**Part VII: Forgiveness: Cover and Confront**

This is the penultimate installment of the series addressing biblical forgiveness. So far I have defined the term; discussed the implications of the believer as being forgiven and functioning as a forgiver; discussed false views of forgiveness and potential ramifications; and discussed the perils of attacking God through grudge-holding and "self-forgiving." Throughout these discussions I hoped you have been gripped by the greatness, beauty, and the sweetness of God as The Forgiver. Only a right understanding of Who God is and who you are as a believer will motivate you to forgive as you have been forgiven as God’s chosen people (Col. 3:12-14).

There is one more aspect of forgiveness that I must address in order to complete our excursus into the biblical view of forgiveness. That aspect is confront or cover – how do you decide?  As you might imagine the Bible offers more than enough guidance in this matter. Every believer when faced with another’s sin has two options and only two: cover or confront.

Covering is an Old and New Testament concept (Prov. 10:12; 17:9; James 5:8; 1 Peter 4:8). In the New Testament the word in the original language (*kalupto*) means to hide or veil. The ideas conveyed in these passages are the necessity of covering sin and love being the instrument that does it.

How is sin hidden and from Whom?  Clearly sin must be “hidden” from God. How is that possible since He is the all-knowing, all-seeing, and all-understanding God? We plumb the depths of God’s love and mercy in answering the question. Forgiveness is God’s answer. Sins are placed on Jesus’s account and our punishment and guilt is reckoned to Him by the Father (Isa. 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Jer. 31:34; Micah 7:19; Ps. 103:12). The sheer amazement of God’s forgiveness is captured in Ps. 130:4*: But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are to be feared.* God has covered – actively and completely – the guilt and condemnation due to original sin and the believer’s subsequent sins. In like manner, there are times in which the believer can and must cover another’s sin – hide it from himself.

Covering is an inner-man activity – a promise to and between the coverer and God. It is the activity of the person who has been sinned against or thinks he has been sinned against. Covering is giving a response to God and the other person BUT not necessarily visibly to the other person. Here is how it works. The coverer (thinking he has been sinned against) says to God and himself: “I will not let this presumed sin interrupt or rupture my relationship with him and You.” He considers it a private matter between him and God. Once covered it is done. The coverer is called to keep his promise. He has God as his model – God is the true Promise Keeper.

At other times confronting the person about his sin is required (Luke 17:1-10; Matt. 18:15-18). The biblical concept of confronting is often misunderstood. Confrontation is a biblical concept although the word is not commonly used. Consider these examples. God had plans for His people and Pharaoh opposed God. Moses was told to confront Pharaoh face to face – take a stand against him on the Lord’s side (Exodus 8:20; 9:13). A similar theme is conveyed in Ps. 17:13: *Rise up God, confront them…* : meet them head on, face to face looking for results which is God’s glory.

On what basis and for what reasons does a person confront instead of cover? These are practical questions. Consider these guidelines which I will flush out in the next and last blog:

1. Confrontation may be required; covering is always to be considered. That said, confrontation may be the most loving activity a believer may engage in with another believer.

2. When there is sin, attention must be directed to a potential rupture of the relationship. The more mature believer must decide. If he can cover the sin he should. If he cannot he must confront. Reconciliation and preserving the relationship are key.

3. When sin is public and harming the cause of Christ, confronting the person is the loving thing to do and is required.

4. When the sin is patterned and without change, confrontation is a serious consideration.

In our next and last blog I will tie up loose ends.

**Application**:

1. What is your view of God as the Great Forgiver? How does that fact influence your relationship with God and others?

2. What is your view of yourself as a forgiven person? How does that fact impact your relationship with God and others?