

# Matthew 18:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

## Analysis

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**Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellobservant, even as I had pity on thee?**—The lord's question uses the same verb family: *eleēsai* (ἐλεῆσαι, 'to have mercy') and *ēleēsa* (ἠλέησά, '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

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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

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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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	ἠλέησα	τὸν	σύνδουλόν	σου	ὥς
not	Shouldest	also	on thee	had pity	G3588	fellowservant	on thy	as
G3756	G1163	G2532	G4571	G1653		G4889	G4675	G5613

καὶ	ἐγώ	σὲ	ἠλέησα
also	I	on thee	had pity
G2532	G1473	G4571	G1653

## Additional Cross-References

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**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.