



P.O. Box 66540  
Albuquerque, NM 87193  
505.890.6806  
E-mail: [lrn@liferesource.org](mailto:lrn@liferesource.org)  
Website: [www.liferesource.org](http://www.liferesource.org)

**Presentation Transcript**  
**The Lord's Prayer – Forgive Us Our Trespases**  
**By Bill Jacobs**  
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This is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries. Today we're continuing our series on *The Lord's Prayer*. If you've not heard any of the previous presentations in this series, you can find them on our Website, [liferesource.org](http://liferesource.org). Our presentation today is the fifth one of the series. It's title is *Forgive Us Our Trespases*.

So far this series, I've reiterated the foundational points of the series. And I suppose I should cover them again, in case this is the first time some of our listeners or readers are with us. So, briefly, The Lord's Prayer is *not* called The Lord's Prayer in the Bible. That's a term invented by humans. Jesus was *not* giving us something to recite – a prayer – but an *outline* of what to pray about. He even said that – “Pray like this.” The idea being, if we want God to listen to us, this is how to go about it. So let's begin – Matthew 6:12.

**Matthew 6:12** - *...and forgive us our trespases, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*

To start with, “forgive us.” Why should we ask for this? First of all, as we mentioned in previous presentations, the *us* reminds *us* that *everyone* has trespases – not just “us.” So what are we asking God to forgive *us* of? Well, forgive us our *trespases*. Before we discuss the need for forgiveness, let's understand what we're asking to be forgiven of.

So, let's jump ahead for a moment. Let's look at the *Louw & Nida Lexicon* for an excellent definition of the word. But before we do, I want to remind you that we're doing this so that we know exactly what Jesus meant by what He said – what *Jesus* meant, rather than any number of fallible human beings. Why am I emphasizing this? What's the point? The point is simply that most people, who have been theologically educated in the last hundred years, are biased against the law of God. They would have you believe that trespass is some vague concept, such as being disrespectful to God or other people, or a violation of the principles of social justice, or some other politically correct diffused concept. Why do they do this? Why are they prejudiced against

the law of God. Well, if you asked them, they might tell you that we are no longer Judaizers, held captive by a rigid law – that we observe a spiritual law now, not that old Law of Moses. Now it's all about *guidelines* rather than rules.

So let me ask you, “Is a trespass a guideline?” If you think about how we use the word today, there's a clue in it.

When I moved from the city where I grew up in the bay area of California to Arkansas many years ago, I asked my pastor – as we were in the Ozarks visiting members of our church – “What does that sign mean – ‘Posted’?” I could see them stuck on the fences all the way down the road on this particular piece of property. He explained that it meant it was private property and there was, specifically, no hunting allowed. And I said, “So it's like a ‘No Trespassing’ sign.” And he said, “Yes.”

Now, when we see a “No Trespassing” sign, it's usually on a gate or fence, like the one I was looking at. In other words, it marks a boundary, which we're not to violate or we're breaking the law. Trespassing on the property of others is illegal. If we stand on one side of the fence, we're okay, but, if we step on the other side of the line, we've violated the law. It's a violation of the space and property of other people. We either are or we aren't doing it. There's nothing about it that's not concrete. And that's what Jesus meant by it.

Now let's look at the Louw & Nida *Lexicon* under *Trespases*. Here's the definition: *What a person has done in transgressing the law and will of God by some false step or failure.* And they define it in two words: *transgression*, or it can mean *sin*. So we can know that Jesus meant we should ask God to forgive us our sins.

Well, what is a *sin* then? Well, that word has taken on a diffused meaning in the last hundred years as well. So let's see what a sin is according to the Bible, instead of some humanly devised definition. To understand this most clearly, we have to look at the 1611 King James translation. We have to look at it before the modern translators meddled and watered down the true meaning. Go with me to 1 John 3:4.

**1 John 3:4** – *Whoever commits sin transgresses also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law.*

So this gets us to my point about a prejudice against the law of God. Modern Christianity doesn't teach people to observe God's law as it was observed in the New Testament. “It's too hard. No one wants to observe the Sabbath, which is the fourth commandment, any longer.” The New Testament church observed it, but it's too hard for us now. Nor do we want to observe the festivals that they observed as well – each one representing some step in Jesus Christ's plan of salvation. So we've lost the meaning of the salvation plan as well, because we don't keep the days that picture it. So, the only thing that they can do with the fourth commandment is to water

it down and tell people they're doing it in their heart now, because they have the Holy Spirit. They also start talking about Judaizers, who call for strict observance of the law. And yet, the example of Christianity: Jesus Christ with all the apostles observed the seventh-day Sabbath and so did most of the church for several hundred years after Christ. There's really no way to excuse this transgression of the law. It's a sin.

Notice that Louw & Nida used the word *transgression*. According to Webster, that word has three meanings: 1) *To go beyond the boundary or limit*; 2) *to violate a command or law*; 3) *sin*.

So, all this to prove that when Jesus said, "Forgive us our trespasses," He was talking about violations of the law and will of God. Do you remember that He said, "Not one iota of the law would be done away?" So *all* of it, except for the parts about the sacrifices, because He *is* the sacrifice now – that's explained – and the temple worship, because there is no more temple – and the laws of the nation of Israel, because God isn't working with nations anymore; He's working with the church – there is no more ancient Israel – everything else was observed by the New Testament church. *Everything* else!

Now, some translations translate the word *trespasses* as *debts*. Louw & Nida tells us that the word *debt*, in context, means *a transgression of the law*. So He's talking about *sins*! "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." We owe God obedience to His law. Otherwise, we've trespassed His space, His boundary for us, and His will.

Okay, now that we know what Jesus meant when He said, "Forgive us our debts or trespasses," let's go back to "forgive us." Why should we ask for this? Some might answer, "So our sins can be forgiven." And that, of course, is a correct answer. But why would we want that? And some, again, might say, "Because no sinner can enter the Kingdom of heaven." That's right. We have to have our sins forgiven or the death penalty kicks in. And that's a correct answer then. We have to be forgiven our sins so that we can enter into the Kingdom of heaven. But, if you think about it, these are all somewhat self-centered reasons. We want to be forgiven so we can *get* something. And I don't mean it's wrong to think that way. You know, whatever works – God knows how to motivate people – and He does promise us those things. So it's okay to think about that. It's good, in fact. In fact, most Christians seem to think about it this way. But there is another *extremely important* reason why we should ask God to forgive us our sins. And it can be found as part of an explanation of faith, presented by the apostle Paul, starting in Romans 4:20. He's talking about Jesus here:

**Romans 4:20** – *No unbelief made Him waver concerning the promise of God, but He grew strong in His faith as He gave glory to God* – that makes sense, doesn't it? Always giving glory to God, you realize how strong He is so we can believe in Him more – *fully convinced that God was able to do what He had promised*. And then he says, *That is why His faith was counted to Him as righteousness*. Now that term there – *counted to Him as righteousness* – that was first

applied to Abraham. He believed God was able to fulfill His promises to him. And God forgave him his sins because he believed God. But let's read on.

**V-23** – *The words – Paul says – “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also.* Most Christians struggle with this. We know we can't live up to God's law. We know we ought to die because of our weakness. But God tells us, if we will believe in Him and His Son, Jesus Christ, our sins *will* be forgiven. But, as real as our sins are, can we believe it? Well, Paul explains it here. *It will be counted to us, who believe in Him, who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*

Now here's the point I want to get to – this part about *delivered up for our transgressions*. God is not a respecter of persons. He doesn't value any one person over another, because He applies His law evenly to all. He would have sent Jesus to die for us if we were the only *one* who needed forgiveness. Had that been the case, He would have been delivered up for each one of us alone. When we think about what kind of death Jesus died for each of us, only then does it become obvious why we ought to ask for forgiveness. We caused the violation of Jesus by our sins. We caused His death and His suffering. It's a heavy burden!

So what's the natural response once we realize this responsibility? Well, let's read another scripture from Paul in Romans 12:1.

**Romans 12:1** – *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice – holy and acceptable to God – which is your spiritual worship.* That phrase – *which is your spiritual worship* – there's a footnote attached to it in most Bibles. It can also be translated *your rational service*. So, if you combine the two, then, you have it. Our spiritual worship, if rational, is to become a living sacrifice. In other words, people understanding what Jesus did for them, who are grateful for His unselfish sacrifice, would naturally want to respond by trying to live like Jesus lived, because they know that's why Jesus was willing to die – so that they could become like Him. Paul gets specific about that as well. He says:

**V-2** – *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing, you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.* So there it is.

Let's move on. Let's move to the last part – *as we forgive those who trespass against us*. Why does God make a connection between our being forgiven and our forgiveness to others? Well, it's very simple. Jesus forgives. If we want to be like Him, we will forgive, too. Jesus was not judgmental of people when He walked the earth. If we want to be like Jesus, we won't be judgmental either.

Why did Jesus say to the woman taken in adultery that He would not judge her? Well, let's read 1 Peter 2:23. Here's a clue about why He didn't.

**1 Peter 2:23** – *When He was reviled, He did not revile in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly.*

He knew that He didn't have to try to take revenge or hurt back, because God was going to take care of everything in the long run. Jesus also knew that no human knows enough to judge. Even though, in ages to come, He will judge the world, as a human, it wasn't His job. He left all that to God the Father.

We have to let go of the sins others do to us. We can do that because God promises to set everything aright. All the sins others have committed against us will be dealt with. All the sins others have committed against us will be dealt with, as will all the sins we have committed against God and others. How do we want God to deal with us regarding our sins? Well, most of us would like to be treated with mercy and forgiveness. Then, we must deal mercifully and forgivingly with those who have wronged us. If we appreciate what Jesus has done for us – suffering crucifixion – we will become non-judgmental people. We will refrain from attacking, thinking down toward others, because we know we also have sinned and have no moral right to look down on anyone else, and because we also know that we will only be forgiven in the same measure that we forgive.

I had a man come to me, in my counseling office, once for treatment, whose situation illustrated why we ought not to judge. He told me he was a minister – not one of ours. When I asked him what brought him to counseling, he said he was bitter toward his mother and that he knew he had to forgive her to be forgiven, and he knew that God give him the same treatment he was giving his mother. So he wanted to forgive her, but he could not find it in him to do it. So, as we proceeded to process this situation, a number of things came to his mind. He first remembered that his mother seemed to love his older brother more than she loved him. He could still feel the resentment. He remembered that his mother was ten years younger than his father, and that his father was a big man and would fly into rages when he was drunk. He observed in the present, as an adult, that his mother was in no way equipped to handle her husband's rage – that she must have been terrified of him, as my client and his brother also were. Then he recalled a time when he was seven years old. His father was intent on hitting him in the face with his fist while he was drunk. Just in time, his mother stood in between them and his father hit her. At this point, my client began to weep. I asked him if he still was bitter toward his mother. And he said, "No, there's nothing to forgive. She loved me, too. I just didn't understand until now."

See, humans don't make very good judges. We don't know all the facts. We have a very undependable memory. We'll all do better if we just leave that off and trust God and Jesus to take care of all us – succinctly stated by Jesus, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us."

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Okay, that concludes our work on part 5 of the series, *The Lord's Prayer*. We started this series because we know prayer is important to success as a Christian and because some ways of praying work better than others. This is the way *Jesus* taught us to pray.

Until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.