



Freedom, Limits, and the Nature of Sin

Key idea:

Sin promises freedom and fulfillment if I will reject God's limiting commands and design, but this always produces deadly results rather than life, freedom, and flourishing.

Key text:

Genesis 2:15–17

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ 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."

Genesis 3

Now the serpent 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'?" 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.'" 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. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. ⁸ 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. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." ¹¹ And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" ¹² The man said, "The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." ¹⁴ So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ 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.”¹⁶ To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”¹⁷ To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”²⁰ Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.²¹ The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.²² And the Lord God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.”²³ So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.²⁴ 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.

Key points:

1. As an essential part of our nature as created by God, limits given by God lead to our freedom and flourishing.
2. Genesis 3 reveals several key points about the essential nature of sin. From it we learn that sin:
 - a. Doubts God’s Word and motives
 - b. Distorts my perception of reality and deceives me
 - c. Displaces peace with guilt and shame
 - d. Desires to blame God and others for my behavior
 - e. Disrupts relationships
3. Contrary to our expectation, in Genesis 3 God offers forgiveness, giving the first promise and type of the Gospel to Adam and Eve.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?

2. Why did God give Adam the specific clear command in Genesis 2:15-17 regarding not eating the forbidden fruit? What does this tell us about our essential nature, even before the fall?
3. Why does sin tempt us to doubt God's Word and motives? Can I think of examples of this in our culture? Of when I have experienced this in my own life?
4. In 1 John 2:16, John tells us "For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world." How do the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does (or 'the pride of life') relate to Eve's view of the fruit in Genesis 3:6? What is John telling us about the process of temptation and sin?
5. Bret stated "Sin makes error seem like truth, ugliness look beautiful, and evil seem good. It utterly distorts our perception of reality and deceives us into embracing our own harm." Can I think of examples where our culture is proclaiming error as truth, that which is ugly as beautiful, and evil as good? Can I think of examples where our culture is proclaiming truth to be error, the beautiful to be ugly, and the good to be evil? How is this even worse than the first set of distortions?
6. When I hear the words guilt and shame, how do I react? What is my first thought as to what these words mean? What is the difference between objective guilt and shame and subjective guilt and shame? What determines if guilt and shame are good or bad?
7. Rousseau taught that sin is external, and it is the fault of the community. How prevalent is this idea in our culture? How is this related to the response of Adam and Eve to their sin? Why am I tempted to blame others for my sin?
8. How is the sinful rejection of limits destroying relationships and harmony in our culture right now? Why are limits mandatory for peaceful relations between humans?
9. Why is it so important that in the middle of this terrible story in Genesis 3 we get the first promise of the Gospel and the first type of Christ's death for us?
10. Who will I call or see to encourage this week?

For Further Study:

[The Story: Sin and Exile](#) (December 6, 2015)

[Slipping Into Something More Comfortable](#) (May 11, 2014)

[Paradise Lost: The Fall of Humanity](#) (April 15, 2007)

[The Consequences of the Fall on Mankind](#) (April 22, 2007)

[The Covenant of Redemption \(Adam\)](#) (February 2, 2020)

Preview of next week: Freedom From Death: Christ as the Second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:20-28)