

# One Bad Apple

March 8, 2026

Romans 5:12-19, Revelations 12:7-9

It was a mindless moment. I had stopped at the store and picked up a chocolate éclair. That was my “on the go” breakfast.

I was on my way to church. I reached over to pick up the bakery treat and took a bite. I immediately noticed that a strange taste. I looked down at it in my hand and gagged. I had bitten into the end with a big green moldy section. I stopped the car and spit it out but the damage had been done. The experience ruined. I don't think I've had an éclair since.

That's kinda' like what happened in the Garden of Eden. It should have been a beautiful moment... but it soured quickly. One bad apple is all it took to ruin God's perfect plan.

This morning, I want to address something no one likes to talk about. We like to talk about Jesus. But talking about Jesus doesn't make sense unless you talk about the Doctrine of Sin and the power of repentance and forgiveness.

Sin is old as the creation itself. It is older than man because it originated in the mind of Satan. Satan was the first sinner as we read in Revelations 12. Satan's pride led him to want to be equal with God, and as a result, there was rebellion in heaven. I've always said that pride leads to all other sins. It is making a statement that we know better than God.

In Romans 5:12 the apostle Paul says, “All have sinned.” So to understand the human story, you need to begin with a correct understanding of sin.

Sin took root not long after creation. We read in Genesis that as Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command, and overstepped God's boundaries, sin entered the world. That disobedience, that sin, was not just something that affected them, it also destroyed their relationship with God and each other. Let me say this: Sin is real. Sin is destructive. Sin is eternally fatal if not addressed. It is not to be taken lightly.

There are three things that are important to understand about sin. First, sin is not just a matter of behavior. Sin is in our very nature. It's not just that we do bad things, it's that we are born with sin. In Romans 7, Paul says "I do not know why I do the things I do." He explains in our reading this morning that we were born in sin because we are connected to Adam. We inherited the sin from him.

Therefore, we can't help ourselves. We sin because we are sinners by our nature. That's the concept of original sin. And so, we'll never solve this problem by behavioral reformation alone. Ask an alcoholic. Ask someone struggling with sexual immorality and lust. We can't change the condition of our hearts. We need help. We need a Savior.

The second thing to note is that sin is not simply disobeying an abstract set of laws. It is rebelling against the authority of God. That's why in talking to God, David says, "Against You and You only have I done this thing." On the face of it, he wronged

Bathsheba and Uriah. But David rightly understands that it was God who he sinned against.

Notice that the Ten Commandments begin with worship of God. If God is not in the appropriate place in our lives, then nothing else will be. So, every sin is relational. It's breaking relationship with God. It's loving something more than we love God.

The third thing is there are three words for sin that are very helpful. The first word is "iniquity." Iniquity is moral impurity. It is like that mold in the éclair. Yuck! We are corrupted by this original sin. This sets us up to turn away from God and do our own thing, the way we want, to satisfy OUR needs and wants.

The second word is "transgression". Transgression is trespasses, going where we don't belong, an intentional stepping over the boundary. It is parking in the "no parking zone" even when I've seen the sign.

The third word is "sin" and sin has been described as missing the mark. God sets the target and we fall short. As Paul says, "Everyone sins and falls short of the glory of God." I can't reach God's standard because sin has rendered me unable.

The word sin is found hundreds of times in the Bible in both Old and New Testaments. Its first mention is in Genesis 4:7, where it is said to have been lurking at the door of the world's first murderer, Cain.

The final mention is in Revelation 18:5, where it brings down the full wrath of an angry God upon the political and economic systems of this entire world. The very word carries with it the hissing sound of a vicious viper.

Sin originated with the devil and entered the world through Adam and became a universal problem. It is like a house of mirrors wherever everything is distorted. It looks fun and good but is never real. It is like sex for sex sake. Without love, it is nothing more than a fleeting fancy. Sin is darkness. When we are walking in sin we are living without the light of God's love and glory. That's why we often talk about people being lost. They can't see where they are going as they head down the path of destruction. Sin is separation. It leads to isolation and a feeling of despair. Sin is perversion. It distorts that which is good and turns it into something evil and destructive. Sin is servitude. The Bible takes pains to teach us that indulgence in sin leads to dependance on it. Ask any alcoholic about the hold that drink has on them. The same is true with sexual sins, a life of greed, and a love of power. That's why the Bible speaks against these things. They are not harmless. They all corrupt and lead the perpetrator being caught up, being bound and a slave to that sinful life. Sin leads to emptiness. There is no satisfying sin. It leaves you wanting more and more is never enough. Sin ruins life and destroys hope. It

leads to brokenness. It is the opposite of holiness which suggests whole and fulfilled.

So How Do We Find the Remedy for Sin? How Do we Find our Salvation? The first step in salvation begins with true repentance. In the Old Testament, two Hebrew words help us understand repentance. The first is the word "nacham," which means to turn around or to change the mind. The second is the word "sub." It is used over 600 times in the Old Testament and is translated by such words as "turn," "return," "seek," "restore." You see it very often in phrases like "to turn to the Lord with all your heart."

When you come to the New Testament there is one word, the Greek word metanoia, which literally means "to change the mind." It has to do with the way you think about something. You've been thinking one way, but now you think the opposite way. That's repentance. In Romans 12 Paul says

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

The Bible unhesitatingly and emphatically declares that repentance is the first step in returning to God. Thus, the summons to repent is the dominant note in God's calling in both the Old and New Testaments. No soul can be saved without it. Repentance is the theme in many historical Biblical stories. For example, Psalm 51:1-12 is David's response. He says,

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

The word repent occurs 45 times in the Old Testament. In the New Testament it occurs 61 times. It is powerful. It is usually accompanied with the idea of remorseful regret. So, in essence it suggests that one changes one's mind and turns with deep regret over the way they were going.

It is the living out of the story of the Prodigal son. The young man came to his senses, regretted what he had done and turned around and went home to ask forgiveness.

Genuine repentance is born out of humiliation, the realization and the heartbreaking assessment of what one has done to God.

Contrition follows. Actions too. The beating of one's breast, the overflowing tears and real grieving and sorrow at the realization that this hurt God's heart and led to separation from God.

So what does this mean for our preaching and witnessing? Once we understand the nature of sin and the need for salvation, we can begin to repent and trust in God and his saving actions through Jesus Christ. It is fruitless until this occurs.

The person who does not understand sin will ask, "What do I need to be saved from? I am not that bad? I am a good person..."

It is only when we understand the nature of sin, that we understand that we need to be saved. When we understand how a Holy God loathes sin and that this same God has provided a way out of this, we can we begin to repent and look for our redemption.

Redemption is the work of undoing the harm of sin. This is what Christ came to do. He came filled with grace... and gave his life so that we might be free of the curse of sin. He bore the curse that comes with sin, all the pain, separation and damnation when he went to the cross. At Calvary, the guilt of sin was dealt with and forever canceled by the merit of Christ's atoning work. Willingly he became the propitiation (the appeasement of God's wrath) for our sins.

When the Psalmist spoke of transgressions being forgiven in Psalm 32, he used the word "Nasa" which literally means borne away. He cleanses us. Sin defiles but with his blood we are cleansed and made whole again. He washes, justifies and sanctifies us and turns our black heart white again.

(If you have ever seen the charts reflecting the lungs of a smoker who has quit...) My heart thing...

Christ is our healer, our deliverer and he remolds us and fashions us in his image, while restoring the divine image in which we

were created. The Holy Spirit which we spoke about recently, fills us, transforms us and we begin to bear witness to the fact by the fruit we produce; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control... Then we are on the road to sanctification and life reflecting the glory of God once again.

Amen.