

THE STRONGER ONE · TAKE-HOME

Session 2: How Walls Get Built

Keep this sheet. It is yours, and it is private.

WHAT WE FOUND

James cleared the air first: “God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one” (James 1:13); whatever voice lures you toward the wall, it is never his. Then he traced sin’s gestation: desire lures, conceives, gives birth, grows to full strength (James 1:14-15), which means there is a window before consent, and that window is where the whole tradition fights: suggestion, delight, consent (St. Gregory). The unbidden suggestion is no sin; sin enters wherever the will says yes, and the yes can come early, by deliberately dwelling in the delight. We found God’s combat coaching of a fallen man in Genesis 4:7 (“sin is couching at the door... you must master it”): a real command that grace makes genuinely possible; and Proverbs 5:22 told us who wove the cords.

We drew the Church’s two lifelines with precision. The pull itself (concupiscence) is not sin, and “cannot harm those who do not consent but resist by the grace of Jesus Christ” (CCC 1264): the pull is the battlefield, not the defeat. And the hardening is real: “Sin creates a proclivity to sin; it engenders vice by repetition of the same acts” (CCC 1865), until, as Jesus warned, the slave sincerely believes he was always free (John 8:33-34). Grace does not replace your will; it heals and powers it: “work out your own salvation... for God is at work in you” (Philippians 2:12-13).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Gregory the Great

Moralia on Job (the classic analysis, commonly cited at IV.27)

St. Gregory teaches, in substance, that sin advances by steps: first the suggestion, arriving unbidden (from enemy, world, or flesh) and itself no sin; then the delight, where deliberate dwelling can already be a yes; then the consent of the will. The tradition therefore fights at the suggestion: the cheapest ground (that phrase is ours) it will ever be offered.

A summary of St. Gregory’s classic analysis; not a direct quotation.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Thomas Aquinas

Summa Theologiae I-II (the treatise on habits)

St. Thomas teaches, in substance, that a habit is a second nature: repeated acts leave an inclination, so the next act comes easier. Bent toward evil, the habit is a vice; toward good, a virtue. The law runs in both directions: grace can enlist the very machinery that built your wall to build acquired virtue in its place, while infusing what no repetition can manufacture.

A summary of St. Thomas’s teaching on habit; not a direct quotation.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. John Cassian

Conferences and Institutes

St. Cassian, carrying the desert’s wisdom west, teaches in substance that great falls begin as unwatched thoughts; that the vices feed one another in sequence; and that the fight is joined at a thought’s first appearance, before it is entertained: at the gate, as this study puts it, not in the courtyard.

A summary of the desert teaching St. Cassian recorded; not a direct quotation.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- **One pre-decided move.** Pick your most common trigger moment and decide now, in peacetime, what you will do when it comes: leave the room, pray one line, text a friend. Wars are won in peacetime decisions.
- **The three-minute examen.** Nightly: where did the pull start, where did it warm, where was the door held or opened? End the same way, win or lose: thank God for one thing, and ask, “Stronger One, hold the door with me tomorrow.”
- **Reread.** Midweek, read James 1:12-18 once, slowly, and stop on “he himself tempts no one.”

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

“If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.”

Genesis 4:7

Before next session: Read Genesis 3:1-13 and Matthew 4:1-11.

From the Catechism: CCC 405; 1264; 1735; 1865-1866; 2515.