



Sin biscuits. Sin drink. I picked these up in Spain recently. 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? We use sin a lot in our language. So in sport you have the Sin Bin. And do you remember when people "lived in sin"?

What do we mean by "sin". If you look in the dictionary, sin is a word that says you've broken the rules, that you're doing something immoral, you're doing something wrong. It says in the Bible that everybody has broken the rules or done something immoral or done something wrong and as a result we come short of the glory of God - separated from Him not just in life but for eternity. What that's saying is that however good a person you may think you are - the Bible says you're a sinner and separated from God. I don't find many people who like the idea of being called a sinner, cos' let's face it, most people living in Great Ashby are decent law-abiding folk, aren't they? But we've all done something wrong sometime. And think for a moment do you feel really close to God, or kind of separate from Him? I think most people would say kind of separate. And look around the world and other people don't look too close to God either when you consider all the awful things that happen - civil war and suffering in Darfur, AIDS in Africa, war in Afghanistan and Iraq, abduction of Madeleine McCann.

Then you open the Bible and read that God created the heavens and the earth and He concluded by finding it good. So what happened to it that we see so much evil around us now? Why does the Bible say that all have sinned and fall short of God's glory?

It's all here in Genesis 3. One description of the Bible is that it gives us the history of humanity's dealings with God. It starts off positive: God created man in His own image and gave our race an important global task: *1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

But it all went quickly pear-shaped - description of pear shaped - RAF description for a bad loop-the 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! 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 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are 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 of it you will surely die."*

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. When we get to consider just who the snake was then you perhaps feel more sorry. 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: *He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 7:45-46).* So what we have here in Genesis 3 is satan, an angelic being in the guise of a snake seeing what mischief he could case.

We can pan satan for his mischief-making but he didn't actually do more than prod something that was already there. And it comes out in the way Eve describes the tree.

(The serpent) said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 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.'"

Look carefully, 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. So why did Eve exaggerate? The snake went fishing. He tells her an outright 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.

Bang! Got her! By suggesting that God was holding out on Adam and Eve struck a chord in Eve and also in Adam who was there. It was the original conspiracy theory. "Why did God make up this silly rule?" "What's He hiding". "We deserve better." "We deserve to know" It didn't make sense so perhaps there was something in what the snake said.

All the serpent did was to bring what was simmering to the surface. They didn't like the silly rule and thought they could and should know more. What was in their mind led to the act of eating the fruit.

Sin against God isn't just disobedience to the laws or rules of God, it's a state of mind that makes us believe that we can do without Him, that we are better than Him, we don't need Him, we don't need to hear His voice. And what happens? He's gone. He's out of the loop. They ended up separated from Him and so has everybody else since.

But the snake was not altogether wrong in what he said. They 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."*

Actually this story gets worse the more you read it. These people had an intimacy with God that the most devout Christian would die for. So why didn't Eve just ask God? And what about Adam. He had responsibility for the garden. He said nothing and just let it happen: why? At any point they could have stopped and talked it over with God - it would have been so easy. Their eating the fruit only reveals what was already in their hearts - that they thought that they should have and deserved more than the idyll they already had, not realising that they had paradise.

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. Neither took responsibility for what they had done:

Woman: the serpent tested me - was his fault
Man - the woman tempted me - it was her fault
Man - the woman YOU gave me - he blamed God!



They took no responsibility and there's no record of them ever being sorry for what they did. No remorse, no tears. What they started and continued was a mindset of sin which is a mark of our race - we can do without Him, that we are better than 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.

I don't know where you are before God this morning. Some 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. 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:

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. 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. 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.

Becoming a Christian can be a life-transforming thing. Adam and Eve's lives were transformed quickly for the worse when they sinned. But in Jesus, we have a way by which God deals with all the issues in our lives as He prepares us for an eternity with Him - so today, you can know His transforming power in your life.



Here it is in a nutshell: Just as one person did it wrong and got us in all this trouble with sin and death, another person did it right and got us out of it. But more than just getting us out of trouble, he got us into life!

Romans 5:18 (The Message)

Christians - sin damages our relationship with God - find it difficult to pray, feel a long way from God, things go wrong, don't see His blessing. We need to deal with that sin

Song: Purify my heart