39** (Parallel theme): And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant:

**Nehemiah 5:8** (Parallel theme): And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer.