

Does God Only Forgive Us If We Forgive Others?

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Abstract: In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ teaches that God will only forgive [*aphiemi*] us if we forgive [*aphiemi*] others; however, it's hard to understand why God would only forgive us conditionally and yet expect us to forgive unconditionally. I argue that understanding *aphiemi* as not counting a person's sin against their relative moral standing makes sense of Christ's teaching.

1. Introduction

In the Sermon on the Mount Christ teaches,

For if you forgive [*aphiemi*] other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive [*aphiemi*] you. But if you do not forgive [*aphiemi*] others their sins, your Father will not forgive [*aphiemi*] your sins. (Matt 6:14-15, RSV)

Most English Bibles translate *aphiemi* as forgive in this passage; however, it's hard to understand why God would only forgive us conditionally and yet expect us to forgive others unconditionally. If one understands forgiveness as something relatively demanding, like treating an offender as though they did nothing wrong, then it makes sense that God might sometimes withhold forgiveness from us, but then it's hard to explain why God would expect us to always forgive. Presumably, there are situations in which treating an unrepentant offender as though they did nothing wrong is dangerous, morally problematic, or simply unfeasible. On the other hand, if one understands forgiveness as something relatively undemanding, like wishing an offender well, then it makes sense that we should always forgive, but then it's hard to explain why God would ever withhold forgiveness from us. Surely God desires the wellbeing of all of his creatures. So, it's hard to find a conception of forgiveness on which forgiveness is basic enough for us to always extend but not so basic that God would always extend it too.

I argue that there is a reasonable way of understanding *aphiemi* that explains passages like Matt. 6:14-15. In particular, I argue that understanding *aphiemi* as not counting a person's sin against their relative moral standing makes sense of Christ's teaching. I conclude by discussing whether we should understand the English word "forgiveness" in the same way.

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2. Why it is Hard to Interpret Matt. 6:14-15

But before I defend my interpretation of *aphiemi*, allow me to explain in more detail why translating *aphiemi* as forgiveness makes Matt. 6:14-15 hard to interpret. At least in the philosophical literature, conceptions of forgiveness tend to lie on a spectrum between debt-cancellation and resentment-forgiveness. According to debt-cancellation accounts, forgiveness consists in some form of refraining from treating an offender as though they culpably committed an offense, (or, depending on the details of the particular account, at least trying to or resolving to, etc.) In contrast, according to resentment-forgiveness accounts, forgiveness consists in overcoming hard feelings towards an offender, such as resentment, and, depending on the particular account, perhaps also extending them some kind of positive regard (or at least trying to or resolving to, etc.); one may do so, however, while treating the offender as fully culpable. Debt-cancellation accounts tend to explain why God would only forgive conditionally but suggest that Christians ought to forgive conditionally too. In contrast, resentment-forgiveness accounts tend to support the idea that Christians ought to forgive unconditionally, but leave unexplained why God would only forgive conditionally.

For example, consider Wolterstorff's (2015) debt cancellation account. On his view, forgiveness involves treating an offender as much as possible as though she were excused without going so far as to excuse her. As Wolterstorff explains, one excuses an offender when one regards her as not morally responsible for her offense. For instance, one might excuse a friend for stealing one's car keys if one learned that she only stole them because she non-culpably mistook them for her own. In excusing her, one would continue to believe that she stole one's keys, that doing so is wrong, and (if applicable) that her doing so caused one various kinds of trouble; however, one would cease to hold her morally responsible. One would stop engaging with her as though the offense were reflective of her character. Wolterstorff supposes that forgiveness involves something similar. On his view, when one forgives, one continues to believe that an offense was committed, that the offense was wrong, and (if applicable) that the offense caused one various kinds of trouble; one does this, however, while engaging with one's offender as though the offense did not reflect her character. At the same time, in order to forgive, one must refrain from actually excusing her. So, one must do all of this while also continuing to regard her as morally responsible for her offense (Wolterstorff 2015, pg. 170-171). If one's offender were truly repentant, one might do so by believing that she is morally responsible for her past offense, but that her past offense no longer reflects her character now that she has repented. But if one's offender is unrepentant, it's not clear how one can forgive in Wolterstorff's sense. In fact, Wolterstorff himself argues that it is morally impermissible to do so (pg. 172-175). His view thus

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explains why God would only forgive conditionally, but by the same token it suggests that Christians should only forgive conditionally too.¹

Other debt-cancellation accounts are less demanding than Wolterstorff's. For example, Nelkin (2013) understands forgiveness as releasing an offender from all offense-related obligations, such as the obligation to apologize, repent, or make restitution (pg. 175). Doing so, however, is potentially compatible with re-appraising the offender's character, or, given the right circumstances, perhaps even leaving the relationship. But even on a less demanding debt-cancellation view like this one, it still seems problematic for Christians to always forgive. There are likely situations in which Christians should, for example, ask an offender for an apology, or at least regard themselves as being owed one, even if they ought to accept that it is unlikely to be forthcoming.² So, Nelkin's account still faces a similar difficulty as Wolterstorff's in explaining why Christians should always forgive.

A proponent of Wolterstorff's or Nelkin's account might deny the premise that Christians ought to always forgive. As support, they might claim that passages like Matt. 6:14-15 presuppose a context in which an offender has repented. A disadvantage of this approach is that there are other passages in the synoptic Gospels in which Christ commands his followers to forgive (*aphiemi*) anything they have against anyone, not just the sins of the repentant (e.g., Mark 11:25).

In comparison to debt-cancellation accounts, resentment-forbearance accounts tend to be better suited to explaining why Christians ought to forgive unconditionally, but by that very feature they tend to be worse suited to explaining why God would only forgive conditionally. For example, on Holmgren's (1993) view, forgiveness consists in extending one's offender the basic goodwill, compassion, and respect due to them in virtue of their humanity, an action which she argues is sufficient for overcoming resentment towards them and also reaching some kind of internal acceptance of them as a person (although perhaps not as a spouse or as an employee,

¹ Swinburne's ("Forgiveness as a Performative Utterance") and Rutledge's (*Forgiveness and Atonement*) conceptions of forgiveness are similar to Wolterstorff's and so face a similar difficulty as interpretations of *aphiemi*. According to Swinburne, when B forgives A, B makes "a promise to treat A insofar as is possible as someone who has not wronged B by her past action" ("Forgiveness as a Performative Utterance," pg. 133). Following Wolterstorff, Rutledge supposes that when one forgives moral wrongdoing, "one treats a wrongdoer as if they are excusable rather than morally blameworthy for whatever action they have committed" (Rutledge, *Forgiveness and Atonement*, pg. 80). The main difference between Wolterstorff and Rutledge's conception is that Rutledge generalizes Wolterstorff's account to include cases of non-moral offense.

² Warmke's ("The Economic Model of Forgiveness" and "The Normative Significance of Forgiveness") and Zaibert's ("The Paradox of Forgiveness") conceptions of forgiveness are similar to Nelkin's and so face similar difficulties as interpretations of *aphiemi*. Warmke defends an account of forgiveness that is similar to Nelkin's, but suggests that forgiveness involves giving up certain rights as a victim (such as the right to blame) in addition to releasing one's offender from certain obligations. He does not commit to a view on exactly what rights and obligations are relevant to forgiveness. Zaibert's account is similar in structure to Warmke's and Nelkin's but focuses exclusively on punishment.

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etc.) Because, on her view, forgiveness only involves extending attitudes that are already due to everyone anyway, her view makes it easy to see why Christians ought to forgive unconditionally. By the same token, however, her view makes it hard to see why God would ever withhold forgiveness. Surely God already freely gives each of his creatures more than they are due.

Other resentment-forbearance accounts are more demanding than Holmgren's. According to these accounts, forgiveness involves having attitudes that are more generous than those due to an offender in virtue of their humanity. For example, Garrard and McNaughton (2003) suppose that "forgiveness requires something more positive--an attitude of good will (or even love) towards the wrongdoer" (pg. 44). But God already perfectly loves each of his creatures too.³ So, their account still faces a similar difficulty as Holmgren's in explaining why God only forgives conditionally.

According to still other resentment-forbearance accounts, forgiveness involves being charitable in ways that are not obviously required for loving an offender, especially an unrepentant offender. For example, according to Allais, "forgiveness constitutively involves the victim making some kind of separation between the wrongdoer and his wrong act in the way she feels about him, such that the wrong act does not play a role in the way the victim affectively sees the wrongdoer" (2008, pg. 51).⁴ It seems possible that one might love an offender while also allowing their wrongdoing to play a role in how one sees them, especially if they are unrepentant. In fact, given the right circumstances, loving a person might even require one to do so. If this is right, then it may be possible for God to perfectly love an offender while also withholding Allais' kind of forgiveness.⁵ Nonetheless, even on an account of forgiveness like Allais', it is still difficult to explain why God would only forgive conditionally. The Sermon on the Mount depicts generosity to one's enemies not as a way that God imitates Christians, but rather as a way that Christians imitate their "Father who is in heaven" who "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matt. 5:45, RSV). But if God only forgives conditionally, then it seems like he engages in a "tit-for-tat" forgiveness policy, so to speak. So, even if forgiveness goes beyond what is required for loving one's offender, so long as God expects Christians to forgive unconditionally, it's still not clear how he can only forgive conditionally.

³ Strabbing's ("Divine Forgiveness and Reconciliation" and "Forgiveness and Reconciliation") conception of forgiveness face a similar difficulty as interpretations of *aphiemi*.

⁴ For other examples, see Griswold (*Forgiveness*), Roberts ("Forgivingness"), Ware ("Forgiveness and Respect for Persons"), and Hampton (*Forgiveness and Mercy*).

⁵ For the sake of argument, I'm assuming that God can affectively "see" his creation, or at least does something relevantly analogous; so, he can forgive in Allais' sense. For a discussion of the challenges of understanding divine forgiveness in terms of attitudes or emotions, see Warmke ("Divine forgiveness I," pg. 3-5).

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Stump (2019, pg. 181-186) makes sense of Matt. 6:15 by supposing that *aphiemi* refers to a more demanding kind of forgiveness (in the neighborhood of Wolterstorff's) when the passage talks about God's *aphiemi* and refers to a less demanding kind of forgiveness (in the neighborhood of Garrard and McNaughton's) when it talks about our *aphiemi*. She observes that in some contexts we use the word "forgiveness" to mean "forgiveness-plus-actual-reconciliation" (e.g., when a young child asks a sibling for forgiveness) while in other contexts we use it to mean forgiveness that does not necessarily come with reconciliation (e.g., when a spiritual director counsels a grown child to forgive their deceased parent.)⁶ When Christ teaches that God will not *aphiemi* us our trespasses if we do not *aphiemi* others their trespasses, she reads that God will not forgive (and reconcile with) us unless we forgive others (but perhaps without reconciling with them). This interpretation is theologically appealing to her because on her view God initiates reconciliation with all of his creatures, but he cannot unilaterally unite himself to those who resist union with him. She also supposes that union with God includes loving what he loves and imitating his generosity. So, it makes sense to her that God cannot forgive (and be reconciled with) the hard-hearted who refuse to forgive others (even in a minimal sense that does not include reconciliation).

It seems possible that Christ would play on the range of meanings of *aphiemi*, using it one way to talk about God and another to talk about us, especially if the Thomists are right about God's attributes only being analogous to human attributes anyway. Nonetheless, it seems like a cost of Stump's reading that it requires us to assume that Christ changes what he means by *aphiemi* mid-way through his sentence. In particular, her interpretation requires us to assume that God's *aphiemi* in Matt. 6:15 is the kind of forgiveness that includes reconciliation, but our *aphiemi* in the same passage is the kind of forgiveness that may come without reconciliation. However, on her view, both parties practice both types of forgiveness, and *aphiemi* can in theory refer to either type. So, it's not clear why we should think that the different parts of the passage refer to the different kinds of forgiveness Stump claims that they do, (other than that Stump needs us to assume so for her interpretation to work). A reading of the passage would thus be more compelling (all else being equal) if it explained why God's *aphiemi* includes reconciliation, but ours sometimes does not.

We can develop such a reading if we understand *aphiemi* as not counting another's sin against their relative moral standing. This interpretation explains why God's *aphiemi* always includes reconciliation but ours does not, which explains why God would only *aphiemi* conditionally even though he expects us to do so unconditionally.

⁶ These examples are original to Stump ("The Doctrine of the Atonement," pg. 177).

3. Why We Ought to *Aphiemi* Unconditionally

If I spilled a cup of coffee on someone, then in general it would be hypocritical of me to resent them for spilling a cup of coffee on me ten minutes later (assuming we were equally repentant and apologetic, etc.) When it is made salient to us that we occupy the same moral standing as our neighbor, as it is when we commit the exact same sin, we intuitively recognize the hypocrisy of holding it against them in certain ways. Rarely have we offended our neighbor in exactly the same way that they have offended us. However, we all contribute to the collective web of sin in which we are all entangled, and, as co-sinners, we all occupy the same fundamental standing before God. So, there is a sense in which we are all perpetually in a position analogous to that of the coffee-spiller. As a result, there is a sense in which we all can be analogously hypocritical.

Exactly what kind of behavior is analogously hypocritical is going to depend on many particulars, e.g., how repentant the offender is, how similar our sins are to theirs, etc. But no matter the circumstances, at a minimum, it would be analogously hypocritical for us to act in a way that is insensitive to our shared, fundamental standing as sinners. This is not the same thing as being insensitive to their sin. It's not hypocritical to take a neighbor's sins seriously and hold them responsible, so long as one takes one's own sins seriously and holds oneself responsible. It's not necessarily hypocritical to experience fear or grief or self-pity in connection with another's sin, just as one might in connection with one's own sin. It's not even necessarily hypocritical to cut ties with a person on account of their sin, just as one might if one's own sin were endangering either party. But in order to avoid hypocrisy, one should at least construe oneself and one's offender as in some sense having the same, fundamental standing as sinners. One might do so, for example, by allowing one's moral dissimilarities to drop out of focus in one's moral vision and allowing one's moral similarities to take salience. This would be a form of not counting a neighbor's sin against their relative moral standing. So, if we understand *aphiemi* as I propose, we have an explanation for why Christ would command us to *aphiemi* unconditionally.

There are two reasons this directive might seem too problematic for Christ to prescribe. The first is that it might seem willfully blind to focus disproportionately on one's moral similarity to one's offender and to not let one's moral dissimilarity to them equally shape one's moral vision. In response, I appeal to the idea that often there is a range of fitting ways to construe a state of affairs. As Roberts (1995) explains, fitting construals can (up to a certain limit) come apart from beliefs. For example, one might believe that a snake is benign and yet fittingly construe it as scary. Relatedly, as Roberts also explains, for any given situation, there can be a range of fitting ways to construe it. For example, it is equally fitting to construe a duck-rabbit gestalt image as a duck as it is to construe it as a rabbit. In the same way, while retaining the same, accurate beliefs about a particular difficult situation, it might be equally fitting (at least as far as rationality is concerned) to construe it angrily as being cheated out of something one is due as it is to construe

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it gratefully as an opportunity to grow in one's relationship with God. One way of understanding the command to "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials" is that it is a command to cultivate the latter construal (James 1:2, RSV). Returning to the case of a victim forgiving a particular offender, it might be fitting for the victim to focus on the dissimilarities between herself and her offender and so construe the offender as having far inferior moral standing. However, at the same time, it might also be fitting for the same victim with the same beliefs to focus on her moral similarity to the offender and so construe herself as in some sense having roughly equivalent moral standing. One way of understanding Christ's command to *aphiemi* the trespasses of others is that it is a command to cultivate the latter of these fitting construals.

A second worry for my interpretation of Christ's command is that it seems incompatible with proper anger towards one's offender. Often people are not angry in the right ways, at the right things, at the right time, etc; nonetheless, it is plausible that anger is still morally good in certain ways. To give a few examples, anger is thought to be a way of affectively appreciating injustice, being for the good and against evil, and asserting a victim's worth in the face of mistreatment.⁷ In fact, it seems to some that victims may even have a certain moral obligation to feel anger, especially if they do not have other, viable means in the near future of acquiring the moral goods of anger.⁸ But it might seem that anger is at odds with refraining from counting an offense against an offender's relative moral standing. So, it might seem that it is morally problematic to always *aphiemi*.

I have two responses to this worry. First, in some ways it is an interpretative strength of my interpretation, not a weakness, that it is at odds with anger. The moral goods of anger appear to be goods which Christ asks Christians to sacrifice, just as he asks them to sacrifice genuine material goods to feed the poor. For example, Christ commands his followers to turn the other cheek and not resist one who is evil (Matt. 5:39). An interpretation of *aphiemi* that was too anger-permissive would thus be out of step with the tenor of other parts of the Sermon on the Mount. That being said, it's possible that *aphiemi* is compatible with having certain emotions that provide many of the same moral goods as the ones that anger provides. Depending on one's views about anger, *aphiemi* might even be compatible with having certain, particularly pure forms of anger. For example, one might fiercely mourn the injustice of an offense, but do so without being angry at the offender himself in a personally directed way. By doing so, one might accomplish some of the same moral labor as anger: affectively appreciating and bearing witness to injustice, affirming the worth of victims, being effectively for the good and against evil, etc.

⁷ On the moral goods of anger, see Srinivasan ("The Aptness of Anger"), Narayan ("Working Together Across Difference"), Bell ("Anger, Virtue, and Oppression"), Cherry (*The Case for Rage*), Kauppinen ("Valuing Anger").

⁸ See Srinivasan, "The Aptness of Anger".

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Having such an emotion would not be hypocritical, however, so long as one felt similarly about one's own sins.

So, in summary, on my interpretation, *aphiemi* is not compatible with feeling a kind of anger that would be at odds with the rest of Christ's teaching; however, it is compatible with holding one's offender accountable, having accurate beliefs about one's offender, and possibly even having emotions that provide many of the moral goods that anger provides. So, my interpretation, together with the observation that we are in an analogous position to the hypocritical, coffee-spiller, explains why Christ would command us to always *aphiemi*.

4. Why God Can Only *Aphiemi* Conditionally

God, being sinless, does not occupy an analogous position to the hypocritical coffee-spiller. So, it's not fitting for him to construe himself as though he were on the same moral level as a sinner. Nonetheless, he can *aphiemi* our sins in another way. He can restore our relative moral standing by raising us up to his moral level (perhaps not in all respects, but at least in some philosophically significant ones). He does so by remitting our sins from us, transforming us into a new creation, making us partakers of his divine nature, etc. If we understand sin not only as a form of guilt but also as a condition of the person and the will, then it is plausible that God can only remit our sin from us if we cooperate with him by surrendering to his love, receiving his grace, striving towards union with him, etc. Also plausibly, cooperating with God's attempt to transform us involves loving our neighbor. As Stump (2019, pg. 185) explains,

The two commandments on which all the law and the prophets hang (as Matthew 22:40 puts it) are in a sense just one commandment. To love God is to love the goodness that God is and so to love what God loves. Consequently, to be hard-hearted towards another human person is in effect to close out the love of God. And that is why reconciliation and union with God, which is what God in love and forgiveness desires, is ruled out for a human wrongdoer when she is unwilling to forgive someone who has wronged her. Even God cannot fulfill his desire for union with a human person if that person is closed to God...

If Stump is right about this, then God cannot turn us into a new, sinless creation unless we are soft-hearted towards those who wrong us. Plausibly this at least includes not being like the hypocritical, coffee-spiller. So, plausibly, cooperating with God's attempt to transform us includes learning to *aphiemi* others their sins.

We can now understand why God would only *aphiemi* our sins if we *aphiemi* the sins of others. He cannot *aphiemi* our sins unless he remits us of our sins, which he cannot do unless we cooperate with him, and our cooperating with him includes not closing out God's love, which includes not being hypocritically hard-hearted towards others, which includes being willing to

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aphiemi their sins. In contrast, we can *aphiemi* other people's sins against us without their cooperation; we don't need an offender's cooperation to be properly attuned to our relative similarity to them as a sinner. So, we can understand why God would expect us to *aphiemi* unconditionally even though he only does so conditionally. Namely, God needs our cooperation in order to *aphiemi* our sins, whereas we do not need our neighbor's cooperation in order to *aphiemi* theirs. This also explains why God's *aphiemi* comes with reconciliation, but ours sometimes does not.

On this model, we ought to *aphiemi* unconditionally, while God only does so conditionally; however, this does not make God's *aphiemi* a tit-for-tat repayment of our *aphiemi*. Rather, when we *aphiemi* others, we imitate God's prior generosity to us, which in turn allows him to *aphiemi* us. Christ uses the parable of the unmerciful servant to illustrate the relationship between our *aphiemi* and God's. In the parable, a servant begs his master to give him more time to repay an unpayable debt. In response, the master remits (*aphiemi*) his debt outright. Upon having his own debt canceled, the servant goes out and demands that a fellow servant pay him back a small sum that he owes. His debtor begs for more time, just as the servant begged the master for more time, but instead of having mercy on his debtor as the master had on him, he demands repayment all the more insistently. In response, the master angrily throws the wicked servant in prison. Christ concludes, "so My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive [*aphiemi*] his brother his trespasses" (Matt. 18:34-35, RSV). The master freely remits the unmerciful servant's debt. The continued remission of his debt is conditional only on the servant's later extending analogous mercy to his fellow servant, mercy which he is empowered to extend out of the generosity that the master first extended to him. In a similar way, God unconditionally loves us, strives to remit our sins, and tries to make us partakers of his divine nature. Our transformation into a new, sinless creation is conditional only on our cooperation with God's initiative, which includes being gracious to others just as God was first gracious to us, which includes extending *aphiemi* to them.

5. Forgiveness vs. *Aphiemi*

I've argued that we can explain passages like Matt. 6:14-15 if we understand *aphiemi* in these contexts as meaning not counting a person's sin against their relative moral standing. One might infer that we ought to understand forgiveness in the same way. After all, when we ask God to forgive us, aren't we really asking to receive whatever it is that the Bible is talking about anyway?

It would certainly be convenient at times to understand forgiveness and *aphiemi* in the same way. But while my proposed interpretation of *aphiemi* may often overlap with forgiveness, it doesn't always track it. I will give two examples. First, suppose an atheist hit-and-run victim overcomes all resentment towards her offender, sincerely wishes him well, and exhibits other

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stereotypically forgiving behavior. However, she doesn't believe that she's very sinful, and so doesn't construe herself as having the same fundamental standing as a sinner. A victim like this has not managed to *aphiemi* in the sense I outline, but her response fits with how English-speakers commonly use the word "forgiveness." Second, suppose a victim manages to not only *aphiemi* an offender, but moreover goes out of his way to actively bear their burdens. A victim like this seems more forgiving than a victim who merely grants *aphiemi*. But if forgiveness is the same thing as *aphiemi*, then it's hard to see how his behavior could be more forgiving than *aphiemi*. So, it seems that my understanding of *aphiemi* sometimes comes apart from forgiveness.

This might seem like a mark against my interpretation of *aphiemi*; however, it's not obvious that the concept picked out by the word *aphiemi* ought to exactly match the concept picked out by the English word "forgiveness." As translators know, it's common for words in one language to not have a perfect equivalent in another language, and we have good reason to think *aphiemi* is one such word. Most English Bibles translate *aphiemi* as "forgive" in Matt. 6:14-15, but in other contexts they translate it in a variety of other ways clustering around the concept of letting go: to permit, allow, suffer, leave, yield up, forsake, remit, put away, and, perhaps most surprisingly, to divorce.⁹ Needless to say, the English word "forgiveness" is not nearly as flexible. So, it's reasonable to understand *aphiemi* in a way that overlaps with forgiveness but is not perfectly equivalent to it.

In fact, if one were to develop a concept of forgiveness to exactly track New Testament usage, it's not even obvious that *aphiemi* would be the right word to track. There are two words in the New Testament that are typically translated as forgiveness: *aphiemi* and *charizomai*. They are used in different ways. In my view, forgiveness corresponds to *charizomai* more closely than *aphiemi*, but that is an argument for another paper.¹⁰

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⁹ ". . . if any brother has a colleague who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce [*aphiemi*] her. (1 Cor 7:12, RSV; the KJV translates *aphiemi* in this verse as "put her away."); Immediately they left [*aphiemi*] the boat and their father, and followed him. (Matt. 4:22, RSV); But Jesus answered him, "Let [*aphiemi*] it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness." Then he consented [*aphiemi*]. (Mat 3:15, RSV; the KJV translates *aphiemi* in this verse as "suffer."); "if any one would sue you and take your coat, let [*aphiemi*]i him have [*aphiemi*] your cloak as well." (Matt 5:40, RSV); And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded [*aphiemi*] up his spirit. (Mat 27:50, RSV); "Then Peter said in reply, "Lo, we have left [*aphiemi*] everything and followed you. What then shall we have?" (Mat 19:27, RSV; the KJV translates *aphiemi* in this verse as forsake.); "Whose soever sins ye remit [*aphiemi*], they are remitted [*aphiemi*] unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." (John 20:23, KJV)

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