**Part III: Forgiveness: Categories**

This is the third blog addressing the subject of forgiveness. Not only is forgiveness man’s greatness need, it is a commonly misunderstood truth. In the first blog, I emphasized that Matthew 7:1-6 was a cornerstone passage. Forgiveness is relational. Functioning as a forgiving person begins with an accurate knowledge of one's own sin. My sin and yours hinders a proper perception of our forgiveness in Christ and hinders a proper view of the other person’s sin. The subject of the second blog was a proper definition of forgiveness. It is going on record declaring to and promising God, self, and the other person that you will not bring up the offense for the offender’s hurt or detriment, or to hinder the relationship.

In this third blog, I set out categories of forgiveness in order to help understand the full spectrum of biblical forgiveness. The first category is Judicial Forgiveness. It involves God’s forgiveness to you. It accompanies the transfer of the now-believer from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light that occurs at salvation. It is a once-for-all activity on God’s part. God is functioning as the Just Judge of all the earth (Gen 18:25). The result is given in Rom 8:1: *there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus*. God promised and kept His promise. When believers were forgiven in Christ at salvation, God “remembered their sins no more.” He will not bring up your sin to the detriment of His relationship with you. In part, forgiveness of another is modeled after God’s judicial forgiveness.

The second category of forgiveness is Paternal Forgiveness. In contrast to Judicial Forgiveness, God as Father forgives believers on an ongoing basis. He does “remember their sins” but not as a judge but as Father. Fatherly forgiveness is repeated and ongoing because His children displease Him regularly: Matthew 6:12. Being rebuked and being forgiven are joys to and for the believer.

A third category of forgiveness is Familial Forgiveness: believer to believer (Eph 4:31-32; Col 3:12-14). I will discuss this subject in later blogs. Suffice it to say that the believer has only two options in regards to sin and a fellow believer: cover or confront.

A fourth category is Non-familial Forgiveness: believer to unbeliever. Unbelievers can’t repent and you, the believer, can’t grant him forgiveness. Since he has no indwelling Holy Spirit, the concept of sin is foreign to him. He does not have the capacity to repent of sin and receive forgiveness. That, in part, means that much spiritual maturity on the part of the believer is needed. The believer must (is obligated) have a willingness – heart’s desire – to forgive. A willingness to forgive is biblical (Mark 11:25). It differs from granting forgiveness. A willingness to forgive, at least, means no grudge holding, bitterness, and revenge. It means making it easy for the other person to repent to you and to God.

A willingness to forgive is having an attitude of forgiveness. It is a must for the believer.  It is Christ-like (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60; 2 Tim. 4:16), yet it is not granting forgiveness. An unwillingness to forgive may be due to ignorance, resentment, and bitterness. The latter two leads to grudge holding which is primarily against God.

**Application**:

1. Review the principles in these “forgiveness” blogs. What is your understanding of forgiveness?

2. How are you, believer, thinking, desiring, and acting as a forgiven person? As a forgiving person?

3. Make the link between being forgiven and forgiving according to Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 7:36-50

4. Think ahead: how will you be able to handle the hurts of being sinned against?