

## June 18

**Matthew 18:32-33 (NIV)** [Jesus said,] <sup>32</sup>“Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.’ <sup>33</sup>Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’

Phyllis and Joan grew up together. Their families knew each other, they attended the same school, and they participated in the same activities. However, from their earliest days, Joan was a thorn in Phyllis’ side. From the beginning, Joan seemed to delight in tormenting Phyllis. By the time they graduated high school, the wounds Joan had inflicted were deep. At college, Phyllis began to attend a Christian fellowship where she accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior. Her life changed dramatically as she changed. Truly, she was forgiven and had become a new creation. However, upon returning home one day, she encountered Joan, and the old feelings rose to the top. Phyllis was filled with anger, resentment, and a desire to get even. When she confided in her mother, her mother quietly but firmly said, “Phyllis, the Lord has forgiven you. Now, it is time you forgave Joan.”

Yesterday, we looked at Paul’s statement that each one of us once fell into that “lost” category where we wallowed in our sins without remorse. It was Jesus Who willingly and lovingly reached out to us and forgave us when we never thought we needed forgiveness. Freely we received; freely we are to forgive. However, it is very easy to receive forgiveness because we all yearn for that and because we know we desperately need it. It is far more difficult, however, to let go of our anger and desire to get even so we can forgive others. Yet, forgiving others is not an option for those who accept and follow Jesus. We are to forgive because we have been forgiven. We set the standard for our forgiveness by how willing we are to forgive others. We do not wait for others to repent and ask for forgiveness. We extend it because that is what Jesus has done for us and because it frees us from bitterness. We forgive by letting go of our anger and desire for getting even. We forgive because it frees us to love more, to be at peace, and to heal.