**Biblical Foundations – The Doctrine of Sin (Pt.5)**

**What is sin? Where did it come from? Do we inherit a sinful nature from Adam?**

**Are There Degrees of Sin**- Are some sins worse than others? The question may be answered either yes or no, depending on the sense in which it is intended. **A) Legal Guilt.** In terms of our legal standing before God, any one sin, even what may seem to be an exceedingly small one, makes us legally guilty before God and therefore worthy of eternal punishment. (Genesis 2:17, Romans 5:16) This one sin made Adam and Eve sinners before God and no longer able to stand in his holy presence. This truth remains valid through the history of the human race. (James 2:10-11) Therefore in terms of legal guilt, all sins are equally bad because they make us legally guilty before God and constitute us as sinners. **B) Actual Results.** On the other hand, some sins are worse than others in that they have more harmful consequences in our lives, in our relationship with others, and in our personal relationship with God. Scripture sometimes speaks of degrees of the seriousness of sin. (John 19:11, Ezekiel 8:6,13,15) Jesus implies that there are lesser and greater commandments. (Matthew 5:19, 23:23) the implication is that some sins are worse than other sins in terms of God’s evaluation of their importance.

In general, we can say some sins have more harmful consequences than other sins if they bring more dishonor to God, cause more harm to ourselves, others, or to the church. Moreover, those sins that are done willfully, repeatedly, and knowingly with a calloused heart are more displeasing to God than those that are done out of ignorance and are not repeated or those that are done with a mixture of good and impure motives and are followed by remorse and repentance. Thus, the laws that God gave to Moses make provisions for cases where people sin unintentionally. (Leviticus 5:15,17) On the other hand, sins committed with **“a high hand,”** that is, with arrogance and disdain for God or his commandments, were viewed very seriously. (Numbers 15:30) We can readily see how some sins have much more harmful consequences for ourselves, others, and our relationship with God. Similarly, if a new Christian convert and a prominent or mature Christian pastor commits the exact same sin- the sin of the pastor would be more serious in God’s sight, both because of the harm that would come to the reputation of the gospel and because those in leadership are held to a higher standard of accountability. (James 3:1)

**Unpardonable Sin**- Multiple passages of the scripture speak about a sin that will not be forgiven. (Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:28-29) In these passages, Jesus had just cast a demon from a man who was blind and mute. Incontrovertible evidence of the power of God had just occurred. But the Pharisees, with stubborn unbelief, credited this display of God’s power to Beelzebul, the devil (Mt 12:24). Several Scriptures reveal that many Jews had expressed the same kind of false assertion, namely, that Jesus was performing miracles by the power of the devil (Mt 9:34, Jn 7:19-20, 8:48-52). A group of Jews, mostly Pharisees, were guilty of attributing to the devil what was the work of the Spirit demonstrated through the Lord Jesus. They committed the unpardonable sin when they said that Jesus’ actions, performed by the power of the Holy Spirit, originated from Beelzebul, the devil. Interestingly, many Jews perpetuated this false characterization about Jesus long after his death. They did not deny that he did miracles; they said he did miracles by the power of the devil.