

## Ephesians 1:7 - Aphiemi

INTRODUCTION: Forgive is a verb which the 1828 Webster's Dictionary defines as follows:

To pardon, to remit, as an offense or debt; to overlook an offense and treat the offender as not guilty. The original and proper phrase is to forgive the offense, to send it away, to reject it, that is, not to impute it, [put it to] the offender. But by an easy transition, we also use the phrase, to forgive the person offending.

This definition of forgive begs the question "Is there someone you need to forgive?" Believers supernaturally enabled by the Spirit can forgive freely because we have been freely forgiven supernaturally! As Paul said, we should be "habitual forgivers," continually "forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven us." ([Ephesians 4:32+](#)). As H. W. Beecher said, "Every man (or woman) should have a fair-sized cemetery in which to bury the faults of his friends." C. H. Spurgeon said it this way "Forgive and forget. When you bury a mad dog, don't leave his tail above the ground." But there's no point in burying the tail or a hatchet if you're going to put up a marker on the site. The old familiar phrase "bury the hatchet" is an old English idiom meaning "to make peace." The phrase is an allusion to the literal practice of putting away the tomahawk at the cessation of hostilities among Native Americans in the Eastern United States. Weapons were to be buried in time of peace." (Wikipedia)

Burying the Hatchet: Old Joe was dying. For years he had been at odds with Bill, formerly one of his best friends. Wanting to straighten things out, he sent word for Bill to come and see him. When Bill arrived, Joe told him that he was afraid to go into eternity with such a bad feeling between them. Then, very reluctantly and with great effort, Joe apologized for things he had said and done. He also assured Bill that he forgave him for his offenses. Everything seemed fine until Bill turned to go. As he walked out of the room, Joe called out after him, "But, remember, if I get better, this doesn't count!"

We may smile at this story. Yet what a clear picture this gives of the way we sometimes treat one another. The forgiveness we profess is often superficial (not from the heart, [Matthew 18:35](#); [Ezekiel 36:26, 27](#)). It may be prompted by fear, or to gain some selfish advantage, or to clear our conscience – not out of genuine love for God (cf [Luke 7:41-47](#)) and the one who has wronged us. Yes, we may say we forgive,

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but when the least little friction arises, we are quick to resurrect past grievances. We must understand the breadth and length and height and depth of God's forgiveness in Christ on the cross, foreshadowed by these beautiful pictures:

- [Psalm 103:12](#) *"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."* (ED: Where is the east and west pole?)
- [Isaiah 38:17](#) *"Lo, for my own welfare, I had great bitterness; it is You who has kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back."*
- [Isaiah 44:22](#) *"I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."*
- [Micah 7:18-19+](#) *"Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possessions? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love. Vs. 19 He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. (Then put up a "NO Fishing" sign like Corrie Ten Boom likes to say!)*

In short, we like to "bury the hatchet" with the handle sticking out. That way, we can easily pick it up again and use it to our advantage. How different is the forgiveness Jesus talked about! ([Matthew 18:15-22](#)) If our sinless Lord is willing to forgive us – with all our faults – how can we withhold pardon from those who have sinned against us? True Christlike forgiveness buries the hatchet completely.

Those who say they will forgive but can't forget, simply bury the hatchet but leave the handle out for immediate use.

D. L. Moody:

*Christ the Lord our debt has paid*

*All our sins on Him were laid.*

*We like Him should try to live,*

*Always ready to forgive!*

Bosch

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Garth Brooks has a song which speaks of the unforgiving heart:

*We bury the hatchet*

*But leave the handle stickin' out*

*We're always diggin' up things*

*We should forget about*

*When it comes to forgettin'*

*Baby, there ain't no doubt*

*We bury the hatchet*

*But leave the handle sticking out.*

- Garth Brooks, "We Bury the Hatchet" on the album: Ropin The Wind

One more illustration:

WHEN FORGIVENESS SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE – Corrie Ten Boom, author of *The Hiding Place*, was taken captive and spent time in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. While in prison, Corrie saw incredible abuse, so inhumane that it drove the prisoners to incredible depths, including intentionally allowing lice to breed on their bodies because the more lice they had, the less likely it would be that the guards would molest them! And Corrie even witnessed the death of her own dear sister.

After the war, God sent Corrie Ten Boom on a mission of mercy through the war-torn cities to encourage residents to choose forgiveness over bitterness. She would motivate her audiences by sharing some of the atrocities she had experienced, implying that if she could forgive such horrors, so could her listeners. One-night speaking, she immediately recognized the man who came walking down the aisle as a particularly cruel guard in one of the concentration camps. The man did not recognize her, however. As he approached Corrie, he said: "Fraulein, you don't know me, but I was a guard in one of those camps. After the war, God saved me. I wish I could go back and undo those years. I can't, but I've just been prompted by God to come tonight and ask you, would you please forgive me?" Then he extended his hand to her. Can you imagine the horrible thoughts and memories that raced through Corrie's mind as she recognized his face and then even worse, heard his incredible plea for forgiveness? How could she? Corrie said her arms froze at her side and she was literally unable to move.

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The flashbacks in her mind replaying the atrocities, the death of her sister, the abuse. And then God's Spirit said to her, Corrie, what have you been telling everyone else to do? As an act of your will, will you choose to forgive? Corrie went on to explain what happened next..... I reached out my hand, and I put it in his, and I said, 'You're forgiven.' She later reported that at that moment, it was like a dam broke loose – all the bitterness and resentment- and God set me free.

So, let's look at the Greek word for forgive, *aphiemi*.