

## I. Introduction

1. Prayer
2. Show of hands:
  - i. How many of you currently work at a job or have worked one in the past? How many find their work totally satisfying and without stress?
  - ii. How many are married? Who has never had an argument with their spouse, or felt the strain of life on their marriage?
  - iii. How many have been sick?
  - iv. How many feel that you worship God with all of your heart, soul, and mind every day all day?
  - v. Seems like this discussion should be relevant for all of us.
3. **ASK: Why is it important to understand Sin?**
  - i. We have no basis from which to judge the external world, and the apparent brokenness and futility of life. We will have no real answers to the world's dilemmas because we won't have an adequate grasp of the true problem.
  - ii. We are bound to misunderstand who God is without a correct view of sin. C.S. Lewis said that theism without an understanding of sin would result in either monism, where God is both good and evil, or dualism where there are two gods, one good and one evil.
  - iii. Sin is the problem for which the Gospel provides a solution. Without an adequate understanding of the problem, we cannot appreciate the solution.
  - iv. In other words, no doctrine of sin, no Christianity.

## II. The way things were – Genesis 1-2

1. We live in a culture with a predominantly naturalistic view of world. In the words of Carl Sagan: "The cosmos is *all there is or ever was or ever will be.*" The idea is that the universe is on a trajectory that has essentially continued unchanged since its origins. You don't have to be an atheist or an unbeliever to have this perspective influence your view of life. There are many Christians who hold very naturalistic views of certain aspects of life. If you've ever heard someone excuse a fault with, "God made me this way," or "I'm only being human," or "it's perfectly natural," then you've see a bit of this philosophy in action. Underlying this is the idea that "The way things are by nature is the way things ought to be."
2. **However, the Bible paints quite a different picture. The way things are by nature is not the way it was, nor the way it ought to be, and it is not the way it always will be. In many respects, this is the story of the Bible – what was, what happened, what is, and what God is doing to bring about what will be.**
3. **Read:**
  - i. Genesis 1:26-31
  - ii. Genesis 2:15-17
4. Man is made in the image of God
  - i. He is made like God and given dominion over the earth as God's vice-regent
5. (v31) God saw that his creation was very good
  - i. Things are as they should be – this is shalom, this is peace
  - ii. In chapter 2, we see man and wife in communion with God, in communion with each other, and in communion with God's creation. They are secure in themselves, undefiled by sin and immorality, naked and unashamed.
  - iii. There is only one rule for Adam and Eve: Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
    1. Bruce Waltke writes, "Amazingly, God gives only one prohibition, a single dietary rule: 'You must not eat.' The command assumes that as God's image bearers, humans should think, plan, speak, and act as their Creator intends. The command is also for their good. The prohibition protects them from assuming self-serving autonomy in sin and death and to live instead under the Creator's loving and trustworthy rule and protection. Sin consists of an illicit reach of unbelief, an assertion of human autonomy to doubt God and to know good and evil apart from Him." (Waltke, 259)

### III. Something happens, and shalom is broken...

#### 1. Read Genesis 3

#### 2. The Serpent questions God, tempts Eve

##### i. ASK: What are some characteristics of the serpent's temptation, what are his tactics?

##### ii. Five aspects of the temptation (summary of Waltke 261-263):

1. (v1) Allow Satan to entice us into questioning the truthfulness of God's Word
2. (v1) Raise questions of interpretation designed to create doubt and lead us away from childlike obedience – "Did God really say...?"
3. (v1) Focus on the forbidden thing rather than God's true blessings – "...you must not eat from any tree in the garden?"
4. (v4) Be tempted to become something apart from what you were created to be, leading to resentment of God – "You shall be as God, knowing good and evil..."
  - i. ASK: What would Adam and Eve find tempting about being like God?
  - ii. Temptation to be like God:
    - i. to be elevated from creature status to creator status (human pride 101).
    - ii. to be independent from God (freedom from accountability--God is not my father).
    - iii. to be free to define our own value of existence apart from God (self conceit).
5. (v4) Discounting God's word, ignoring God's stern warning – "You will not surely die..."

#### 3. (v6) At this point, all of the defenses have been torn down and Eve begins to doubt God. She examines the fruit and considers it:

- i. Good for food (It doesn't look like it's harmful at all)
- ii. Delight to the eyes (How could something so beautiful be wrong or bad)
- iii. Desirable to make one wise (I'm just seeking to grow and improve myself)

#### 4. (v6) Eve eats of the fruit, and gives some to Adam and he eats

- i. Sin has entered the human race
- ii. Waltke offers this definition of sin – "Sin is the perversion at the core of our being that causes us to disobey. Sin is the desire, the imagination, "to be like God"- the refusal to be human, to be creature – that causes us to disobey. Correlatively, sin is an inward, spiritual breach of trust in God's character and his word that results in active disobedience." (Waltke, 263)

#### 5. (v7-8) Something happens, but not what they were expecting - "Their eyes were opened..." -

- i. They realize they're naked and they are ashamed. They hide from God.
- ii. There is an immediate breach in the communion that was enjoyed –
  1. Between the man and the woman, realizing their nakedness and being ashamed
  2. And there is a breach between both of them and God.

#### 6. God confronts Adam and Eve - They both pass the buck, and refuse responsibility.

- i. Adam blames Eve, and ultimately blames God himself
- ii. Eve blames the Serpent

#### 7. **This simple narrative is profound in its description of human sin and our behavior, from the stages of temptation, to the guilt and desire to hide, and our tendency to pass the blame for our actions on to someone else.**

8. God's judgment

i. **Something has already gone horrible wrong. The fellowship between God and man has been broken. The covenant in Paradise has been broken, and the blessings forfeited. God pronounces judgment as he had promised.**

ii. (v14-15) To the Serpent:

1. God not only speaks to the animal, but to the true tempter behind the animal
  - i. Rev 12:9 tells us that the serpent was Satan
2. In the curse against in the serpent, there is a glimmer of hope – Adam and Eve have made their allegiance with rebellion, disobeyed God, and then passed the blame rather than repenting. However, God promises that He will put hostility between the woman and the serpent, and between their respective seeds, with the anticipation of the serpent's defeat. We will discuss this further when we get to Redemption.

iii. (v16) To the woman:

1. She faces pain in childbearing and conflict with her husband.
2. "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" – What does this mean? The Hebrew word for desire here occurs only two other times in the Bible, and these two provide the basis for two primary interpretations as to what this text means:
  - i. Song of Solomon 7:10 – "I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me." In the context of the romantic relationship here, the desire seems to be of a sexual nature.
  - ii. Genesis 4:7 – "And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it." This is the identical construct as in 3:16. In context, sin's desire is to control Cain, but he must master it.
  - iii. Seen in the light of 4:7, 3:16 could be understood as saying that Eve will have an inordinate desire to control her husband, and he will "rule" over her (as opposed to leading, guarding, and caring for her). The judgment would be that of conflict between the husband and wife, destroying the bond of peace and fulfillment that was once present.

iv. (v17-19) To the man:

1. The ground is cursed, work will be difficult. The whole creation suffers because of this sin and the world as it was is changed into the world as it is.
  - i. Romans 8:20-22: For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.
  - ii. Francis Schaeffer writes - "Christianity as a system does not begin with Christ as Savior, but with the infinite-personal God who created the world in the beginning and who made man significant in the flow of history. And man's significant act in revolt has made the world abnormal. Thus there is not a total unbroken continuity back to the way the world originally was. Non-Christian philosophers almost universally agree in seeing everything as normal, assuming things are as they have always been. The Christian sees things now as not the way they have always been. And, of course, this is very important to the explanation of evil in the world. But it is not only that. It is one way to understand the distinction between the naturalistic, non-Christian answers (whether spoken in philosophic, scientific or even religious language) and the Christian answer. The distinction is that as I look about me, I know I live in an abnormal world." (*Genesis in Space and Time*)
  - iii. Tim Keller quote on handout: "We are told that as soon as we determined to serve ourselves instead of God - as soon as we abandoned living for and enjoying God as our highest good – the entire created world became broken...Disease, genetic disorders, famine, natural disasters, aging, and death itself are as much the result of sin as are oppression, war, crime, and violence. We have lost God's *shalom* – physically, spiritually, socially, psychologically, and culturally.
  - iv. Ecclesiastes 1 gives us an honest look at this futility – Read 1:1-14

2. Finally, we have physical death – Adam and Eve have died spiritually, and as God has promised, their bodies will succumb to the same judgment. Genesis 5, with its often repeated “and he died,” makes it painfully clear that death has now become a part of life.
  3. It’s worth noting that God curses the serpent and He curses the ground, but He does not curse Adam and Eve.
  - v. (v22-24) God’s final act of judgment in the account is also an act of mercy. Adam and Eve are banished from the garden, so that they might not eat from the tree of life and live forever. God cleanses the garden of sin, and at the same time prevents Adam and Eve, in their fallen, corrupted, and sinful state to eat from the tree and remain forever in that state. He has better things in store for them beyond death.
9. Bruce Waltke provides some theological reflection on this text:
- “God plants an idyllic garden as the setting for humanity on probation. The failure of Adam and Eve in this paradise has profound theological significance. Since Adam is the only human being who could have resisted the Serpent’s temptation, his failure implies that humanity that is not spiritually empowered by God does not match the Serpent’s power and so keep covenant with God. In contrast to much sociological thinking that holds that the way to improve humans is to better their environment, this text shows that humanity at its best, when tested, rebels even in the perfect environment.
- “This theological understanding is found at the outset of Genesis. Each of the subsequent covenants – Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic – must be read with this presupposition: unassisted human faithfulness is an impossibility; any aspect of the covenant that is contingent upon human will alone is doomed for failure. The argument is simple: If Adam falls in the perfect setting of garden paradise without inherited guilt and a depraved nature, how can stiff-hearted Israel keep the Lord’s teachings in Canaan, a land known for its debauchery (cf. Deut 31:26; 32:1-43; Josh 24:19,17). And how can Judean kings in their own spiritual strength satisfy the conditional aspects of the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7:14)? Indeed, the failure of these later covenants is preordained by the failure of Adam and Eve in the garden. This failure, right at the start, implicitly anticipates a different sort of covenant relationship, one that does not depend on human faithfulness, but entirely on the grace of God through the second Adam.” (256)

#### IV. The downward spiral

1. Through Genesis 1-11, we see the downward spiral and the hopelessness of the human condition after the fall.
2. (Gen 4) Upon leaving the garden, we meet Cain, who after having his faithless offering rejected, ignores God’s warning to repent, and is led by his envy into hatred and murder of his brother Abel. The decline in Cain’s family line continues through Lamech, the self-avenging polygamist.
3. (Gen 6-9) Humanity eventually becomes so corrupt that God decides to flood the earth. Even after destroying the whole human race except for Noah and his family, once the flood has ended, Noah himself falls into sin.
4. (Gen 11) It is not long before humanity has completely declared its independence from God and its desire to ascend to God’s throne by building a tower to heaven. **This is significant – all of sinful humanity was destroyed except for a single godly family, and yet within a short time they are spurned God’s command to fill the earth and were seeking to make a name for themselves. Something is seriously wrong here.**
5. (Gen 12) In the midst of this dark situation, God calls out Abraham and promises to make a great nation out of him, and that in his offspring all of the nations of the earth would be blessed. The rest of the book traces Abraham’s family line, following the seed of blessing through Isaac, Jacob, and Judah.
6. **One thing that should stand out in the narrative is that this family whom God has called out is also plagued by sin.**
  - i. We see it in discord between Abraham and Lot, in Lot’s conformity to the immorality of Sodom, in Abraham’s fear and doubts, in Isaac’s inordinate appetite, in Jacob’s deceitfulness, in the jealousy of Joseph’s brothers, and in Judah’s lust, and so on. Even among God’s people, sin is wreaking havoc.
  - ii. The amazing thing is how God continues to work out His purposes and fulfill His promises, in spite of and even through the sinful actions of people.
  - iii. **This is important to keep in mind, because we have a tendency to elevate the “heroes of the faith” to a level far above us, and forget that the Bible does not attempt to cover up their sins. Using the narratives of Genesis as an example of how to live might lead to some peculiar behavior.**

## V. Exodus

1. (Exo 1) When we get to Exodus, we are introduced to a new facet of sin in the world – that of systematic oppression. The family of Jacob, which was welcomed into Egypt with open arms, grows quite large but then finds themselves subject to hard slavery.
  - i. **ASK: Why did Pharaoh enslave the people of Israel?**
  - ii. Pharaoh is driven by greed. The people of Israel are a huge benefit to Egypt economically, and his concern is that they might join with Egypt's enemies and eventually "escape from the land." Finally, in order to slow the population growth, Pharaoh orders that all of the Hebrew sons should be cast into the Nile when they are born.
  - iii. Even this evil could not thwart God's purposes, as the people of Israel continued to grow larger.
  - iv. Genesis 15:13-16 - Then the Lord said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign country. They will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. But I will execute judgment on the nation that they will serve. Afterward they will come out with many possessions. But as for you, you will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will return here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its limit."
2. From the Biblical context, we learn that the people of Israel were not only in bondage to Egypt, but they found themselves in a different type of bondage as well (sin and idolatry):
  - i. Joshua 24:14 - Now obey the Lord and worship him with integrity and loyalty. Put aside the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates and in Egypt and worship the Lord.
  - ii. Ezekiel 20:7-8 - I said to them, "Each of you must get rid of the detestable idols you keep before you, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the Lord your God." But they rebelled against me, and refused to listen to me; no one got rid of their detestable idols, nor did they abandon the idols of Egypt. Then I decided to pour out my rage on them and fully vent my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.
  - iii. (Exo 15-17) This becomes readily apparent when they are being delivered from Egypt. After witnessing the most spectacular display of God's power and mercy on their behalf, they immediately begin grumbling against God, as if He wasn't going to provide for them and should have left them in Egypt
  - iv. (Exo 32) As God is giving Moses the covenant stipulations on the mountain, the people below are already breaking that covenant by worshipping a golden calf
  - v. This theme of sin and unbelief continues throughout the story and results in the people spending 40 years in the wilderness before being permitted to enter the land. Even Moses does not escape the snare of sin and must die in the wilderness as well.
3. **There is no mistaking that this is a rebellious and sinful people, but God has mercy upon them and enters into covenant with them, not because of their righteousness or because they were a great nation, but because He loved them and is faithful to His promises**
  - i. **Deut 7:7-8** - It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. **(in other words, "I love you because I love you")**
  - ii. **Deut 9:5-6** - Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the Lord your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 6 Know, therefore, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.

## VI. The Law

1. In His mercy, God delivers Israel and establishes His covenant with them, and the stipulations of that covenant are set forth in the law. Once again, similar to God's command with Adam and Eve, we have direct commandments from God to His people, saying "Do this, don't do this." On a personal level, the law provides the guide for life and the promise of punishment if it's disobeyed. On a national level, the law sets forth blessings and curses for Israel. Obey God's covenant and the blessings of the land will be yours. Disobey and you will suffer rejection and exile (Deut 28-30).

- i. In the Ten Commandments, we find the best summary of what God expects, with 1-4 dealing with the covenant people's worship and loyalty to God, and 5-10 dealing with the covenant people's interaction with each other. In other words: 1-4 = Love God with all your heart, 5-10 = Love your neighbor as yourself.

1. **Read Exodus 20:1-17**

- ii. The personal aspect of each of these can be demonstrated from two stories in Israel's history:

1. David and Bathsheba – man of faith fallen
  2. Solomon and Idolatry – man of wisdom gone astray

3. **Both of these cases should give us pause**

- iii. At a national level, Moses did not have any illusions about Israel's ability to fulfill God's covenant, and in the explanation of the blessings and curses it is taken for granted that the curses will indeed come up Israel. These covenant blessings and curses form much of the reality that plays out in the Old Testament narrative and in the prophets.
  1. The macro picture is this: God brings His covenant people into the land and as they obey Him they are successful in taking possession of the land. Yet they quickly depart from following Him, and encounter increasing conflict in the land and great lawlessness. Eventually, a monarchy is established in Israel, and we witness the rise of King David, and it appears that he might be the mediator of the covenant blessings to Israel. However, David himself falls into sin. Mercifully, God promises that a son of David would establish a permanent kingdom. His son Solomon brings Israel to new heights with his God-given wisdom, yet he proceeds to turn from the Lord to idols, and the kingdom is divided as a result. The remainder of Israel's history is on the downward slope, with some godly, but mostly wicked kings. This leads to prophetic warnings, precursors of judgment, calls for repentance, and then finally defeat and exile for the nation, as promised in Deuteronomy. However, also as in Deuteronomy, with the exile comes the promise of hope that despite Israel's failure, the LORD will have mercy for the sake of His name and restore them.
  2. A shocking but appropriate image of this is given in Ezekiel 16. Though spoken about Jerusalem, it paints a picture of the nation's existence in the land.

VII. **Some New Testament Reflections on Sin** – Most of these ideas are present, either implicitly or explicitly, in the Old Testament, but are given additional force and clarity in the New Testament.

1. Sin as a matter of the heart – This is a constant theme throughout the Bible. Our actions are the fruit of the state of our hearts
  - i. **Read Matthew 12:33-37**
  - ii. **Read Mark 7:14-23**
2. Sin as an inherited state
  - i. **READ Romans 5:12-21**
  - ii. Through Adam's disobedience, sin and death came to all who are born in him. Likewise, through Christ's obedience, righteousness and life come to all who are born-again in Him.
    1. Original Sin - As a result of Adam's sin we all enter the world with a fallen nature (i.e. the sinful tendencies, desires, and dispositions in our hearts with which we are all born).
    2. Imputed Sin - The guilt of Adam's sin is credited not just to Adam himself, but to us all. We are regarded as having sinned *in Adam*, and hence as deserving of the same punishment.
  - iii. Ephesians 2:1-3 - And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.
3. Sin as blindness
  - i. **READ 2 Cor. 4:1-4**
  - ii. **ASK: Who blinded their eyes? Who can make them see?**

4. Sin as bondage
  - i. Romans 6:16-20; Titus 3:3
5. Sin as evidence of the wrath of God
  - i. **READ Romans 1:18-32**
  - ii. Notice that the wrath of God is against those suppressing the truth about Him in unrighteousness, and that the result of His wrath is that they are given over to their lusts, and fall into deeper and deeper sin. This is manifest in different degrees, but it stems from the same root of exchanging the glory of God and the thankful worship of Him, for something created.
6. Sin exposed and provoked, but not remedied by the Law
  - i. Read Romans 3:19-20
  - ii. Read Romans 7:7-12

#### VIII. The way things are

1. Despite the excuses, we are responsible for our sins and are held accountable by God
2. Our sin, even those committed against others, is primarily an offense against God
  - i. Read Psalm 51:3-4
3. Sin against a holy God demands satisfaction, and there is a tension in the OT between what happens and what must happen.
  - i. Exodus 23:7 - Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked.
  - ii. Proverbs 17:15 - He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord.
  - iii. **How can a holy and righteous God acquit wicked and sinful humans? David, the murderous adulterer – a “man after God’s own heart?” Really? Noah? Samson? Where is the justice? This is the dilemma for which the cross of Jesus Christ is the answer.**
  - iv. Read Romans 3:19-25 - Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

4. We are not only in need of God's mercy, but also His power
  - i. As the story of the Bible demonstrates, and Romans 7 makes clear, human power alone is insufficient to overcome sin and resist temptation. We may win against a single manifestation of sin, but it will usually just crop up somewhere else. Even if you were to avoid all sin, it is likely that you'd end up proud or self-righteous, which would be a worse condition. The only way we will truly overcome sin is through the power of the Holy Spirit and faith in the gospel of Christ.
  - ii. READ Galatians 5:16-25 - But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.
5. As Christians, understanding the nature of sin and its bondage should give us:
  - i. Humility
  - ii. Grace
6. Prayer