

Forgiven?

Have any of you woken early in the morning, between 5.30 and 6, and turned on the radio? About half way through this time slot the 'Today' programme on Radio 4 has a two minute segment entitled 'Prayer for the Day'.

There is usually some brief comment and a concluding prayer.

One morning recently, the speaker focussed on a section of the Lord's Prayer – "Forgive us our trespasses" I listened with interest and really took note when it came to the concluding prayer:

"Forgiving God, teach us by your grace to forgive those who trespass against us as you have already forgiven our trespasses. Amen."

My thoughts turned to our 'conventional' form of the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth,
As it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
But deliver us from evil:
For Thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen

We normally share in saying the prayer congregationally, which generally results in it sounding like this:

Our Father which art in heaven,	(Breathe – Pause)
Hallowed be Thy Name.	(Breathe – Pause)
Thy kingdom come.	(Breathe – Pause)
Thy will be done in earth,	(Breathe – Pause)
As it is in heaven.	(Breathe – Pause)
Give us this day our daily bread.	(Breathe – Pause)
And forgive us our trespasses,	(Breathe – Pause)
As we forgive them that trespass against us.	(Breathe – Pause)
And lead us not into temptation;	(Breathe – Pause)
But deliver us from evil:	(Breathe – Pause)
For Thine is the kingdom,	(Breathe – Pause)
The power and the glory,	(Breathe – Pause)
For ever and ever. Amen	(Breathe – Pause)

The pauses after breathing can interrupt the flow of the language – I have always felt that there are two points in the prayer where lines should flow into each other with no pause:

"Thy will be done in earth - as it is in heaven"

"Forgive us our trespasses - as we forgive them that trespass against us"

It is the second of these that has triggered my putting pen to paper

Is the forgiveness that we are requesting from the Lord **conditional**? Is it conditional upon us forgiving those who trespass against us?

If we do not forgive others, does this mean we will not be forgiven by the Lord?

The 'Prayer for the Day' asked the Lord to teach us how to forgive others – we having already received His forgiveness.

Are these two thoughts mutually exclusive?

I leave you to decide.

Eric Brown