

21. Pliny the Younger To Sabinianus

Pliny the Younger (A.D. 62?-c.A.D. 113). Letters.
The Harvard Classics. 1909-14.

The freedman of yours with whom you said you were angry has been to me, flung himself at my feet, and clung to me as if I were you. He begged my help with many tears, though he left a good deal unsaid; in short, he convinced me of his genuine penitence. I believe he has reformed, because he realizes he did wrong.

You are angry, I know, and I know too that your anger was deserved, but mercy wins most praise when there was just cause for anger. You loved the man once, and I hope you will love him again, but it is sufficient for the moment if you allow yourself to be appeased. You can always be angry again if he deserves it, and will have more excuse if you were once placated.

Make some concession to his youth, his tears, and your own kind heart, and do not torment him or yourself any longer - anger can only be a torment to your gentle self. I'm afraid you will think I am using pressure, not persuasion, if I add my prayers to his - but this is what I shall do, and all the more freely and fully because **I have given the man a very severe scolding and warned him firmly that I will never make such a request again. This was because he deserved a fright, and is not intended for your ears; for maybe I shall make another request and obtain it, as long as it is nothing unsuitable for me to ask and you to grant.**

24. To Sabinianus a reply

You have done the right thing in taking back into your home and favour the freedman who was once dear to you, with my letter to mediate between you both. You will be glad of this, and I am certainly glad, first because I see you are willing to be reasonable and take advice when angry, and then because you have paid me the tribute of bowing to my authority, or, if you prefer, granting my request. So accept my compliments as well as my thanks, but, at the same time, a word of advice for the future: **be ready to forgive the faults of your household even if there is no one there to intercede for them.**