

Part 6: How We Got to Ow

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During the 19th Century many Native Africans followed trade routes out of the country's interior to the fertile coasts. Mago trees lined these roads, offering cool shade and sweet fruits for those who dared follow their path. The resources along these routes became more and more abundant terminating ultimately in the oasis city of Bwagamoyo on the African coast.

Today, Bwagamoyo is an Instagramer's dream with resorts dotting the sundrenched beaches and deep blue surf. If you searched for images of it, your heart would long to visit it.

Which is ironic, since the town's name "Bwaga Moyo" is Swahili for "lay down your heart." That's because beneath the markets of tropical fruit and cheap souvenirs lay the historic market which built the town: the African slave market.

The mango trees, which seemed to promise provision and paradise, were not native to Africa. The fruit was native to India, and Slave Traders from India would pack their caravans full of the fruit as they led missions into the African heartland to harvest and sell human souls. Once they finished their afternoon treat, they would cast aside the seed of the tree. While following in the shade of the foreign and sweet mango tree, countless men, women and children found themselves in chains in Zanzibar's infamous slave market.

The end of slavery is a horrific evil. But beware, the road to slavery looks deceptively sweet. And history tends to repeat itself.

And if we aren't careful—we might find ourselves following the scent of sin's sweetness only to wake up one morning and say: "How did we get here?" Maybe that's you this morning. Despite the promises of our world this week we woke up to headlines of slain children, famines, and global instability. And that's only the half of it. What our hearts wrestle with, the hurt we carry and the hurt we inflict seem to be unending and unavoidable.

How did we get here? While the whole story of the Bible is one of how we got to now—the title of our sermon this morning is "How we got to Ow." Today, we see the origin of everything that hurts in life. And it comes from this empty and enslaving reality of human sinfulness. But amidst the ruins, we can also find a way out.

Our main idea this morning is this: **Sin offers false promises and real pain.** We are going to see this in three ways this morning. First, we will see **Sin's Doubt**, then we will examine **Sin's Ouch**, and lastly we will see the hope of **Sin's Out**.

If you remember last week, Genesis 2 was the climax of God's perfect creation. Man and woman were in harmony with nature, with God, and with one another. This culminated in Moses summary on Adam and Eve's marriage where he said, **Genesis 2:25**, "And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."

But Moses immediately continues with this: **Genesis 3:1**, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

In Hebrew this reads that man and woman were “arummim” but the serpent was “arum.” In other words, the naked and upfront goodness of God’s creation was now under threat by a crafty serpent who disguises and twists the truth. Like a funhouse mirror, he came to distort what God made as clearly good.

God is upfront in his good creation, and his good rule. Adam and Eve enjoyed that in vs. 25. But here comes one who is not good, and therefore he needs to hide his true intent.

This crafty serpent begins his work with our first point this morning: **Sin’s Doubt**.

Now, where did this serpent come from? How did he talk? Neither of those things seemed to alarm Eve—which perhaps is the very source of the problem. While we might speculate on both of these questions the Bible makes two things clear: 1. The serpent was a real creature, 2. Whether by direct or indirect relationship—the serpent was under the influence of the Devil.

While the Bible elsewhere gives a bit more detail on the origin of Satan, a fallen angel himself created by God, Moses goal here isn’t to explain where the snake came from—but where temptation and sin came from.

Jesus tells us in John 8 that the Devil is, “A murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in 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.”

Satan knows he’s not God, and he knows he can’t convince Adam and Eve he is more powerful than God. Which is why he immediately begins to attack the character of God. In **Genesis 3:1b**, “He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”

While we might think the primary issues is what Eve thought about the tree. At its heart sin is a matter of what we think about God.

By the time those African men and women reached the mango trees, they knew things were bad. Wicked men came by force and tore them from their homes. You might think that sin and temptation is as clearly obvious as that. But sin is subtle and the Devil is no dummy. I heard it said once that sin needs to look its best in order to do its worst—and the Devil has a lot of make-up.

But the Serpent didn’t show up and say to Eve, “Eat from this tree.” If he did, she probably would have been wise enough to say, “No. God told us not to.” But sin is not so easily identified as that!

He’s not trying to convince Eve the tree is good as much as he’s calling her to doubt that God is good. He even twists God’s good word to make his point.

If you remember what God told Adam back in **Genesis 2:16** we see “You may surely eat of every tree in the garden.” The grammatical emphasis of God’s command is “every.” He’s drawing us to his generous provision. But the serpent’s question twists God’s word into a restrictive, “Not eat of any tree.”

As a rule of thumb, you'll find it best in life to never negotiate with terrorists, toddlers, or talking snakes. We never negotiate with a question which, at its core, calls us to doubt God's goodness.

Eve should have ended the conversation there. She should have said, "No, he didn't say we shall not eat of any tree in the garden. He said we can eat of every tree in the garden that is good for food. Now step aside, or I'll hit you with the shovel."

But Eve entertains the thought. And she begins to believe the lie. Notice God's command in full: **Genesis 2:16-17**, " "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

But notice what Eve adds to this: **Genesis 3:2-3**, "And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' "

Did you see the addition? She added to God's command. God didn't say anything about touching it. In fact, the two categories of trees God made were those good for food, and those pleasant to the eyes. My guess is that Adam and Eve were to enjoy the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They would have been fine nestling in its shade, climbing in its branches and picking its flowers. It was a good tree—but when we entertain doubts about God—we are the ones who start restricting his goodness.

Seeing his opportunity, the snake bites. Not with his fangs, but with his tongue: **Genesis 3:4-5**, "But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

If you have your Bible open, you'll see that every other time God is mentioned in Genesis 2 and three it's "the LORD God." Those two words, "Yahweh Elohim" express God's nature—he is God—and God's quality—he is the Lord. He is the covenant keeping Yahweh. The God who is invested in you and loves you. A God, yes. But a good God.

But did you notice how the Serpent talks of God? He only speaks to Eve about "God." He wants her to forget about his love for her. He wants her to think that God is a big God who doesn't care about her, she just gets in the way, he doesn't want what's best for her, and she—if she listens to the Serpent, can be just like God.

And notice how a wrong view of God changes how we view everything: **Genesis 3:6-7**, "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths."

God said, "I've given you every tree good for food." The doubt of sin says, "But have you? Let me be the judge of that."

And the serpent is right. When we step outside of God's good rule, our eyes are opened aren't they. But they are opened to a broken reality. One in which the naked good of God's world is now spoiled.

Prior to sin, God's good creation was entirely safe. Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed. But now, sin preys on God's good perfection. And in one fell swoop God's paradise became the sphere of man's pain.

And this leads us to our second point: **Sin's Ouch.**

Sin is like going to a morally debunked tax accountant and believing them when they say, "Let me help you with that." Before you know it, everything in your life hurts.

Adam and Eve believed that their sin would make God's creation even better for them. But everything that was good was now a source of pain.

Notice how all three spheres we saw are not pain points: their relationship to each other, their relationship to God, and their relationship to their labor and life in the garden.

Suddenly, Adam and Eve aren't ok being naked in front of each other anymore. Why? Is it because their bodies became gross and nakedness became sinful? No. God made bodies, and nakedness inside of marriage beautiful. So, what happened? My guess is that the other oriented view they once had of each other became a self-centered view. Each saw the other and saw the ways they could take advantage of the other's nakedness. And when they realized how they saw each other, they realized that they were just as exposed too—and quickly covered it up.

Their view of others was corrupted, and their conscience was condemned. We see this in how they respond when God begins to walk in the garden. Intimacy with each other was challenged, and now intimacy with God was also to be avoided.

Here's how deep sin goes. When the lie bites, it holds on. They sinned for sure—but God's character didn't. And instead of running to a God who they trusted to do good and help them despite the wrong they had done—they believed that God wouldn't care. That he could do nothing. So they hide: **Genesis 3:8**, "And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden."

God created Adam and Eve to stand as King and Queen apart from the rest of the created world—but sin calls us to hide ourselves in the world. The trees, they believe, is a safer place for them to go with their sin than their God.

I love how God snaps Adam back to reality in verse 9. While Adam is hiding among the trees, trying to not be seen by God—God calls out, "Where are you?" and Adam responds. Either Adam is terrible at hide and seek, or we see that men will always answer when the Creator calls.

And notice the question: "Where are you?" Does God not know where Adam is? Did he give up hide and seek, and throw his hands up in frustration? No! As the Psalmist says, "Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?"

God didn't ask the question because he didn't know where Adam was. God asked the question because Adam didn't know where he was anymore. Adam was in sin—and nothing which once made sense,

made sense. Nothing which once was safe, now felt safe. Adam was in fear. And God wants us to come to him when we feel the same thing.

God himself can explain why things are the way we are. And God himself can explain to you the fears and experiences of your life. And if we want to think clearly again, we must let God speak to us.

Our default setting is broken. We often find ourselves blaming the brokenness and pain in this world on God. We call him to answer for it. But what Genesis shows us is that God's world had none of this—the world of our own making, sin, humanity is the source of brokenness.

Genesis shows us not just the fall of sin, but the fallout of it. God wants us to know how deep this pain goes, because he wants us to not be unaware of the challenges, but he also wants us to not be unaware of the hope.

Let's see this dialogue in **Genesis 3:10-19**, "And he said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.' He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.'" Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you." And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

What we just read is often called, "the curse." But notice how God's curse follows man's choice. God didn't make man afraid. God didn't ruin Adam and Eve's intimacy. God didn't bring pain. God's curse explains what sin has done, prepares us for what will follow, and calls us to come back to hope in him.

It is hard living in light of reality. Gender roles, God's rule, and our responsible work are all still created norms. But sin makes each of those a bit more complicated now. When we try to live out those biblical realities—we might feel pain. But God wants us to know that the pain of obedience is better than the promise of more sin.

God is still the source of life and if we want it, we must walk in his light. But guess what—there's a war now. The lie and labor of the serpent isn't done. We've got to fight for faith, not doubt. We've got to believe in the goodness and care of God's command. But that serpent is going to put up a fight—and we are in the middle of it today.

Gender roles, faithful cooperation, and biblical marriage—yup, that’s still the reality of life—and beautifully so. But the natural command to be fruitful and multiply—it’s going to hurt. Men and women can still make babies, but childbirth hurts, barrenness hurts, parenting hurts. Gender roles of head and helper still exist. But this beautiful place of cooperation—is now a battleground itself. Wives will desire the roles of their husbands, but it doesn’t change the fact that he’s not you and you’re not him.

Work in this world is still required—we are to rule over it, subdue it, and rest in God. But this work is hard. The ground is hard. It produces thorns and thistles, bad bosses and injuries, affairs and accidents. It’s hard work, and then you’ll die.

Never has life been so accurately explained. This is our reality is it not? Whether you’re a Christian or not—doesn’t this explain everything that hurts us? Everything that we hate? If that’s so, I’d like to propose that it also then should define for us everything worth fighting for. That obedience to God, meaningful work, loving cooperation between husbands and wives and men and women are not the cause of humanity’s problems—but the solution for them.

And yet, these solutions themselves won’t save us. Obedience is hard, and obedience alone isn’t strong enough. We need more help—and it’s not going to come from the Serpent. He’s the master of the hit-and-run. He’s gone. But the Lord God is not. He stays amidst the wreckage. And he’s not done yet. Here we see our final point: **Sin’s Out.**

As we look at the last part of our passage today, I want us to see how we got us into this mess by doubting God’s goodness. But how it is the very goodness of God which covers us and provides a way back into his goodness.

First, notice God’s grace of clothing. **Genesis 3:21**, “And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin and clothed them.” When sin leads us to doubt God’s goodness, and we engage in it, we will feel ashamed, exposed, and alone. We will try and cover ourselves with our own work, or with the figs of this world. But this good God who you doubted, is a good God who covers your insecurities. He gives us a better covering—the righteousness of Jesus which takes away our sin and our shame.

Second, notice God’s grace of a closed way: **Genesis 3:22-24**, “Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.”

Now, you might ask, how is this good news? Don’t we need to go back, don’t we need life? Don’t we want to live forever? Not like this we don’t. This God, loves us too much, desires our good too deeply, to let us get back to that tree and eat from it and live forever in a world as broken and painful as this.

He’s removed us from his garden because our sin put us in danger. He consumes sinners. And a paradise without the relationship with the good God who made it is just hell lined with mango trees.

We can’t go back to the garden. Not like this. But God will bring us back. God’s not done with us. This world and its created beauty can be enjoyed. All is not lost. We just are. And one day, we’ll get back.

God himself says so. Look at **Revelation 22:14**, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates."

There's a way for us to get back. To be washed clean. But it's got to be by the gates. It's got to be the right way. It's got to be God's way.

And here's the final grace and promise of sin's out: the grace of the snake crusher.

Look back at **Genesis 3:15**, to the serpent God says, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

There will come a child born through Eve's painful childbirth who will himself experience the pain of the serpent's sting—but that offspring is going to crush the head of the snake.

It seems outlandish, doesn't it? It seems hard to believe? But knowing all she knew, Eve believed it, and so did Adam. We know that from **Genesis 3:20**, "Then the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living."

Why did Eve get a new name after the curse? Because if there was going to be hope—it was through the womb of the woman. And at one point, a woman gave birth. Mary would conceive, through the Holy Spirit, and Jesus would be born. Fully God, and fully man. And he would obey where Adam failed.

And he would say, "I am the door. I am the truth. I am the way. I am the life." No man comes to the Father but by me. He'd take that sting on the cross. And he's going to crush the head of that snake forever.

But the snake's not dead yet. He slithers, he lies, he deceives. But make no mistake, he's nothing but a dealer in souls. His trees are empty, but his chains are real. But if you put your faith in Jesus, he'll get us back.

Freedom from slavery comes when we finally put sin's lie to bed. We don't run from the Lord when we realize our sin, we run to him. We come to him and he takes us under his arm, he leads us to Jesus and the promises us a return to paradise. God's offers a real promise and true peace.