### Matthew

## Chapter 18

1It was less than an hour later that the disciples came up to Jesus and asked:  
  
 ‘Which [of us] will be the greatest in the Kingdom of the heavens (or, of God)?’  
  
2So [Jesus] called a little boy over and stood him in their midst, and said:  
  
 3‘I tell you the truth: Unless you change your ways and become like this little boy, you won’t get into the Kingdom of the heavens!  
  
 4‘But the one who humbles himself like this little boy will be the greatest in the Kingdom of the heavens. 5And whoever welcomes someone like this little boy in my name, welcomes me.  
  
 6‘But if anyone sets a snare before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for him to have the type of millstone that’s turned by a burro hung around his neck, and then to be dropped into the open sea!  
  
 7‘Woe to this system of things because of its snares!  
  
 ‘Of course, there’ll always be snares… But woe to the man who sets them!  
  
 8‘So if your hand or foot is a snare to you, cut it off and throw it away. For it’s better to enter life maimed or lame than to be thrown into the age-long fire with two hands or two feet.  
  
 9‘Also, if your eye is a snare to you, rip it out and throw it away. For it’s better to enter life with one eye than to be thrown with two eyes into the fires of the garbage dump.  
  
 10‘This is why you should never disregard any of these little ones!  
  
 ‘For I tell you: Their messengers in the heavens gaze upon the face of my Father in the heavens!’  
  
 11‘For the Son of Man came to save that which was lost. [spurious text, copied from Luke 19:10]  
  
 12‘What do you think? If a man has 100 sheep, but one of them strays, won’t he leave the 99 and search in the mountains for the one who’s strayed?  
  
 13‘Then, if he happens to find it, I tell you, he’ll be happier over that one than over the 99 that didn’t stray!  
  
 14‘So it is with my Father in the heavens… He doesn’t want even one of these little ones to perish. 15Therefore, if your brother should fail in some way, take him aside and discuss it between you and him alone; then if he listens to you, you’ll have won over your brother.  
  
 16‘But if he doesn’t listen, you should bring along one or two others, so that whatever is said [by him] can be proven by the mouths of two or three witnesses. 17However, if he refuses to listen even to them, you should speak to the congregation. And if he refuses to listen to even the congregation, let him become as a gentile or as a tax collector among you.  
  
 18‘I tell you the truth: everything that you bind on the earth will be bound in the heavens, and everything that you set free on the earth will be set free in the heavens.  
  
 19‘Again, I truthfully say: If two of you agree to anything on this earth that you must request, it’ll happen because of my Father in heaven. 20For wherever two or three are gathered in my name, I’ll be there among them.’  
  
21Then Peter came up to him and asked:  
  
 ‘Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother when he sins against me… Up to seven times?’  
  
22But Jesus replied:  
  
 ‘I tell you; not up to seven times, but up to seventy-seven times!  
  
 23‘To illustrate:  
  
 ‘The Kingdom of [God] is like a man, a king, who wanted to settle some accounts with his slaves. 24So he started by bringing in a man who owed him 10,000 large silver coins. 25And because he couldn’t repay it, the master ordered that he, his wife, his children, and everything that he owned was to be sold to make the payment.  
  
 26‘However, the slave fell down with his face to the ground before [the master] and begged:  
  
 ‘Be patient with me and I’ll pay back everything that I owe you!’  
  
 27‘Well, [the king] was moved to pity at this, so he forgave him and freed him from his entire debt.  
  
 28‘But shortly thereafter, the slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves that owed him just 100 small coins, and he grabbed him and started choking him, saying:  
  
 ‘Pay back everything that you owe me!’  
  
 29‘Then his fellow slave fell down and started begging him, saying:  
  
 ‘Be patient with me, and I’ll pay you back!’  
  
 30‘However, [the first slave] had the man locked up until he could pay everything that he was owed.  
  
 31‘Well, when all the other slaves saw this they became very upset, so they went and told their master what had happened. 32Then the master summoned him and said this:  
  
 ‘Wicked slave! I canceled all that debt for you because you begged me. 33So, why didn’t you see the need to show the same type of mercy for your fellow slave that I had shown to you?’  
  
 34‘And the master became so furious that he had him taken off to jail until he could repay all that he owed.  
  
 35‘Now, this is how my heavenly Father will deal with you if you don’t forgive your brothers from your hearts.’