

July 7, 2013

The Fifth Petition

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

What does this mean?

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins or because of them deny our prayers; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we ask, neither 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 forgive from the heart and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

1. According to the following passages, what do we know is true about our relationship with God because of our sins? What do we know is true about our prayers?

“Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).

“The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

2. In the Fifth Petition, we are asking God to forgive our sins. What alone moves God to forgive us? On what basis does he forgive us? How does this forgiveness affect our relationship with God? Can you think of a passage to support your answer?

3. According to the following passages, what assurance does God’s forgiveness give us concerning prayer?

“In [Jesus] and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence” (Ephesians 3:12).

“Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:9-11).

4. According to the following passages, what will God’s forgiveness move us to do?

“We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

“Love . . . keeps no record of wrongs” (1 Corinthians 13:4,5).

5. In the parable of the unmerciful servant, Jesus spoke about forgiving and being forgiven. Review the details of the parable. Read the following verses.

“The master called the servant in. “You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on

you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart” (Matthew 18:32-35).

In the parable, who is the master? the servant? the fellow servant? Describe the debt the servant owed his master. By comparison, describe the debt owed by the fellow servant. Why did the master turn the unmerciful servant over to the jailers. What does Jesus teach us by this parable?

6. How is a forgiving spirit cultivated within us?

7. Comment on the following statements:

The Fifth Petition is really a confession of sins.

I can forgive my sister for what she did to me, but I can’t forget.

My ego is my biggest obstacle when it comes to seeking and granting forgiveness.

Luther said:

“Not that [God] does not forgive sins without our prayer or before we ask. In fact, before we prayed for it or ever thought about it, he gave us the gospel, in which there is nothing but forgiveness. But here the point is that we should recognize and accept this forgiveness.” (Tappert, p. 432.)

Closing Prayer

Often, Lord, we are like the unmerciful servant. Move us by your mercy to forgive others as you have forgiven us—fully, freely, without condition, and to the glory of your saving name. Amen.

At home: Memorize the Fifth Petition and its meaning.

See answers below:

Helps

(1) Our sins make us unworthy of any blessings from God, but worthy only of his eternal wrath and punishment. Our sins separate us from God and create a barrier so that God does not hear our prayers.

(2) Moved by his grace alone, God forgives us because of the sacrifice Jesus made for sins in our behalf. Our forgiveness results in peace with God and in our being God's own children. Saint Paul wrote, "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26).

(3) Because we are at peace with God, we can pray in boldness and confidence.

(4) God's forgiveness and love move and empower us to be loving and forgiving toward others.

(5) The master is God. We are the servant, and the fellow servant is our fellowman. The servant's debt, like our debt of sin, is tremendous; it can't possibly be repaid. The fellow servant's debt, by comparison, is small; so are the offenses of those who sin against us in comparison to our sins against God. If we are unmerciful, we are saying that we do not believe in mercy and that people should be held accountable for all their sins.

(6) A forgiving spirit is cultivated at the cross of Christ, by the good news of our complete and undeserved forgiveness through Jesus.

(7) This petition contains a strong element of confession. Weak humans often have the inability to forget another's sins. The refusal to forget another's sins, however, is an indication of an unwillingness to forgive. Sinful pride, arrogance, and self-righteousness will keep people from seeing their need for and seeking forgiveness and from granting forgiveness to others.