

redemption value or the cost of redemption. We are therefore told that our debt has been paid for us, not with money but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Money could never pay back the debt we owe to God for our sins, the mention of the 10000 talents was meant to provide that indication. The debt too is not financial but moral and spiritual; it is because of our wrong doing in the sight of God. It is because of our disobedience and going against His will and the damage that has caused to our lives, the lives of others, but above all sorrow in God's heart that we have not trusted in the one who made us and has given us life.

The wonderful thing is that God who is, we are told, "Rich in mercy because of the great love He has for us" has Himself paid the price for all our wrong doing. Jesus Christ has taken that debt upon Himself and given His life in payment. The Bible tells us that the "Life is in the Blood" so being redeemed by the blood means by the giving of the life. We are told that we **have** been redeemed indicating that, as far as God is concerned, the value of the Life of His Son Jesus Christ was sufficient payment for our sins, and for the sins of the whole world. Anyone can therefore come and be forgiven; anyone can come and be redeemed from their sinful life; anyone can come to the risen Jesus Christ and receive Him into their lives. Jesus's resurrection shows that the debt was fully paid and His life was sufficient payment, as God has now raised Jesus from the dead.

In the parable we are told that the King freely forgave the debtor all his debt. All you need to do is come to Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and ask His for His forgiveness and His mercy and He will forgive you. It is called repentance, the acknowledging of your wrong doing, admitting it to God and then asking Him to take away your sins.

Wonderful freedom results, it is all free and the burdens you have carried in your heart and life will go. It is just like Pilgrim in "Pilgrim's Progress" when his burden fell off at the cross. Many

Christians can testify to the reality of God's redemption and forgiveness over the past 2000 or so years.

How do we know it is real? One of the results is that you will have a forgiving heart too. In our parable because the first debtor once forgiven would not forgive the debt owed to him, he was eventually cast into prison until he had paid the very last amount of his debt. If we will not forgive we hold wrong doing in our hearts and God cannot forgive that. It is not that He does not want to, but that if we insist on holding onto that which is wrong, God cannot take it away. We have a free will in this. If we hold onto our wrong doing then we have to pay the whole of our debt and that we will never be able to do. That is why there is a place called hell, it is where those who won't let go of their wrong doing remain for ever; they are still trying to pay off their impossible debt.

Come to Jesus, receive Him and let Him take away all your wrong doing and any unforgiveness you may have. Let Him take away your burdens and enable you to live a loving and kind life, a life free from all your past wrong doing. The price Jesus paid is enough for you to be freely forgiven, it is much more than 10000 talents, it is His whole life which could be said to worth, according to our calculations, much, much more than 10000 normal lives.



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The Value of our Lives?

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In the Bible the Lord Jesus tells a parable of a King taking account of his servants who owed him money. We read that the King forgave the debtor the whole of his huge debt of 10000 talents. It is interesting to work out the real value of the amounts of money quoted in the parable in today's currency and see exactly the levels of debt involved.

In the same parable we are also told that the servant who, having been forgiven the huge debt by his master, then goes out and demands payment of a much smaller sum from someone else who owed him money. The amount here demanded is 100 pence but in the original language 100 denarii. This was a currency of the day and is considered to be the payment of a day's wage. So the 100 denarii owed is the equivalent of 100 days wages, not a small sum and in the UK, where courts consider a week's average earnings to be £400, this amounts to £8000 based on a five day week.

The amount forgiven by the King was 10,000 talents. One talent is considered to be 10,000 denarii or 10,000 days' work. Again based on a five day week that is 38 ½ years' work or a lifetime's work, at least for someone in what are called developed countries; even working 7 days per week that is 27 ½ years work and for a Jew who was to work only a 6 day week more than 32 years' work. Yet the king forgave a debt of 10,000 talents which is 385,000 years work, an amazing figure when looking at the life expectancy of a human being. Based in the UK on our £400 per week average wage forgiving 10000 talents is 8 billion pounds; £8,000,000,000

There are very, very few people in these times who have a personal fortune greater than 8 billion pounds or at today's exchange rate 9,480,000,000 Euros or \$12,160,000,000, over 12 billion dollars. Most of the figures for the world's richest people are given in dollars so maybe that is the best figure to use.

To give another idea of the size of it all it is interesting to look at the measurements of the currency. A US dollar note is 156 mm long, this is approximately 15 cm or 6 inches in length; in fact most currencies have banknotes about that size. The British Ten Pound Note, there are no longer one pound notes in the UK, the Swiss 20 Franc note and even the 100 Shilling note in Kenya. So with some simple arithmetic 12,160,000,000 dollar notes, all end to end, would extend to 81,000 Km (or 50625 miles) which given the circumference of the earth at 40.075 Km (or 24,901 miles) means that 12,160,000,000 dollar notes would extend twice round the earth.

Most commercial long haul jet aircraft fly at around 550mph or 880km per hour. For such an aircraft to fly the 81,000 km (or 50,625 miles) would take 92 hours or almost 4 days continual flying.

All these statistics are put forward to show how large the amount the King, in Jesus' parable, forgave the debtor. It is an amount which is completely beyond the means of any of us. Even the 100 denarii owed by the other debtor is a fairly large sum of money, if it was to be paid back in 100 days. To have all your money taken away for 100 days would be a huge challenge for anyone and is why most people who owe money make arrangements to pay back in instalments.

In Israel the people were not allowed to charge any interest on a debt. To do so extends repayment periods hugely and costs a great deal of extra money. In modern society banks and so on make much of their business from charging interest on loans and with the long periods of repayments required, even a small debt can become a burden and take many years to pay back. For our one hundred denarii to be paid back over 20 years at an interest rate of 5%, the total to be paid back would be 265.30 denarii, with the interest payment alone being 165.30 denarii. This is more than one and a half times the original loan.

Perhaps this shows how difficult it is to pay back debts when they have to be paid in instalments with interest. This is why God said that the Jews were not to charge interest, so that any burdens were relieved as soon as possible.

The debt of 10000 talents is just too massive to contemplate ever making a repayment. Perhaps the Lord Jesus told the parable to illustrate the need for us to forgive those who have wronged us. We are to do so in the light of the huge amount God has forgiven us, but also perhaps the Lord Jesus is also indicating to us the huge debt which we owe to God, and of which he has forgiven us all, and this in comparison to the size of the debts humans owe to one another. Even nations, many of whom are in deep financial crises in these times, for borrowing money they really can't afford to pay, would struggle to find the billions of dollars, euros or pounds required to pay back the 10000 talents.

The Bible though helps us out with the problem of our huge debt to God. We read "We are not redeemed with silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without spot or blemish". We are not redeemed with money, as coins at that time would have normally been made out of these precious metals. The original idea of the coin was that it contained the value of the metal that it represented. It is only in more recent times that coins have been made out of more base metals and now only indicate the value. Banks originally are meant to hold gold to the amount of the coins and notes they issue, but no longer, as they have issued far more money than they hold in gold. Redemption means to buy back, the idea comes from giving an item in exchange for money and then taking money and buying the object back. It was and still is a way of borrowing money and the money paid to get the object back is the

