

The background of the page is a composite image. The upper portion shows a view of the Earth from space, with the Americas visible. The lower portion shows a close-up of a hand holding the globe. The text is overlaid on this image in red and black.

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

**Expository Sermon
March 2018**

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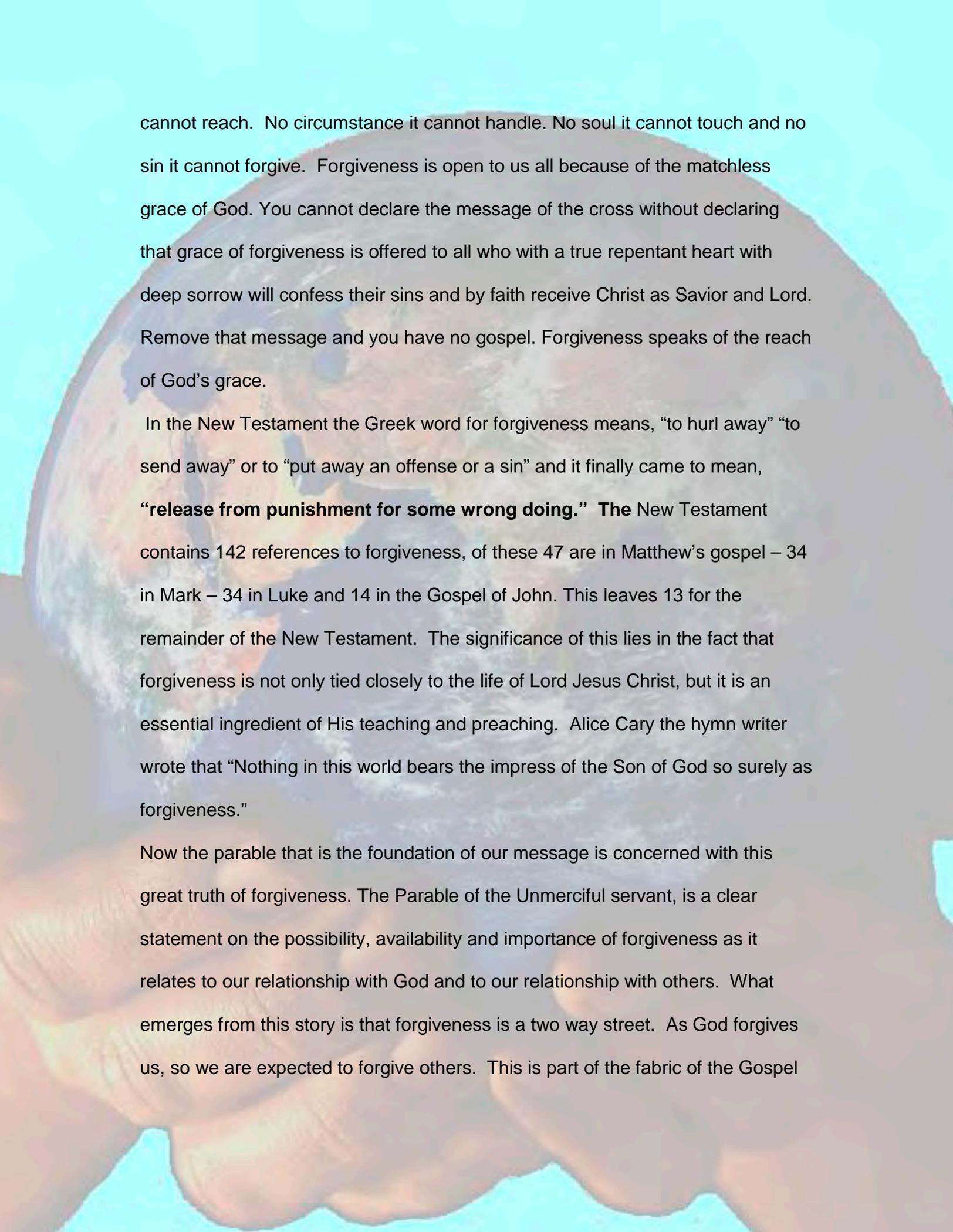
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FORGIVENESS - THE REACH OF GRACE

Scripture Reading – Matthew 18:21- 35.

Introduction

As we move through the season of lent, and focus on passion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are reminded of the great truth and hope that is intrinsic to the message of the Cross. It is the revelation of “the grace of the Jesus who though he was rich for our sakes became poor that we through His poverty might become rich.” The word grace is that which catches our attention. We are reminded that there is at this time of year there is a clear message that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ reaches to the highest heaven and to the deepest depths of the earth. There is no place it



cannot reach. No circumstance it cannot handle. No soul it cannot touch and no sin it cannot forgive. Forgiveness is open to us all because of the matchless grace of God. You cannot declare the message of the cross without declaring that grace of forgiveness is offered to all who with a true repentant heart with deep sorrow will confess their sins and by faith receive Christ as Savior and Lord. Remove that message and you have no gospel. Forgiveness speaks of the reach of God's grace.

In the New Testament the Greek word for forgiveness means, “to hurl away” “to send away” or to “put away an offense or a sin” and it finally came to mean, **“release from punishment for some wrong doing.”** The New Testament contains 142 references to forgiveness, of these 47 are in Matthew's gospel – 34 in Mark – 34 in Luke and 14 in the Gospel of John. This leaves 13 for the remainder of the New Testament. The significance of this lies in the fact that forgiveness is not only tied closely to the life of Lord Jesus Christ, but it is an essential ingredient of His teaching and preaching. Alice Cary the hymn writer wrote that “Nothing in this world bears the impress of the Son of God so surely as forgiveness.”

Now the parable that is the foundation of our message is concerned with this great truth of forgiveness. The Parable of the Unmerciful servant, is a clear statement on the possibility, availability and importance of forgiveness as it relates to our relationship with God and to our relationship with others. What emerges from this story is that forgiveness is a two way street. As God forgives us, so we are expected to forgive others. This is part of the fabric of the Gospel

message, and there are two facets to this forgiveness.

First, there is the possibility of forgiveness. God loves us so much there is possibility of Divine forgiveness because He provided a way of forgiveness for all men.

Then second, there is responsibility of forgiveness. We are to forgive others as God forgives us. There are three very simple truths in this parable that Jesus wants to impress upon us. There three truths that this parable highlights as essential ingredients in Divine forgiveness. They are - **Its' Necessity — Its Availability – Its' Responsibility.**

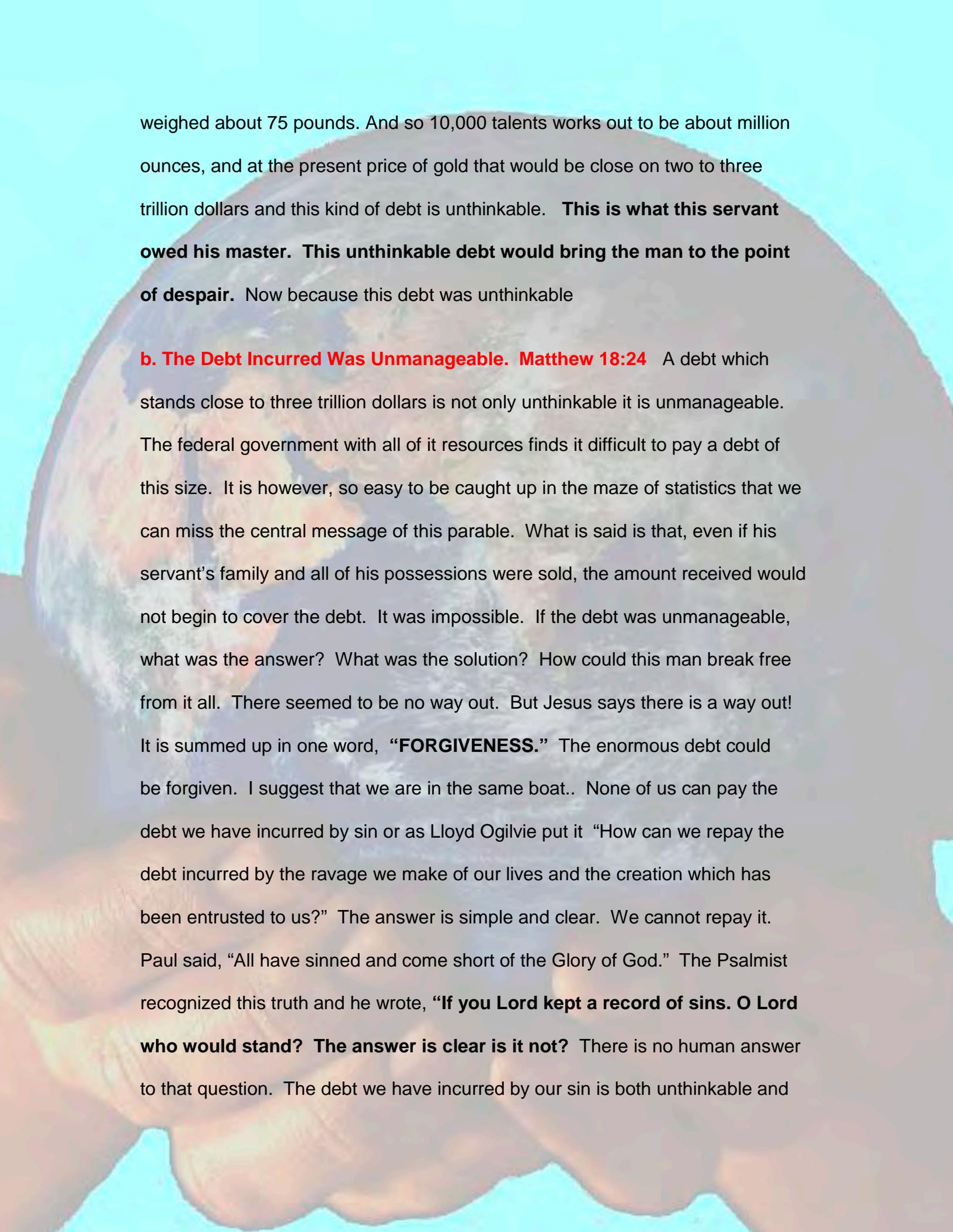
Note first,

1. THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS. Matthew 18:24-25

The parable tells us that, “A certain man wanted to settle accounts with his servants. There was one who had an enormous debt, and could not pay it.”

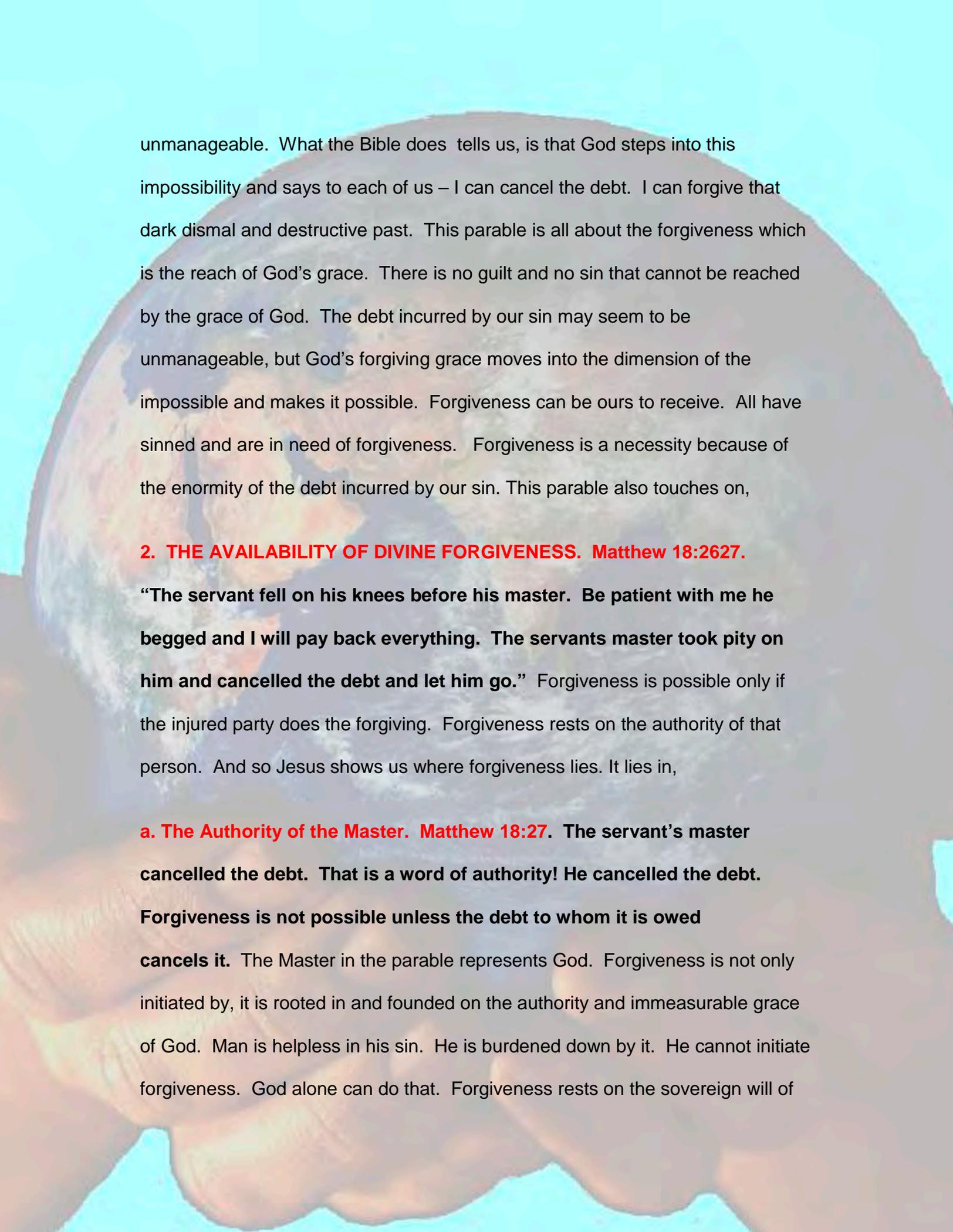
The enormity of the debt incurred by the rich man’s servant necessitated forgiveness. There was no other way the debt would be removed. One of the truths that filters through this parable is that self redemption is impossible. We cannot save ourselves. The only solution to the servant’s debt is forgiveness. In this context only the master has the authority to impart forgiveness. The master represents God in the parable. Now why was forgiveness so necessary? The parable makes clear that it was because,

a. The Debt Incurred Was Unthinkable. Matthew 18:24. The servant owed his master 10,000 talents. Montgomery Boice pointed out that a gold talent



weighed about 75 pounds. And so 10,000 talents works out to be about million ounces, and at the present price of gold that would be close on two to three trillion dollars and this kind of debt is unthinkable. **This is what this servant owed his master. This unthinkable debt would bring the man to the point of despair.** Now because this debt was unthinkable

b. The Debt Incurred Was Unmanageable. Matthew 18:24 A debt which stands close to three trillion dollars is not only unthinkable it is unmanageable. The federal government with all of its resources finds it difficult to pay a debt of this size. It is however, so easy to be caught up in the maze of statistics that we can miss the central message of this parable. What is said is that, even if his servant's family and all of his possessions were sold, the amount received would not begin to cover the debt. It was impossible. If the debt was unmanageable, what was the answer? What was the solution? How could this man break free from it all. There seemed to be no way out. But Jesus says there is a way out! It is summed up in one word, **"FORGIVENESS."** The enormous debt could be forgiven. I suggest that we are in the same boat.. None of us can pay the debt we have incurred by sin or as Lloyd Ogilvie put it "How can we repay the debt incurred by the ravage we make of our lives and the creation which has been entrusted to us?" The answer is simple and clear. We cannot repay it. Paul said, "All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God." The Psalmist recognized this truth and he wrote, **"If you Lord kept a record of sins. O Lord who would stand? The answer is clear is it not?** There is no human answer to that question. The debt we have incurred by our sin is both unthinkable and



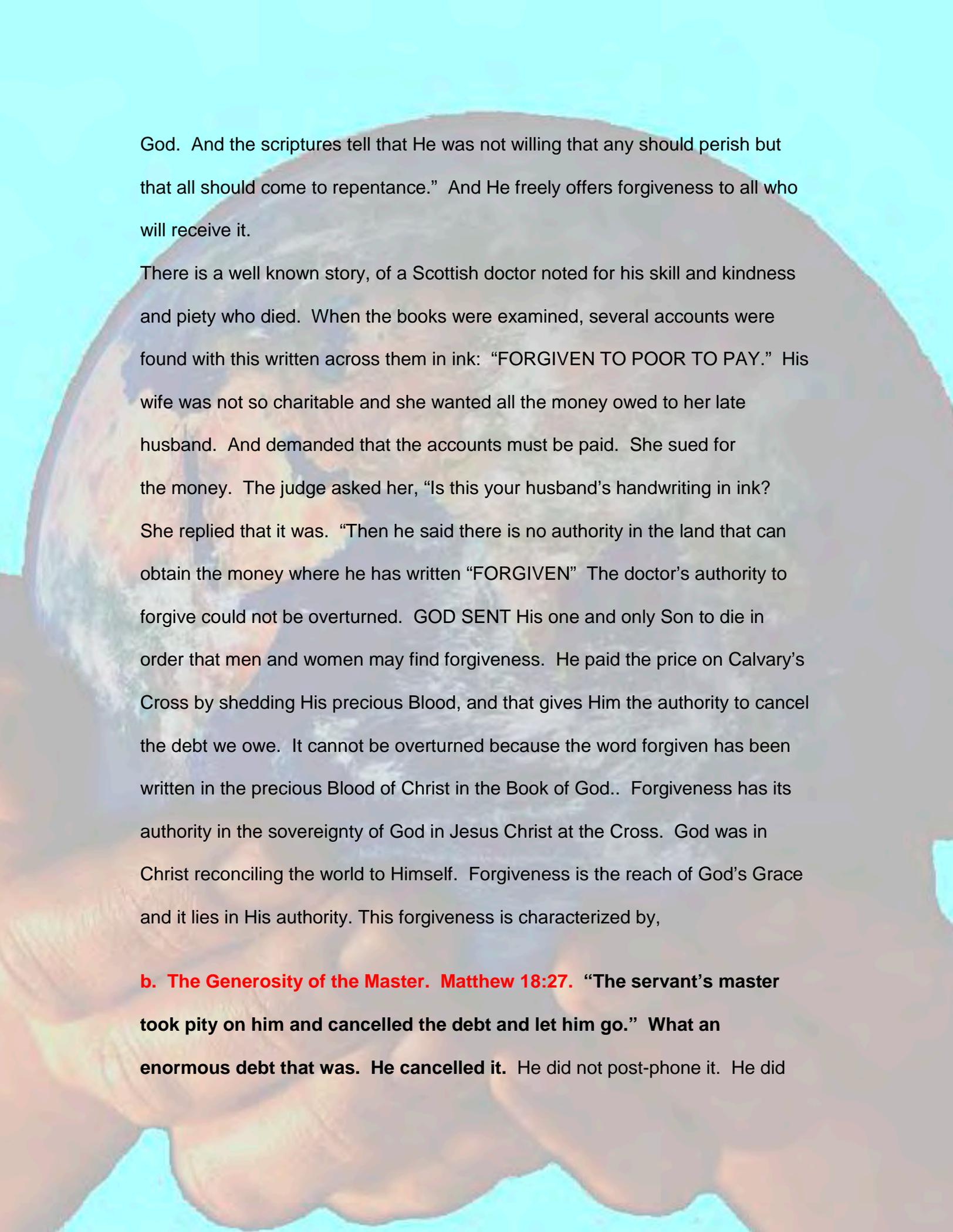
unmanageable. What the Bible does tells us, is that God steps into this impossibility and says to each of us – I can cancel the debt. I can forgive that dark dismal and destructive past. This parable is all about the forgiveness which is the reach of God's grace. There is no guilt and no sin that cannot be reached by the grace of God. The debt incurred by our sin may seem to be unmanageable, but God's forgiving grace moves into the dimension of the impossible and makes it possible. Forgiveness can be ours to receive. All have sinned and are in need of forgiveness. Forgiveness is a necessity because of the enormity of the debt incurred by our sin. This parable also touches on,

2. THE AVAILABILITY OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS. Matthew 18:26-27.

“The servant fell on his knees before his master. Be patient with me he begged and I will pay back everything. The servant's master took pity on him and cancelled the debt and let him go.” Forgiveness is possible only if the injured party does the forgiving. Forgiveness rests on the authority of that person. And so Jesus shows us where forgiveness lies. It lies in,

a. The Authority of the Master. Matthew 18:27. The servant's master cancelled the debt. That is a word of authority! He cancelled the debt.

Forgiveness is not possible unless the debt to whom it is owed cancels it. The Master in the parable represents God. Forgiveness is not only initiated by, it is rooted in and founded on the authority and immeasurable grace of God. Man is helpless in his sin. He is burdened down by it. He cannot initiate forgiveness. God alone can do that. Forgiveness rests on the sovereign will of



God. And the scriptures tell that He was not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” And He freely offers forgiveness to all who will receive it.

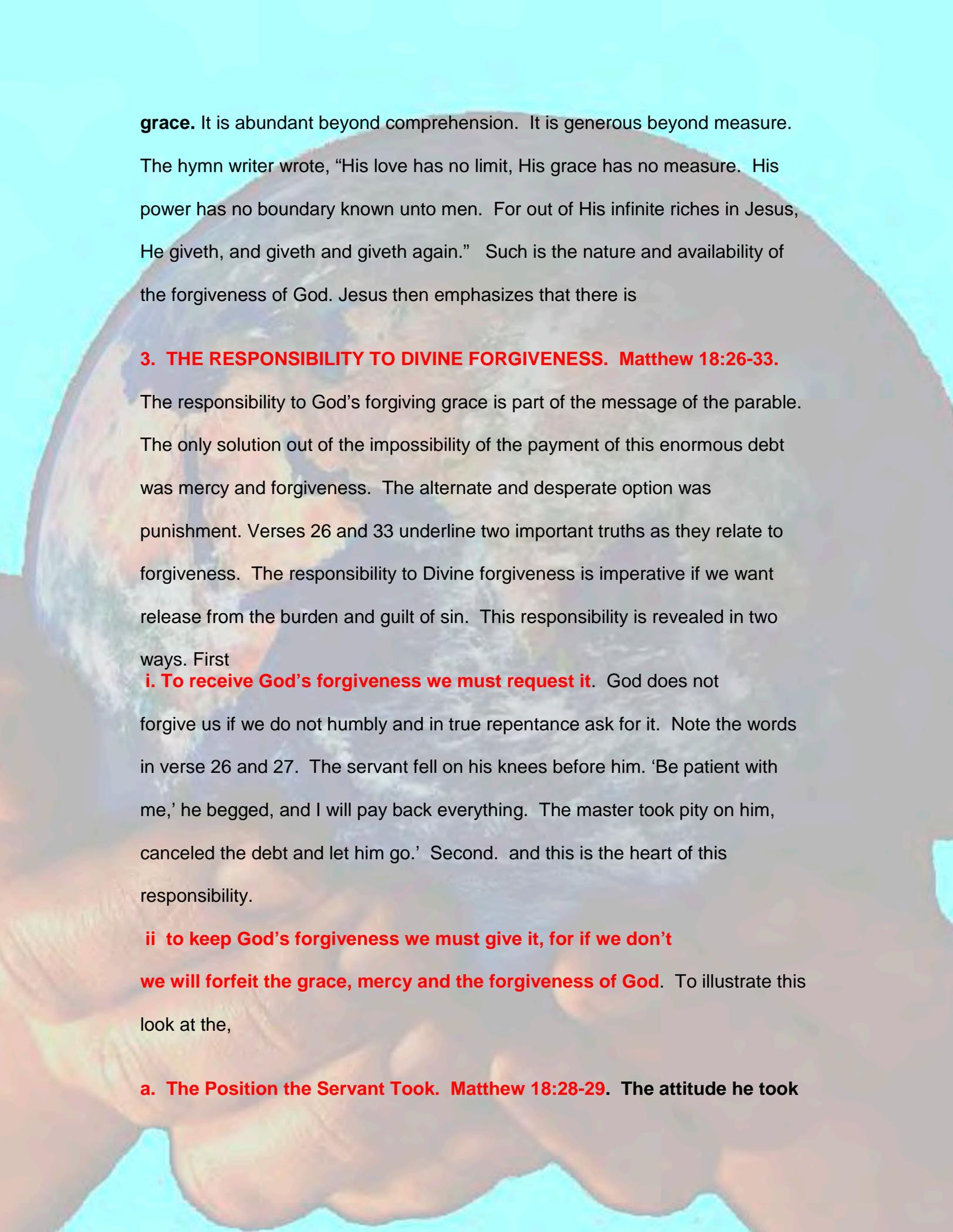
There is a well known story, of a Scottish doctor noted for his skill and kindness and piety who died. When the books were examined, several accounts were found with this written across them in ink: “FORGIVEN TO POOR TO PAY.” His wife was not so charitable and she wanted all the money owed to her late husband. And demanded that the accounts must be paid. She sued for the money. The judge asked her, “Is this your husband’s handwriting in ink? She replied that it was. “Then he said there is no authority in the land that can obtain the money where he has written “FORGIVEN” The doctor’s authority to forgive could not be overturned. GOD SENT His one and only Son to die in order that men and women may find forgiveness. He paid the price on Calvary’s Cross by shedding His precious Blood, and that gives Him the authority to cancel the debt we owe. It cannot be overturned because the word forgiven has been written in the precious Blood of Christ in the Book of God.. Forgiveness has its authority in the sovereignty of God in Jesus Christ at the Cross. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Forgiveness is the reach of God’s Grace and it lies in His authority. This forgiveness is characterized by,

b. The Generosity of the Master. Matthew 18:27. “The servant’s master took pity on him and cancelled the debt and let him go.” What an enormous debt that was. He cancelled it. He did not post-phone it. He did

not sit down and work out payments. He cancelled it. What a liberating moment that was! This non-payable debt cancelled. The burden gone. The pressure is over. The debt is forgiven and the man is free.

This parable you remember was the answer to a question put to Jesus by Simon Peter in verse 21. **“Lord how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me. Up to seven times? In the words of the K.J.V. Jesus answered “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven. That is 490 times. It quite a difference to Peter’s seven times.** But Jesus meant more than that. 70 times 7 was a saying of the Rabbi’s rooted in the Old Testament scriptures. It really meant to go on to infinity. This is forgiveness without limit.

The tone Peter’s question indicates that he thought that he was being quite magnanimous. Seven times! It was more than double what was expected of the Jew. Rabbi Jose Ben Hanina said that, “he who begs forgiveness from his neighbors must not do so more than three times. The fourth time there is no forgiveness. So Peter felt like that he was being very extravagant in his attitude for he had opened the door to more than double the requirement. But Jesus answered “I tell you not seven times but seventy times seven. The issue here is not statistics. Forgiveness is the reach of Grace. There is no point where He stops forgiving and there are no limits to the times we must forgive. Forgiveness cannot be reduced to cold hard statistics. Jesus lifts the act of forgiveness out of the rigidity of figures. Mathematics is not part of the forgiving spirit. **The forgiving heart is not calculating. It is not restricted by the count. The Lord Jesus Christ is accentuating the limitlessness of God’s forgiving**



grace. It is abundant beyond comprehension. It is generous beyond measure. The hymn writer wrote, “His love has no limit, His grace has no measure. His power has no boundary known unto men. For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth, and giveth and giveth again.” Such is the nature and availability of the forgiveness of God. Jesus then emphasizes that there is

3. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DIVINE FORGIVENESS. Matthew 18:26-33.

The responsibility to God’s forgiving grace is part of the message of the parable. The only solution out of the impossibility of the payment of this enormous debt was mercy and forgiveness. The alternate and desperate option was punishment. Verses 26 and 33 underline two important truths as they relate to forgiveness. The responsibility to Divine forgiveness is imperative if we want release from the burden and guilt of sin. This responsibility is revealed in two ways. First

i. To receive God’s forgiveness we must request it. God does not forgive us if we do not humbly and in true repentance ask for it. Note the words in verse 26 and 27. The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, and I will pay back everything. The master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.’ Second. and this is the heart of this responsibility.

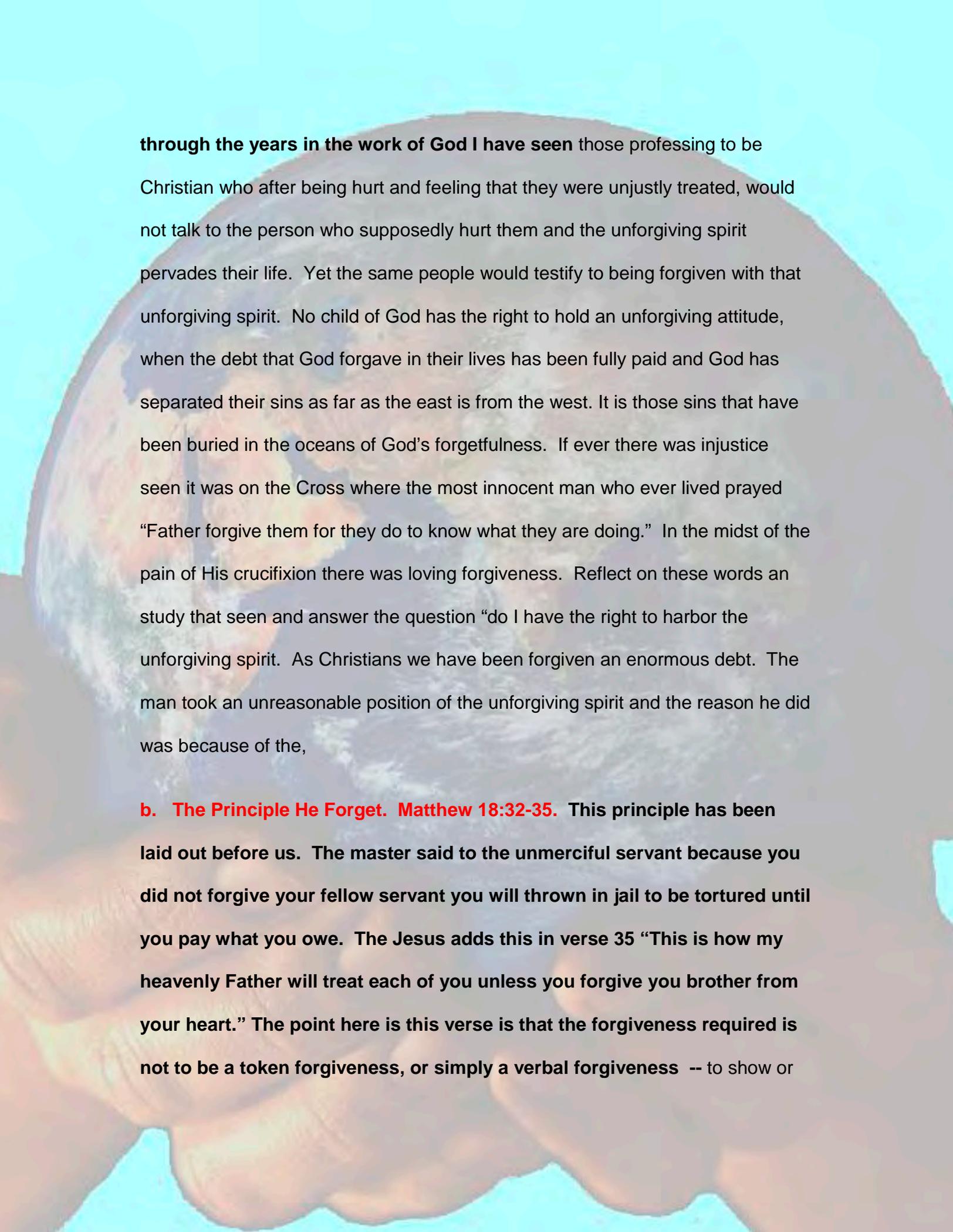
ii to keep God’s forgiveness we must give it, for if we don’t we will forfeit the grace, mercy and the forgiveness of God. To illustrate this look at the,

a. The Position the Servant Took. Matthew 18:28-29. The attitude he took

was quite incredible. He had been forgiven and unmanageable debt. The debt had been cancelled. He had been relieved of the punishment that would have stripped him of his possessions, family and kept him prison for life. He was a liberated. His family now safe with a secure future ahead. He simply asked for forgiveness and was granted it. This was a gift beyond his wildest dreams. And yet he moves from the place of mercy and forgiveness, the place of new beginnings, the place of a new life with a bright future, and sought out one of his fellow servants and began to choke him demanding a 100 Denarii worth about 20 dollars. The servant made the same request he had made of his master, but he rejected the pleas of his fellow servant. Instead he threw him into the jail until he could pay the debt. It is hard to believe that he would take this attitude after he had been forgiven so much. He had used the gift of forgiveness and freedom from his great debt, to place someone else in torment and bondage. He received so much and gave nothing. There are Christians who having received the forgiveness of God still hold an unforgiving attitude towards those who have hurt them. There two characteristics about the attitude he showed. It was

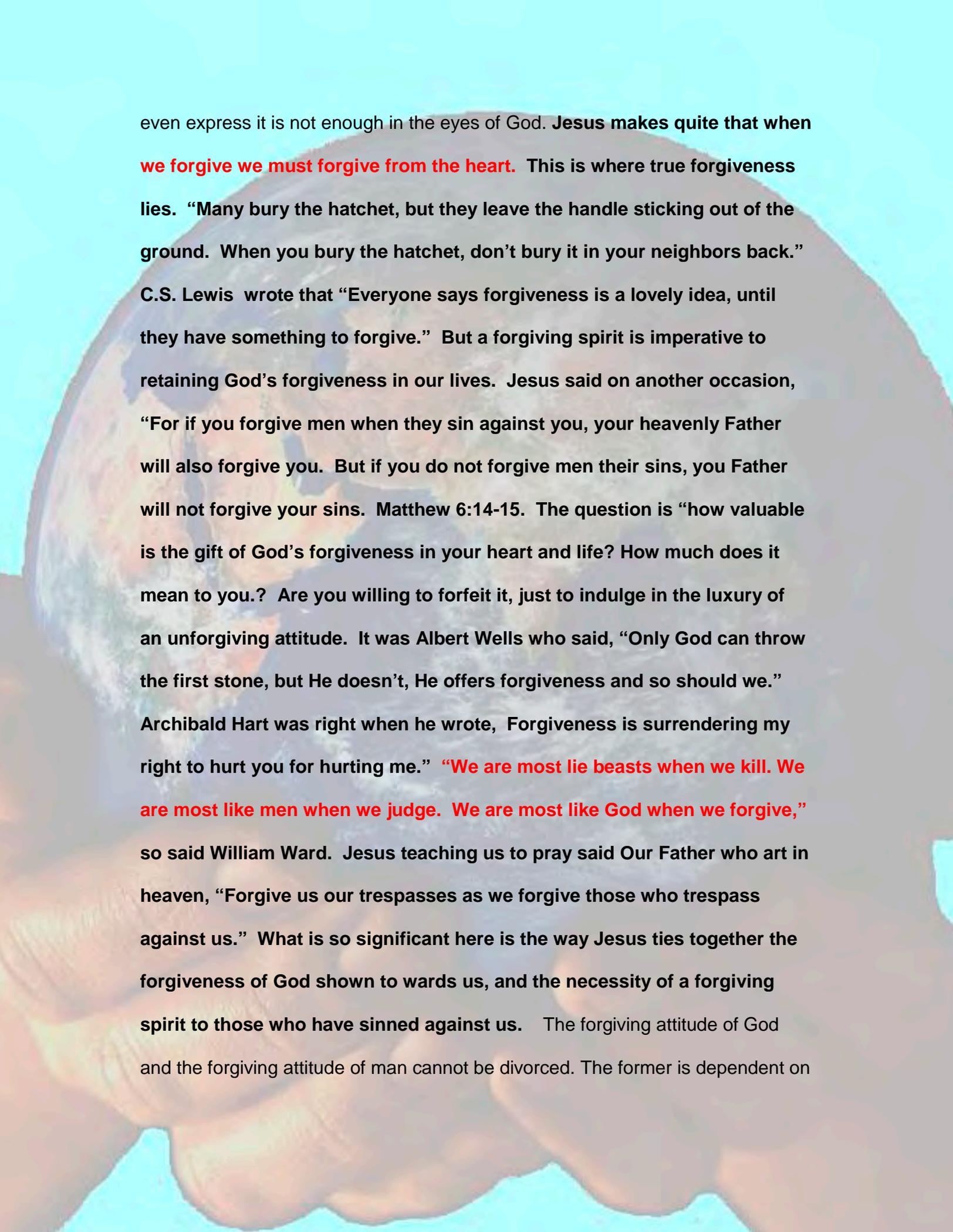
i. Brutal. It was harsh. The unforgiving spirit is always brutal. He began to choke his fellow servant. Secondly his attitude was,

ii. Unreasonable. The one who had been forgiven so much debt, threw his \$20.00 debtor into prison until he could pay back what he owed. How could he pay back the debt if he was incarcerated. That action was unreasonable. What Jesus is teaching us is that the unforgiving spirit is unreasonable. We might say well we would never do that. Down

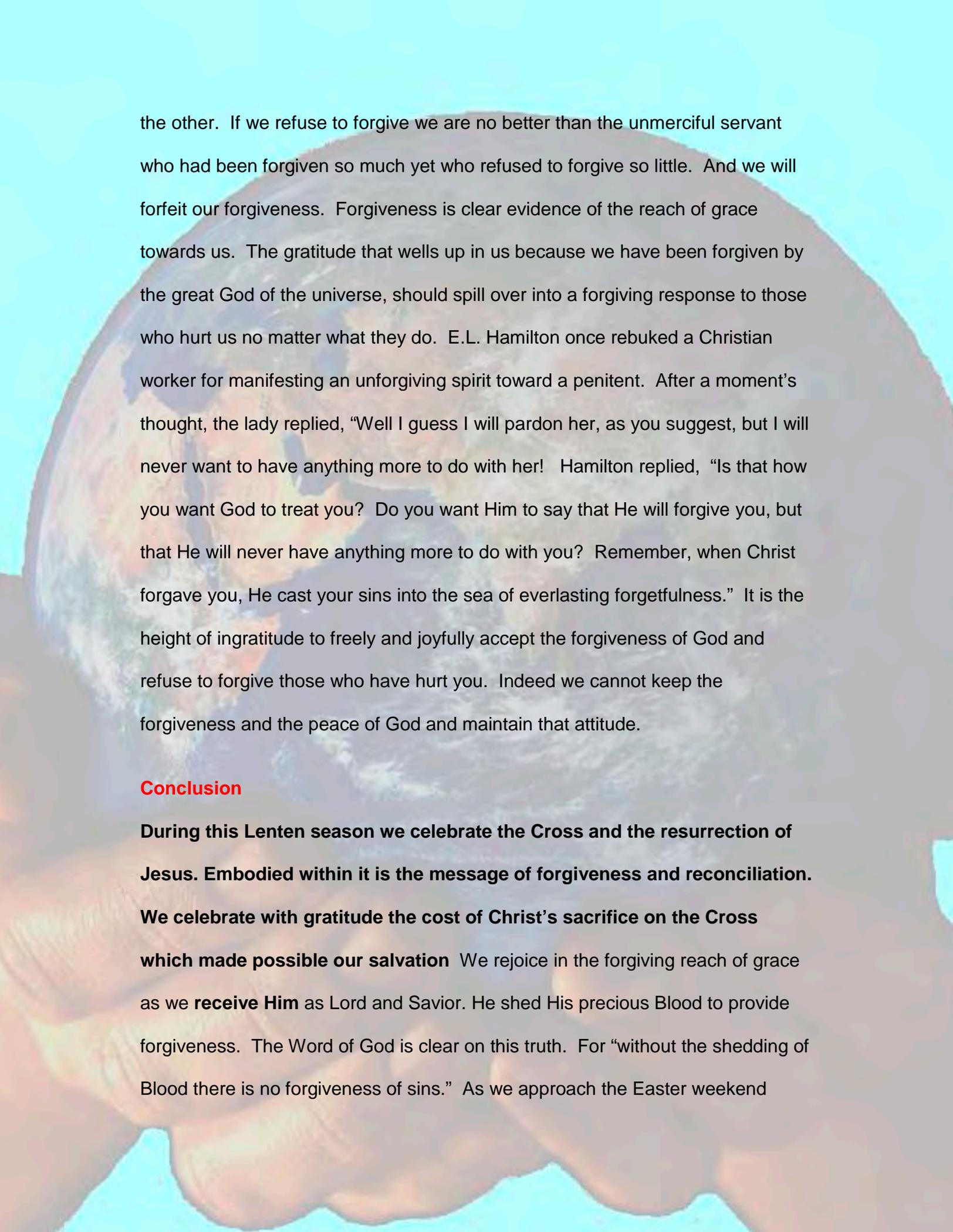


through the years in the work of God I have seen those professing to be Christian who after being hurt and feeling that they were unjustly treated, would not talk to the person who supposedly hurt them and the unforgiving spirit pervades their life. Yet the same people would testify to being forgiven with that unforgiving spirit. No child of God has the right to hold an unforgiving attitude, when the debt that God forgave in their lives has been fully paid and God has separated their sins as far as the east is from the west. It is those sins that have been buried in the oceans of God's forgetfulness. If ever there was injustice seen it was on the Cross where the most innocent man who ever lived prayed "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." In the midst of the pain of His crucifixion there was loving forgiveness. Reflect on these words and study that scene and answer the question "do I have the right to harbor the unforgiving spirit. As Christians we have been forgiven an enormous debt. The man took an unreasonable position of the unforgiving spirit and the reason he did was because of the,

b. The Principle He Forget. Matthew 18:32-35. This principle has been laid out before us. The master said to the unmerciful servant because you did not forgive your fellow servant you will be thrown in jail to be tortured until you pay what you owe. The Jesus adds this in verse 35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." The point here is this verse is that the forgiveness required is not to be a token forgiveness, or simply a verbal forgiveness -- to show or



even express it is not enough in the eyes of God. **Jesus makes quite that when we forgive we must forgive from the heart.** This is where true forgiveness lies. “Many bury the hatchet, but they leave the handle sticking out of the ground. When you bury the hatchet, don’t bury it in your neighbors back.” C.S. Lewis wrote that “Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive.” But a forgiving spirit is imperative to retaining God’s forgiveness in our lives. Jesus said on another occasion, “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:14-15. The question is “how valuable is the gift of God’s forgiveness in your heart and life? How much does it mean to you.? Are you willing to forfeit it, just to indulge in the luxury of an unforgiving attitude. It was Albert Wells who said, “Only God can throw the first stone, but He doesn’t, He offers forgiveness and so should we.” Archibald Hart was right when he wrote, Forgiveness is surrendering my right to hurt you for hurting me.” **“We are most like beasts when we kill. We are most like men when we judge. We are most like God when we forgive,”** so said William Ward. Jesus teaching us to pray said Our Father who art in heaven, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” What is so significant here is the way Jesus ties together the forgiveness of God shown to wards us, and the necessity of a forgiving spirit to those who have sinned against us. The forgiving attitude of God and the forgiving attitude of man cannot be divorced. The former is dependent on

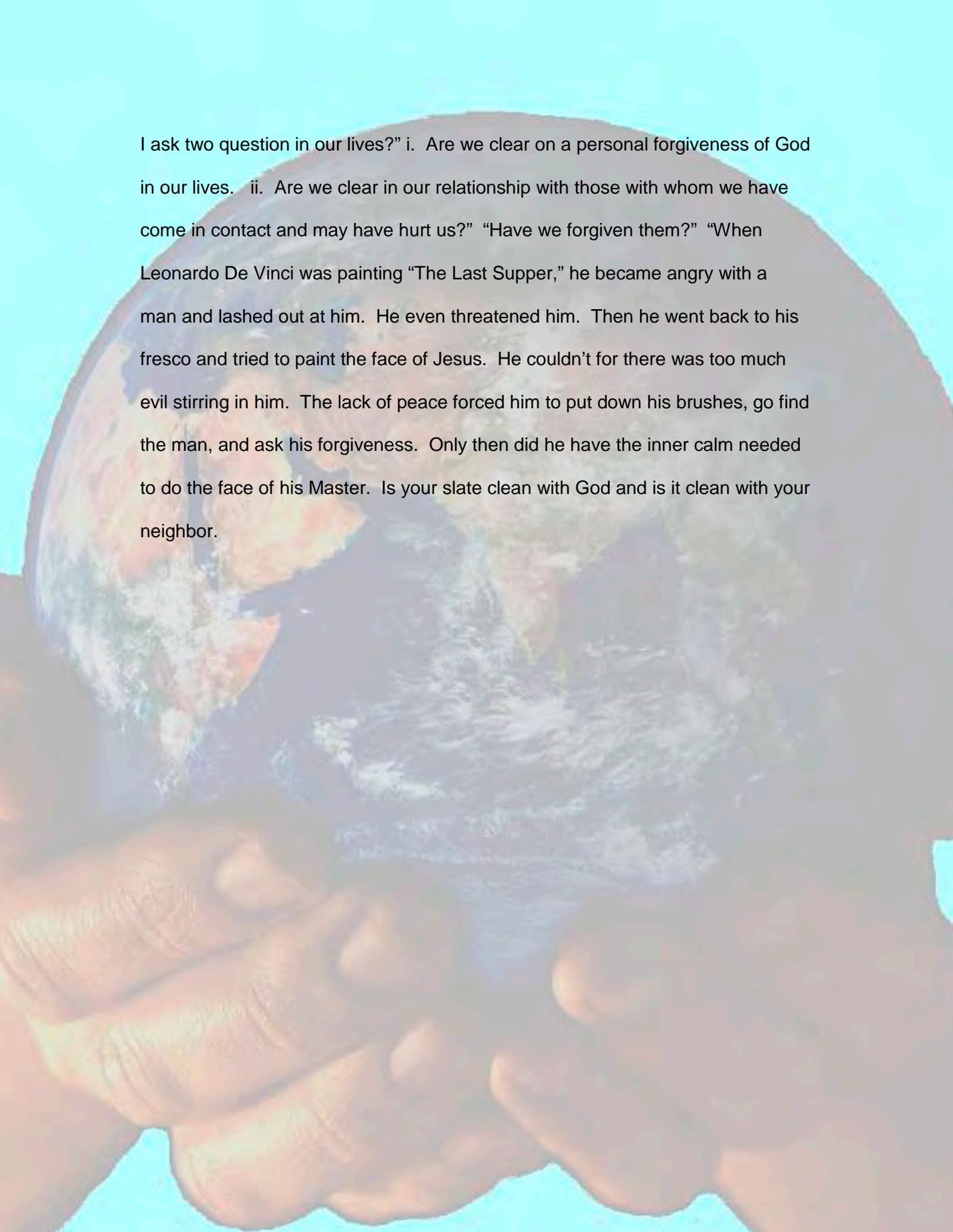


the other. If we refuse to forgive we are no better than the unmerciful servant who had been forgiven so much yet who refused to forgive so little. And we will forfeit our forgiveness. Forgiveness is clear evidence of the reach of grace towards us. The gratitude that wells up in us because we have been forgiven by the great God of the universe, should spill over into a forgiving response to those who hurt us no matter what they do. E.L. Hamilton once rebuked a Christian worker for manifesting an unforgiving spirit toward a penitent. After a moment's thought, the lady replied, "Well I guess I will pardon her, as you suggest, but I will never want to have anything more to do with her! Hamilton replied, "Is that how you want God to treat you? Do you want Him to say that He will forgive you, but that He will never have anything more to do with you? Remember, when Christ forgave you, He cast your sins into the sea of everlasting forgetfulness." It is the height of ingratitude to freely and joyfully accept the forgiveness of God and refuse to forgive those who have hurt you. Indeed we cannot keep the forgiveness and the peace of God and maintain that attitude.

Conclusion

During this Lenten season we celebrate the Cross and the resurrection of Jesus. Embodied within it is the message of forgiveness and reconciliation.

We celebrate with gratitude the cost of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross which made possible our salvation We rejoice in the forgiving reach of grace as we **receive Him** as Lord and Savior. He shed His precious Blood to provide forgiveness. The Word of God is clear on this truth. For "without the shedding of Blood there is no forgiveness of sins." As we approach the Easter weekend



I ask two question in our lives?" i. Are we clear on a personal forgiveness of God in our lives. ii. Are we clear in our relationship with those with whom we have come in contact and may have hurt us?" "Have we forgiven them?" "When Leonardo De Vinci was painting "The Last Supper," he became angry with a man and lashed out at him. He even threatened him. Then he went back to his fresco and tried to paint the face of Jesus. He couldn't for there was too much evil stirring in him. The lack of peace forced him to put down his brushes, go find the man, and ask his forgiveness. Only then did he have the inner calm needed to do the face of his Master. Is your slate clean with God and is it clean with your neighbor.