

e-concepts

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Sin Is Worse When It Is More Contrary to the Character of God

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By definition: Sin is anything contrary to the character of God. So, I suggest, the more contrary it is to the character of God, the worse it is.

If we look to Scripture, not only are some sins worse than others, it seems the differences are because of their violation of the character of God. The Bible does not give us a list of sins in order from least to worst. That's impossible because circumstances, attitudes of the heart, and intentions all play a part in determining **the greatness of the sin**. But we can determine from Jesus that sins directly against God are worse. A lawyer once asked Jesus:

Matthew 22:36-39 *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind,’ this is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”*

Jesus gave two basic categories for commandments. That would seem to mean breaking the commands to *love the Lord your God* is greater than breaking the *love your neighbor* ones. But we also know that the reason the *love your neighbor* ones are sinful is because they offend God. After David committed adultery and murder, he prayed,

Psalms 51:4 *“Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge.”*

Let's go back to Jesus' *great and foremost commandment*. In both testaments, the worst sin was idolatry. The Bible has constant, consistent, repeated, warnings about idolatry, calling it not just a sin but a **great sin**. [Remember, although David was an adulterer and murderer, he was not an idolater.]

- **Exodus 20:3-5** *You shall have no other gods before Me... for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me.*
- **Exodus 32:21** *What did this people do to you, that you have brought such great sin upon them?*
- **Deuteronomy 16:22** *You shall not set up for yourself a sacred pillar which the LORD your God hates.*
- **2 Kings 17:21** *Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the LORD and made them commit a great sin.*
- **1 Corinthians 10:14** *Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.*

But idolatry does not usually bring “guilt” to the idolater or “damage” to others. Sins that increase the “damage” to others are violations of *love your neighbor*. Therefore, they do offend God. But sins against God do not necessarily observably “damage” people, although they are the **worst sins**. So we must conclude that the seriousness of sins cannot be determined by how they impact people. The acronym **COEXIST** sanctions idolatry and the worship of false gods, yet it does no observable damage.

Conclusion

The severity of sin can only be determined by what God says about the sin. Those called *greater sin*, those God says He *hates*, those that are called an *abomination*, those in the Mosaic Law requiring the death penalty, those we are told to *flee from*, and anything resembling the tolerance of other gods, should be a warning that we are approaching a great sin. *The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).*