



Genesis 3:1-13

SIN biscuits. Sin drink. I picked these up in Spain a few years back. As you can see, in Spain they do sin very easily. You can eat and drink it! Of course, sin in Spanish means "without" whereas the word for Sin in Spanish is pecado. Confused?

TITLE

One of my themes for this year is that we as a church should deepen our relationship with God. I don't think I would be insulting anyone by saying that whatever our stage of spiritual development - whether recent followers of Jesus or more mature ones - that there is so much more scope to grow in our faith. In fact, my experience of God has been that as I've grown, my perception of how big God has grown at a much larger rate. There's so much of Him to be known that a lifetime is by no means adequate to cover it.

This morning I'm going to start at the very beginning. If we need to build our relationship with God, what went wrong in the first place? If we know what went wrong, it will help us to understand what can be done about it.

It's all here in Genesis 3. One description of the Bible is that it gives us the history of humanity's early dealings with God. It starts off positive: God created man in His own image and gave our race an important global task: 1:27-30 *So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female, blessed them, and said, "Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals. I have provided all kinds of grain and all kinds of fruit for you to eat; but for all the wild animals and for all the birds I have provided grass and leafy plants for food"--and it was done.*

But it all went quickly pear-shaped - a term we commonly use for something that's gone awry - RAF description for a bad loop-the loop. LOOP Think about it. Adam (and Eve) had it good. As they were only two people, God started them off in a small area - Eden. And everything was just great and hunky-dory. Even better, these people got to meet God personally and they could walk around Eden having a chat about whatever. Imagine that!

TITLE

Now how many people would kill for that today? And there were no rules. Adam and Eve could do whatever they liked, whenever they liked - except for one rule of course - that they were not allowed to eat the fruit from a particular tree because they would die: 2:16-17 *"You may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, except the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad. You must not eat the fruit of that tree; if you do, you will die the same day."*

As we know, it was like having small children. You tell them not to do something and what do they do - they do it! And we don't get beyond 6 verses before they are munching away at the forbidden fruit. Some people say you've got to feel sorry for them - they were tricked after all, weren't they? When we get to consider just who the snake was then perhaps we may even feel sorrier for them?

TITLE

Do you know what a pun is? It's where you get something funny out of words that sound the same. **"When's a room not a room? When it's a mushroom. When's a door not a door. When it's ajar!"**

Hebrew writers liked puns and the Hebrew for snake sounds very similar to the Hebrew for Deceiver or Liar. We read how the snake was a crafty old thing - a deceiver. That's the pun. In the Bible, the title of Deceiver goes to the devil, satan. Jesus said of him: *From the very beginning he was a murderer and has never been on the side of truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he is only doing what is natural to him, because he is a liar and the father of all lies.* (John 8:45-46). So what we have here in Genesis 3 is satan, the devil, an angelic being in the guise of a snake seeing what mischief he could cause.

We can pan satan for his mischief-making but he doesn't actually do more than prod something that was already there. And it comes out in the way the woman, Eve describes the tree. VERSE *Now the snake was the most cunning animal that the LORD God had made. The snake asked the woman, "Did God really tell you not to eat fruit from any tree in the garden?" "We may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden," the woman answered, "except the tree in the middle of it. God told us not to eat the fruit of that tree or even touch it; if we do, we will die."* Is that what God said? No. GOD ACTUALLY SAID *"You may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, except the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad. You must not eat the fruit of that tree; if you do, you will die the same day."*

Eve embroidered what God had said. She makes God sound harsher than He was. The only rule was that the fruit should not be lunch. Nothing was said about touching it. As far as the tree was concerned, they could have climbed it, picked the fruit, played cricket with it, put it in a bowl and painted a picture of it - the rule was simple - don't eat it. Just one rule. Just one. Simple.

TITLE

So why did Eve exaggerate? Genesis 3 gives us that too. When the snake heard the exaggeration, he knew Eve had an issue and went fishing. He tells her an lie to see what would happen *4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*

It's not a blatant lie. He told her what her eyes told her. The fruit wasn't poisonous. It wouldn't kill her. So it was a part truth, she wouldn't die and she would get some knowledge that she didn't have. But it was a half truth. The knowledge she would gain was what happens when she crosses God? Her relationship with God dies and that's far worse than physical death - it kills that relationship with God eternally.

Like I've suggested, the snake was pushing on an open door. By suggesting that God was holding out on Adam and Eve struck a chord in Eve and also in Adam who was there.

The Good news Bible does not translate this accurately, so I'll read verse 6 again in the NIV: *When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*

Yes, he was there. It's not clear if he heard the whole conversation, but when she was looking at the tree and picking the fruit he was there! And he never said a word. He stood by and said nothing. It seems he needed no persuasion to eat the fruit. And they both disobeyed the simple rule that God had given them.

TITLE

Why? It wasn't just the simple act of disobedience was the sin, but what gave birth to it. And what was that? Lack of trust. God said don't and gave a reason. Rather than taking His word for it, even though it didn't make sense to them because the fruit looked OK, God had said, don't eat that, because if you do you'll die.

They were the original conspiracy theorists. "Why did God make up this silly rule?" "What's He hiding". "We deserve better than this." " We deserve to know" All the serpent did was to bring what was simmering to the surface. They questioned rule and thought they could and should

know more.

It was idiocy. God's credentials as creator should have meant that they trusted Him implicitly. They had a close relationship with Him. Yet they preferred to trust their own judgement and the word of a talking snake rather than just take the Creator God at His word.

At the heart of sin is an issue of trust. It's lack of trust, belief, faith that what God says He means, what God promises happens, what God says He's done has been done, what God says He's like is what He is in reality.

Adam and Eve did learn about good and evil that day. They were naked in the garden and it never bothered them as they worked in the garden and talked with God. Now they learned a new word: guilt - and found that God could see right through them. Mark Twain , "Man is the only animal that blushes and has reason to."

SIGN

And their disobedience led to them being thrown out of the garden, having to suffer the stresses, strains and pains of life and having to battle with the environment rather than have control. Tough punishment? Then read the passage. One sin led to another. Neither took responsibility for what they had done - they shifted the blame

Woman: the serpent tested me - was his fault

Man - the woman tempted me - it was her fault. But look more closely

Man - the woman YOU gave me tempted me - he blamed God!

They took no responsibility and there's no record of them ever being sorry for what they did. No remorse. What they started and continued was a mindset of sin which is a mark of our race - we trust ourselves rather than God, we can do without Him, we don't need Him, we don't need to hear His voice. Separated from God. They wanted to do their own thing - now they could.

TITLE

Where are you are before God this morning? Most of you have found faith, some of you are possibly considering it. After hearing all that, you may feel a bit downhearted.

The good thing is, that this story has a happy ending. Adam and Eve never took responsibility for what they did and other people in history have done much the same and committed worst acts than them.

They didn't take responsibility - but God did, even though He wasn't to blame for what they did. And God acted so that you and I needn't be separated from God but part of His family. Let me read a few verses from Romans 5:VERSE

Rom 5 :12-16 You know the story of how Adam landed us in the dilemma we're in--first sin, then death, and no one exempt from either sin or death. That sin disturbed relations with God in everything and everyone, but the extent of the disturbance was not clear until God spelled it out in detail to Moses. So death, this huge abyss separating us from God, dominated the landscape from Adam to Moses. VERSE Even those who didn't sin precisely as Adam did by disobeying a specific command of God still had to experience this termination of life, this separation from God. But Adam, who got us into this, also points ahead to the One who will get us out of it. Yet the rescuing gift is not exactly parallel to the death-dealing sin. VERSE If one man's sin put crowds of people at the dead-end abyss of separation from God, just think what God's gift poured through one man, Jesus Christ, will do!

God Himself became human and opened a way for people to find forgiveness of their sins and to accept the gift that God wants to offer each one of us - eternal life - which was the very thing that Adam and Eve had to look forward to before they sinned and decided to do things their way. It all starts by taking responsibility for your actions. Accept that you've broken the rules, that you're doing something immoral, you're doing something wrong - you've sinned. Accept the offer of forgiveness and eternal life that God offers you now.

But what then follows is the fact that each of us need to live the rest of our lives here. How are we going live that life. By doing what Adam and Eve should have done in the first place - by trusting God and obeying Him.

VERSE

What was true for Adam and Eve is true now for each of us who follow Jesus. It's a question of trust. Jesus says follow me. He said John 14:15 " *If you love me, you will obey my commandments.*"

Simple, obvious, true for any true follower of Jesus. We know, we all know that's the formula for our walk in life with God. Because if it isn't life gets to us because our relationship to God inevitably will break down. God doesn't want that to happen because He went to a great deal of trouble to get us back into relationship with Him.

So what do we need to do. Ask for His forgiveness. Come in repentance. As the Holy Spirit to empower us to follow Jesus. But most of all - trust God implicitly and always despite our situation.

Challenge.

*Preached by Mark Reid
MRBC Felixstowe 16/1/11
© Mark Reid 2011*