

Spoilt By Sin

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[0 : 00] Hi everyone. I've put away my God voice, so that's okay. Well, please follow along on the outline if you want to.

But we're at page 3, Genesis chapter 3. So how is it that ordinary people can end up doing such horrible things?

People just like you and me, it could be our workmates, our classmates, normal, ordinary, and yet they end up committing such extraordinary or horrible crimes.

For example, the recent high-profile murderer, Jared Badenclay, I'm sure we've all heard of him. I mean, he's actually the great-grandson of Lord Baden-Pow, you know, the founder of the Scout Movement.

And he's a father just like any other. Three children, successful real estate business up in Brisbane, and yet he ends up killing his wife of 15 years.

[1 : 12] Now, when you hear things like these, what goes through your mind? I mean, do you think, oh, it never happened to me? Or do you think, here only by the grace of God?

Well, we're in chapter 3 of Genesis, and things start going wrong from here on in. And everything we see in this world happens, whatever happens, can actually be traced back to this very one event in this chapter.

And over the last two weeks, we've seen how God made a good creation, and then next, he made a perfect home. But now this week, we see how it's all spoiled by sin.

Now, most of you would know what sin is. It's just simply acting against God's will, or failing to do what God commands. But this chapter is a masterful piece of storytelling that gets to the heart of what sin is, and what its impact is on us.

If you like, it gives us the ABC of sin, which is how I've broken up this chapter tonight. So, an anatomy of sin, that is, what its components are, how it's formed.

[2 : 24] Then the behavior of sinners, what sinners do after they've sinned. And then thirdly, the consequence of sin. Sadly, if we're honest with ourselves, I think we'll see a lot of Adam and Eve in ourselves tonight.

And as we go through the story, I want to encourage you, well, probably not encourage you, but you'll probably see how you can identify with what they've done. Well, the story begins with the serpent.

It says in verse 1, Now, the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals that the Lord God had made. And although some people might think that this serpent is actually Satan, I still think that it's a snake.

It's a wild animal, just like all the other wild animals created by God. But it's certainly under Satan's influence. And perhaps that's why he can speak. And so it comes to the woman and says, Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden?

And by that, I take it to mean that he's actually saying, Surely God didn't say this. And to which the woman replies, Now, whenever we see dialogue like this, we need to pay close attention.

[3 : 52] And so here's a little exercise for you to do with the person next to you. I'm going to put on the slide the verse of what God actually said in chapter 2. And then immediately below that, what the woman says.

And I'll give you a minute just to compare the differences. So off you go. All right. I'm sure you've picked up two or three. But what I've done is put the differences on the next slide in color.

So apologies to any of you who's colorblind. But it's clear, isn't it, that Eve leaves some things out, and then she adds certain things in.

So first, she left out the word freely, thereby minimizing God's generosity. Then she doesn't refer specifically to the tree. She just says the tree in the middle of the garden.

But in fact, there are two trees, aren't there? The other one being the tree of life, which God didn't say not to eat from. And God didn't say not to touch either.

[4 : 52] I wonder whether you see what Eve is doing. That in each case, she's making God to sound more restrictive than he actually is.

And what's more, she also minimizes the impact of disobedience. And so she doesn't say, you will surely die or you will certainly die. She just says, you will die. Now, this could just be carelessness on her part, or more likely it could be ignorance because Adam probably didn't instruct her carefully.

But either way, both Adam and Eve were being very casual with God's word. And this is further highlighted by how both the serpent and the woman refers to God.

So if you bother to read through the whole of the two chapters, two and three, God is always referred to by the storyteller as the Lord God. But it's only here in the mouths of the serpent and the woman that we hear him being called God.

Almost as if it's a first name basis. A bit like calling the queen Lizzie. It shows irreverence, doesn't it? They're not taking God seriously.

[6 : 05] They're playing fast and loose with his commands. Now, ironically, it's the serpent who actually quotes God correctly, but not to obey him, but actually to use his words against him.

So verse four, you will surely, certainly not die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be open and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. The serpent casts doubt on God's goodness.

He's almost saying, if you like, if you eat, God knows that you will be like him and he doesn't like that or he's afraid of that. Now, if you think about it, the serpent is actually calling God a liar.

But the fact is, it's simply not true, is it? Because God had made them in his image and God had given them the authority to rule over the earth. So none of these things God would have done if he was afraid.

Adam and Eve, if you like, was already God-like in that sense. But what they're being tempted to do is to be independent of God. So Eve has a choice, doesn't she?

[7 : 11] Should she believe God or the serpent? Who was the liar and who was telling the truth? Well, friends, every time we fail to trust God, the reality is that what we're doing is we're accusing God of lying.

Now, we may not think of it like that, but that's actually what's happening. God's made a promise to us and we're saying that we don't believe him. We don't trust him to follow through on it.

And so Eve wasn't simply just making a choice about whether to eat a fruit or not. But with her act, she was making a statement about God's character, about his integrity. Now, having done his devious work, the serpent now exits, stage left, and the woman is left to covet and eat the fruit.

So just imagine this. She's standing in the middle of the garden in the midst of trees full of fruit that is pleasing to the eye and good for food. And she can't have any of these.

And yet, this is the one that she desires. This is the one she thinks she needs in order to gain wisdom. Now, we are all created with desires and needs.

[8 : 25] God gave them to us. We saw some of them last week with purpose, relationship, security, belonging. But the issue is this. Do we trust God to provide for these things his way, or do we pursue them our way and in the course of it, do evil as we do them?

Often, sin does not start with bad motives. They often arise from good desires. Now, I'm sure, like, this Gerald Baden-Klayer had a good upbringing. He had the best intentions when he married his wife to raise a family, to provide for them.

But somewhere along the line, he turned to evil to satisfy his desires. And if you watched on TV, I think that the murder wasn't actually the first evil act he did.

It started when he actually slept with his colleague. And that's the same way with us too, isn't it? Sometimes, it can just start with a small thing, a grumbling attitude, a resentment, resentment, and then it spirals down as we listen to our own selfish self-talk instead of God's commands and promises.

Well, sadly, Eve not only just eats, but then she gives it to her husband as well. Now, interestingly, Adam was actually with her. It says so in verse 6. But instead of stopping her, which is what he should have done, he joins her instead.

[9 : 57] And so the impact is immediate, which brings us to the B, the behavior of sinners. If you like, this is the sinful reaction to the sinful action.

The sin after the sin, as it were. And the two typical sinful reactions are there to be seen. Firstly, the cover-up, and then the blame game.

We cover up so that our sin isn't discovered. And then when it is, we try and shift the blame to someone else. So in verse 7, Adam and Eve do just that.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. So ironically, they actually got what they wanted.

Their eyes were opened, but they got more than they bargained for. They knew good and evil were all right, but that included the evil in themselves. Now many of you would have heard the expression to cover with a fig leaf.

[11 : 00] And it comes from this incident in the Bible. And it describes a poor attempt at trying to cover up something you've done wrong. Which is what happens to Adam and Eve. They may be able to cover their bodies, which they did, but they were not able to cover their sin.

They were still morally exposed. And so that's why they hid behind trees when God came calling. They knew what they had done was wrong. And what's more, they knew that God knew as well.

That's why Adam admits in verse 10 that he hid because he was afraid of God. And so it's often quite easy to tell when we've done the wrong thing, haven't we?

Because what we try and do is cover up. That's our instinctive reaction to see if we can get away with it. Just take extramarital affairs, for instance.

Some people try and justify that as, no, that's fine. But if that's really the case, then why do people try and hide it? You know, why do they have the secret rendezvous, the deleting of the flirty text messages?

[12:06] It all points to the fact that they know it's wrong. Our own consciences gives us away when we sin. And yet we try and cover up. We try and pretend that other people wouldn't recognize wouldn't know.

But it's a charade, isn't it? And once we've found out, we try and then pin it on somebody else. That is, we engage in the blame game. And so it is here in Genesis when God questions Adam, who told you that you were naked?

Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from? And Adam here, again, could have just fessed up at this point, just come clean. And you know, one wonders what God would have done. But instead, he blames the woman.

Actually, he blames God as well. Because he says, this is the woman you gave me. Look what you've done. If you haven't given me this woman, I wouldn't have sinned.

And in turn, the woman, having been blamed, passes the buck down to the serpent. But again, the truth is that both Adam and Eve made up their own minds to sin.

[13:10] They made their own choices. The serpent may have tempted Eve big time, but it's Eve that took the fruit. And the serpent wasn't even there when she did it.

And likewise, Adam could have refused the fruit when Eve gave it to her. And we too like to blame others, don't we, when we're in the wrong? He started it. The driver cut in front of me.

I had a bad day at work, and so I can lash out at my children. Even things like the weather was bad. But at the end of the day, we can't blame others, can we?

Nobody forces us to sin. We do it ourselves. No matter the provocation, it is we that decide to do the wrong thing. It's funny, because Adam and Eve wanted to be like God, and yet they couldn't take responsibility for their own actions.

Well, let's turn to the final letter, C, the consequence of sin. Sin always has its consequences, and now God pronounces his judgment. So first, to the serpent, God said, Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals.

[14:20] You will crawl on your belly, and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.

So from the most crafty animal, the serpent now becomes the most cursed animal, eating dust, because he tempted the woman to eat. But I think the most important detail is right down the end, and it's the curse around the enmity or the ongoing conflict between the serpent and humanity.

And I think that because the serpent is Satan's agent, it's actually a symbol of the enmity between Satan and humanity. So Satan will keep striking at us, trying to make us fall, but it's the woman's offspring who will crush his head.

Now the word offspring here just is the word seed in Hebrew. And throughout the Bible, it's always included when God's promise of salvation is made to, so first to Noah and his seed, to Abraham and his seed, to David and his seed.

And all of it is pointing to the ultimate fulfillment of this, the seed being Jesus. And so even here, right in the very start, in Genesis 3, we already have God foreshadowing, even as he pronounces judgment, his salvation.

[15:40] Jesus, the seed of Adam and Eve, will be the one to crush Satan's head for good. Now let me turn to the other judgments. And as we do, I want you to notice how each is the souring of God's blessing to humanity.

So I put it up on a table to hopefully make it clearer. But what we have, for example, is humans, we're told in chapter 1, to be fruitful and multiply, to greatly increase.

But now here in verse 16, this will only happen when the woman will give birth in her labor pains and that labor pain greatly increases.

The wife was meant to be a helper, but now the husband and wife relationship is strained. God says, your desire will be for your husband, and that's not to be taken in the good sense, rather it's meant to be taken in the controlling sense.

And we can tell this when we look next time at chapter 4 and verse 7, where Cain said that the sin's desire will be for Cain, but Cain is told to rule over it.

- [16:45] And so here, it's taken to mean that the woman's desire is to control the man, but in return, the man will rule over her. So instead of mutual help, which is what God wanted, there's now competition between man and wife.

As for the man, he was to care and keep the garden, but now in verse 17, cursed is the ground because of you. Though through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life, it will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field by the sweat of your brow.

You will eat your food until you return to the ground. And then finally, there's death. For dust you are, and to dust you will return. And again here, we see a reversal of what God has done in chapter 2, taking man and creating him out of the dust of the ground.

All these consequences happen because humans have tried to overturn God's created order. So it was meant to be like this, God, man, woman, the animals.

God gave his word to the man. The man should have passed it on to the woman, and together they are to rule the animals. But instead what's happened is that the woman listens to the serpent instead of listening to the instruction that comes down to the man.

- [18:06] And the man, instead of passing on God's word, is silent. And he too, instead of listening to God, listens to the woman. And so that's exactly what God begins his judgment in verse 17 with.

because you listen to your wife instead of to my command, and that's why this judgment falls on you. And so here we see that God's creation still stands.

His mandate to human continues on. And that's why we see, for example, in Adam, in verse 20, he names his wife Eve because she's going to continue to be fruitful and multiply because she'll become the mother of all the living.

But even as that continues, everything is tainted by sin. Our purpose, belonging, relationships, now all come with frustration, with pain, and with toil.

And so even with Eve, who is the mother of all, that's a bittersweet thing as well because it also means all of us will be like her.

- [19:11] Everyone that comes from her will be like her, sinful. None of us are sinless and people can, you know, atheists can argue about whether God exists.

But no one, not even atheists, can argue that everyone is sinful. And the world isn't separated between good people and sinful people, you know, with Jared Baten Clay on this side and we hopefully on this other side.

Instead, the dividing line of good and evil runs right down each of us. We're all a mix of good and evil because we're all children of Eve. And so we can't isolate sin from ourselves as if to put it away, cut it out and put it away somewhere.

No, it's like a cancer that infects every part of us, every part of our lives and sin isn't out there, outside the church walls.

Sin is right here in amongst us as well even as we are Christians. But sad though it is, this chapter actually ends on a rather positive note because as my outline says, in spite of sin, God is still gracious.

[20 : 23] It's verses 21 to 24. So in verse 21, he provides garments of skin to clothe Adam and Eve. But again, even this is bittersweet, right?

Because without the effect, even here, the effect of sin can't be avoided because some animal had to be killed in order for the skin to be made. And then finally, God sends Adam and Eve out of the garden.

Verse 22, the man has now become like one of us knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever.

And so the Lord banished them from the garden and had cherubim standing to stop them returning to the garden. Now again, there is judgment and there is mercy here even in this final act.

The judgment we know is that we live away from God's, Adam and Eve lives away from God's presence, experiencing death. But in a way, it's also an act of mercy because it would be terrible, wouldn't it, to live in a world where sinful people never die.

[21 : 32] Imagine that happening where sinful people never suffer any punishment. punishment. I think that the world would be infinitely more evil than we have today if that were the case.

Well, by way of application, let's move down to the next three points. And we need to ask, how do we respond in light of this chapter, in light of the fact of the pervasiveness of sin?

Well, I want to suggest three things. So first, I think we need to repent. In our New Testament reading today, we see that even though death and sin came into the world by one man, grace and life also comes through one man, Jesus Christ.

So I've printed again on the screen, Romans chapter 5 in verse 17. For if by the trespass of one man death reigned through the one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

And so the consequence of sin is death, but repentance and trust in Jesus brings life for all of us. We don't need to hide from God anymore.

[22 : 45] That's the good news. We can come to him for forgiveness and have life in Jesus Christ. Now repentance, as you all know, isn't a one-off thing. We keep doing it as Christians and it's a habit I think we need to keep cultivating and it's a culture that we need to keep having in our church.

That is, whenever we do wrong, let's not be afraid to confess. Let's not try and cover up. Let's not try and blame one another. I know our natural instinct is to do that. But let's practice repenting and confessing.

We don't need to pretend that we're perfect anymore. That fig leaf doesn't work. Besides, there's a much better way because we know that Jesus' righteousness is the thing that clothes us now.

He is the one that now provides us with robes that are washed clean by his blood and we need to use that to cover ourselves instead of fig leaves. Second, and that follows from the first, I think that when someone confesses and repents, then let's forgive.

Let's be gracious because God is gracious. If a perfect God can forgive, then how much more imperfect and sinful people like us should forgive?

[24 : 03] Now, in our home, we always try and praise our kids whenever they say sorry. It's a bit perverse, I know, but we try and do that. And the reason is that I want to take away their fear of admitting they're wrong so that when they make it, when they actually do it, and it's even better when they do it without me having to tell them to do it, I actually make it a point to actually say I forgive them, hug them, and tell them I'm no longer angry with them.

I mean, they might still be punished for it, but at least they know that they are being forgiven. And so I think the same should happen with us at church, that we need to be quick to forgive.

That's actually great power to hear someone say I forgive you. And I think we should do that. When someone is courageous enough to say I'm sorry, then let's be quick to say I forgive you.

Incidentally, that's why we always have an assurance of forgiveness after our confession of sin, which we do every Sunday, because it's important for us to hear from God, from His Word, that He forgives every time we confess.

Thirdly, because we know how vulnerable we are, we need to beware of sin. Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 12, so if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall.

[25 : 29] So even as we pray and God works in us as Christians and helps us to sin less and less, we ourselves need to be on God, we need to be vigilant. Yes, God is the one that's doing the changing in us, but that just doesn't mean that we sit passively and wait for Him to do it.

So we need to take practical actions to exercise discipline that will help us to stop sinning. One day in the new creation, sin will be no more, but until that time, sin is always at the door, as it were, lurking, ready to pounce if we're sloppy.

So if there's something we know we're weak at, for example, pornography, then let's take steps to avoid coming into temptation in the first place. Studies, for example, have shown that we only have so much willpower each day and that it sort of runs down over the day.

And so we're actually most vulnerable at the end of the day to all manner of sin, all manner of temptation. And so if that's the case, and that's the case with pornography, let's go to bed early. Let's turn off the computer after a certain time.

Let's not think we're strong enough or we have the mental willpower to say no at those times. We need to be on guard. We need to think that we're actually vulnerable. But whatever it is, whether it's anger, jealousy, greed, my point is that we actually need to take practical action.

[26 : 54] When we know that we're prone to certain things, then let's think hard about how we can change our lives so that we don't put ourselves in sin's way. So yes, we live in a sinful world, and we can't avoid that.

But as Christians, we need to know that neither are we defeated by sin. Because Christ has conquered sin and death on our behalf. And so we have the victory in Christ, and we can live in that knowledge.

And living in that knowledge involves us repenting, forgiving, and being aware of sin. So I'm going to close now by actually going into a time of confession.

I'm going to give us a quiet moment to be specific in our confession if needs be, and then we'll have our usual corporate confession of sin, which will be up on the screen.

So let's pray. Wir piaceiannis die la y