

# 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 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.

As we examine the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer today, I want to call your attention to the two quotes from the Large Catechism. The first one speaks to the necessity of forgiveness.

*Where the heart is not in a right relationship with God ... it will not dare to pray. ... A confident and joyful heart can spring from nothing else than the certain knowledge of the forgiveness of sin (**Large Catechism III 92**). This is also why we begin our Divine Services with Confession and Absolution. For us to come into the presence of God, hear from His Word, and receive the body and blood of His Son, we must have that certain knowledge that our sins are forgiven. According to Luther, we cannot even dare to pray without that knowledge that our sins are forgiven. The second quote from the Large Catechism deals with the scope of forgiveness.*

*Just as we daily sin much against God, and yet He forgives everything through grace, so we, too, must ever forgive our neighbor who does us injury, violence, and wrong, shows malice toward us, and so on. If, therefore, you do not forgive, then do not think that God forgives you (**Large Catechism III 94-95**). In this petition we are promising God that we will forgive anyone who sins against us the same way and to the same extent that He forgives us. Think about the weight of that promise. God's forgiveness is limitless. For Christ's sake, He forgives all our sin as often as we sin. How can our forgiveness of others ever measure up to that standard? On our own, it can't. That's why the Lord has given us His Spirit. The more time we spend in the Word and focusing on God, the more the Holy Spirit works on our hearts, conforming them to His. We will never be perfect, but if we confess our sins, even the sin of being unforgiving, God will forgive us and help us to be more forgiving in the future.*