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Forgive us our trespasses?

During a recent conversation with a friend about The Lord's Prayer, we pondered how different versions transpose 'trespass, sin and debt' in the line "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us". For some this can be a bit of a stumbling block when visiting other churches as to which version is used, often ending up with an embarrassed mutter or silence at this point. The trespass, sin or debt issue however is not the biggest challenge with this phrase in the prayer.

The challenge comes from having the confidence to ask God for forgiveness because I have forgiven someone else. It makes this line the most difficult to pray as it depends on our willingness to change. It requires a change in our own behaviour and the ability to forgive others their behaviour. George Herbert says "He that cannot forgive others, breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass..."

As for our own sins we will know, for "If our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him" 1 John 3:21-22 NIV.

There is help however; remember the Prayer begins with the words 'Our Father'. As a parent would teach a child to do something new by demonstrating a few times then stepping back and saying 'Now you show me'. God forgives us and invites us to do likewise.