

# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

## Video Lecture Series

by Robert D. McCurley, ThM

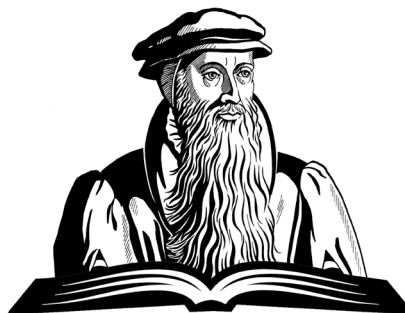
# STUDY GUIDE

*Module 3:*

## THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

*Lecture 5:*

## THE NATURE OF SIN



The John Knox Institute  
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*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

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## STUDY GUIDE

Module 3

### *The Nature of Sin*

1. Introduction
2. The Nature of Man
3. Man As the Image of God
4. The Freedom of Man's Will
- 5. The Nature of Sin**
6. The Doctrine of Original Sin
7. The Doctrine of Total Depravity
8. The Doctrine of the Covenant of Works
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10. The Doctrine of the Law of God

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## STUDY GUIDE

### Module 3: THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

### Lecture 5: The Nature of Sin

#### ***Introduction***

In international classical music competitions, a competitor can be immediately disqualified if they miss one single note in a very long and complex piece. The least infraction could result in their whole life's work being lost. There's a great deal of stress and pressure in competitions like this and everything hangs in the balance. There are other examples of people who have studied hard in school, preparing for a significant entrance exam to a prestigious university. They are put to the test, and the smallest mistake could have catastrophic implications for their future and their life. This illustrates for us something about the nature of sin. God has given to us his holy law, and that law works its way, by way of implication, into the deepest crevices of man's being. And what we learn in the Bible is that the smallest infraction, a failure to do one thing that God's law requires, or a violation of even the least of what God's law forbids, results in catastrophic implications. Sinners are justly, equitably, and fairly condemned for the least sin. God's standard is high, demanding of all of his creatures. And so we have a sense of the weight then, and the significance of what sin is.

**Theme:** *The doctrine of The Nature of Sin.*

#### **I. Scriptural Basis**

*"And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. But the word of God grew and multiplied." (Acts 12:21–24)*

1. Man's estimation of himself is grossly inflated.
2. All sin deifies man—it is an attempt for man to take the place of God.
3. Man cannot take credit for anything without depriving God of his honor.
4. Sin, in its essence, is a violation of God's law.

5. Sin brings guilt, and guilt requires punishment in this life and in the life to come.

**Questions:**

1. What universal nature of sin can we draw from the death of Herod in Acts 12:21–24? How does the nature of sin implicate you in your daily life?

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2. Acts chapter 12, records both the deaths of James and of Herod, but each of these two men experienced death in a different way. Meditate upon the deaths of these two men. What differences do you see?

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**II. Doctrinal Overview**

1. Sin and God's moral law.

a. The essence of sin is violating the absolute, objective, revealed will of God.

b. Sin is transgression of the law.

c. The spiritual nature of the law.

d. Every sin can be traced back to one or more of the Ten Commandments.

e. Two categories of sin:

1) Sins of commission.

2) Sins of omission.

f. Hebrew words for sin:

1) To miss the mark.

2) Crooked or bent.

3) To exceed boundaries.

2. Sin, law, and love.
  - a. Law and love are not opposites.
  - b. Love is expressed by obedience to the law, not as a way to receive salvation.
  - c. The nature of sin—it is radically opposed to love.
3. The relationship of sin and guilt.
  - a. The objective fact of being found guilty of breaking God’s law.
  - b. The twofold aspect of guilt.
    - 1) Guilt as the intrinsic moral evil.
    - 2) Guilt in relation to the penal sanction of the law.
  - c. The pollution of sin, negatively and positively.
4. The relationship of the nature of sin and punishment.
  - a. Punishments take place in this world.
  - b. Punishments take place in the world to come.
5. The relationship of sin and misery—they always go together.
  - a. The mortality of the body.
  - b. Spiritual death.
  - c. The sentence of eternal death.

**Questions:**

1. What is the Bible’s definition of sin? How does the Westminster Shorter Catechism define sin?

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2. What two aspects are there in each of the Ten Commandments? What is the spiritual nature of the law?

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3. Can every sin be traced back to the Ten Commandments? Please give some examples.

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4. What are the two categories of sin? What are the meanings of the Hebrew words for sin, which help us understand more about the nature of sin?

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5. Is the law of God opposite to love? Prove your answer from the Scriptures. What other things about sin do we see from this relationship between law and love?

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6. As a theological term what does the word “guilt” express? What are the two aspects of guilt in relation to sin?

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7. What is the pollution of sin? What are its two aspects?

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8. What is the relationship between sin and punishment? What are the punishments of sin?

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9. How is sin related to misery? What miseries does man suffer since sin entered the world?

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### **III. Polemical Exposition**

1. God alone has authority to define sin.
2. Sin is not just human weakness or mistakes—it's an attack on God's very character and being.
3. This sets the background for discussing the nature of salvation (Module 5).
  - a. Salvation must address real guilt, not just a moral reformation.
  - b. A penalty must be paid to atone for sin.

#### **Questions:**

1. What are the implications of the fact that only God has authority to define what sin is? Why do we say that the world and the church miss the mark on both sides? What are the two sides? Can you give some examples?

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2. Some think that sin is merely human weakness or mistakes that people make. Please show how this is false and why.

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3. How does the doctrine of sin relate to the nature of salvation? How should this affect the preaching of the gospel?

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#### **IV. Practical Exposition**

1. We need to grasp the abhorrent nature of sin.
2. We need to glory in the cross of Jesus Christ.
  - a. The evil of sin is manifest most clearly in the cross of Christ.
  - b. We see there the love of God and the holiness of God.
3. The greatness of sin shows us our great need for a great Savior.
  - a. Christ pays the penalty for all of the sins, of all of his people, from Adam to the end of time.
4. God has broken the shackles and delivered us from slavery to sin.
  - a. This reinforces the joy of the believer, for deliverance from the power of sin.

#### **Questions:**

1. Why is it important for us to grasp the abhorrent nature of sin?

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2. What are the reasons that we need to glory in the cross of Christ? Why should we meditate on the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ?

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3. Why do we emphasize the great necessity of the Holy Spirit when we come to study the Doctrine of Man?

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4. How does this study about the nature of sin reinforce the joy of the believer?

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### **V. Self-Reflection**

Read Psalm 130 and meditate on the verses. Affliction and guilt can bring a man very low indeed, but in the worst of depths, a sinner must not abandon himself to despair. He must acknowledge that he cannot stand before God on his own merits. He must trust that God forgives sin through the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. He must rest his hope entirely on Christ. What about you? Do you think you can stand before God on your own? God knows all your sins. Do you fear your sins are too great? God's salvation in Christ is greater. Do you think your sins are too many, or that you have sinned too long? God will save his people from all their guilt. Faith focuses your hope and desire upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are you trusting in Christ alone for salvation from your sins? If so, then how has your faith evidenced itself in a childlike fear of God?

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