

## The History Of Sin.

Text: James 1:13-21

Suggested Hymns:

105, 127, 610, 320, 262

1) How Sin Came

2) How Sin Develops

3) How May Sin Be Overcome

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is James 1:13–21, <sup>13</sup> *Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.* <sup>14</sup> *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.* <sup>15</sup> *Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.* <sup>16</sup> *Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.*

<sup>17</sup> *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.* <sup>18</sup> *Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.*

<sup>19</sup> *So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;* <sup>20</sup> *for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.* <sup>21</sup> *Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The name of this Sunday, *Cantate*, and the Introit for today invites us to sing a song of praise.

That may seem strange when we remember that we live today in a world of evil. Our planet resembles a gigantic stage where performance follows performance, each one, it seems, more tragic than the other. Men are the actors, and few perform their parts well.

The world may be likened to a field of battle where strife and combat never end. The most striking description of our world is in the expression with which you are familiar: *A vale of tears*.<sup>1</sup> There is no home that does not have its cross to bear, and there are only a few who find themselves carefree.

Which, however, of all evils is the greatest? Hunger, sickness, disappointments, or other heartaches which cause bitter tears and sleepless nights? No, the greatest evil of all is sin, for sin is the wellspring, the fountain, of all sorrows on earth. Were it not for sin, our world would know nothing of poverty, of sickness, or of sorrow.

And sin separates man from God.<sup>2</sup> It establishes a barrier between God and man. Every sin is, as it were, is a new building stone, increasing the height of the barrier. Unless man rids himself of his sins while on earth, which he can do only through faith in Jesus Christ whose blood cleanses us from all our sins,<sup>3</sup> he will find himself separated from God in all eternity.

The tragedy of it all is that man does not mind sin. He toys with sin as a child plays with fire. He entertains it as a bosom friend.

In consideration of these facts, can we sincerely “*sing to the Lord*”?<sup>4</sup> Most certainly, for as we study the text, we will not only learn about the source of sin and how sin develops to dreadful proportions, but also how sin may be overcome, the knowledge of which enables us to properly observe *Cantate* and all other Sundays of the church year.

Our text, then, invites us to study *The History of Sin*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. How Sin Came

In answer to the question “*How did sin come?*” People are hasty in their reply, blaming their temper or disposition or the environment into which God has placed them. In other words, they place the blame on God. In their opinion, God is the tempter, and the actual sinner.

To this St. James answers, <sup>13</sup> ***Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil.*** Sin cannot proceed from God, for He is in essence good and holy. The tempter rather is Satan, who brought sin into the world. We are given the record of sin’s origin in Genesis 3.

There we are taken into Paradise, where we find man in his state of holiness. Approaching him is one who was created a good angel, the chief among the angels, next to God, yet who, desiring to be like God, fell away from God and became the devil.

In the Garden of Eden he addresses the woman, by means of the serpent, ***“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”*** His purpose is to create doubt. Naively the woman answers, ***“We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; <sup>3</sup> but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”***

The tempter answered ***“You will not surely die,”*** which implies that God has deceived, and lied to Eve. He then said, ***<sup>5</sup> For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”***

Verse six proceeds to state the change wrought in man: ***<sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.***

A change had taken place in the woman, for she had seen this tree and fruit daily, but without lust or desire to eat of it, since God had forbidden it, and she had heeded the command, ***‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’***

Now she sees the tree in a different light; she sees it with desire. Why? Because she no longer believes what God had told her, but believes the lying words of the devil.

So unbelief was the defection from God. Unbelief was the first sin in the hidden recess of the heart, from where it proceeded to the eyes and then into the hands, which took of the fruit and ate.

As a result Eve developed into the seducer of her husband, instead of continuing to be a helpmeet to him. But Adam was not deceived as we read in 1 Timothy 2:14. Nevertheless, because of his headship, it is through Adam that

“sin entered the world.” Thus these blessed, holy children of God became sinners. Their nature became corrupt and depraved.

If poison is added to a vessel of pure water, every drop of water is contaminated. Even so sin penetrated into the body and soul, mind and heart, of our first parents and then transmitted itself to their descendants through Adam.

Adam is blamed for bringing sin into the world, not Eve. We read in Romans 5:12, *through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin.* Jesus was sinless because He had no human father.

So man became a sinner, not gradually, but by birth. Sin is now inherited; hence we speak of, and believe in, original sin.

You have probably often heard this tragic story of the origin of sin. Yet we also know that a detailed account of it rarely appears in print, and that in the churches of our day that chapter of the Bible is not often referred to, or if heard, speaks of the origin of sin only in a very superficial way.

We know that some hearers or readers of this record of the origin of sin pronounce it a figment of the mind, a childish superstition or an old wives' tale. And yet that tragedy in the Garden of Eden produced the greater tragedy, the crucifixion of the Son of God on Calvary, as you have heard during the past season of Lent.

However sentimentally a person occupies a pew during Lent, following the Saviour in His suffering, trial, death, and burial, and then returning home with a deep sigh of sympathy and admiration for the suffering High Priest without tracing the cause of His redemption back to this simple, yet all-important record in Genesis regarding the origin of sin, and from there to the sinful condition of his own heart, to his sin, is a Lenten observance devoid of profit to his soul. It is a mockery, an abomination to the Lord.

Here in the first book of the Bible you have the record of the origin of sin with the resultant tragedy in our surroundings and the reason for Paul's familiar exclamation, <sup>24</sup> *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*<sup>5</sup>

We all have original sin from conception. Note, for example, the mother with an obstinate, selfish, ungrateful, child lying in her arms. This child is

inclined to these sins even before it has been exposed to surroundings which might have been contributing factors to its conduct.

## 2. How Sin Develops

Sin is hidden within us, so that we are compelled to say with the Apostle, *“<sup>18</sup> For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells.”*<sup>6</sup> But as a sleeping serpent awakens, or as the root of a poisonous weed, hidden in the soil, begins to sprout, so sin soon manifests itself.

St. James in our text speaks of the development of the hidden evil desires which produce the act of sin. *God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.* God does indeed test our faith, but He never tempts to evil.

A teacher will occasionally surprise his pupils with tactful questions, not in order to lead them into error, but for the purpose of arriving at the correct answer by a proper process of reasoning.

God may try and test us, but He never tempts us. The Apostle therefore continues, *<sup>14</sup> But each one is tempted [to evil] when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.* Sin expresses itself as an evil desire in the heart, a sinful thought, comparable at this time to a spark which may yet, however, be extinguished by a footstep, as an old church father expressed it.

Luther put it this way: *“I cannot prevent birds from flying about my head, but I can stop them from building nests in my hair.”* Evil thoughts, lusts, and desires will arise contrary to my will, since sin lives within me. But a simple, sincere prayer, *“Lord, help me,”* will frustrate the evil design.

A short verse of Scripture, *“How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God”*<sup>7</sup> will banish evil thoughts. Unfortunately, however, this good rule of quenching evil desires is not always put into practice. The result is, *<sup>15</sup> Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin.*

Lust bears fruit, as it were, by our fancy and imagination; an unrestrained portrait of honour, renown, or wealth is presented, producing a magic effect, promising happiness and satisfaction. In this case, a mere sigh will not suffice to quench evil thoughts and desires. Earnest prayer is needed.

Failure to pray finds man a victim of the Tempter. The deed is done. ***Sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death***, which means separation from God. Man as a result is stricken with fear and horror. Remorse gnaws at his soul. He tries to hide himself from the presence of God.

If persisted in, sin becomes a passion, a wickedness, strangling the sinner as the serpent strangled Laocoon and his two sons. With a diabolical grin Satan stands by, stirring the fire of passion and causing the sinner to despair in the face of eternal death. Thus sin develops, advancing from step to step, from degree to degree until it ends in death here and hereafter.

Where do you, dear hearer, find yourself, and how far have you advanced on the road to the wide gate? Do not think, *"I know that I do not need to worry, for I am not in danger."* Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 10:12, <sup>12</sup> ***Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.***

Our Saviour warns all of His children in Matthew 26:41, <sup>41</sup> ***Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*** Sin is a dreadful adversary and ruler, an awful tyrant when it once succeeds in making men its slaves. Oh, beware of it!

### **3. How May Sin Be Overcome**

May sin be defeated? Oh, yes, for St. James writes in James 4:7-8, <sup>7</sup> ***Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*** <sup>8</sup> ***Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*** He is *"the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."* He is the Giver of *every good gift and every perfect gift* and has provided for us a blessed gift, the Word of Truth, with which to combat sin.

In this Word we find the Law, the Ten Commandments, with their powerful "Thou shalt not" to provide a curb to the door of the human heart and check the coarse outbursts of sin.

And in His Word we find the precious Gospel of His grace in Christ, saying, ***"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*** This Gospel changes us to newness of life, so that we become a kind of *"firstfruits of His creatures,"* who in the strength which He supplies gain the mastery over sin and through Him who loved us we become more than conquerors.<sup>8</sup>

This gift of God, His blessed Word, must be *implanted* or grafted within us. Bread sustains life only when it is eaten. So the bread of heaven must become our spiritual food.

Therefore the Apostle pleads that we be “*swift*,” anxious and eager, “*to hear*,” that we receive the Word with meekness, also when it reveals to us the truth regarding our condition and bares our sins.

In God’s hands His Word becomes a sharp pruning shear, clipping from spiritual vines the wild branches of “*filthiness*” and “*overflow of wickedness*.” Thus in the hour of temptation we are reminded of the words of Mark 14:38, <sup>38</sup> *Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*”

Perhaps it will help us to understand properly and apply the lesson of the text if we add a story from life. A poor, but pious, servant in a large city, father of a large family, found himself in dire need. Rent, support of the family, some adversities, had burdened him with considerable debts.

A banker near by gave this servant a job. He was compelled to pass through a foyer before entering his master’s office. In this foyer the servant observed a large amount of money, placed there, evidently, for the purpose of testing his honesty.

Slumbering in his bosom was the desire to take the entire amount, thus to rid himself of care and worry. “*Take it; no one sees you.*” Bravely he resisted. However, entering his master’s office, he commented on his troubled features and trembling hands.

Next morning he was greeted by the same temptation, only to a larger degree. The Tempter suggested to him: “*Take the money now, it may be gone tomorrow.*” His conscience reminded him of his moral obligations: “Thou shalt not steal.”

A prayer proceeded from his heart and mouth, “*Lord, keep me, for You have promised if we look to You, we shall be radiant, and our faces shall not be ashamed.*”<sup>9</sup> Again the temptation was overcome. But he was not completely at rest. That night found the servant on his knees, wrestling in prayer with God.

When next he entered the room of his master, he cheerfully met the eye of his employer, exclaiming, “*Sir, I have prevailed.*” And then followed a report of the harassing experiences of the past days. The banker then entered the foyer and presented the servant with a substantial gift of money, adding that more was to follow as need arose.

That reminds us of the scene in the wilderness where our Lord was greatly tempted, but resisted each temptation of the devil with the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, after which angels came and ministered to Him.<sup>10</sup>

Similar temptations approach us, for sin is within us and surrounds us. May we heed the warning, “*Watch, pray, and learn to grow by means of the Word.*” Thus we shall grow in our spiritual life and be enabled to observe *Cantate* Sunday and to shout, “***Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvelous things.***”<sup>11</sup> Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Hymn 22

<sup>2</sup> Isa. 59:2

<sup>3</sup> 1 John 1:7

<sup>4</sup> Psa 98:1

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 7:24

<sup>6</sup> Romans 7:18

<sup>7</sup> Gen. 39:9

<sup>8</sup> Romans 8:37

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 34:4-6

<sup>10</sup> Matt. 4:1-11

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 98:1