**Part II: Forgiveness: What is It?**

         This is the second blog addressing the issue of forgiveness. A short review is in order. Forgiveness is man’s greatness need. In that sense man is a needy person. This position was not normal. Adam and Eve were created in harmony with God and each other. There was no sin, no judgment, no wrath, and no death, spiritual or physical. When Adam sinned his eyes were opened. He was guilty and condemned. He ran from God to no avail (Gen. 3:6-10). Man was thrust out of God’s presence in need of forgiveness. God, in His mercy and justice, provided His forgiveness in Christ. Each believer is united to Christ and is thereby forgiven in Christ. What is forgiveness?

God's forgiveness is a transaction, a declaration, a promise by God to you that your sins are remembered no more – *out of God’s mind* so to speak. Sin – guilt and condemnation – has been put behind *God’s back*. They have been put *out of His sight* and *out of His reach* (Isa. 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Jer. 31:31-34; Ps. 103:12; Micah 7:19; Ps. 51:1,9; Acts 3:19). Obviously the omniscient God does not forget. The above terms are metaphors to express God’s declaration that He will NOT hold the person He has forgiven guilty and condemned. How can that be? How is it possible to forgive guilty people? Is God playing the game of legal fiction? You know the answer: emphatically NO. God remembers the believer’s sins no more because He held His Son guilty and condemned at  the cross. Jesus went to hell on the cross, thus paying it all. The guilt and condemnation due you, believer, Jesus took to Himself. This includes the guilt from Adam’s first sin. WOW!  God will not hold you guilty after He has held Jesus guilty. He would not mistreat and misrepresent the cross and His Son (Rom. 8:32).

The believer is called to remember his forgiveness in Christ (actually, it is God’s forgiveness of the believer). At least one activity should and will follow. The believer, being the most forgiven and loved person, should – and will – be the most forgiving and loving person (see Luke 7:36-50).

Forgiveness is never earned *by* us but was earned *for* us by Christ. Forgiveness is modeled after God’s forgiveness of the believer (see above: Isa. 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Jer. 31:34; Micah 7:19; Ps 51:1,9; 103:12). The omniscient God remembers no more because He remembers His Son’s work and His own legal transaction of declaring His Son guilty and the believer, in Christ, as not guilty. God will never reverse this judgment (Rom. 8:33-34). Praise God.

For the believer, forgiveness is a gift and a duty. But it is also a privilege and a blessing to be forgiven and to forgive. Forgiveness probes the heart. Being forgiven and forgiving is a learning experience – about yourself and God, the cross, and God’s love and mercy. For the believer, granting forgiveness means he goes on record as God did. He makes a promise and a declaration to the person, to God, and to himself that he will not raise the offense again in a judgmental (such as gossip), accusatory, or revengeful manner. The forgiver will not bring up the offense and or his own hurt to the detriment of the other person and the relationship. Forgiveness is always vertical – to God – and horizontal – to man (Matt 18:21-35). Granting forgiveness and willingness to forgive are not synonymous and will be the subject of our next blog.

**Application**:

1. Write out your understanding of forgiveness so far.

2. Read Luke 7:36-50 and Matthew 18:21-35. Write out what you learn about God, self, and forgiveness.

3.  To which relationships do you need to apply these truths?