

Matthew 18:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

Analysis

Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion (σπλαγχνισθεὶς δὲ ὁ κύριος, *splanchnistheis de ho kyrios*)—the Greek *splanchnizomai* denotes visceral compassion, literally 'bowels moved,' indicating profound emotional mercy. This word appears repeatedly in the Gospels describing Jesus (Mt 9:36, 14:14, 15:32), revealing God's character: mercy flows from His nature, not the debtor's merit.

Loosed him, and forgave him the debt (ἀπέλυσεν αὐτόν, καὶ τὸ δάνειον ἀφῆκεν αὐτῷ)—total, unconditional forgiveness. The lord didn't accept the payment plan; he *aphēken* (ἀφῆκεν, 'released, sent away') the entire debt. This pictures justification: God doesn't make salvation easier or extend the deadline—He cancels the debt completely through Christ's substitutionary atonement (Col 2:13-14). Reformed theology emphasizes this sovereign, unilateral divine action in salvation.

Historical Context

Debt forgiveness by royal decree was occasionally practiced by Hellenistic monarchs as acts of beneficence (often at accession or after military victory). However, forgiving such a massive sum would be economically devastating, making this parable's generosity deliberately shocking. It illustrates grace's costliness—God absorbs the debt Himself rather than demanding payment.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the lord's compassion arising from his own character (not the servant's worthiness) reflect the doctrine of unconditional election?
2. What did God's forgiveness cost Him, since debts don't simply disappear but must be paid by someone?
3. How should receiving complete debt cancellation (not merely payment plans) transform your gratitude and obedience?

Interlinear Text

σπλαγχνισθεῖς	δὲ	ὁ	κύριος	τοῦ	δούλου	ἐκείνου
was moved with compassion	Then	G3588	the lord	G3588	servant	of that
G4697	G1161		G2962		G1401	G1565
ἀπέλυσεν	αὐτῷ	καὶ	τὸ	δάνειον	ἀφῆκεν	αὐτῷ
loosed	him	and	G3588	the debt	forgave	him
G630	G846	G2532		G1156	G863	G846

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 145:8 (References Lord): The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

Psalms 86:15 (References Lord): But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

Nehemiah 9:17 (Parallel theme): And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready

to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.

Hosea 11:8 (Parallel theme): How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

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