

The narrative gives an interesting glimpse of the character of Peter. He is always the practical man dealing with the practical affairs of life. Even while a disciple he showed traits of leadership which were afterwards fully developed. Thus the question has suggested itself to his practical mind: "What is the limit to forgiveness in the case of one man in his dealing with another?" That Peter had advanced in no small degree in the Christian life is evident from his even suggesting the idea that an erring brother should be forgiven seven times.

In the narrative Jesus Christ gives us a hint regarding the great doctrine of his religion, namely, forgiveness of sins through his vicarious sufferings upon the cross. Our Saviour continually spoke in parable; and great spiritual truths are taught in these parables which are not, at first sight, apparent. Thus, in the present parable our Saviour foreshadows to us the infinite love of the Father freely forgiving man through the sufferings of Calvary.

Read Luke 17:3, where our Saviour's teaching on the subject of forgiveness is given in slightly different form.

NOTES ON THE TEXT.

21.—The Rabbis taught that the transgressor should be forgiven three times and no more, justifying this by the authority of Amos 1:3. Our Saviour teaches that there should be no limit to forgiveness. We are reminded of the petition in our Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

Compare with this the action of our Saviour in the judgment hall when he was ill-treated by the servants of the high priest, and when, upon the cross, he prayed for his murderers. Compare also Stephen's prayer for his murderers while he was being stoned to death. The whole of Paul's life after conversion is also a lesson on forgiveness. Notwithstanding all the wrongs he received, he never, on a single occasion, uttered an unkind word in retaliation.

22.—What is forgiveness? It is difficult to give a full definition of the term. Perhaps it would be better to analyse the thought underlying the word and to formulate its component parts.

First then, forgiveness is closely allied to *penitence*. We do not forgive then till we realize that we were in the wrong as well as those who injured us; and that in cherishing the unforgiving spirit we have grievously sinned. These two then, are twin sisters in the Christian religion—Penitence and Forgiveness. The one never appears without the other.

To forgive also, is to *forget* the injury done. St. Paul gives us a description of this element of forgiveness in the 13th chap. of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians.

The next element in forgiveness is Love as

expressed in Rom. 12:19-21. There Paul teaches us that the essence of forgiveness is Love.

23.—Our Saviour very often speaks of the kingdom of heaven. Thus, he says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 5:3. He speaks of the kingdom of heaven in the parable of the talents, etc.

By this expression our Saviour means the kingdom of grace which is gradually formed in the believer's heart through the indwelling Christ, and which will be succeeded by the kingdom of glory at the second coming of the Saviour. The servants spoken of are ministers or stewards.

The imagery of the parable is drawn from Gentile and Jewish life, the master mentioned being some Gentile ruler possessed of great wealth and authority who has satraps or governors under him, which governors have frequent opportunities of embezzling in the provinces over which they rule. Mention is frequently made in classic literature of such extortion.

"The King Eternal in various ways and at various periods takes account of men, as by a commercial crisis, a personal affliction, a revival, or by those heartsearchings which come without explicable cause on almost all men at some period of their life."

24.—Trench says that we can best appreciate the sum of ten thousand talents by comparing it with other sums mentioned in Scripture.

In the construction of the Tabernacle, 29 talents of gold were used. Exodus 28:34.