

What are “Greater Sins”?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. 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.’”
 - 1. While we may judge that an act is in itself a grave offense, we must trust judgment of persons and their sins to the justice and mercy of God
- B. The Bible speaks of various kinds of sins:
 - 1. Secret sins; known only by God and the sinner - Psalm 19:12
 - 2. Besetting sins; constantly attacking, ongoing temptation - Heb. 12:1
 - 3. Presumptuous sins; shameless, irreverent, and careless - Psalm 19:13
 - 4. Willful sins; deliberate, voluntarily, without consideration of others or consequences - Heb. 10:26-27
 - 5. Weakness, ignorance, and inadvertence - sin that overtakes the vulnerable - Gal. 6:1; 1Tim. 1:13
- C. But what are “greater sins”?

I. THE BIBLE AFFIRMS GREATER SINS

- A. The context of this term reveals much about its nature
 - 1. Amos 5:12 - It takes advantage of the weak and vulnerable
 - 2. Lam. 1:8 - It dismisses consequences
 - 3. 2Kings 17:21; Ex. 32:21, 30-31 - It publicly defies God
 - 4. 2Sam. 24:10; 1Chron. 21:8 - It involves and harms many others
 - 5. John 19:11; James 3:1 - Committed by those with greater responsibility

II. THERE ARE DISTINCTIONS IN BIBLE WORDS FOR SIN

- A. Hebrew “pasha” - “great transgression, rebellion; transgression against individuals, nations, or God; it is recognized by the sinner; it is addressed, punished or forgiven by God” (Strong’s H6588)
- B. Hebrew “chata” - “to sin, go wrong, incur guilt, forfeit, uncleanness; miss the goal or path of right and duty; to bring into guilt or condemnation or punishment” (Strong’s H2398)
- C. Hebrew “avon” - “perversity, depravity, iniquity, guilt or punishment of iniquity; guilt of condition” (Strong’s H5771)
- D. One may unintentionally “miss the mark” (chata); one may have a weak, depraved nature; and, though these are still sins, it is not as if one had rebelled against God (pasha). In the latter case, one is guilty of “the great transgression - Psalm 19:13

III. IMPLICATIONS OF GREATER SINS

- A. This does not mean that some sins are consequential and others are not; nor are there some sins that cause one to be lost, while others are overlooked.
 - 1. No grain of sand is small in the mechanism of a watch.
 - 2. A tiny spark can cause a great fire.

3. Microscopic bacteria can endanger the whole body.
 4. A small hole in the boat can sink the whole ship.
- B. What do the scriptures teach?
1. Eve only ate one piece of fruit
 2. Lot's wife only took a single gaze backward
 3. The Israelite only picked up a few sticks on the Sabbath
 4. Achan only took a small wedge of gold and a robe
 5. Uzzah only put one hand on the Ark of the Covenant
- C. All sin, whether large or small in Bible description or our own estimation, will keep one out of heaven
1. Heb. 2:1-3; John 8:21; Rev. 21:27
- D. Any un-repented sin is enough to render one a sinner, cause him to be lost, and to void all the good things he did toward an eternal reward - James 2:10
- E. Humankind presumes to classify sins on behalf of God
1. Murder, adultery, and stealing are big sins, great evils
 2. Jealousy, random dishonesty, and gossip are little sins, character flaws
 3. Luke 15:11-32 - Was the prodigal son worse than the older brother?
 4. "There is no little sin, because there is no little God to sin against."
(Matthew Henry)
 5. "There is no distinction between big and little when talking about snakes. They are all snakes." (Indian proverb)

IV. ALL SINS ARE RESOLVED BY THE SAME MEANS

- A. Just as all sin will bring death... - Rom. 6:23; James 1:14-15; Ez. 18:20
- B. ...So will any sin repented of scripturally and from the heart be blotted out and forgiven, including greater sins - 1John 1:7-10; Mark 3:28-29
- C. Sins are greater because of the condition of the heart from whence they come
- D. Sins are greater in that they are greater in their temporal consequences and by the number of vulnerable persons impacted by them.
 1. There is a difference in the temporal consequences of Cain murdering Abel and David murdering Uriah the Hittite than in the murder which is committed in the heart by a failure to love one's brother - 1John 3:15
- E. Sins are greater in that the punishment is often proportionate to the sin and the heart of the sinner - Luke 12:47-48
 1. The punishment in eternity will not be less in duration, only in degree and extent of sorrow over regrets - Matt. 25:46; 2Peter 2:20-21
 2. We are not just punished for our sins; we are punished by them.

Conclusion:

- A. God is waiting to forgive us of all sins, even the greater ones - Matt. 18:11-14
- B. "When we stray from His presence, He longs for us to come back. He weeps that we are missing His active love, protection and provision. He throws His arms open, reaches toward us, gathers us up, and welcomes us home." (C. Stanley)