

Theme: 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.

I. Intro - Augustine and Rousseau

- A. Augustine, *Confessions*, the pears
- B. Rousseau, *Confessions*, asparagus
- C. Where is sin found? In me or society?
- D. A look at the fall, freedom, limits, and the depth of sin

II. A Review: Freedom and Limits

- A. God gave us freedom within limits so we would flourish
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 2:15–17
 - 1. God gave us a home and work fitted to our nature
 - 2. God provided great freedom suited to our nature
 - 3. God gave defined limits suited to our nature
 - 4. God warned of the danger of rejecting the limits: death
- B. The reality of The Freedom of Limits
 - 1. We are created by God and given a specific nature
 - 2. Our nature includes physical and metaphysical reality, the body and the soul
 - 3. To flourish we must embrace the freedom found within the limits established by God

- 4. All of this is written into creation and also verbally revealed by God
- 5. If humans embrace the limits assigned by God we will flourish, but if we reject these limits it produces destruction and death.

III. The Nature of Sin

- A. Sin doubts God's Word & motives
"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." Genesis 3:4–5
 - 1. God said you will surely die - sin says you will NOT surely die
 - 2. God is being selfish - this is God's fault
 - 3. Sin rejects the limits given by God for our good, viewing them as evil, arbitrary limits that prove God's impure motives
- B. Sin distorts my perception of reality and deceives me
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. Genesis 3:6
 - 1. The fruit was dangerous but it now seems desirable
 - 2. There was plenty of food but the forbidden fruit now captivates the attention while all else fades
 - 3. 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.

C. Sin displaces peace with guilt and shame

The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Genesis 2:25

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. Genesis 3:7–8

1. Adam and Eve had been at peace with God and one another, naked and unashamed
2. Adam and Eve immediately know something is wrong and try to hide from one another & from God
3. Sin produces guilt - objective moral guilt before God
4. Sin also produces shame - the subjective feeling of humiliation regarding our behavior
5. There are shame cultures that may produce feelings of shame about things that are not sinful - but there is also real shame arising from our guilt before God.
6. Sin prompts us to try and cover our guilt and shame, not through confession and repentance, but rather through our own rationalizations and works.
7. Many today blame guilt and shame on repressive culture but no amount of such rationalization will remove our objective guilt before God, nor can it remove the fruit of such guilt - real shame.

D. Sin desires to blame God and others for my behavior

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.**” Genesis 3:11–13

1. God offers a chance for confession and repentance
2. Adam blames Eve - the woman is the problem
3. Adam blames God - you put her here!
4. Eve blames Satan - He deceived me
5. Me, the lawnmower and the hose
6. Rousseau - society is the problem! (He cheers!)
7. Augustine knows I am the problem - and cries!
8. Sin desires to blame God or others for my own sin, refusing to acknowledge, confess, and repent so that I might receive forgiveness.
9. Sin says my problem is outside of me and my salvation is inside of me, but the truth is that my problem is within and salvation can only come from outside of me - from God Himself.
10. This particular manifestation of sin is particularly rampant right now, from the troubled young man in Atlanta who shot the spa workers because of his own struggles, to attempts to blame the Church, or family, or society for my own evil behavior.
11. This is the foul fruit of Rousseau’s “confession” and must be utterly rejected - others are not the problem, I am the problem.

E. Sin disrupts relationships

1. Adam and Eve are now hiding from one another
2. Adam and Eve are now hiding from & lying to God
3. Sin produces conflict and death throughout creation
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." Gen 3:16–19
 - a. Eve will be in pain to bring forth life
 - b. Eve and Adam will be in conflict
 - c. Adam will now have to struggle to rule the earth and produce food
 - d. We will all struggle against death - and lose
 - e. The shalom of creation is now disrupted and death pervades every aspect of life
4. We can see the effects of sin throughout our society now in damaged friendships, broken marriages, class and racial strife, environmental degradation - and death.

F. 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.

IV. Applying the Word

A. Do I understand the true nature of sin?

1. In this series, we have looked at our need for limits because of creation
2. But the nature of sin also impacts how we will experience freedom and flourishing
3. From the garden, we have minimized and externalized sin and its effects
4. From Rousseau forward, we have put this in hyper-drive as a culture
5. But the effects of sin are deep and profound. 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
6. Sin touches, disrupts, and deforms EVERYTHING
7. A low view of sin leads to sin management, but we must be killing sin or it will be killing us (John Owen)
8. Is my view of sin shaped by our culture or God's Word?

B. Take heart - The Gospel is greater than sin!

1. Do I see the Gospel break through even in the fall?
2. Genesis 3:15 - the first proclamation of the Gospel

3. The first type of the Gospel - an animal dies that our sinful nakedness and shame might be covered
4. Like Adam, when confronted by our sin and the Presence of the Holy God, we are tempted to work to cover our sin and nakedness, to hide, or to blame others or even God Himself.
5. But take heart - the Holy God is also the God of Love, and He offers forgiveness and covering through Christ!
6. Embrace the Gospel - for the first time or anew!

C. The Table of Freedom

1. This Table shows the depth of our sin - and God's forgiveness!
2. This Table shows the depth of our sin - and the path to freedom
3. Come, eat and drink forgiveness and freedom

Freedom, Limits, and the Depth of Sin

Genesis 2:15-17; Genesis 3

March 28, 2021

Communion

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Teaching keywords: Freedom; humanity; Lent; sin; temptation

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. 1 Thess 5:23–24

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 2:15–17

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. Genesis 3:1–24