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Forgiving Trash Passes

By Teresa Hampton

Don't you love the way children repeat things they've heard? A six year old was reciting the Lord's model prayer, "And forgive us our trash passes, as we forgive those who passed trash against us." Gossip and slander is trash, for sure, but *all* sin is trash.

In the prayer from which the little girl recited, Jesus instructed, *Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors* (Matt. 6:11-12). We are all sinners in need of God's forgiveness every day (Rom. 3:23). Forgiveness is the central theme of God's redemptive plan. After Jesus closed the prayer, he explained, *For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

Later in His ministry, Jesus illustrated the importance of forgiving others when he told about a king who came to settle accounts (Matt. 18:21-35). He called a servant who owed him ten thousand talents (about \$42 million). The servant was unable to repay the debt. He begged for patience, promising he would repay everything he owed. The master had compassion on him and forgave the entire amount. The servant promptly went out and found a fellow servant who owed him a hundred denarii (about \$75). When the fellow could not repay the small debt, he threw him in prison. The king heard about this, summoned the man he had forgiven, and said, *Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?* Then he delivered him to the torturers until he could repay the massive debt. Jesus ended the parable saying, *So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you from your heart does not forgive your brother his trespasses.*

You and I cannot pay the debt we owe for our own sin. Therefore, we deserve eternal death. But God allowed his Son to die, bearing our own iniquity, paying our debt in full (Isa. 53:6c). With gratitude for God's tremendous grace and love toward us, he expects us to have compassion and forgiveness for those who sin against us. It is so little to ask in light of what the Father and Christ did for us!

Today's Verse: *For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment* (James 2:13).

Today's Quote: The first to apologize is the bravest. The first to forgive is the strongest. And the first to forget is the happiest.

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