



Fifth Petition—And forgive us our trespasses...

“I just can’t forgive you.” When we are hurt by others, we might find ourselves thinking or even saying something like this. It is not always easy to let go of the pain and hurt caused by the people we care about. The closer people are to us, the more they are able to hurt us. Intimacy with others opens us up to getting hurt. Yet, this should not deter us.

As our Heavenly Father, God knows all too well how being close to us can cause heartbreak when we fail to live our lives according to His good and perfect will. The reality is that we do not deserve the forgiveness that God readily and eagerly provides us. The particular phrasing of this petition has left some to speculate that God will only forgive those who already forgive others, yet we know from 1 John 4:19 that we love (and forgive) because God first loved (and forgave) us.

The connection between our forgiving others and God’s forgiveness of us flows from our response to God’s forgiveness gifted undeservedly to us. If we keep from forgiving others (see the parable of the Unforgiving Servant in Matt. 18:21-35) then God warns us that we may cease to be forgiven. This is not because God no longer desires or is willing to forgive, but more to the point that we run the risk of cutting ourselves off from God’s forgiveness as we harden our hearts by failing to extend that forgiveness to others.

So, let forgiveness freely flow in your life, forgiving others with the free grace and love that God has already given to us.

Thoughts for Reflection

In what ways do you struggle to forgive and how can God’s forgiveness of you soften your heart in order that you might more freely forgive others?

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 will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.