

Gen 3:1-7 (& Acts 26.17-23) – What is sin & what to do about it? Clint Le Page

Main Point- Sin is disobedience, and personal rejection of God. We must turn back to God, trusting Christ for forgiveness.

I was once talking with someone who had been to church as a child, and as I mentioned the word 'sin' they said, "Oh, I'm not a sinner."

I've not broken the 10 commandments.

I've not committed adultery, not stolen anything or murdered anyone."

Apparently their conscience was clear, and they thought they were a good person.---

Now I know they had broken the 10 commandments, as we all have.

But still I ask, **What is sin?-----**(SLIDE)

What do you believe sin is?-----

It's disobeying God, isn't it?

It's all the bad things we do, and all the good things we don't do.-----

But is it more than that?-----

Maybe, like my friend, many of your friends think, 'I haven't done anything to deserve prison, therefore I'm not a sinner'.-----

When people think of sin they think they're not that bad, and God is not that holy.-----

Also, when people think of sin, they often think of outward deeds and not the heart attitudes.-----

Today I hope we'll grow in our understanding of what sin is, and know how God would have us respond.-----

As you'll see from the outline(SLIDE), we're going to consider **What went wrong?** then **What we need to learn and do.**-----

In Genesis 2 God made the first man, Adam, and put him in the Garden of Eden.

Then God made the first woman, corresponding to him.

At this point there is a certain order in creation.

There is a good and generous Creator who rules over all.-----

Under God, human beings were to rule over the earth's creatures, as God's image-bearers.[1.26]

And then **ch3 tells us what went wrong.**-----

This chapter is foundational to our faith.

And for some to claim it is a myth, a fairytale, or only symbolic, is a great lie, and horrible deception.

Which can shipwreck people's faith or keep them from salvation.-----

Yes, we read of a talking snake, but this is no fairy tale, no Three Little Pigs.

It's a true story that explains who we are, and why the world is the way it is.---

Genesis 3 is history.-----

V1 begins with some background info.

The **serpent** was the most cunning [or crafty], of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made.

We don't know what the serpent looked like, but personally I wonder if he had legs at this point.-----(cf. 3.14)

In the ancient world the serpent(SLIDE) was viewed as a demonic and hostile creature, who possessed mystical wisdom.

But in Gen 3 we know the serpent is Satan's personal presence in the Garden.

Because **Rev 12 (v9,SLIDE)** says that, the ancient serpent is the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world.-----

Satan, means the adversary, and 'devil' means, the slanderer and false accuser.-----

And Satan does accuse us of sin and guilt.

He's the enemy to human relationships with each other, and with God especially.

Satan is behind what happens here in Gen3.-----

But, v1 & v6 are communicating that the creation itself rises up against its creator.

The fall of humanity into sin starts with a creature, who tempts and deceives the woman.-----

To be clear, God created all things, but he did not create evil.

I accept that Satan is a fallen angel, who chose to become God's enemy (Lk10.18(**SLIDE**);

Isa 14.12-15; Rev 12:7ff)-----

Genesis doesn't say, the serpent is Satan, maybe because human beings are not to shift the blame away from ourselves.

Genesis 3 does not allow them or us to say, 'the Devil made me do it'.-----

Adam and Eve, and we all, are responsible for our sin.-----

The focus is on humanity's guilt.-----

So the serpent comes to the woman and says, "**Did God really say**, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden'?"

The hint, the insinuation is, that God is overbearing.

God is not good, Not generous, "for you can't eat from any trees, can you?"

And the woman rightly corrects the serpent, "We may eat the fruit from the trees".

In fact God had said to Adam, who we trust told his wife, **ch2v16,(SLIDE)**

You are free to eat from any tree in the garden,----- expect one.

The emphasis is on God's bountiful generosity.-----

But we wonder if Eve is already starting to forget God's generosity?-----

While God didn't say anything about not touching it, Eve repeats God's words, that 'you will die' if you eat from the tree in the middle, **v3**.

And how does the snake respond?-----

"No, you will not die".

The serpent has moved from feigned ignorance to a blatant lie;

an outright denial of God's word.-----

For he wants them to die.

As Jesus said of Satan in **John 8.44,(SLIDE)** the devil 'was a murderer from the beginning'. A liar, and the father of lies.'-----

Then in Gen **3v5** the serpent proposes a conspiracy theory:

You wont die, because "God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."-----

Remember in **chapter 2v9 and v16,(SLIDE)** this tree with the forbidden fruit is called the '**tree of the knowledge of good and evil**'.

And **3v6**, the fruit looked good; desirable, delightful.----

Now despite the media's portrayals, the fruit was unlikely an apple.(**SLIDE**)

The Old English word for 'apple' meant fruit.

And in Latin, the words for apple and evil are very similar.-----

Yet what does 'knowledge of good and evil' mean?-----

It's hard to be certain.

It could mean gaining moral discernment, or knowing the difference between right and wrong.

But, they already know what is right and wrong, even if the fruit gives them a new level of perception.

So in the context, the emphasis falls on the prohibition rather than the properties of the fruit.---

The focus is the opportunity the tree gives to disobey God.

So what is placed before them is a test, that gives them the opportunity to express loyalty to God, love for God.-----

A relationship of trust n' obedience requires the possibility of a choice.-----

Adam and Eve were not robots.

God wanted them to choose to love and obey him.-----

In eating this forbidden fruit it's about them deciding what is good for themselves.

They are determining what is good and evil in their own eyes.-----

Their eating is about moral autonomy, a declaration of independence against God.---

In the movie The Truman Show, Truman,(SLIDE) without knowing it, lived his entire life in a huge television studio.

For over 30 years he never knew that everyone he came into contact with, even his family and friends, were just paid actors.

Even the weather and sun rise were controlled by computers.

He eventually becomes aware that something is not right.

He tricks the cameras, gets across the ocean and bumps into the horizon.(SLIDE)

Then his "creator", the director, speaks with him and tries to persuade Truman to stay in the world he knows, for outside the world is a 'sick place'.-----

And with the cheer of the audience, Truman boldly chooses wisdom and knowledge over a controlled security.

And friends, people treat God like this, as a tyrant, who needs escaping from.

We reject dependence on God for a far more costly dependence, on ourselves and our own resources.-----

But in seeking autonomy and freedom, it only forges chains.-----**(SLIDE)**

God is not like the selfish director in the movie.

God is good, and he seeks our good.

And yet we reject him.-----

People think in rejecting God they gain freedom and life.**(SLIDE)**

But all they get is slavery to sin, and death.-----

In v6 the woman and the man are sinfully **determining what is right for themselves.**

They're choosing to know in their own eyes what is right.

They're making-up the rules.-----

And saying, We're want to live our own way.----

We want to be gods.-----

The woman desired the "wisdom" the fruit could give.

So she took some and ate it.

But before we lay all the blame on Eve, **v6** also says, 'she gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.'

He was with her.

If Adam was there the whole time, we don't know.

But **2 Cor 11** says,**(SLIDE)** Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning.---

And yet, when God finds them in the Garden, as we'll see next week, knowing what they've done, God speaks to Adam first.**(SLIDE,v9)**

God holds Adam, the head [Eph 5.23], ultimately responsible for what happened.

He failed to dissuade her from eating, or to rebuke her.

Then he went and ate it.-----

The creation order here is turned upside-down.

Eve listens to an animal. Adam listens to his wife's sinful words.(v17)

And neither of them to God's word.

It's a rebellion of the creation against their Creator.-----

And what results from this, **v7?**

'the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.'-----

Interestingly, there's a play on words, with the Hebrew word for cunning in v1 and nude, v7.-----

They will seek to be shrewd, but discover they are nude.☺ (**SLIDE**)-----

And in a pathetic attempt to **cover their nakedness and shame**, they make fig-leaf loin-coverings.(**SLIDE**)-----

This communicates that Adam & Eve don't trust each other any more, and there's the risk of hurt.-----

They may their genitals because our sexuality is closely connected to our whole self – personally, emotionally, physically.

That's why sexual shaming is so destructive to a person's sense of self.-----

We want to cover up our nakedness to protect ourselves from shame and abuse.---

But more than being about their sexuality, this covering is about sin making us feel shame.

Sin creating distance between us and each other, even a spouse.

And us and our Creator.

The fig-leaves are an pathetic attempt to hide from the scrutiny and judgement of God.

[Now they ate, and yet they haven't died. So was the serpent right?

Adam would reach 930 yrs before he dies.(Gen 5.5)

But no. They didn't die straight away, but in the OT and even now, God's punishment for sin is not always instantaneous, is it?

They will die physically, and as we'll see next time, they have to leave Eden, and the presence of God. So they do die spiritually.]

Ch2 finished with Adam and Eve being naked and without shame.

Now it's all gone wrong.-----

Next Sunday we'll consider all the consequences of their sin.

But now, let's think about **what we need to learn, and do.**(**SLIDE**)

Firstly, we need to understand what sin is.(**SLIDE**)

When our first parents disobey God's command and eat that fruit, they sin.

But describing their sin as 'disobedience' is not enough.

What's happened is an **act of rebellion**, and treason.-----[Isaiah 1.2;Jer 5.23]

Not an accidental stumble but a personal rejection of their Creator and Lord.

Sin is personally rejecting your Maker, and if we are a Christian, our Saviour.

We tell God to get lost, whether consciously or not.

And say we want to run our lives our way.-----

In **v5-6**, Eve believes the Serpent's slander and she's deeply attracted to becoming like God.-----

This is a great irony though, because Adam and Eve were already like God;

made in God's image, remember.(1.26-27)

Yet that wasn't enough.

As Andrew said last week, we prefer to replace God and be God, than obey God.

We delight to reject, replace and ignore God.-----

Adam and Eve's sin occurred because they didn't think God had their best interests at heart.

They thought **God was holding something 'good' [v6] back from them.**

Just like in this picture.(**SLIDE**)----- (How blind!)

This has been the essence of sin ever since.

We doubt God's commands are truly good.

Think about the last time you chose to sin.-----

If you truly believed God was good and seeking your good, how would that change your decision?-----

We think we can flourish better, living our way without God.-----

And like Adam & Eve, we think that sin is going to satisfy us like nothing else can.

Even as Christians, sin comes from **doubting God's goodness**, and believing that God has withheld from me that which is truly good.

We desire fleeting short-term pleasures, instead of satisfaction in God himself.

As **CS Lewis** famously said,(**SLIDE**) '*We are half-hearted creatures fooling around with drink, sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us. Like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum, because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.*'

And about this **John Piper's says**,(**SLIDE**)

That's it, isn't it? Our desire for happiness is too weak. We have settled for a home, a family, a few friends, a job, [technology & gadgets], an occasional night out, a yearly vacation. We have accustomed ourselves to such small, unexciting, short-lived, inadequate pleasure that our capacity for joy has shrivelled. And therefore our worship has shrivelled.

Many can scarcely imagine a holiday at the sea – worshipping the living God!-----

When we seek ultimate satisfaction in God's gifts instead of God, that is sin.-----

Sin is forsaking the good God, for something lesser.

Sin is believing the lie about what satisfies.-----

So is there something you need to accept, and take action on?-----

A man once got dressed up and was on his way walking to a party.

A car going by, drove through a muddy puddle and drenched the man's clothes.(**SLIDE**)

Unlike in that pic it was dark outside, so at first the man thought the damage might be minimal. He could tell he was wet, but since it didn't look that bad, he thought he would just go to the party.

Ahead of him was a street light. When he got closer he noticed his dirty clothes; the stains were greater than he thought. He was worried but still went on.

At last he came and stood under the full light and saw the severity of the stains.

He said, 'Wow, it's much worse than I thought. I won't be welcome at the party. It's not acceptable. I'm going to have to go home and change my clothes.'-----

But he realized, he didn't have any clean clothes at home.'-----

If you want to be welcomed into God's presence, and heavenly party, God's family, you & I must first see that we are dirty all over, we are sinful beyond measure.

And we have no clean clothes.-----

To turn to God for mercy, we must **realise how bad sin is.**

And **secondly**, we must **come to Jesus** who alone is able to provide clean clothes. Have you come to him?-----

From our second reading (**SLIDE**) Paul shared what the risen Jesus said to him (**Acts 26:18**),

'I am sending you to [the non-Jews], to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'-----
Faith in Jesus Christ, relying upon Him in your heart and mind, enables your sins to be forgiven, and washed away.

It enables you to be sanctified, that is, counted acceptable, holy, and righteous in God's sight.-----

If you know the reality of your rebellious sin, have you relied on Christ for forgiveness?-----

If not, please do that today.

And find, as many of us have, Christ will meet your need, and cover your stains, and enable you to stand before God forgiven.-----

Or **third** application, maybe what you need to do is, be open with **your friend who needs to know** how bad sin is, or how great a Saviour Jesus is?-----

Like Paul knew, others need to know about Jesus.-----

A faith revival seems to be storming the 2026 World Cup.

Stars like Lionel Messi, the USA Captain and Germany's Felix Nmecha(**SLIDE**) are shocking fans by laying down imaginary crowns before Jesus on the pitch.

Elite athletes are uniting under the player-led movement, **#theKingsReturn**.

Dropping rivalries to form post-game prayer circles, they are reminding the world of what matters more.

While the world worships trophies and fame, these players are pointing to the ultimate King, Jesus.

And saying the greatest victory is not the World Cup, but knowing Christ.-----

Should you be open and honest with someone about your faith?-----

Then a **fourth** thing we are to learn and do, as people saved by Jesus, is reject sin; and say '**No**' to temptation.-----

Paul said in **Acts 26.20**,(**SLIDE**) 'I preached that they should repent and turn to God and do works worthy of repentance',

or, 'demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.'

We who've experienced God's forgiveness, must continue to repent; show our repentance by what we do

Yet how can we do this?-----

The key is to remember that we still have Christ.

By his Spirit we are united to Christ.(**Rom 6.11-SLIDE**; Rom 8.9-14)-----

Think about a **moment of temptation**.---- And what you will do.-----

- You think about giving money to the poor or to church, but then get a desire to upgrade your phone instead.-----
- You're with a friend or family member, and you start to get angry at them.
- You're at school and the boys start making sexist comments.
- It's late at night, you've scrolled the Insta feed for ages and it's time to turn your screen off, or you'll visit one of those other sites.-----
- You think that person doesn't love me; so I'm not going to love them.

- Or my suffering goes on and on, so will I get bitter at God and seek to meet my needs my own way?-----

Temptations make us battle within and confuse what we want.

And without Christ, sin is really what we want, "What I really really want!"

If Christ is just someone whose teachings I follow, like an App I've downloaded into my life, a cause I've signed up for, then he's not my identity.

However, if by faith I am united to Christ and Christ is not just someone behind me but in me.(Matt 28:20; Heb 13.6)

He is not an App but my whole Operating System.

He is not just a cause or a destiny, but where my life is now.

He is my identity.

He is who I want, and who want to know more.-----

Because he gives me life and love and joy, in God.-----

When we get this, it does actually change our response to temptation.

We will reject sin and not give into temptation.-----

Because wanting to live for Christ is more desirable than sin is.-----

Union with Christ is not some dry theological doctrine, but when it's released into the grim realities of the school yard of life, it equips us to face the bullies of sin, death and Satan.-----

As I conclude, coming back to where we started.

What is sin?

It is disobedience, but also personal rebellion and seeking something more than God.

And we need to Remember how bad sin is; Rely now on Christ for forgiveness.

And Reject sin by Realising in Jesus you have all you need.

Let's pray.