

Matthew 18:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

Analysis

Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?—The lord's question uses the same verb family: eleēsai (ἐλεῆσαι, 'to have mercy') and ēleēsa (ἡλέησά, 'I had mercy'). The argument is proportional reciprocity: 'just as I showed you mercy, you should show mercy.' Not because he earned it or deserved continued grace, but because recipients of extraordinary mercy ought to become conduits of mercy.

The term syndoulon (σύνδουλον, 'fellow servant') emphasizes equality: both are servants of the same master. The wicked servant forgot his own identity—he's not the lord dispensing justice but a fellow servant who received grace. This reveals the heart of unforgiveness: usurping God's position as ultimate judge while demanding from others what we received only by grace.

Historical Context

Ancient honor culture operated on reciprocity: receiving beneficence created obligation to extend similar treatment to others. The patron-client system depended on cascading generosity—those receiving gifts from above extending proportional benefits to those below. The wicked servant violated this fundamental social contract, dishonoring his patron by refusing to mirror the patron's character.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does forgiveness demonstrate that you've truly understood your own position as a 'fellow servant,' not as judge or lord?
2. What does withholding mercy from others reveal about your view of the mercy you've received from God?
3. How would your relationships change if you treated others the way God has treated you in Christ?

Interlinear Text

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|-------|----------|-------|---------|----------|-------|---------------|--------|-------|
| οὐκ | ἔδει | καὶ | σὲ | ἡλέησα | τὸν | σύνδουλόν | σου | ώς |
| not | Shouldst | also | on thee | had pity | G3588 | fellowservant | on thy | as |
| G3756 | G1163 | G2532 | G4571 | G1653 | | G4889 | G4675 | G5613 |

| | | | |
|-------|-------|---------|----------|
| καὶ | ἐγώ | σὲ | ἡλέησα |
| also | I | on thee | had pity |
| G2532 | G1473 | G4571 | G1653 |

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.

Matthew 6:12 (Parallel theme): And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.