

Catechism Story 31

The Lord's Prayer: Fifth Petition
Memory Verse and Catechism Prayers from the Congregation at Prayer

BIBLE STORY: THE PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

Matthew 18:21-35

Central Thoughts

- It is impossible for us to pay the debt of sin.
- We deserve God's wrath and punishment.
- God forgives our sin for Christ's sake as a gift of His grace in Christ.
- The refusal to forgive the sins of others is a denial of our faith in Christ, and will eventually lead to the loss of our salvation.
- Forgiving the sins of others is part of our confession of faith in Christ as Christians.

Discussion Questions

What caused Jesus to tell the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant?

Peter's question concerning how many times he should forgive his brother who sins against him.

What did Jesus' answer, "seventy times seven" mean?

There is no limit to God's forgiveness nor the forgiveness a Christian or the Church is to extend to sinners.

Who does the king represent who decided to settle accounts with his servants represent?

Our heavenly father

Who do the servants of the king represent?

Christians who have been called to repentance and faith in Christ.

What does it indicate that the servant was brought to the king?

He did not come on his own.

What is the approximate value of ten thousand talents owed by the first servant?

An enormous sum of money that he could not possibly have paid back in a lifetime.

What does this enormous debt represent?

The debt of sin before God that none of us has the slightest ability to be able to pay for.

What judgment did the king order against the servant who could not repay the debt?

He ordered him to be sold as a slave, together with his wife and children until the debt was paid.

What does this judgment of the king represent?

The judgment of God's Law. We deserve God's "wrath and displeasure, temporal death, and eternal damnation."

How is this judgment of God that we deserved expressed under the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer?

"We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment..."

What does the servant do in response to the judgment of the king?

He pleads to the king for patience that he might have time to repay the debt.

Knowing that his servant could not possibly repay the debt, what did the King do?

He was moved with compassion, released his servant, and forgave him the debt.

What does this signify in our relationship with God?

We could not possibly pay the debt of sin. God had compassion on us in Christ and freely forgave us the entire debt of sin.

What did the first servant do after he was forgiven?

He found a fellow servant who owed him a fraction of what he had just been forgiven by the king, laid hands on him, took him by the throat (as if he wanted to kill him), and demanded immediate repayment.

How did the first servant respond to his fellow servant's plea for mercy?

He refused to forgive his fellow servant and had him thrown into prison.

How did the fellow servants respond to the first servant's refusal to forgive?

They were grieved at the refusal of their fellow servant to forgive and reported him to the king.

What does this signify?

The church is a place of forgiveness and mercy for sinners. The giving and receiving of Christ's forgiveness is what binds us together in the communion of saints. It is the sign of our faith in Christ and our love for Him that we forgive one another as God in Christ has freely forgiven us for a debt that we could never pay.

What does the refusal to forgive deny?

It denies our faith in Christ's forgiveness, which none of us deserve, but which is a free gift of God's grace.

What will the refusal to forgive lead to?

The destruction of our faith in Christ and the condemnation of hell.

How does the king in the parable call us all to repentance for the refusal to forgive?

"Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?"

What warning does Jesus give about how harmful it is for a Christian to refuse to forgive?

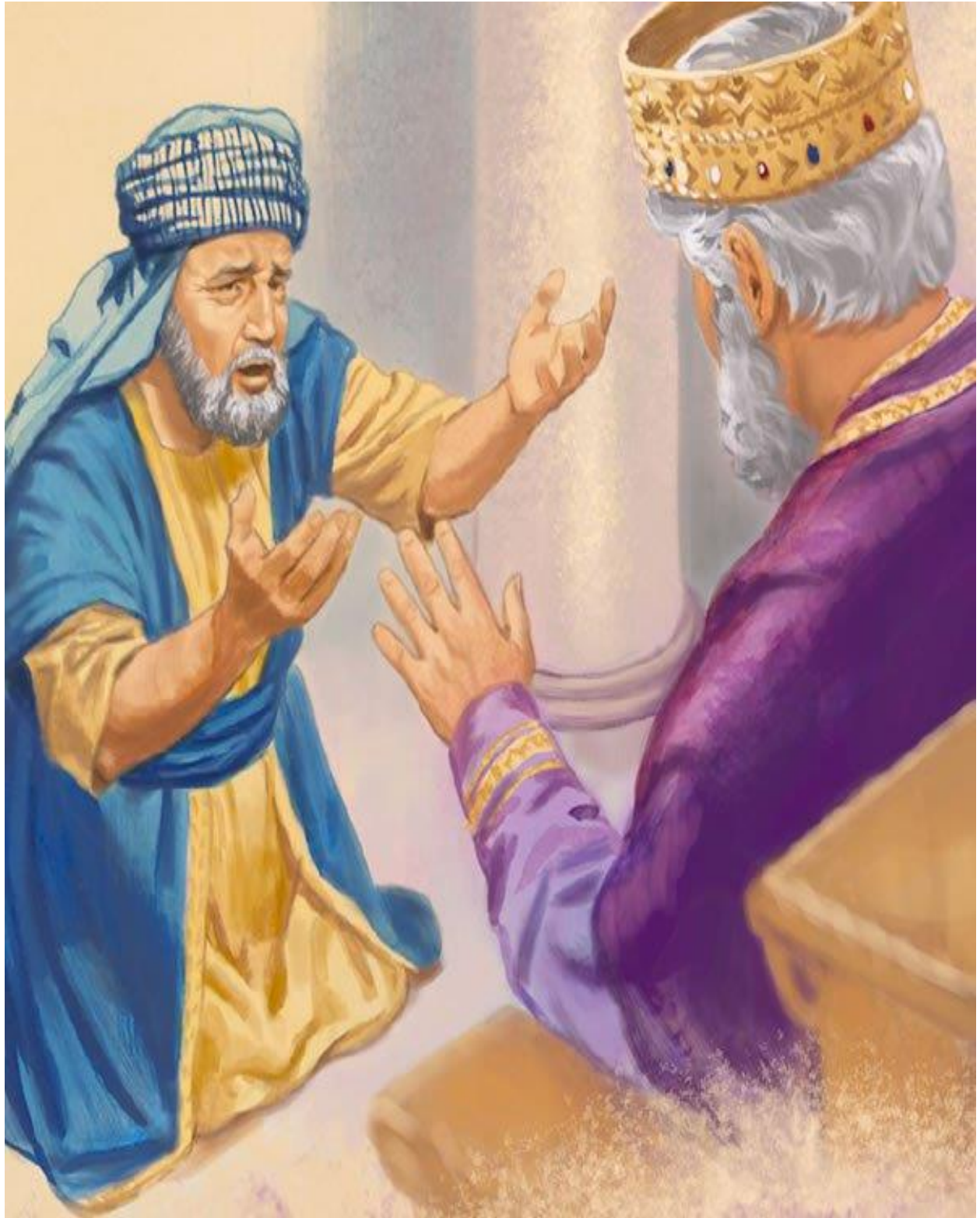
The warning of the pain of hell for having rejected Christ's forgiveness in refusing to forgive a brother. "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

Meditation on the Bible Story

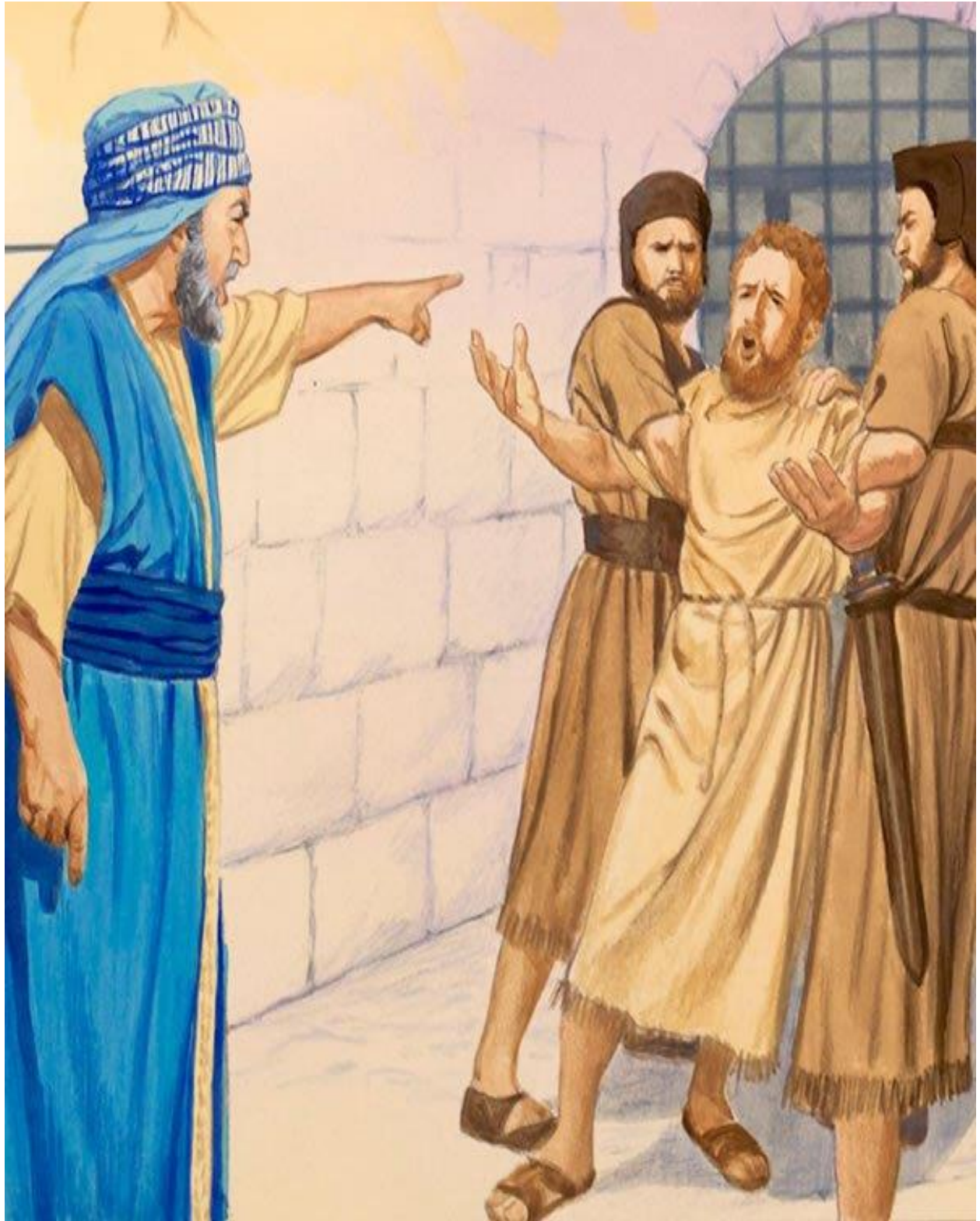
The refusal to forgive a brother who has sinned against us condemns, not because our act of forgiveness is a good work that merits God's favor, but rather because our refusal to forgive denies the Gospel of God's forgiveness and our faith in Christ. All Christians struggle to let go of the sins of others in forgiveness. This is why we pray the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer. But the obstinate prolonged refusal to forgive will eventually lead to the destruction of saving faith. This is why the Catechism's explanation to the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer stresses the problem of our sin and the need for total reliance upon God's grace for both life and salvation. "We pray that our heavenly Father would not look at our sins...we daily sin much...we deserve nothing but punishment..." It is only through dependence upon God's undeserved love in Christ that we can "sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us."

Prayer on the Bible Story

Heavenly Father, teach us to believe in the seriousness of our sin and that the only payment for sin is Jesus' sacrifice upon the cross for us, so that we might freely and sincerely forgive all those who have sinned against us, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



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