

God really does expect us to forgive others.

In many ways our forgiveness of other people, is a celebration of the forgiveness that we have received, and having enjoyed such a wonderful gift, we must be willing to share it with others.

Difficult though it may sometime be, our willingness to forgive others is good for us. When we forgive others we go some way toward releasing ourselves from the lasting damage of the hurts done to us.

In Jesus Christ the debt is paid for the sins we commit against God, and we are invited to realise that Jesus' death is sufficient even for the sins committed against us.

Our willingness to forgive others is a witness to the fact that we ourselves have been forgiven, and that the Holy Spirit is living within us, and that Jesus is truly working through us.

Next week we look at the second of the two spiritual needs, one which faces the reality of the struggle of the spiritual life, namely that God lead us not into temptation.



## Reflections on The Lord's Prayer

**"And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us"**

Last week we looked at the first petition for ourselves, namely for the daily provision of our bodily needs.

We saw how we only turn to ask God for our own needs once we have fully aligned ourselves with him, seeking that his name be hallowed, his kingdom come, and that his will be done.

We saw how submitting ourselves to God's will was a fitting basis on which to turn to God to make requests of him.

When we seek God's provision we demonstrate that we believe he is good and kind, and that he is willing and able to provide for us.

In seeking our daily bread, and accepting God's help as daily provision, we are showing that we trust him to be there for us day after day after day. Confident that he will never leave us or desert us.

That confidence is, of course, well founded, and based on our understanding of who God is, which of course takes us back to the very start of the prayer, and our address of God as "our father."

It is to God as father that we make further petitions that relate to the limiting of the effect of evil in our lives.

Today we look at the second petition for ourselves, which is the first of two spiritual needs.

“And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us”

This petition, although coming fifth among all the petitions in this prayer, is foundational. It is the great petition, the prayer of the derelict soul, reaching desperately out to God knowing that God alone can help.

When the Holy Spirit first makes us mindful of our sin, we cry out to God for mercy. Knowing that we deserve nothing good from God, yet believing God to be good, we bare ourselves before him, acknowledging our sin, and seeking his gracious mercy.

[Luke 18:13, 14]

As the Holy Spirit reveals the person of Jesus Christ to us, we learn that he is our only Lord and Saviour, God the Son, and we put our trust in him for our salvation.

From that moment on, we are saved, secure in God's love; holy Children of a Holy God. Our position is certain, as God's children we will stand before him, be with him, and enjoy him for all eternity.

And yet, children of God though we are, born of the Spirit, we still have within us something of our old sinful selves, and it is sad, but true that we will all give in to the bad habits of sin, and dishonour God in our lives.

[1 John 1:8]

While this does not immediately threaten our eternal peace, if we do not resist sin in our lives, and if we do not genuinely repent of, and regret our sin, then we have to wonder if we are truly God's children, and if our faith in Christ is real.

That is why we are encouraged to come before God daily, to ask for his forgiveness for our sins.

[1 John 1:9]

We come, however, not fearful and anxious, but confident in God's love and mercy, knowing that as his children with sincerely penitent hearts, he will pour out his unlimited grace upon us. This is our daily privilege, and the joy of every believer; that God is willing to forgive our sins.

But, it doesn't stop there; there is the elephant in the room.

The request for God to forgive our sins, our trespasses, is very closely linked with the statement that we are willing to forgive those who trespass against us. This is a serious intent and we cannot ignore it.

In the account of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew chapter six, Jesus links the forgiveness of our sins so closely to our willingness to forgive others that it almost seems conditional on it.

[Matthew 6:14, 15]

God really does tell us that we must be willing to forgive those who sin against us. This is sometimes very hard, and it's important to note that when God tells us to forgive others, it does not mean that the sins committed against us don't matter. It does not belittle the hurt done to us, nor does it fail to take seriously the manner in which we may have been wronged or taken advantage of.

Sins against us are very real, and very serious, and not to be simply set aside any more than our own sins are.

When we consider our own sins, however, the magnitude of them, and the great offence of them toward God, when we consider the immense cost at which our forgiveness was won, we are invited to put the wrong done to us into another context.

When we truly understand the depth of our own sin, and the overwhelming grace of God in sending Jesus to pay the consequence of those sins, we have a wider picture in which to understand the hurts done to us.