**Part VI: Forgiveness: Consequences of Un-forgiveness and Grudge-holding**

What are some consequences of an unwillingness to forgive and initiate reconciliation? Failing to forgive carries it own burden. As we have discussed, grudge-holding is a major consequence (Matt. 18:21-35; Luke 7:36-50). Grudge holding is an attack on God – His character, wisdom, and goodness. It is based on a view that God is a debtor God (owes you) and a degraded God (your works, no matter how tainted, should suit God just fine). Underlying grudge holding is the belief that your sin of grudge holding is not a sin or is less of a sin than that done to you. Moreover, it is based on the false belief that being sinned against allows you to sin against the other person because you deserve better treatment than God gave His Son – Jesus Christ. The grudge holder functions as if relationships don’t matter: God to him, him to God, and him to the other person. The un-forgiver can expect angst within himself and misery in this life (Prov.13:15b).

Another consequence and effect of un-forgiveness is the failure to apply Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13. Conversely, failing to apply those passages leads to grudge holding. In effect the person removes those passages from his Bible or were never there. Prideful, the grudge holder assumes that he is a higher authority than God’s Word. Since forgiveness is relational, it is vital to and for body life - at church and home. Proper horizontal activity (person to person) reflects a correct view of one’s vertical reference (to God) both individually and corporately, at church and at home.

One other consequence of grudge holding is attempting to forgive yourself. First, there is the fact of being sinned against. Second, wrong thinking and desires produce bitterness and resentment. Third, the hurts of being sinned against, a sinful response to it, and to the other person produces an inner-man unrest. This inner-man angst is a logical and predictable consequence of trying to forgive oneself. Instead of seeking God’s counsel in His Word, the “self-forgiver” takes matters into his own hands. Trying to forgive oneself is impossible and utterly foolish. It leads to greater angst. Simply, there is no biblical command to forgive oneself.

The idea is that you “sin against self.” Rather you are the sinner. Definitions are important. Sin is a whole-person, anti-God rebellious act against His standard. Forgiveness understands and acknowledges this vertical reference first and foremost (Ps 51:1-3). The “self-forgiver” considers himself more important than God. He has been hurt and in a desire for relief of bad feelings he seeks to forgive himself. All the while he has missed the fact that being sinned against is somehow worse than his sinful response. He is not concerned about his sin against God, the True Forgiver (Rom. 3:21-26; 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:21). He places himself in the position of God.

Forgiveness is not about making a person feel good. It is about God restoring Himself to hell-deserving sinners. Attempting to forgive oneself is stealing and competing with God. It makes a statement that Christ’s active obedience (a perfect life before the cross) and His passive obedience (His death and going to hell on the cross) is impotent. Functionally, the self-forgiver claims that God failed, Christ’s cross-work did not do the job, and he must be his own savior.

**Application**:

1. Where are you in your vertical and horizontal relationships?

2. How has your relationship with God, and God to you, affected your relationships with others beginning at home and working outward?

3. Are you guilty of grudge holding? If so specifically write out how you will use God’s truth to honor Him and reconcile one to another.