

Seoul Grace Community
What Is Sin? The “Crouching” Sin
Genesis 4:1-16
September 25, 2016

1. Introduction

- a. “Sin” is a tricky issue to discuss—a word that is loaded with meaning depending on your particular worldview (or even if you believe something such as “sin” even exists)
- b. The question “What is Sin?” is the fundamental question: What's wrong with us? What's the problem with the human race?
 - i. There are horrible atrocities in the world. What makes us do these things?
 - ii. The bible tends to say that there is an underestimation of evil—We continually underestimate the predatory nature of sin and evil.
 - iii. God basically says this to Cain. He was unable to see the true power of sin that was “lurking” around Cain the whole time.

2. Sin Crouches

- a. It's crouching at your door (v. 7)
 - i. Rabat--Word here is used for leopards and tigers—crouching, lurking.
 - ii. It's lying in wait and almost impossible to recognize
- b. Sin hides itself
 - i. Cain's disdain for Abel—this probably would have been a sentiment brewing for a long time.
 - ii. Cain resented Abel. Did this happen all at once? Most likely not. Because we know human nature between siblings.
 - iii. When you spend a lifetime constantly being slighted in favor of your sibling your sentiments build.
 - iv. *East of Eden* on sibling jealousy: "The greatest terror a child can have is that he is not loved, and rejection is the hell he fears. I think everyone in the world to a large or small extent has felt rejection. And with rejection comes anger, and with anger some kind of crime in revenge for the rejection, and with the crime guilt-and there is the story of mankind. I think that if rejection could be amputated, the human would not be what he is... It is all there-the start, the beginning. One child, refused the love he craves, kicks the cat and hides his secret guilt; and another steals so that money will make him loved; and a third conquers the world-and always the guilt and revenge and more guilt. The human is the only guilty animal."
- c. The offering of Abel versus Cain shows us a great deal of the condition of their hearts
 - i. This type of offering was a dedication offering—like exchanging rings at the wedding.
 - ii. The wedding ring means dedication. With all that I have and all that I am I give to you.
 - iii. Sometimes we superficially read the offering of Abel as just that he was more religious than Cain.
 - iv. No. It's that he was giving his life to God.
 - v. Nothing was wrong with the form of the offering.
 1. Nothing was wrong with Cain's offering in and of itself that we know of so what's the issue? Is God just being fickle and preferential? Is he being unfair?
 2. To see what's wrong with Cain's offering, just look at his reaction when it's refused (angry and face is fallen (v. 5)
 3. Ultimately, his offering was about him—about covering up for what he lacked and trying to present something to God that wasn't genuine.
 4. He was seeking approval and, when he didn't get it, he became bitter to the point of murder—his offering was never really about God or done in faith, it was only about Cain and what he could get out of the situation.
 - vi. John later says that it was Abel's deeds were what made the difference (John 1 3:12)
 - vii. The heart behind Abel's offering was a full commitment

- d. Sin is subtle
 - i. Cain wasn't selling drugs, stealing or doing anything, morally horrible
 - ii. In fact, he was still worshipping God (by giving the offering).
 - iii. But he was treating himself as his own first cause. God was an accessory.
 - iv. This shows that ordinary people can do the most horrible things.
 - 1. "The sad truth is that most evil is done by people who never make up their minds to be good or evil." –Hannah Arendt (Holocaust survivor) confronting Eichmann
 - 2. "The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal. From the viewpoint of our legal institutions and of our moral standards of judgment, this normality was much more terrifying than all the atrocities put together."

3. Sin Devours

- a. Sin is not done with you even when you're done with it. It keeps just chewing on you (it's desire is for you—v. 7)
 - i. You tell a lie. You can't just avoid the consequences. You have to keep lying to protect the previous lie.
 - ii. Even more dangerous. You start to get lied to. You've distorted the relationship with the one you lied to. And therefore your relationship becomes a continual lie.
 - iii. We see this with Cain ("Am I my brother's keeper?" v. 9) He's deflecting, he can't stop covering up.

4. Sin is Mastered

- a. Where is the hope in this story?
 - i. God goes to Cain and asks him questions. Why would God ask Cain questions? Wouldn't he already know the answer? He wants a dialogue. He had every right to roll in on a cloud of thunder and smite Cain!
 - ii. He's not seeking information but transformation. He engages in a dialogue to flesh out the heart condition of Cain (v. 6). This why repentance is necessary and possible. God engages with Cain.
- b. The blood of Abel cries out to God (v. 10) because spilt blood is so valuable because life is so valuable—we are valuable and cherished in God's eyes
 - i. He is giving Cain a chance to repent. He doesn't and therefore he takes Cain to the blood of the man as judgement.
 - ii. In our sin we are taken to another one who bled, but infinitely better than Abel's blood. (cf. Hebrews 12:24)
 - iii. Abel's blood was judgement on Cain—Jesus' blood is grace/forgiveness for us!
- a. Jesus' offering was The Great Offering because it was the one that saved us
 - i. Cain's offering was ultimately about himself (which is why he became so "face fallen" when it wasn't accepted) because he was trying to find acceptance through his accomplishments
 - ii. Abel's offering was ultimately about having faith in God, that if the blood was shed to deal with Abel's sin, then God would deliver. It was faith, not performance!
 - iii. Jesus' offering was ultimately showing that the Cain's and Abel's of the world have to all repent—not just of their selfish, bad deeds of their self-righteous "good" deeds. The Great Offering that rescued us didn't come by our hands or accomplishments—it came by what Jesus accomplished in his death and resurrection.
 - 1. This makes you go into the presence of God not pointing at your own record but the record of Jesus for you.
 - 2. Augustus Toplady: "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. Naked come to thee for dress. Helpless look to Thee for grace; Foul, I to the fountain fly; Wash me, Savior, or I die."