



# Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 5 – THE DOCTRINE OF SIN  
LESSON 94 – DEGREES OF SIN

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – LOUIS BERKHOF, PGS. 204-241  
BIBLICAL DOCTRINE – JOHN MACARTHUR, PGS. 451-482  
SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – WAYNE GRUDEM, PGS. 490-514

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# Are Some Sins Worse Than Others?

- ▶ All sins are the same in the sense that each sin and any sin renders a person guilty and worthy of God's wrath. The root of all sin is autonomy and replacement of God with self.
- ▶ However small a sin may seem, it is an assertion that the person is acting independently of God.
- ▶ The standard by which all sin is to be judged is the standard of God's holiness.
- ▶ Romans 3:22 For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...
- ▶ James 2:10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. 11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

# Are Some Sins Worse Than Others?

- ▶ Legal Guilt: any one sin, even what may seem to be a very small one, makes us legally guilty before God and therefore worthy of eternal punishment.
- ▶ Genesis 2:17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”
- ▶ Romans 5:16 ...For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation...
- ▶ Deut. 27:26 ‘Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them.’
- ▶ Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

# Are Some Sins Worse Than Others?

- ▶ Scripture does affirm that some sins are considered greater, or weightier than others. They may have more harmful consequences and we also see differing punishments as a result of different sins.
- ▶ There are different levels, so to speak, within the sacrificial system, depending on what is required to make atonement for different categories of sin.
- ▶ Luke 12:48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.
- ▶ James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

# Greater and Lesser Sins

- ▶ John 19:11 Jesus answered, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”
- ▶ Ezekiel 8:13 And He said to me, “Turn again, and you will see greater abominations that they are doing.”
- ▶ Matthew 11:20 Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: 21 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.”

# Greater and Lesser Sins

- ▶ Matthew 5:19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven;
- ▶ Matthew 23:23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.
- ▶ Leviticus 5:17 “If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord, though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity. 18 And he shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish from the flock, with your valuation, as a trespass offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him regarding his ignorance in which he erred and did not know it, and it shall be forgiven him. 19 It is a trespass offering; he has certainly trespassed against the Lord.”

# Degrees of Blessing and Punishment

- ▶ While heaven will be bliss and the lake of fire eternal torments, the Bible is clear that there are rewards and punishments based on the works we have done, whether good or bad.
- ▶ Deut. 32:22 For a fire is kindled in My anger, And shall burn to the lowest hell;
- ▶ Matt 23:15 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.
- ▶ Psalm 62:12 Also to You, O Lord, belongs mercy; For You render to each one according to his work.
- ▶ Romans 2:6 who “will render to each one according to his deeds”:
- ▶ 2 Cor. 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
- ▶ 1 Cor. 3:12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

# The Unpardonable Sin

- ▶ The last and most graphic example of degrees of sin of course is the fact that while Jesus died to forgive the sins of His people there is one sin that is unpardonable! So there are at the very least 2 degrees of sin – forgiveable, and unforgiveable!
- ▶ Matt. 12:31 “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. 32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.
- ▶ Mark 3:28 “Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; 29 but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation”— 30 because they said, “He has an unclean spirit.”
- ▶ Luke 12:10 “And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven.



# The Unpardonable Sin

- ▶ The unpardonable sin involves disparaging the clear works that the Holy Spirit was doing through the Son of God. Therefore, it is the willful and final rejection of the Holy Spirit who is working through Jesus, by attributing God's work in Christ to Satan. It is a willful hardening of the heart against Christ, rejecting the work of the Spirit.
- ▶ Berkhof states, "This sin consists in the conscious, malicious, and willful rejection and slander, against evidence and conviction, of the testimony of the Holy Spirit respecting the grace of God in Christ, attributing it out of hatred and enmity to the Prince of Darkness. In committing that sin man willfully, maliciously, and intentionally attributes what is clearly recognized as the work of God to the influence and operation of Satan." (Pg. 523)
- ▶ This sin consists "not in doubting the truth, nor in a sinful denial of it, but in a contradiction of it that goes contrary to the conviction of the mind, to the illumination of the conscience, and even to the verdict of the heart." (Pg. 524)

# The Sin Leading to Death

- ▶ 1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. 17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.
- ▶ This does not speak of a sin that cannot be forgiven, but of a sin that, if persisted in, will lead to death.
- ▶ One view is that this is a person who claims to be a believer but by their continuation in habitual sin proves not to be an authentic Christian (1 John 3:6). This would be apostasy and praying for restoration is impossible for the apostate (Heb. 6:6).
- ▶ Another view is that this is a true believer, who like some in Corinth, brought such serious shame to Christ by their sin that it resulted in Divine discipline that included a premature death (1 Cor. 11:29-30). Ananias and Sapphira may be an example of this (Acts 5:1-11).

# The Sin Leading to Death

- ▶ 1 Corinthians 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife! 2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

# Propitiation - The Answer for Sin

- ▶ Romans 3:21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.
- ▶ Hebrews 2:17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

# Propitiation - The Answer for Sin

- ▶ 1 John 2:2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. (key word: our/ours – ethnicity, in contrast to all the other nations – see John 11:51 Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.)
- ▶ 1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
- ▶ Hebrews 9:12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
- ▶ Hebrews 10:12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, 13 from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. 14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.