

Jason Upchurch - Systematic Theology - Anthropology - Hamartiology (Doctrine of Sin)

Read 1 John 3:4-10 If you remember something like 2 years ago I began a slow, intermittent series on systematic theology. We work through systematic theology because the Bible commands us to know doctrine. Doctrine - systematic theology - is just what the whole Bible teaches on a subject and in formal theology there are several major categories. We need a healthy diet of expositional preaching but we also need a healthy diet of systematic theology as well.

Knowing doctrine helps us keep from going off the rails when we're reading confusing verses in the Bible.

So for instance Jesus says he doesn't know the day or hour of his coming in judgement, only the Father does. Does that mean that Jesus isn't God? No. Does it mean he's somehow less than the Father? No. Because of doctrine - because we know all of what the Bible has to say - we can know that Jesus in his human nature is subject to human some human limitations. Sometimes he doesn't know who touched him. Luke says he grew in wisdom and knowledge. But we also know **John 1:1-3** says he was God.

This is super important because it keeps us from falling into weird heresies or unusual teachings. Doctrine is the guardrails that keeps us safe as we're reading any particular passage of the Bible.

So far we've seen bibliology, theology proper. And although it's been quite some time we're in the doctrine of anthropology.

They study of man. What does the Bible say about who we are as humans? The Christian view is radically different than almost everything else the secular world puts out because the Christian view is founded on the truth of the word of God.

Just a quick recap: Humans are **created**, we did not evolve from goo or monkeys or anything else. We were the peak of God's creation in the Garden of Eden and we are owned by God and designed for a purpose that God defines.

We also have **value**. Because we're created in the image of God, we have intrinsic value from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death. And Christians have always been the ones to advocate for not protections of the unborn, the orphans, the widows, and the elderly of society.

Even those with whom we disagree with - the vilest, pink-haired, septum pierced, trans advocate fighting to murder unborn babies in the womb is made in the image of God and there is a dignity we afford to them because of God's design.

We've also seen that **gender is fixed** and assigned by God. You'd think people would know that but the Bible says God made them male and female, that's it. And one's gender is simply a function of their biology. No one is assigned gender at birth, gender is simply recognized at birth. Gender was assigned by God the moment of fertilization and new chromosomes and DNA was made.

We talked about **race** - ethnicities. While we are all one species: the human race - God made all the nations from the 3 sons of Noah (Shem, Ham and Japheth) and these make up the identifiable people groups (ethnicities) that we know around the world. Further, God mixed up their languages at Babel and Paul confirms this in **Acts 17:26**: And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allowed periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.

So while all people are made in God's image, God has intentionally spread people across the planet into diverse cultures and ethnicities. And not every culture or ethnicity is equal and we all know that.

There's a reason everyone is trying to break their way into America and no one is clambering to get into India, or Somalia, or Afghanistan. No one is dying to join Mexican culture or Native American culture. I say that because there are some today who seem to think we can't be glad that we're in the society we're in. That we

can't celebrate American culture as Christians. Of course we can. God placed us here and we can thank him for that and even though we've got our own issues, much of our culture was founded on Christian principles.

We've also saw that our **design** is to give glory to God, to be fruitful and multiply. That's a command. Unless you're providentially hindered you should want babies and to train them up in the Lord to rule over creation.

We're not animals. We're made in the image of God to rule over creation, and will be held morally accountable for our our lives.

So that's the recap. This morning let's talk about **sin**. As humans we sin. That shouldn't surprise anyone. That's our fundamental disposition toward God and toward one another. Humans are not basically good creatures who just need to sort some things out. No, we are sinners by our very nature.

And the doctrine of sin falls under anthropology because this is the fundamental problem with humans. The reason we need salvation - salvation from the wrath of God - is because we are sinners. This is the whole point of the Bible, the whole point of the Christmas story of Jesus being born of a virgin and taking on human flesh. The whole point of the Easter story - Christ dying on Friday for sins and being raised 3 days later for our justification. **Read 5**

Hebrews: He was made like us in every way yet without what? Sin.

1 Pet. 2:22: He committed no sin, neither was their secret in his mouth.

So the Son of God is born a man without sin and to redeem us from sin.

There's a lot of people who want to downplay sin. Either they say it's not important - we just need to talk about love and positive things. They think talking about sin is depressing or off-putting. "How does talking about sin help us live a better life?"

Because if you don't understand that basically everything that we deal with is tainted by sin, you'll never live a life pleasing to God.

We saw that in Ephesians with the put off-renew-put on section. People don't just have anger problems and they can't do anything about it. They don't just have porn problems or swearing problems or lying problems and there's nothing they can do.

No, those are sins for which Jesus died and if you're a Christian filled with the Spirit you are commanded to put them off and put on righteous actions.

That's actually what John gets to here, isn't it? **Read 6-9**

Wow. This is John's call for us to pursue holiness and forsake sin. I like the ESV because it says practice of sin. We've all known hypocrites who say they love Jesus and yet there's no change in their lives at all. They are steeped in sin and really have no desire at all to repent. John doesn't pull any punches: they're not believers. They're of the devil.

So this doctrine is very practical. We know our standing before God is not based on how much sin we repent from. Our standing before God is always based on the finished work of Christ on the cross. But if there's no transformation in a person's life - if their life is defined by practicing sin - it's a dead giveaway that they're not redeemed.

Some will also say that if we talk about sin too much people won't come to faith in the Lord Jesus or they won't want to come to church or we'll just be negative Nancys. So we need to downplay the sin word.

So maybe we say we have troubles or messups or accidents. Or like Joel Osteen says we failed to live our best life. Listen, Jesus didn't die on a cross for accidents of the world. He didn't die on a cross because we had

some mess ups. He died on the cross in the place of filthy sinners who know they're sinners and know a merciful Lord will give them forgiveness through faith alone.

This is the Bible's own framework. **Rom. 3:23-24:** For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

So this is very practical.

A) Definition. There's a lot of definitions out there that are good. But we're keeping it simple here: Violating God's Law.

It could be something we say, do or think. It could be something we fail to do or say or think. When we fall short of the glory of God - when we fall short of his standard of conduct and righteousness and holiness, we sin.

There are sins of commission. Sins of commission are things we shouldn't do but we do them anyway. We commit, commission, actively against God.

You knowingly go 10 over on the highway - that commission. You're violating God's law. You know it, do it anyway.

You gossip about someone. You yell at your friend. You take your brother's toys. You are spiteful toward your husband. Those are sins of commission.

There are also sins of omission. Where we omit - we leave out - things we should do. James talks about the guy who tells poor, hungry people to be warm and fed but doesn't actually give them food or give them clothes. He sins because he failed to do what he should. That's omission.

You told your wife you'd get that task done and you don't, that's a sin of omission. You told your kids you'd do that project and you didn't that's omission.

So there's both sides.

Now, at some point in the discussion people ask: **are all sins equal?** And the answer is yes and no.

Yes, all sins are equal in the sense that they condemn us. A white lie to your friend is just as much deserving of damnation as murder. That's why Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount that saying Raca - you fool - to someone puts you in danger of the hell of fire. What goes on in our heart can condemn us to hell just as much as physical actions.

Or put another way, we need to ask for forgiveness from Jesus for big sins and small sins because his blood paid for them all.

On the other hand I think we know not all sins are the same. If you murder someone, you get the death penalty. If you call them a name - even though it needs forgiveness - you don't get the death penalty.

We see this all over the OT Law: different crimes are given different fines and punishments because we know they're not all the same in severity. If you steal a sheep, you pay back 4 fold. If you practice witchcraft, you're put to death.

Side: The Catholic Church tries to make an unhelpful distinction between sins. Calling some serious sins done with full knowledge and your still consent are called mortal sins - these can jeopardize your salvation.

Venial sins are lesser and don't jeopardize your salvation.

These distinctions aren't biblical and here's why: unrepentant "small" sins are just as much of an indication of unbelief as unrepentant big sins.

Calling someone a fool is relatively small in the grand scheme of things. Jesus says it can send you to hell. Not feeding or clothing someone who is destitute, James says, indicates a faith that hasn't saved someone. So we don't get to comfort ourselves by saying "Well I still like this sin and I'm going to keep doing it because at least I'm not shooting up schools or robbing banks." No, Jesus doesn't give us that comfort.

In every area of life - small and big - we are striving to kill sin and put on holiness.

Actually, in the OT there is a distinction between sins and I think this is very important and it shows itself in the NT as well. There's a distinction between sins committed on accident or sins committed on purpose. **Turn to Lev. 4:1-4**

The Bible makes a large distinction between unintentional sins and high handed sins. Sins that are committed on accident - which are still sins. And sins that are committed on purpose. **Read 1-4**

So that word unintentional is very important. In the sacrificial system there were no sacrifices for high handed sins, intentional sins.

If you committed premeditated murdered you were stoned to death. But if you accidentally killed your friend and someone wanted to avenge his death you could run to a city of refuge and they would protect you.

We see this in our own judicial system where crimes are differentiated by degree based on how much we planned them out. First degree murder includes premeditation and deliberation where second degree murder had no advanced planning and is more impulsive, in the moment. Manslaughter is where you had no intention at all, no desire to kill anyone but they still died usually because of neglect in some area. So we see distinctions in the Law between unintentional sin and high-handed sin.

Turn to Psalm 19. This is a passage I usually have people memorize if they're struggling with overcoming a particularly pesky sin. A sin that maybe they've been fighting for a long time and feel like they can't overcome. And maybe they get to the point where they just think: well, I'll do it and God will forgive me for it. That's a very dangerous place to be in when we start playing games with God's forgiveness. **Read 13-14**

A presumptuous sin is a sin you commit presuming that God will just forgive you for it. You know you shouldn't do it but you do it anyway. You're stealing something, you're coveting someone else's house or wife or whatever. You're dishonoring your parents and you know it.

David prays: hold me back from that. Do not let those kind of sins have dominion over me. Why? Because they can lead you down a dark path.

I heard of a pastor last month who was posting on social media about how some people have a false religion, a false love for Jesus. They look good on the outside but they don't really love Jesus. That was his last post before he busted in a prostitution ring. That's the depth of tangled depravity that sin is.

But like David says, if we get to a place where you're freed from presumptuous sins, you're freed from their dominion, there's some serious freedom there.

And I love the second half too. **Read 14**

All our words, all our thoughts should be pleasing to God, amen?

So there are unintentional sins and intentional sins.

4. Words. Let's talk about the words the Bible uses for sin.

The word **sin**, itself, comes from the Greek word hamartw. Actually the doctrine of sin is called hamartiology. And hamartw means to commit a wrong against someone with implied guilt.

So it's offending someone. Who does our sin offend? God. First and foremost.

Psalm 51: against you and you only have I what? Sinned. Even though David had murdered Uriah, committed adultery with Bathsheba, his greatest sin was against God.

And we need to understand this in our own lives as well. When we sin, the greatest affront is to God. Whether we lie or steal or murder or commit idolatry, whatever. The first person we should ask forgiveness of is God. Not because our sins have been re-imputed to our account, but because we've offended our Heavenly Father and we need to restore the relationship..

It's just like if a child sins against a parent, the child isn't kicked out of the family until they apologize. But the relationship is strained until there is repentance. Same with us when we sin against God.

Then we should also ask forgiveness of the person or people we've offended.

By the way, this is an easy way to diagnose if someone really is repentant over a sin they've committed: are they just sad about the consequences of the sin? Or are they sad that they've offended a holy God who deserves all obedience?

A lot of times people cry over consequences of sin. Kids cry when they're caught. Adults cry when they're caught. We've all been there haven't we? We're not really sad because what we did was wrong against God. We're sad that we have to own up to our actions and make it right.

So our sin is an affront to a holy God. It also implies guilt. When we sin we should feel bad about it. We should feel shame and guilt. That's the right response. **Turn to Psalm 32**

This is a psalm of David talking about the greatness of being forgiven. But what's interesting is he also lists the effects of unrepentant sin. **Read 1-5**

This is the guilt that is associated with sin. And that guilt has real physical effects. His bones wasted away. He had no energy. He was lethargic.

Do you struggle getting things done? Are you lazy? Do you struggle with the motivation for action? It could be that you're in sin. And it's compounding itself. You don't want to do the thing, and now you're behind and it's even worse and you're dreading it and your bones are weary. You know what the solution is? Go do it. If Jesus were standing right there in full glory all the excuses in the world for not doing something would seem silly. They're still silly. So go do it in a way that pleases him.

We've all been there. We're lazy and gotten behind on like 10 projects and I just have no energy to do anything. That's guilt and it's good. One of the ways to cure guilt is to confess your sin and go get something done. Accomplish what you know you need to do.

But these affects are true with all kinds of sins. This is why we sulk after being in a fight with our spouse. This is why people's demeanor changes when they're getting into stuff they shouldn't be in or sinning in a particular way. Sin and the guilt actually has a negative effect in our physical body. That's what sin does.

Sin is the main word we use.

B. Wickedness. If the righteous is repaid on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner. **Prov 11:31**

We often don't use the word wicked, it almost sounds like an insult but that's what sin is, it's wickedness. There's a moral wrongness that should be acknowledged about sin. We don't downplay that.

And I know this can feel heavy and the point here isn't self-flagellation and self-deprecation. But the Bible says that we need to have a proper view of what we're doing in order to truly be repentant for it.

C. Transgression. **1 Tim. 2:14:** Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

Eve's sin in the Garden, and later Adam's, was transgression. The idea is going across a line that we know shouldn't be crossed. We know we shouldn't swear, but we do it anyway. Any time your conscience is bothering you - you feel guilty for an action - and you do it anyway is a transgression.

Sometimes the word trespass is used.

Eph. 2:1: We were dead in our trespasses and sins.

Again, there's a line, we know it and we crossed it.

D. Iniquity. **Lev. 26:40:** But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery - that's another word - that they committed against me...God will forgive.

When you are iniquitous you are lacking something usually in a dishonorable way.

When we are treacherous we are a traitor. We are committing treason against our own side.

E. Lawless. We saw that in **1 John**. Sin is lawlessness. It's without regard to the Law. Or there's no desire to conform to the law because the person doesn't think there's a consequence.

I mean, that's why we sin right? We don't think there will actually be a consequence for our actions. Satan told Adam and Eve in the Garden: you won't surely what? Die.

God said they'd die - consequence. Satan said they wouldn't die - no consequence. So they sinned. This is still why we sin. We think there's nothing going to happen. This is why kids will do things when they don't think their parents are looking because there's no accountability.

This is why adults will do things when no one is looking. There's no consequence and sin looks good.

Genesis says when they saw that the fruit looked pleasing to the eyes. Sin looked good, and there were no consequences.

Side: Autocorrect on Apple products has taken a drastic turn for the worse. And ironically so. Every time I typed "sin" on my iPad autocorrect wanted to change it to "fun." That's a true story. I have no idea why.

But if we're just being honest, there is a sense in which sin is fun. That's the allure. Or maybe it's not fun, maybe what it does is take away pain. That's why people often get drunk and high and do all sorts of other things: they want pain to go away.

Turn to Romans 5:6-11

We've spent a lot of time on sin. But let's be reminded of the gospel before we go. **Read**

God's love - the greatness and mercy of God - wasn't shown because you cleaned yourself up enough for God to love you. It wasn't: you do your best and God will do the rest. A lot of people love like that. God's love is greater than that.

It was God's love to send his Son to die for sinners.

And for those who have faith in Jesus we are justified. We are declared in a court of law - God's court - that we are completely in the right not because of what we've done, but because of what Jesus has done for us. He obeyed the Law and he took our punishment of God's wrath on the cross.

We were enemies, now we're reconciled.

And we don't have to mourn our sin, but now we can rejoice.

The analogy I love the most about striving to put off sin and striving for holiness in this life is rock climbing. When you're rock climbing you have a safety rope that holds you when you fall. If you didn't have the rope you'd die if you slipped just a little.

But for those in Christ we have the safety rope of God's justification. We can strive to keep his Law, strive to put off sin knowing that if we fail - and we will because we're all the chief of sinners - our justification in Christ still holds us.

The rope won't break so we can keep climbing, keep striving know he who began a good work in us will complete it on the day of Christ Jesus.

Pray