

Lord's Prayer # 6

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

This past Wednesday I heard on the news that British authorities had released one of the individuals they had arrested the previous week regarding the plot to blow up a number of planes flying between Great Britain and the United States.

My first reaction upon hearing the news of the release of this suspect was - Oh Great! Just like the British.

They are always so ready to appease especially in this case, ready to bend over backward so as not to offend the large number of Moslems living in England.

They will probably release all of the hostages in the end.

- slap them on the wrist,
- and ask that they promise never to do anything bad.

I didn't hear why this suspect was released.

Maybe he/she was truly innocent.

But in my mind, I had already judged, condemned and sentenced this suspect without hearing or knowing any bit of evidence.

Part of the reason why I think this way is due to this fear, perhaps an irrational fear, fear nevertheless I have regarding the rise of Islamist fascism in the world.

So here I am, a minister of the Gospel, acting more like old legendary Hanging Judge Roy Bean.

In case you are not up on your Texas history, Judge Roy Bean was an eccentric US saloonkeeper and arbitrary judge who called himself "The Law West of the Pecos.

It is said that in his saloon which served as courtroom you could always see on the table his revolver and one law book - the only book he owned, and his pet bear!

Not an example of juris prudence.

One can laugh at the antics of a Hanging Judge Roy Bean, but I often act or think like him.

In my own mind, I dish out justice according to my sense of fair play, my sense of right and wrong.

Does that sound familiar to you?

Is that how you often act or think?

It doesn't bother me all that much until I pray these words in the Lord's Prayer, **forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sinned against us.**

And then I am suddenly aware of my sins of judging others.

I expect God to forgive me, but I'm not so quick to share that forgiveness with others.

**Forgive us our trespasses or debts as we forgive those who trespass against us or are in debt to us.**

Planning to blow up a plane is wrong.

It's a big sin -- a sin against the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment - You shall not kill!

However, is there any difference between planning to carry out this act of terrorism and my anger towards that idiot driver who decides to cut across all the lanes because he forgot that this was his exit?

Is this plot a greater sin than

- losing my temper at my kids, spouse,
- or surfing the web and spending a few minutes looking at that soft porn sight?
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We want to make a difference.

Judge one sin as being big - the other - a moment of poor judgment.

Before God it's all the same.

God doesn't make a difference between a big sin of brining down a plane with hundreds of innocent lives on it and your struggle with profanity?

Sin is sin as far as God is concerned.

I often think the main reason why people belittle sin and are so quick to brush it aside is due to the fact that deep down in their hearts they are afraid that if they admit they are a sinner - they will have to personally deal with sin.

We can't deal with sin.

Only God can deal with it.

That is what he did on the cross.

God has forgiven our sins.

We don't have to deal with sin.

That is what Jesus did - dying on a cross.

I still find it hard to fully understand how Jesus' death on a cross 2,000 years ago, makes a difference today.

But it did and still does make a difference.

We are forgiven in Christ.

Now God asks us to share that forgiveness.

Why are we so quick in not wanting to forgive?

Does it make us feel better, more important?

Does it build up our self-esteem?

By withholding forgiveness do we feel we are correcting some eternal wrong in the world?

Is our lack of forgiveness balancing some eternal scale of justice?

Maybe that person pulled a fast one and got by without being punished, but at least by holding a grudge against him/her I'm punishing that person, I'm dishing out justice!

I wonder if my frustration at the British government for releasing that suspect, that somehow or another I'm doing my share in protecting the world from Fascists terrorists?

But that's not my job and it's not your job!

God wants to break us from the endless cycle of resentment, hatred and vengeance.

My job as this petition reminds me is to forgive as my heavenly Father has forgiven me.

Being forgiven by God frees me from being judge, juror and hangman.

It's not my position to be a Judge Roy Bean and be the law West of Pecos, Texas, or Greenbelt Maryland or Washington D.C.

Forgiving is finally letting God be God.

Letting God forgive, as he desires to forgive.

That is so hard to do.

I'm not going to second guess if British authorities were right to release the prisoner.

I don't know.

It's not my call.

Just like it's not your call to judge if that person is sincere when they tell you they are sorry.

It's not your call to question whether or not your spouse really means it when he/she says I'm sorry.

These words remind us that we need to spend more time on thanking God what he has done for me in my life and less time worrying about God's response towards others.

I like what Pastor Simon said about forgiving others.  
He said, I'm quoting from page 92 of his book.

Forgiving shows that we live with Jesus in hope and participate with him in the kingdom.

Not to forgive is to reject the way of the kingdom and cling to the ethic of getting even - an ethic of death.

By pardoning us, God wants to heal us, to break down the walls that separate us from God and from one another and rob us of peace. But healing requires that we also pardon others.

And finally let me read this last quote from Pastor Simon.

Here he is quoting Lewis Smedes, who said,

Forgiving does not excuse or trivialize evil, but it is "the only way to heal the wounds of a past we cannot change and cannot forget.

When we cling to hatred - perhaps waiting for an apology that never comes - we give control of ourselves to the person who did us wrong. But "when we forgive, we set someone free - and that person is us. Amen.