

Origins: Evil

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- [0 : 0 0] Okay, evil is a word that has been used a lot over these past few weeks with the Russian war on Ukraine. Much of what has taken place has been described as evil.
- And we never cease to be shocked by the depths of humanity's inhumanity to man or man's inhumanity to man. And we see this right now in the Ukraine as Russia is attacking.
- But history is full of human wickedness, where evil has been unleashed in many different ways and in many different places across the pages of history.
- Whether it's the Holocaust during the Second World War, the killing fields of Cambodia, the Rwandan genocide, the dictatorship in Zimbabwe, the terrorist attacks of 9-11, or currently the war in Ukraine.
- So the question is, well, what is the problem in our world? Why is there evil, war, greed, selfishness, pain, suffering?
- [1 : 0 3] Why are we the way we are as a human race? Where did it all start? And what is wrong? These are the questions that get asked and have been asked by people as long as there have been people.
- What is wrong with the world and what is wrong with us? And whether you'd call yourself a Christian here today or not, that is something that you've thought about. And the answer is found here in Genesis chapter 3 in our Bibles.
- What is wrong with the world is human rebellion against our Creator God. The origin of everything that's wrong with our world and with us is here in Genesis chapter 3.
- And so the Bible has a word for this. It's the word sin, which explains the reality of the world that we live in. And it explains our lived experience as people.
- And so Genesis 3 is really foundational for understanding our world, for understanding our lives, for understanding God himself. And so today we come to the end of this series we've been going through called Origins.
- [2 : 1 0] And we're looking at not just how things came to be, but today we're looking at what went wrong. Because if we're going to understand what life is all about, then we need to go back to our origins.
- The beginning of everything in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 and 3. And Genesis 3 tells us where it all went wrong. But not in some kind of simplistic way.
- It gives us a brutally honest account of what is wrong with the world and with us. But it also gives us a beautifully hopeful picture that points to the solution.
- So today we're going to see three things. First of all, the origin of sin, verse 1 to 6. Second, the problem of sin, verse 7. So first of all, the origin of sin in verse 1 to 6.
- Genesis chapter 3 is a true account of what happened to the first human beings. And Genesis 3 is framed by what is said before in Genesis chapter 2.
- [3 : 1 2] So the Genesis chapter text in Genesis 3. Chapter 2, verse 16. And the Lord God commanded the man, You're free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

For when you eat from it, you will certainly die. Okay, that's the context. And so first of all, we are introduced to the snake. Chapter 3, verse 1. Now the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden? Now this raises all kinds of questions like, Who's the snake?

And where did he come from? And how come he can talk? Well, according to the Bible, According to the book of Revelation, Which is the last book in the Bible, This snake is Satan or the devil.

We are in Revelation chapter 20. He's referred to as that ancient serpent. And so when we read Genesis 3, We are to identify the snake with Satan. He represents Satan's personal presence in the garden of Eden.

[4 : 21] And of course, the text doesn't tell us everything we'd like to know. It does tell us what we need to know, though. And that is that this snake is a created being made by the Lord God, Along with all the other animals that the Lord God made.

And so we should never think in any sense that Satan is somehow an equal power to God. He's not as powerful, and he certainly isn't equal. He is obviously in rebellion against God.

And there's no desire here to tell us how or when or why. But there are other places in the Bible that may hint at Satan's rebellion, Different passages.

But here, Satan simply slithers his way into the life of the first human beings. And so while we might not understand exactly where evil comes from, It is an intruder in God's good creation, And Satan is behind it.

And so the focus here is not on Satan and all the questions you might want to ask about him. The focus here is on the rebellion of the first human beings, Adam and Eve, rebelling against God.

[5 : 35] So the woman is the object of Satan's attack. And he directly attacks what God says by twisting God's words. Making God's words seem harsher than they actually were.

So did God really say, You must not eat from any tree in the garden? And that is a gross exaggeration. Because the suggestion here is that what God says is up for debate.

But this is Satan's tactic to get the conversation going. And so Satan emphasizes God's prohibition Over against God's generous provision of this great garden With all these lovely trees to eat from.

But the woman quickly corrects the snake here. Verse 2 and 3. The woman said to the snake, We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden. But God did say, You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden.

And you must not touch it or you will die. So they had been forbidden from eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Which the woman failed to name here. But then notice what she does.

[6 : 39] She also exaggerates what God said by adding to it. She says that God said, You must not touch it or you will die. Verse 3. Now God never actually said anything about not touching it.

And so she makes God out to be stricter than he is. So what Satan does is he twists what God said. And the woman now is adding to what God said.

And so then Satan seizes his opportunity in verse 4. You will not certainly die, the snake said to the woman. For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened.

And you will be like God, knowing good and evil. So what he does here is directly challenge God's word. God said, You will certainly die.

In chapter 2 verse 17. But Satan here contradicts that by saying, You will not certainly die. So this is a blatant rejection of God's authority.

[7 : 36] And a blatant denial of this threat of judgment that God gave. So verse 5. For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened.

And you will be like God, knowing good and evil. So the snake is partly right. In the sense that they will know the difference between good and evil. God himself says so in verse 22 of chapter 3.

The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. But Satan is completely wrong to suggest that they will be like God. Because in effect, what Satan is saying is to the woman, You can be greater than you are.

Why settle for anything less? Go get that fruit. It won't do you any harm. In fact, eating the fruit will liberate you.

God knows this. That's why God has forbidden you to eat it. But you can do without God limiting your life. You be your own God. You decide what is right for you.

[8 : 42] You decide what's good and evil. You don't need God telling you what to do. And so what Satan does here is he makes God out to be this cosmic killjoy.

This great big party pooper who stops people enjoying the good things in life. He's restrictive. He's mean. He spoils your fun. And that's the impression, isn't it, that some people have of God today.

And it's a lie that Satan has continued to delude humanity with. And it worked on the woman. He managed to quickly and easily sow these seeds of doubt in the woman's mind about the goodness of God.

And his tactics haven't changed. Because he wants us to think that what God wants for us isn't actually the best for us. And that we know what is better for us than our creator God does.

And so Satan wants us to say that God's word is there to be questioned. God's authority is there to be challenged. And God's judgment is nothing more than an empty threat.

[9 : 51] And so Satan's tactics worked on the woman. Verse 6 tells us, So this rebellion happened so quickly.

And commentators, they pick up on the threefold appeal to the human appetites that we have. In other words, eating the forbidden fruit was physically appealing. It was also aesthetically pleasing.

And it was also intellectually gratifying. And so these desires were greater for Adam and Eve than the desire to obey the God who loved them and who made them.

And so we might think, well, where is Adam all this time? The snake, Satan, is talking to his wife. Well, it appears that Adam was right there the whole time.

Silently watching on. So it's not as if he is less guilty. He is probably more guilty. By standing by, standing back and watching.

[11 : 00] And so the point is, they are both complicit in this rebellion. Because they both pathetically surrender to the snake's lies. And they show this tragic contempt for the God who made them and loves them.

And so this is the origin of sin. This is why it's called original sin. But it's not just their sin away back then. It is our sin too.

Because Adam is the representative of the human race. Theologians talk about him being our federal head. In other words, he represents all of humanity and rebellion against God.

And so let's just consider the implications before we move on. Because sin isn't just doing something that's wrong. And that is commonly what people think sin is.

It's breaking the rules. There's a rule. You break it. You sin. And that is what sin is. It is breaking rules. That is exactly what happened here. But sin goes far deeper than just breaking rules.

[12 : 01] Because the problem here wasn't the fruit of the tree. You know, it's fruit on a tree. That wasn't really the issue. The issue was their deliberate rebellion against God.

So God's creatures rejected his loving rule. And their desire to be like God themselves. So it wasn't just breaking the rule.

It was rejecting the God who gave the rule. And that's why sin for us isn't just about breaking rules. It is far more evil than that. It is this human desire to reject God.

And for me to behave like God myself. Where I get to call the shots. Where I get to decide what is right and what is wrong. And God doesn't have a clue what he's talking about.

And so ever since that day in the Garden of Eden. Instead of living for God. What have we done? Well, we have asserted our own independence. And we have turned our backs on him.

[13 : 04] And that's what's happening here. That's what happens still in our hearts today. So this is the origin of sin. And next we move on to the problem of sin in verse 7 to 24.

Because the consequences of rebellion against God are disastrous. Because our relationship with God has been broken. And so because our relationship with God has been broken.

That affects everything else. It affects all other relationships. Relationships. So notice here that sin destroys our relationship with God. Sin also destroys our relationship with ourselves.

Sin also destroys our relationship with other people. And sin also destroys our relationship with the created world. So God, ourselves, other people, and the world.

So first of all, sin breaks our relationship with God. Look at verse 7. Then the eyes of both of them were opened. And they realized that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

[14 : 03] Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. So what do we get?

We get this beautiful picture of God walking in the garden, which describes the intimacy that God had with the people he had made. And yet now that's gone.

It's been shattered, broken. Because the couple are now frightened by the presence of God. And so rather than be with God, what they do is they run away from God.

And it's a powerful picture of sin, isn't it? Sin is essentially a person running away from their maker and creator. And yet this is a remarkable moment because despite their rebellion, notice that God still seeks them out.

Verse 9. But the Lord God called to the man, Where are you? He answered, I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid. And he said, Who told you that you were naked?

[15 : 08] Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat? Of course, God doesn't need to ask where they are. He knows where they are. God doesn't need to ask, What have they done?

Because he knows what they've done. But God is taking the initiative in going to them and in seeking them out. So with perfect justice, God could have destroyed them instantly.

But instead, he goes to them and he forces them to confess their sin. So that's the first thing. Sin breaks our relationship with God.

And as a result of that, Secondly, sin breaks our relationship with ourselves. So verse 7. Did you see how the couple instantly realized that they were naked? So before, their nakedness symbolized their innocence.

And now the innocence is gone. They recognized something was wrong with them. That's why they cover up with fig leaves. It was a poor attempt to hide their guilt and shame.

[16 : 13] So the sin didn't just destroy their relationship with God. Now they weren't even at ease with themselves. They weren't comfortable in their own skin, if you like.

And that's why the man said to God, I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid. So guilt and shame became part of our human nature.

It characterizes us. It's what we're like. So first of all, sin breaks our relationship with God. Secondly, sin breaks our relationship with ourselves.

And thirdly, sin breaks our relationships with each other. Verse 12 and 13. The man said, the woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it.

Then the Lord God said to the woman, what is this you have done? The woman said, the snake deceived me and I ate. So rather than admit their guilt, rather than take responsibility for their own actions, what happens?

[17 : 11] The man blames the woman. The woman blames the snake. The snake doesn't have a leg to stand on. Adam here, notice Adam has got absolutely no hesitation in throwing his wife under the bus.

Why? Because he wants to justify himself. He blames her so much for loving and caring for his wife. But he doesn't just blame her, notice.

He blames God for giving the woman to him. In other words, God, it's your fault for giving me this woman. That's why this has happened. And it's her fault, but behind that, it's actually your fault.

And we'll see more of this later, but can you see this is the start of the battle of the sexes, right here in Genesis chapter 3. Okay, and then fourthly, sin breaks our relationship with God, with ourselves, with each other, and with the created world.

So the reason why we've got natural disasters, why there's ongoing concern about the environment, is because this world is fractured and broken. And it all goes back to what happened here.

[18 : 17] And so we see this begin to play out in these curses that God pronounces in verse 14 to 19. We'll just, we'll look at those now. Because what God does is he now addresses the snake and the woman and the man.

And he addresses them in that order, I guess, because that's the order in which they appear in the narrative. There's the snake, then there's the woman, and then there's the man. So these are curses.

But notice that God curses the snake. He curses the snake. He doesn't curse the woman and the man. He curses other things, but he doesn't curse them. But he definitely curses the snake.

So verse 14 and 15, God's words address the snake first in verse 14, and then Satan in verse 15. So verse 15 says, 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 this enmity would extend for future generations. There would be this ongoing conflict between Satan and the human race.

[19 : 25] But it would be the woman's offspring that Satan would be defeated by. And so this is described by the head of the snake getting crushed while the offspring of the woman would strike his heel.

Now, this is significant because it's a promise. It's a promise of hope amidst despair. And we're going to come back to verse 15 in Genesis chapter 3, because it's crucial.

But before we get there, in a sense, we need to feel the mood of what is going on here. And the mood is dark and bleak and hopeless and desperate.

Because this destructive power of sin, what we're seeing here is that it is all persuasive, all pervasive, should I say. So it affects our relationship with God.

It affects our relationship with ourselves, with others, and with the world. And so God curses the snake. Second, it comes to the woman. Verse 16. Now, the specific judgments on the woman and the man touch upon the particular roles that God gave them in Genesis chapter 1 and chapter 2.

[20 : 36] So the curses are mirrored by the roles that God gave. In other words, they're not random. God's not saying these things in some random kind of fashion. So the first command, you remember, that God gave humanity, there in Genesis chapter 1, verse 28, was, Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it.

So it's a command to bear children. Fundamental part of life. I mean, we're all sitting here today because that's happened in our families. We wouldn't be here without it.

But God's saying now this childbearing would be a painful thing. Verse 16. To the woman, he said, I will make your pains in childbearing very severe.

With painful labor, you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. Okay, so there's this curse of painful labor.

And yet there's more to it than painful labor. Because the woman's desire for her husband changes. That's what God says. And so this harmony that existed between the sexes is now gone.

[21 : 46] So conflict between one another, rather than care for one another, is the way it's going to be. So that's the snake first, then the woman, and then it's the man in verse 17 to 19.

And again, the specific judgment on the man relates to the role that God gave him in Genesis chapter 1 and 2. And so the role was, Genesis 1, 28, to rule over the created order, to rule over, to have dominion, to subdue.

And then in Genesis chapter 2, verse 15, in the Garden of Eden, he was told to work it and take care of it. And now the curse says that this work is going to be much harder.

So verse 17, to Adam he said, because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, you must not eat from it. Cursed is the ground because of you.

Through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the fields. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken.

[22 : 55] For dust you are, and to dust you will return. And again, there is more to it than just painful work. Because before, the man ruled over the ground.

The ground submitted to him, if you like. But now the curse has reversed this, and now the ground will eventually swallow him up. So death has entered the world.

The wages of sin is death. Where certain physical death is now the way. Painful labor is the way for the woman. And certain physical death, hard work is the way for the man and the woman.

And yet, death was never meant to be part of God's good world. And that's why death is so painful. We don't like anyone close to us dying.

And so can you see here how the consequence of sin is spiritual, it's physical, it's psychological, it's relational, it's environmental. Sin has such far-reaching consequences for everyone and for everything in this world.

[24 : 07] It is fractured, broken, tainted, marred, twisted, wrecked, spoiled. And at the heart of it all is our broken relationship with God, with the God who made us.

And this devastating tragedy is pictured at the end of the chapter. Look down to verse 23 and verse 24. So the Lord God banished him from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. So they're banished from the garden.

And there's no way of returning to the tree of life, which means they have been removed from God's presence. They turned away from God in rebellion. Now look what happens.

God turns away from them in judgment. And so Genesis chapter 3 tells a story of what is wrong with our world and what is wrong with us. This perfect and beautiful world that God made became broken and ugly.

[25 : 19] So harmony was replaced by chaos, innocence with guilt, openness with hiding, blessing with cursing, joy with sorrow, dignity with depravity, care with conflict, pleasure with pain, and intimacy with exclusion.

And there is no denying that this is the reality of life in this world, is there? It's in the news. It's written in history. And we experience it personally.

In fact, you have probably felt some of this in this past week. We have, haven't we? And the reason is it's because we live in a world that is experiencing the curse of God against sin.

The curse of sin has wrecked everything. And that's why the origins here in the Bible actually give us the best explanation of the harsh reality of life in this world.

And so the verdict of Genesis 3 isn't easy to hear because it actually points the finger at us. And it says, you're guilty. We're guilty.

[26 : 28] So we can't say that Adam and Eve's rebellion against God has got nothing to do with me. The entire human race has inherited Adam's sin. So we too are sinners.

In our hearts, we are well aware that we rebel against God. And so we can't make excuses for our sin. We decide to do the things we do.

We choose to relate to God in the way we do. So we are accountable. We are accountable. We've rebelled against our Creator.

But is that it? Well, we do need to get the bad news and it's got to sink in so that we understand the good news. And so let's move on to our third and final point, which is firstly, the origin of sin.

Secondly, the problem of sin. And then thirdly, the solution for sin. Because even against this bleak background of rebellion against God, there are clear signs of hope in Genesis chapter 3.

[27 : 31] They're implicit and they're explicit. And so this is where we're going to end. We'll end with four signs of hope. So firstly, did you notice God speaking to Adam and Eve despite their rebellion?

God engaged with them, but he didn't engage with Satan. God only spoke to him to curse him. Well, why does this matter?

Well, it tells us that God loves the sinner, but he can't stand the sin. God wants people to be in a relationship with him, but he will not tolerate sin and evil.

He will ultimately destroy it. It must be punished. That's the first thing. Secondly, did you notice the naming of Eve in chapter 20?

Sorry, verse 20. Adam named his wife Eve because she would become the mother of all the living. So despite certain death, Adam gives his wife the name life.

[28 : 30] What's that all about? It means Eve, means life or living. So Adam believes that she will be the mother of all the living. So when God cursed Satan, Adam heard in what God said the promise that his wife's offspring would crush the snake's head.

And we'll end on this. But thirdly, did you notice God clothing Adam and Eve in verse 21? The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

So Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves, remember, with fig leaves, whereas God gives them designer clothing. Despite their alienation from God, God shows them this undeserved kindness.

God makes garments out of skin for them. And do you know what that means? Where did the garments of skin come from? Unless an animal was killed so that they could be clothed.

God covered them because an animal was sacrificed, an animal's blood was shed so that they could be covered. And there's no mention of blood being shed here. There's no mention of blood being shed for forgiveness.

[29 : 44] But doesn't this hint at this sacrificial system we see all the way through the Old Testament which points towards the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the New? Because when Jesus appeared, he was declared to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

So Jesus is the ultimate solution for sin because it's through his sacrifice on the cross that our sins are covered. And then fourthly, and this is the explicit sign of hope in Genesis chapter 3 there in verse 15.

I'll read it again. 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 God is saying here that he has a plan and God is committed to his plan.

God will sort this out. Theologians often call Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 the proto-evangelion. So proto meaning first, evangelion meaning good news or gospel.

So this is the first announcement of the gospel. The first announcement of the good news. It all begins here with the promise that the snake's head will be crushed.

[31 : 01] So God is saying that one of Adam and Eve's descendants, the offspring of the woman, a human being, is going to come and to destroy Satan.

And in destroying Satan, he himself will be wounded in the process. So who is this? There is only one answer. This is Jesus Christ because Jesus was wounded as he died on the cross, but Satan was defeated.

We read of Jesus in Hebrews, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death, he might break the power of him who holds the power of death. That is the devil. And so the cross was the climatic showdown showdown where Jesus won the victory over Satan.

And so while Adam, the first Adam, surrendered to the snake and was banished from the garden, the second Adam, Jesus Christ, surrendered his life to crush the snake so that we could be brought back into God's presence again.

So we can't be saved from the judgment our sin deserves by anything we do, only by what Jesus Christ has done for us.

[32 : 15] So Jesus came to live the life that we should have lived, a perfect life without sin. And Jesus came to die the death that we deserve, to die death for our sin.

He lived that perfect life, but then he went to the cross to take the curse that we deserve. So that when we put our faith in Jesus Christ and become a Christian, all of our sin falls on him and his perfect life comes to us.

So that God no longer treats us as rebels, as enemies against him, separated from him, but he welcomes us back to himself as his people. That's God's solution to the problem of sin.

And it's radical that God who made us should come and die for us. Because God can't be true to himself if he ignores sin and evil.

God must punish it. And God can't be true to himself if he doesn't love his people. He must love his people. And so God is both just and loving at the same time through Jesus' death on the cross.

[33 : 28] And so the sword of divine justice that stopped the way to the tree of life fell on Jesus to open up the way of life for us.

And so the good news is that Jesus has defeated Satan and sin and death, which means there will be an end to all sin and all evil and all suffering when Jesus Christ returns.

You know, it is only Christianity that promises the end of evil and perfect justice. I've got lots of secular friends who care nothing about Christianity, God, or Jesus Christ.

And yet they care about the evil and the sin and the suffering in this world. And yet they don't seem to see that only Christianity takes us to a place where all evil will be punished and justice will be perfectly done.

It is only God who can do that. It is only Jesus Christ who gets us there. And even if you don't believe this today, deep down, don't you want this to be true?

[34 : 35] Isn't this the only hope that we've got for evil in our world? And so we need to grasp our origins in Genesis to look back to see where we came from so that we know where we're going.

And so let me just close with one final question. Are you hiding or have you been found? What do you mean? Am I hiding or have I been found?

Well, the Garden of Eden gives us the first game of hide and seek the world has ever known. Adam and Eve hide from God, but God does the seeking. And ever since that day, men and women have still tried to hide from their loving creator God.

and yet God has never stopped seeking us out. When Jesus came, he said, I have come to seek and to save the lost. And so don't try to hide from God any longer.

That is a futile exercise and a big waste of life. Go to him. He is the one you need. He is the one we all need. He came for us.

[35 : 40] Please Egypt as you need to encourage and servet and move to Him.