

Sin: Its Origin

Westview Church | Genesis 3:1-23 | Pastor Brett Toney | September 13, 2020

The Plague of Plagues

We're familiar with the narrative. A disease with limited understanding of its origin spreads across the metro resulting in businesses being closed and masks being worn. The death toll tallies upward as civic leaders put quarantines in place and scramble to do something, *anything* to just make it stop. Adding woe upon woe, the city is set ablaze. It is this setting that led one pastor to write on just how terrible *sin* is, saying, "Sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of his mercy, the jeer of his patience, the slight of his power, the contempt of his love."¹ All this, however, took place in London in 1665 during what became known as "The Great Plague of London."

Three-and-a-half centuries later, as we see echoes of this in our context, do we even pause to consider what truly plagues our world and our souls? As we can readily list the very real abuses, evils, devastation, fears, and sorrows of 2020, will we see they are but shadows of the eternally worse pandemic of our world that will not merely kill the body but condemn both body and soul to Hell?

Why a Series on Sin?

We will be taking a four-week break from the Gospel of Mark to give attention to sin. Here are three reasons why I think it is good for us to give focus here:

¹ Venning, Ralph. *The Sinfulness of Sin*, Puritan Paperbacks (32).

1. *Deepen Our Need* — We've talked about how *what* we are doing when we gather for public worship each Sunday; we are reorienting on the gospel. But we will not recognize our need for the gospel, to reorient on it, if we don't recognize the extent of our sin. I'm praying the Spirit will deepen our need for his work in making effective the death and resurrection of Jesus in our lives. Our need can't actually deepen any further, but may we increasingly see just how deep our need truly is.

2. *Understand Our Problem* — If I don't see that my main problem is *my* sin, I will continue to look for the problem somewhere else. If only my circumstances were different, if only I made a little more money, if only my spouse would change, if only my candidate were elected, if only my kids were better behaved ... if *that* was different, then my life would be better. Friends, things outside of you are not the problem. *You* are the problem. *I* am the problem. Specifically, our sin is the problem. And if we don't diagnose the disease correctly, we'll never know the true cure.

3. *Motivate the Mission* — We are beggars showing other beggars where the bread is. Knowing more fully the extent and nature of our sin will, God willing, spur us on to move towards other sinners with compassion and urgency. The mortality rate for sin is 100%—no comorbidities, no died “with sin” verse “from sin.” Hundreds of thousands of people outside our doors are racing towards eternity one moment at a time in blind, deaf, and mute rebellion against their

Creator. And we know the way of rescue, we have the vaccine. O, may God compel us to make Christ known.

Sin's Origin

And so, we begin—where does sin come from? Where did this all start? Sin entered into the human experience back in the Garden, in Genesis 3. Sin came about as Adam, with his wife Eve, failed to regard God as God. God had given Adam a mission in Genesis 2:15 to work and keep the Garden. He was supposed to provide and protect—that's what men are to do. So alarms should be going off when the crafty serpent is even present in the Garden. Adam has not done his job—he did not take God's commissioning seriously, and thus belittles God's authority.

Now, we don't expect the serpent to regard God truly, but Eve?! The ensuing sin is not because of the serpent. The problem has never been from outside; it comes from within. Consider what Eve says of God's one prohibition, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, *neither shall you touch it*, lest you die" (3:3). That isn't what God said! He only said not to eat the fruit—there was nothing mentioned about touching the tree. You've perhaps heard it said that in the Garden, God created a world of "Yes!" with only one "No!" All was to be enjoyed; just don't eat this one fruit. But Eve fails to regard God as God and adds to his decree. And so, v.6, seeing the tree was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes, that it was desired to make one wise, she took and ate. Did you track that progression from temptation to sin?

She saw it, delighted in it, desired it, and took it. You and me and all humanity has been following the same progression ever since.

Eve eats the fruit, and—look still at v.6—“she gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.” I don’t want us to over-read what’s going on here. We don’t have enough detail of this interaction. Maybe Adam was across the Garden when he saw Eve talking with the serpent, and by the time he got to her she had eaten. Maybe he passively watched the whole interaction take place. Regardless, he failed his job. He didn’t work and keep the Garden. He didn’t lead his wife in the Word of God. He didn’t intervene. He ate, and all was undone.

Shame, fear, guilt—they rose in the soul of mankind for the very first time. They recognize their nakedness, seeking to cover their shame with leaves. In fear, they try to hide from God. And in guilt, they face the questioning of the all just Judge. The verdict is clear. God curses the serpent. God curses the woman’s childbearing and relation to her husband. And in turning attention to Adam, God curses the creation. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). Friends, Adam was our representative. He stood in place for all humanity. His failure is our failure, my failure. We are now, by nature, sinners. We inherit the shame, fear, and guilt of sin. From the moment we are conceived, we are

sinner (cf. Psalm 51:5). God looked on the sin of Adam and regards all humanity as *guilty*.

This is, foundationally, where our sin comes from. Kids, when you get upset with your brother or sister or friend or parents, it isn't because they did something you didn't like. When you stomp and grump, it isn't because they said something. When you sin like that, it is because you are a human, a sinner. You're like a yogurt or applesauce pouch—any of you eat these? You're like one of these pouches. When other people do things you don't like, that's like a pouch getting squeezed. What happens? Applesauce squirts out. The squeeze didn't make the applesauce. It just shows what's already there. Sin is like the applesauce—it's in you and comes out easily. What are you like as a sinner? You're like an applesauce pouch.

The Lord's Table

It should come as no surprise then when sinners think, speak, act, and feel sinfully. But even here at Patient Zero, there are glimmers of the cure. God promises and acts to begin the redemption of his people. In the midst of curse, he promised rescue. He told the serpent that while he will bruise the heel of a son of the woman, the son will bruise his head. A son will come to deal with the serpent. But God doesn't just promise; he acts. An animal dies, is sacrificed, so that Adam and Eve's nakedness, their shame, would be covered. Verse 21, with garments of skins God clothes them. And not only that, God acts to display mercy. He does not give what they deserve. He said in the day they eat of the

fruit they will surely die. Yet instead of killing them, he shows mercy in exiling them.

Since the very origin of sin, God has been anticipating the Table. The Son has come to bruise the head of the serpent. A sacrifice has been made to cover our shame. God has extended mercy to pass over our sin. And if we claim it isn't fair that we be counted guilty with Adam, then we have no place at this table. It would likewise not be fair that we be counted with the righteousness of Christ.

Sin is the plague of plagues. May we hear the call of that same London pastor, "Will you love that which hates God, and which God hates? God forbid! Will you join yourself to that which is nothing but [contrary] to God and all that is good? Oh, say to [sin]...what have I to do with you! ... Away! Away!"²

² Ibid., 36