

EXPLORING THE VARIED DIMENSIONS OF FORGIVENESS

Words “Forgive” in Greek

ἀπολύετε – luke 6:37 literally means to “release” or “loose from” “sever by loosening” “forgive” Luke 6:37 (ESV) “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;

χαρίσασθαι – 2 Cor 2:7 “to favor, give, forgive” “to restore one to another” “to do something pleasant or agreeable” 2Corinthians 2:7 (ESV) so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow

ἀφίημι - Luke 17:3 “to let go, give up, a debt, by not demanding it” “Forgive” Luke 17:3 (ESV) Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him,

The Issue of Forgiveness: I believe that there is no disagreement in substance, but one of definition and terminology:

“Forgiveness” Category 1: If forgiveness means we release the right of justice to God in faith, then I believe we all would agree that everyone, regardless of repentance on the part of the sinning party, should forgive.

“Forgiveness” Category 2: If forgiveness means we must reconcile relationship in such a way that friendship, brotherly affection and fellowship is restored, then I believe we would all agree that forgiveness (in this narrower sense) is not required of us if the offending party refuses to repent.

The Question of Meaning: This leads to what I believe the main point of disagreement is, and that is one of definition. Does the word forgiveness have a semantic range wide enough to include both of these categories? Those who would say that forgiveness is exclusively a category 2 kind of forgiveness, would have to say, “no”

Biblical Evidence:

An Example of Forgiveness Predicated upon Repentance

Forgiveness	Conditionality
2Corinthians 2:5 (ESV) Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. 6 For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, 7 so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8	Repentance. The sense of the passage is that the young man who was in sin in 1 Corinthians 5 had indeed repented. Otherwise Paul would rebuked them for failing to excommunicate according to 1 Corinthians 5. Conclusion: It seems that forgiveness in this

<p>So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. 9 For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. 10 Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, 11 so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.</p>	<p>passage is conditioned upon repentance and manifests itself in inclusion, full fellowship, comfort and so on.</p>
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Example of Forgiveness Predicated on No Condition

Loving Action	Conditionality
Luke 6:27 Love your enemies	Enemies = no condition for love
do good to those who hate you,	Hate=no condition for doing good
28 bless those who curse you	Curse=no condition for blessing
, pray for those who abuse you.	Abuse=no condition for praying
29 To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. 30 Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back.	Strike/takes away=no condition for offering other cheek or giving
31 And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.	Maxim
Luke 6:32 (ESV) “If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. 35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. 36 Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.	Essence: love/do good without condition unlike the Gentiles
TRANSITION TO HOW WE TREAT OTHERS WE WILL BE TREATED BY GOD	
Luke 6:37 (ESV) “Judge not, and you will not be judged;	Judge not=an absolute (never permitted). Judging is a conditional response based upon the failure/position of another. Point-don’t respond conditionally in judging. Otherwise, God will judge us conditionally

condemn not, and you will not be condemned;	Condemn not=an absolute (never permitted). Condemning is a conditional response based upon the failure of another. Point-don't respond conditionally in condemning. Otherwise God will condemn us conditionally
forgive, and you will be forgiven;	Forgive (positive)—in light of the unconditional thrust of all of the above, I would have to conclude that Jesus is calling for an unconditional relinquishing of debt toward another (the opposite of condemning).

My Conclusion is that: 1.) we must be careful as elders to be more nuanced in our explanation of various dimensions of forgiveness. People aren't required to restore fellowship/friendship to someone who hasn't repented. However, they are as Christians to release it (forgive it) in the sense of giving it to the LORD as judge in faith; 2.) as with all new testament commands, they must be applied gently and patiently so as not to give them a sense of being "under the law" again.