

“Forgive Us Our Trespasses”

(07-21-13)

Let's continue going through the Lord's Prayer and focus on one of the hardest sections to say and follow, by reading aloud the 5th Petition and Luther's explanation. *“And Forgive Us Our Trespasses, as we Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us!”*

What does this mean? We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

If we sincerely pray, *“And forgive us our trespasses,”* then we're openly and candidly saying we're guilty of doing wrong! Sometimes this doesn't really come to mind to many of us every time we repeat these five simple words. Thousands of people who recite the Lord's Prayer don't see themselves really as trespassers or sinners. They don't really consider themselves actually standing guilty before God! God isn't the problem, we are!

Note the little word that comes at the beginning of this petition, *“and.”* *“And forgive us our trespasses.”* This little word reminds us of something that went before: *“Give us this day our daily bread.”* God gives both!

Open to Psalm 103. We might not always think that God's giving enough, but He's giving all we need! That's why we call Him our Father. He gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay our debt of sin and take the punishment we deserve. He did all of this out of His great love for us!

Look at verses 2-5, *“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.”*

Paul was so caught up in the love God has shown, he exclaimed in Romans 8:31-32, *“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”* None of us is ever going to be able to pay God back for the love and forgiveness we've received from Him. We owe Him everything!

We can never repay our debts to God, but we can: respond to His goodness with gratitude and worship. We can have the words from the Psalm we just read be a continual thought as we go through life. We can put our trust in His promises, and we can respond to His love by learning to love in return, showing love to Him and the people we meet each day! Because of what God's done for us, we can continually turn to Him. The four most important words to ever speak are: *“Forgive us our trespasses.”* This shows our complete trust in Him alone!

In the light of our sins, we're dirty! That's exactly what sin does! It stains us and darkens our lives. But in the light of Christ's death we're clean. Because of what Jesus has done for us, when God looks at us, He sees purity and perfection, because He's seeing us through Jesus! Get caught up in the wonder of what Jesus Christ has done for you!

And now, in all the Lord's Prayer we get to by far, the most difficult phrase, *“as we forgive those who trespass against us.”* To forgive someone else for what they did against us doesn't always seem fair! They really hurt us and it doesn't seem fair that God's asking us to not hurt them in return but to forgive them. The sad part is that there's probably an overwhelming majority of the people who repeat this prayer and haven't forgiven others!

We have to ask the question, *“How can we in good conscience, come and ask our Father in heaven to forgive us, when we've failed to forgive others?”* Don't you think God sees right through this kind of hypocrisy? The sad part is that lying behind our difficulties to forgive others is our own pride!

Our pride cuts us off from other people. It turns us to a more self-centered attitude and we quickly begin to find fault with others, and have a negative attitude toward them, but at the same time, we're so very sensitive to our own needs. If this is our attitude, how can we even hope to be open and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others?

How can we get out of this pattern? What can change these inner attitudes that are so damaging, to ourselves and to others? There are three steps. We need to come to Christ! We need to put aside ourselves and our sin and see the suffering He endured for us! He went through the painful beatings, scourging, and death we should have received because it was our sins not His! The cross on Calvary stands eternally as God's demonstration to us of what total selflessness is! It's the supreme act of self-denial in a world that's largely focused on self! It's also a supreme act of love and a supreme act of forgiveness!

Now, we need to put love in action just like Christ, and forgive others! As He hung on the cross and looked at the crowd around Him, He asked God to forgive them for what they were doing even though they didn't know why they were doing it.

Forgiveness from God is an upsetting thing. It turns people inside out and upside down. It goes against the pattern the world has! It never allows anyone to bury the hatchet and still leave the handle sticking out of the ground! Forgiveness buries it completely!

We need to lay our sins at the foot of the cross and ask God to remove them from us, and then turn around and do the same for others! When we completely realize the forgiveness we've received, it opens the door for us to share that same forgiveness with others no matter what they've done to us!

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a great minister of London, wrote, "Whenever I see myself before God and realize something of what my blessed Lord has done for me at Calvary, I'm ready to forgive anybody anything. I cannot without it. It don't even want to withhold it!"

May it be your prayer to do exactly as this petition says and turn to God for forgiveness and then turn around and do exactly the same as you live with, love, and forgive others!