

The Lord's Prayer: The Fifth Petition

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 upon our sins, nor deny such petitions on account of them; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we pray, neither have we deserved them; but that He would grant them all to us by grace; for we daily sin much, and indeed deserve nothing but punishment. So will we verily, on our part, also heartily forgive and also readily do good to those who sin against us.

1. What gives us the confidence to pray for all good to “our Father in heaven,” and to say “Amen!” at the end, trusting that He will deliver—even as we ask Him to pardon our sins? (Hebrews 4:11–16; 9:11–14)
2. Prayer, therefore, in the midst of our troubles—even those, as sinners, we have brought upon ourselves—exercises our faith in Jesus! Likewise, how does it confess Jesus to “forgive those who trespass against us”? (2 Corinthians 5:16–21)
3. If we refuse to forgive those who have sinned against us, what are we saying about the death of Jesus (as opposed to what John says, 1 John 2:1–2)? When this robs us of our faith in the forgiveness of sins, what happens? (Matthew 18:21–35) Lord, bring us to forgive, as you forgive us!

From Luther's *Large Catechism* (III: Lord's Prayer)

⁸⁸ Therefore there is here again great need to call upon God and to pray: Dear Father, forgive us our trespasses. Not as though He did not forgive sin without and even before our prayer (for He has given us the Gospel, in which is pure forgiveness before we prayed or ever thought about it). But this is to the intent that we may recognize and accept such forgiveness.

⁸⁹ For since the flesh in which we daily live is of such a nature that it neither trusts nor believes God, and is ever active in evil lusts and devices, so that we sin daily in word and deed, by commission and omission, by which the conscience is thrown into unrest, so that it is afraid of the wrath and displeasure of God, and thus loses the comfort and confidence derived from the Gospel; therefore it is ceaselessly necessary that we run hither and obtain consolation to comfort the conscience again.

⁹⁰ But this should serve God's purpose of breaking our pride and keeping us humble. For in case any one should boast of his godliness and despise others, God has reserved this prerogative to Himself, that the person is to consider himself and place this prayer before his eyes, and he will find that he is no better than others, and that in the presence of God all must lower their plumes, and be glad that they can attain forgiveness.

⁹¹ And let no one think that as long as we live here he can reach such a position that he will not need such forgiveness. In short, if God does not forgive without ceasing, we are lost.