Crime, Christianity & Human Nature

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Jesus in Matthew chapter 18)

**21**Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” **22**Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mat+18&version=ESVUK#fen-ESVUK-23747g)]

**23**“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.[[h](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mat+18&version=ESVUK#fen-ESVUK-23748h)] **24**When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.[[i](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mat+18&version=ESVUK" \l "fen-ESVUK-23749i" \o "See footnote i)] **25**And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. **26**So the servant[[j](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mat+18&version=ESVUK#fen-ESVUK-23751j)] fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ **27**And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. **28**But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii,[[k](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mat+18&version=ESVUK#fen-ESVUK-23753k)] and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ **29**So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ **30**He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. **31**When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. **32**Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. **33**And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ **34**And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers,[[l](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mat+18&version=ESVUK#fen-ESVUK-23759l)] until he should pay all his debt. **35**So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

Application

* Christians believe criminals deserve to be punished.
* Christians themselves deserve punishment.
* They are no better than criminals in God’s sight.
* They need to forgive criminals if they want to be forgiven.
* This does not mean that criminals should not be punished with jail, etc. because people still need to be prevented from harming others in society.