



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

### PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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**“UNLIMITED FORGIVENESS”**

**EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians**

**[9:2-12] If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you and the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. My defence to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.” Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who ploughs should plough in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.**

**EXPLANATION:** Paul's apostleship is under attack in this chapter and he defends it. Although he was not one of the 12 apostles, nevertheless he proved himself capable of teaching and bringing others to Christ by those he had converted in Corinth, truly accomplishing the work of an apostle among them. **(9:2)** Since he fulfilled the essential qualifications of and was doing the work of an apostle, he was entitled to be supported by the Christian Community. **(9:3)** Paul and Barnabas were not married. Therefore Paul argues that "sisters-in-the-Lord" (pious Christian women) should be allowed to accompany them, to help with their ministry and to provide support. Peter and some of the other apostles were married and their wives helped them in their ministry. He says that they that do God's work should also be entitled to receive help from the Christian community because they are like soldiers in God's army, sent out to fight evil; they are like shepherds in that they guide and guard Christ's congregation. They are like farmers in that they plant churches. **(9-7)** As it would be unfair to muzzle a threshing ox, not allowing it to eat of the grain it treads (Deut 25:4) it is unfair to deprive a hard-working man of his just wages. Likewise, those who do the work of the Lord should be recognized and their work recompensed. The clergy must be given "**material**" support to be free to sow "**spiritual things**". **(9:8-12)**

**GOSPEL** **The Reading is from St Matthew** [18:23-35]  
Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, "Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all." Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released

him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, "Pay me what you owe!" So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all." And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.

**EXPLANATION:** The parable illustrates unlimited forgiveness towards our brothers and sisters who have sinned against us. The "**Kingdom of Heaven**" is the Word of God. The "**King**" is God. The Word is likened to a man who was a king, that is, He Who became incarnate for our sake and appeared in the likeness of men, and He **settles accounts with His servants** as a Good Judge. **(18:23)** Sin is portrayed as a debt to God, and "**10,000 talents**" refers to countless sins we commit by neglecting God's will. "**Selling**" the debtor (sinner) and his family indicates alienation from God, for the one who is sold goes to another master. Because of his sins, the whole family suffers for there is no peace in a home which is subject to demonic attacks and illnesses. Also the wife and children have been sold, that is, given over to afflictions so that they do not follow the sinners' footsteps and their spirits might be saved. **(18:24-25)** But as soon as the servant "**fell down prostrate before God**", repented, and promised to depart

from his sinful ways, God in His great love and compassion for man, immediately forgave the whole debt, even though the servant was not asking for complete forgiveness of the debt, but an extension of time in which to repay it. Learn, therefore, that God gives more than we ask for. His love for man is such that even what seems to be severe (the command that the servant be sold), God did not speak out of severity, but to terrify the servant in order to induce him to correct his life, to put all his hope in God, and to save his soul.

**(18:26-27)** But he who had been forgiven **“went out”**(departed) and seized his fellow servant by the throat, demanding payment of a small debt of 100 denarii, and irrespective of his pleas for time to pay, cast him into prison. One who lacks compassion departs from God and is a stranger to God. So great was his inhumanity that, although he had been forgiven the greater amount of 10,000 talents, more than a labourer could earn in a lifetime, he could not at all forgive the smallest amount of 100 denarii which was about 100 days wages, nor even grant a postponement.

**(18:28-30)** Angered by his inhumanity and ingratitude, the king revoked his gift and handed him over to the punitive powers for eternal punishment because he will never be able to repay such a large amount. **(18:31)** Understand, then, what a great evil is remembrance of wrongs, since it revokes God’s gift. **(18:32-34)**The same fate awaits us if we do not forgive **“from our hearts”** and not only from our lips. **(18:35)** The Lord declares without equivocation that forgiveness is more than a commandment. It is a condition of being forgiven. The Lord, emphatically relates his fundamental requirement that those who would enter the Kingdom of Heaven must forgive. When we forgive from our heart, true reconciliation and healing comes upon us by God’s grace. If we are truly grateful to God for His having forgiven us our countless sins, through Christ, we find it impossible to withhold our forgiveness for the comparatively paltry debts owed to us.