



April 2, 2021

What Sin Begins

*Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" - **(Genesis 4:6-9 NIV)***

Something momentous and world-changing has now been set in motion. You will see this same pattern in the story of Abel and Cain, where mistrust and anger lead to murder (Gen. 4:1-15). The effect of the rupture that sin created in the relationship between the man and the woman is this: mistrust, anger, and disappointment became the standard quality of human life. Even among those of us who have experienced the grace of God, it is rare to find any man and woman who are bound together in marriage who are truly trustful in every respect, and confident, pleased, and satisfied with each other. Rather, there is a constant testing that goes on, and it is a very serious problem.

For example, though it is not as true now as it was in other times, men would often be responsible for the financial well-being of a couple's life together, but not many men are smart enough to succeed in that. So the wife is tempted to think, You know, if this guy were just a little smarter, I'd be a lot better off! Correspondingly, in our society, the woman often faces a real possibility that they will be traded in for someone younger and more beautiful. Women often live under a constant threat and wonder, When is the axe going to fall? These are just two characteristics of this sin rupture in American society.

It is rare to find a marriage relationship that truly has the grace of God in it to such an extent that both people are completely at home and confident, never in doubt, and full of love and concern for each other. The threats of abandonment I just mentioned hover over most relationships, and people are so busy protecting themselves that they cannot love each other. That violation then spreads down to their children, who also struggle with attacks and withdrawals, doubts and questions that are always there. It is not uncommon that, when a parent leaves due to divorce or death or any of the other things that are beyond the child's responsibility, the first thing the child thinks is, I am to blame; I am the one responsible, even though it's entirely out of their hands.

Reflect: *The element of mistrust makes it impossible for people to confidently step forward in the grace of God and realize the goodness that God intended them to have in their relationship to one another. The apostle Paul believed that the grace of God, as it came in Jesus Christ, was sufficient to heal the relationship between men and women. Yet it was still necessary for him to teach about it; the healing does not happen automatically without effort on both parts.*

(Q) In your own interactions with others, are you able to recognize the anger, mistrust, and disappointment that is percolating just below the surface that leads to much of the heart-ache and heartbreak that you may experience in your relationships?