

The 'Trans' That God Really Cares About

Hardly a day goes by where we don't hear about "trans"—as in transgender. Whether it's a trans child, a trans celebrity or a trans lawsuit, trans is ever before us.

But it's not just transgender that's in the news.

We also hear about transracial and transabled and transhuman and trans-species, all of which leads me to focus on the trans that matters most to God: transgression.

I don't mean that God doesn't care about people who identify as transgender or who wrestle with other variations of trans.

I simply mean that the "trans" that matters most to Him is the trans in transgression—as in disobedience, sin, wickedness, evil.

What is the actual definition of transgression?

The English verb "transgress" comes from two Latin words, *trans* meaning "across" and *gradi* meaning "to go," coming into English by way of Old French. So, to transgress is to "go across, step across," while a transgression is the act of going across or stepping across.

In short, to transgress is "to act in violation of some law," and you can transgress boundaries, customs, codes or guidelines.

In our English Bibles, "transgression" has a very specific meaning: intentionally breaking God's laws. This means there is a willful nature to our actions. We know something is wrong, yet we do it anyway. We know God forbids it, but we disobey. We don't just fall short of the mark while making our best efforts. We determine to do what is wrong. This is self-

will. This is pride. This is rebellion.

Accordingly, the Hebrew word translated with “transgression” in most of our English Bibles means “an act of rebellion,” and it is related to a verb meaning “to rebel.” It’s not surprising that both the verb and the noun occur many times in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, there is a more specialized word for “transgression,” and it carries the meaning of “stepping over” or “violating,” with specific reference to God’s law.

To explain this further, let’s say you’re driving 100 mph on a narrow, winding road that has no speed limits since it’s on private property. You are driving dangerously and foolishly and you might crash and even die, but you are not breaking any law because there is no law. But if you’re driving 100 mph on a public road with a 40 mph speed limit, not only are you driving dangerously and foolishly. You’re also breaking the law. You’re guilty of transgression.

That is the state of the human race.

We’re not just like a curious toddler, innocently touching something we shouldn’t touch. We’re like a rebellious toddler, looking Mommy in the eyes defiantly and touching the very thing she forbade us to touch. Only we’re not toddlers. We’re adults, and we’re fully responsible for our actions—for our transgressions.

Whether or not we like it or acknowledge it, God has given us His laws, His holy standards. They tell us what is right and wrong.

The most important ones are not just written in the Bible. They are written on our hearts. And when we sin against these laws, we sin against God and we transgress. Our sin is an act of rebellion against the Lord.

Of course, it is possible to harden our hearts to the point of insensitivity, and we longer have any sense of guilt. But that's not how it starts. A normal man who steals from an elderly woman and then—in fear that she'll report him to the police—beats her to death, knows that he has done wrong. A normal woman who lies to her husband and deceives her children to carry on an illicit affair knows that she has done wrong.

Even atheists have consciences (some have very sensitive consciences). It is because the God they deny gave them a conscience.

And when any of us sin against those internal, divine standards, we transgress God's laws. The penalty for such transgression is death.

That's the bad news.

The good news is that Jesus paid the death penalty for us. As the prophet Isaiah wrote, "he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way, but the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:5-6).

Our sins and transgressions are incredibly ugly—just look at the ugliness of the cross. But they have been paid in full by the Lord Himself, and if we turn to Him in true repentance and faith, He will completely forgive us.

That is what we have just celebrated during this Passover-Easter season, and that's the trans issue that God really cares about: dealing with our transgressions.

And when our sins are forgiven through the cross, something else happens—the best "trans" of all. We experience radical transformation, going from death to life, from condemned to forgiven, from lost to saved, from unclean to holy. Our God is

a God who transforms!

For my own story, "From LSD to Ph.D.," which describes my transformation from a heroin-shooting, LSD-using, 16-year-old, Jewish, rebellious hippie rock drummer to a husband and father and grandfather and minister and professor, [click here](#).

By God's grace, you can have your own story too. {eoa}