

The Origin of Sin

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[0:00] Amen. So just to begin thinking about the value of origin stories. Origin stories can be so helpful. They help to make sense of who we are as people, where we've come from, and the shaping influence that that has on us, and why we are here.

Sometimes we might find that our origin stories allow us to trace a problem back in time to root causes, so that we might find help and a cure.

We are still considering our origin story as human beings. In Genesis 1 and 2, we've discovered so much of our origins, that we were made by God.

We've been made in the image of God. We've been made to live in a perfect world that God established. We have these rhythms of work and rest. We are made for relationships and community.

And we are made fundamentally to enjoy God in His very good world. Everything's been light. But Genesis 3, and in a sense, like every great story that we encounter in human storytelling, brings us to the point where things fall apart.

[1:22] Because we come to the origin of human sin. And in these few verses, they provide for us a solid understanding of what is sin.

Next week, we'll think about the effects of sin. And that's part of what we need to discover. But beyond the confusion that we might have about that word of sin, beyond caricatures that we may have come across in our culture, Genesis 3 can help us to understand what is sin.

And to see where it fits in our origin story. And as we explore sin, I think we'll recognize that it helps us to make sense of the world that is around us.

It was C.S. Lewis who said in his series of essays, *A Weight of Glory*, he said, There is, in the early chapters of Genesis, an explanation for the way the world is.

For the beauty and the brokenness that we see in our world and in our own hearts. But what we're going to see this week as we work through these verses together, we're going to encounter the snake, the serpent.

[2:50] We're going to discover Satan and the real existence of evil. We have heard a fateful conversation, including a lie big enough to reinterpret life, which draws Adam and Eve's heart away from love and trust of God and His Word.

And as we trace the origins of human sin, I think we'll see that some of those same doubts, some of those same denials that we meet in the garden, they still lurk in every human heart.

But we'll also find hope, as we're led to see in the whole of Scripture, Jesus as the solution to sin.

But let's get into the origin of sin, and let's begin in verse 1 with the snake, the serpent, the tempter. Now, the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. And so, strikingly, we need to talk about a talking snake. And what do we know about this snake that we're presented with in Genesis 3?

Well, I'm going to fast forward us all the way towards the end of the Bible to Revelation 12, where we're told of the great dragon who was hurled down that ancient snake, called the devil or Satan, who leads the world astray.

[4:22] Put that together with Genesis 3, and we discover that Satan is one who was created, and remember, everything that God created was good. But at some point, Satan rebelled in heaven.

Tried to raise a rebellion, but he was cast out. Now, it's really interesting, one of the problems with Adam is that he failed to guard and keep God's garden. But God guards and keeps his holy place,

and so Satan was cast out of heaven.

And now that Satan has been cast down, he works to lead the world astray. And as we read through the Bible, we discover the devil is real, and he has a real hatred of God.

He was unable to defeat God, and so he turns his hate and his destruction against those made in the image of God. That's people like us. We see it in the Gospels.

Why are there so many demons in the Gospels? Because here is Jesus, here is God, here is God's King. And so there is, again, that rebellion against God and the attempt at destruction.

[5:29] We discover some descriptions of Satan in the Bible. He's described as the adversary of God's people. He is described as the deceiver.

He is described as the father of lies. This is his basic, unchanged mode of operating in the world.

And we may find ourselves thinking, yeah, but it's a talking snake. And what are we supposed to do with that? And so it's important for us. So we read Romans 5, and clearly, Paul the Apostle believed that this event was real, that the temptation to fall into sin was real.

We go to the story of Jesus, and we discover very real temptations from Satan, a very real tempter. And so the Bible says this is real.

But I think we can go beyond that as we consider the world around us. Don't we see something of the shadow of the Adam and Eve story everywhere?

[6:36] The suspicion? The suspicion? The selfishness? The separation? The sorrow? The hatred? And so as we come to a text like this, we, in a sense, are facing the same test as Adam and Eve in that garden.

Can I trust? Can I trust? Can you trust today that God is good in the way that he creates? Can we trust that the way God made the world is the best possible way that this world could have been made?

Can I trust that God speaks the truth when he tells us about the existence of evil and a real enemy? Because it's so important for us to know our enemy.

That's true for any sporting clash, any kind of battle, to know who we are up against. And it's absolutely true for us spiritually. To understand that the devil is real, and he is a real opponent.

He is powerful. He is intent on our destruction. And to know that he works by lying to us. And at the same time, it's so important for us to know the gospel.

[7:50] To know the good news. Here to know the good news that the Satan, the snake, he is created, and so he is not equal to God.

Good and evil are not equal and opposite. The Satan devil, he has been defeated, and he will be defeated through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and at Jesus' return.

That there will be a once and for all judgment of Satan and evil, and Jesus will be announced as victorious king. And so for us, we need to know the gospel and to trust in Jesus, so that we'd have our sin forgiven and be on the winning side.

But as we continue in our verses, as Satan comes into the garden, we need to notice how he operates.

He plants through lies those seeds of doubt in the hearts and minds of Eve and of Adam. And the first way he works is to cause, and especially the focus is on Eve, to doubt God's goodness.

[9:00] He said to the women, did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden? Now, a couple of things to notice. In chapter 2, we've been given a way of knowing God, the Lord God.

That's how he's described, the personal covenant-making God, the one who enters into loving relationship. But notice the devil speaks about him just as God. He wants to create distance.

That God has been kind and generous, but the devil wants to suggest, by way of emphasis, that God has been harsh, that God has been restrictive.

And so there's a twisting of God's Word. Remember, in Genesis 1 and 2, we're told that Adam and Eve, they had this whole garden, this whole world to freely enjoy as God's good gift.

There was just one tree. There was just one tree of no in the whole planet. It was an easy way for them to say day by day, I trust my God as I enjoy all of his goodness.

[10:11] But that trust becomes the target for temptation. As the devil wants to suggest, God is holding back something from you.

God is holding out on you. God is holding you down. The lie is that God is not to be trusted. He is not truly good and loving as a father.

And we hear in Eve's response that she begins to share that restrictive emphasis, especially at the end when she adds the prohibition.

We mustn't eat the fruit and we must not even touch the tree. And so the poison is beginning to do its work. Now she too is looking at God as being restrictive and limiting.

And so we are unable to see Satan's tactic. He is closing her ears to God's clear word. A word that spoke yes to enjoying God's goodness in the garden and just one no.

[11:20] She's closing her heart to all of God's goodness because Satan is opening her eyes so that all that she can see, all that she can focus on is the one thing she's told she cannot have.

That's filling her gaze and filling her imagination. It's becoming to her her precious. And she's believing the lie that God is not a good father.

I wonder if that's something that we sense within our own heart. Because the truth is that while Adam and Eve were created with the possibility of not sinning, for us our default setting is that we are wired not to trust God.

And not to see Him as good. Our instinct is mistrust of God's goodness. And we see that played out when we are tempted.

When we are tempted to sin. And I'm talking about Christians and non-Christians. When we're tempted to sin in any way, whether we're thinking about anger and sin, anger and gossip perhaps, or we're thinking about some form of sexual sin, where we're thinking of lying or cheating or selfishness in general.

[12:34] In that moment, we believe that that thing that I am tempted to do or say is better than what God calls us to in His Word.

That we want to believe that my way is better than God's. This will give me more freedom if I give in to temptation. And so we drink down the poison.

And so often don't we have to live with the bitter after effects of when we give in to sin, because we doubt God's goodness. And so we need to understand that it's the gospel that can set us free from those doubts.

Now we might ask ourselves the question, well why is it that from the beginning God planted that tree in the middle? You know, we might ask, why didn't God make us so we wouldn't sin?

Why did He allow people to fall? Why does He allow all the brokenness? Why does He allow us to ask us? It's good to ask those questions. But recognize it can lead us to question, is God good?

[13:41] Is God generous? Can I really trust Him? Let me give you a way to approach that question. Go to another tree.

Let me take you to the tree of Calvary, the cross where Jesus died. What do we see there? That tree. We see God the Father sending His own Son to die in the place of sinners.

We see God's commitment to work out His eternal plan, to demonstrate His saving love. We see God holding nothing back to redeem and reconcile sinners to Himself.

And to look on that tree, to look at Jesus hanging there, dying there, we can say, even when we have questions, God is generous. God is good.

God is loving. But the seed is planted to doubt God's goodness. The second seed that the devil plants is that we would doubt God's truthfulness.

[14:46] So back in chapter 2, verse 17, very clear command from God, you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it, you will certainly die. And significantly before that, God had been speaking words of blessing, be fruitful and multiply.

He's placed them in a perfect garden. And in a sense, there is that greater command to enjoy life with God in the perfect world that He had made. And part of that was to say no to what God told them to say no to.

But the devil takes us back to the question of trust. Will Adam and Eve trust God and His Word? Will they love and obey simply because God is the Lord and because they trust that He is good and has their best interests at heart?

And this is the point where Satan's full frontal attack kicks in. Verse 4, you will not certainly die. The snake said to him, for God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened to you, but

like God, knowing good and evil.

So notice what he's doing there. God's Word is a lie. He says to Eve, and while Adam is listening, I am your friend and God is your enemy. And he delivers a false promise.

[15:57] You'll be like God. When it says you'll be like God knowing good and evil, that means you'll be like God in the sense that you can decide for yourself what is good and evil.

What's the devil saying? You need to throw off God's shackles. Freedom will come when you decide to go your own way and don't trust God. Trust in yourself.

That's not a temptation restricted to the garden, is it? And so again, here's what Satan is doing.

He's hiding from view all that God had done for Adam and for Eve. All the proofs of his love.

Satan's pushing them behind his back. And he's focusing again Eve's gaze on that one tree and these false dreams of what she can have through that tree. And all the time making God seem inconsistent and untrustworthy.

And all the while the seed of doubt is growing. Now as we move from the garden to our own lives, we need to ask ourselves the question, what voice do I listen to?

[17:01] Do I recognize that there are competing voices for my attention, for my obedience, for my trust? Because still there comes that temptation to doubt that God's Word is good and true.

Still there is the temptation to reject God's Word, to twist God's Word, to soften God's Word so it sounds better to our ears.

We can push God's Word to one side so that we can, as Christians, blend in with our culture. We can push God's Word to one side and His truth so it can suit our own sinful desires.

The same thing that happened in the garden is the same thing that can happen to each and all of us. What makes us fall into temptation? It's when we close our ears to God's truth.

Because we believe that my way brings me happiness. You know, it's that illustration, isn't it, of the goldfish that gets tired of living in the water and thinks, you know what, I'll have greater freedom if I can just escape the goldfish bowl.

[18:10] And it jumps out and it finds itself flapping on the kitchen table. And we can imagine that freedom outside of God's limits is the good life and we discover it is anything but.

And so we need to pray, lead us not into temptation. We need to pray that we would be hearers and doers and trusters of the Word of God.

So we see these seeds are planted to doubt God's goodness, to doubt God's truthfulness. And we know why seeds are planted. Seeds are planted so a flower will spring up or so a crop will spring up.

Now why is Satan planting these seeds of doubt in the human heart? So that the poisonous weed of human rebellion and sin. And we get to that moment in verse 6.

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate it.

[19:16] Now by itself, stripped of context, that might seem a small thing. You know, it's just a piece of fruit. But set within the origin story of Genesis 1-3, we see that sin is an act of cosmic treason against their God, their covenant partner, their creator.

And we understand from our text, and we'll see it next week, every aspect of sin and sorrow and suffering and breakdown and ruin in our world, it traces back to this one act.

The downfall of the first human couple is the downfall of us all. So we need to look at the story, to look at the heart of human sin, to look at that tendency within us to say no to God's rule over us, saying no to trusting and obeying God's Word.

It's so significant the way Moses writes this, Genesis 3, when the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good.

We go back to Genesis 1, and we discover over and over again, God saw that what he created was good. So when Moses writes, Eve saw that it was good, we are being told something.

[20:41] Eve has now put herself in the place of God. She doesn't want to be just an image bearer anymore. She wants to push God off the throne so

that she might be in charge.

Why does she do it? As she saw that the fruit was good, it was pleasing to the eye and desirable for gaining wisdom. Where does sin begin?

It begins with us. It begins in the human heart. It begins when God's will is replaced by my will be done.

It's when God's wisdom is replaced by my wisdom as the rule for my life. That's what we see from Eve. Now what of Adam?

And we discover there that Adam was with her. We don't hear anything from Adam. And so we understand that Adam is failing. He is guilty of sin.

[21:48] He is passive when he should be protecting the garden. He should be protecting themselves from this evil influence. But he participates in sin willingly.

And isn't it significant, when we read the Bible, Romans 5 is one good example, that the Bible holds Adam to be most responsible. Now I don't know if you've ever thought about it, why is that?

Why is it that Adam is held to be more responsible when he seems the passive player in that sense? Well remember the origin story, who was created first?

It was Adam. And Adam has a greater stockpile of memories of God's covenant love and care. And significantly, unlike Eve, Adam is the one who heard God express that first command.

Adam is first in the human race. Adam stands as representative. Adam has unique privileges. What happens to Adam in the garden?

[22:54] Now we see it affects us all. That was the logic of Romans 5, do we hear it? And again, we can be tempted to write that off and to say, that is not fair.

But before we do that, just recognize that the same logic also applies in the good news of Jesus. Because God sends another representative, a second Adam, the true and better Adam, who comes to forgive and to save.

And that by His grace and through faith, we get to share in His victory. And that's not fair. That's grace. That's God's goodness.

But when we come back to Adam here in Genesis 3 and verse 6, as he is with his wife, as he eats the fruit, he knows the devil is telling a lie.

He knows God's wisdom and God's way and he deliberately rejects. So he sins with his eyes wide open. When we slow down to consider how the Bible speaks about sin, I think we get something of the shock and the shame of it.

[24:18] Here are these first people created to live in a perfect, beautiful, life-giving world. Here they were created to enjoy perfect relationships within creation with one another and with God Himself.

Here they are gifted with honor and privilege, made in God's image, living in God's garden, getting to serve under Him and for Him and for His glory, promised life in all its freedom and joy if only Adam and Eve would love and trust and obey.

But what did they do? What has every generation done since? We protest against God and we say, not my King.

We rebel. We say of our good and loving Father, well, I'm happy to take your stuff. I don't really want relationship.

And that's the origin of sin. The heart of sin is rejecting our Creator and our King, rejecting His right to rule. It's bleak.

[25:29] It's honest. But praise God, the Bible is also profoundly hopeful because for a few minutes, let's think about the solution to sin. But before we get there, I came across this this week.

In 1925, a lady called Beatrice Webb, who was one of the architects of the modern British welfare system, she kept extensive diaries. And in one of those diary entries in 1925, she said, there is something wrong with us that leads to selfishness and violence, corruption and business and government, war and atrocities, and that it's consistent across history.

She said, science hasn't dealt with it, education hasn't dealt with it, social machinery hasn't dealt with it. Now, 101 years on, don't we find that her conclusion still holds true?

That despite our best efforts, the problems remain, the brokenness remains, because the problem runs too deep, because it gets right to the problem of the human heart, which is our sin problem. And it's so important that we see that and we grapple with that, so that we would come to the point where we look outside ourselves for the solution. That instead of looking to ourselves and modern technology or modern education, we look instead to our God.

[26:58] And that we begin to grasp the wonder of God's loving and gracious solution to our sin. The book of Genesis we're presented with a God who is good and He is generous and He is trustworthy and He is full of covenant love and wonderfully He doesn't leave the world that He has created and the mess that we have made of it.

Rather, He sends His only Son, perfectly bearing the image of God, coming to love His enemies, coming to restore rebels, to fellowship with God, to welcome prodigals home.

Now, how does He do that? He does it because the Lord Jesus, He is the only one who perfectly, completely submits to the Father's word and the Father's will, living a sinless life of perfect obedience.

And we see it as the Lord Jesus lived with perfect trust in the will of His Father through all the temptations, through all the trials that He experienced, even as people were taunting Him on the cross.

He trusts in God, let God deliver Him. The Lord Jesus trusted and the Lord Jesus died as our representative, as a sin-bearing substitute and sacrifice, taking upon Himself the full weight of our sin, its penalty, the judgment of God we deserve.

[28:26] And then three days later, He rose again, showing that Satan and sin and death, they have been defeated so that we can be forgiven, that we can be restored to life with God, that though our sins are many, God's mercy is more.

And one day, one day Jesus will come again to once and for all throw down in judgment that great adversary, the serpent, Satan, and He will once and for all free this world from sin and evil and death forever.

And by God's grace and through faith in Jesus, all who trust in Him will be there. All our sin can be washed clean. All those moments when we doubt God's goodness and we go our own way.

All those times where we've ignored His word of truth and believed a lie. All those times when we've turned our back on God or we've raised our fist in open rebellion against Him.

We have the promise that we can come to Jesus and He will give us a new story and He will give us new life as we trust in His perfect, finished work on the cross.