



Chapter Four

It Gets Worse

“The controlling metaphor of this section is slavery and freedom. Paul paints a black-or-white picture of the human situation: either one lives in service to sin and remains in spiritual bondage, or one lives in obedience to God and enjoys liberation from sin’s captivity. It is a stark either-or: no fence-sitting, no third option.”⁸

- Dr. Scott Hahn,
Commentary on Romans



THE GRACE: *Despair*



When a strongman, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.

Luke 11:21-22



THEMES

The Strongman Parable

- The strongman – *the enemy*
- His palace – *the world*
- His goods – *humankind*
- The stronger one – *Jesus*



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What am I thinking and feeling right now?
- Did God reveal something new to me about how the enemy works in my life?
- How does the Biblical Story's vision that the enemy is the enemy (and that he divides and accuses) change the way I think about what is happening around me right now?

[illegible]

[illegible]



RESOURCES

Catechism of the Catholic Church 396-401:
“Original Sin”

Freedom put to the test

396 God created man in his image and established him in his friendship. A spiritual creature, man can live this friendship only in free submission to God. The prohibition against eating “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” spells this out: “for in the day that you eat of it, you shall die.” The “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” symbolically evokes the insurmountable limits that man, being a creature, must freely recognize and respect with trust. Man is dependent on his Creator, and subject to the laws of creation and to the moral norms that govern the use of freedom.

Man’s first sin

397 Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God’s command. This is what man’s first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness.

398 In that sin man *preferred* himself to God and by that very act scorned him. He chose himself over and

against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own good. Created in a state of holiness, man was destined to be fully “divinized” by God in glory. Seduced by the devil, he wanted to “be like God,” but “without God, before God, and not in accordance with God.”

399 Scripture portrays the tragic consequences of this first disobedience. Adam and Eve immediately lose the grace of original holiness. They become afraid of the God of whom they have conceived a distorted image—that of a God jealous of his prerogatives.

400 The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul’s spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject “to its bondage to decay.” Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will “return to the ground,” for out of it he was taken.

Death makes its entrance into human history

401 After that first sin, the world is virtually inundated by sin. There is Cain’s murder of his brother Abel and the universal corruption which follows in the wake of sin. Likewise, sin frequently manifests itself in the history of Israel, especially as infidelity to the God of the

Covenant and as transgression of the Law of Moses. And even after Christ's atonement, sin raises its head in countless ways among Christians. Scripture and the Church's Tradition continually recall the presence and *universality of sin in man's history*:

What Revelation makes known to us is confirmed by our own experience. For when man looks into his own heart he finds that he is drawn towards what is wrong and sunk in many evils which cannot come from his good creator. Often refusing to acknowledge God as his source, man has also upset the relationship which should link him to his last end, and at the same time he has broken the right order that should reign within himself as well as between himself and other men and all creatures.⁹



SUGGESTED READING

Rutledge, Fleming. *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus*, 2015.

8. Hahn, *Commentary on Romans*, 102.

9. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 396-401: “Original Sin.”