

**Mastery of Sin**      Sixth Week in Ordinary Time      Monday, February 18, 2019      **Gn 4:1-15, 25;**      Mk 8:11-13      (So according to the authors of Genesis this battle between good and evil was always going on and humanity was never defeated really.)

**“If you do well, you can hold up your head; but if not, sin is a demon lurking at the door: his urge is towards you, yet you can be his master.”**

This is from the Book of Genesis. It's very interesting to study the Book of Genesis from the standpoint of the Hebrew mind that wrote it, in contrast to the later Greek minds of the early Church Fathers like St. Augustine. They don't see the same thing; they don't intend the same thing.

From the standpoint of the author of the Book of Genesis, **sin is a reality that has entered our world, but we can master it.** If we don't, it will enslave us; but we can master it, and they intended that way, way before Christ. In contrast, **St. Augustine said** that after Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, the condition of humanity was *non posse non peccare*, meaning **they could not not sin.** This is not what the Hebrew author said. **Augustine's interpretation is quite wrong. The Hebrew author does not intend a blanket condition of helplessness.** Abel himself was pleasing to God. That itself displaces any sort of universal moral fault. Later on you will see in the story of Joseph, again Joseph acted with extraordinary wisdom and virtue. Joseph had mastered this tendency; his brothers did not. **So according to the authors of Genesis this battle between good and evil was always going on and humanity was never defeated really.** That's Augustine's view that from the get-go nothing worked right; everything was terrible until Christ came. That is a very unfortunately negative interpretation of history, and not one backed up by the word of God itself. **There are so many ways in which later Christian theology oversimplified the story** we find or the stories we find in Holy Scripture, and make do with very black and white simplistic views: **before bad, after good,** and so on.

No, **the struggle between good and evil has always been part of humanity. And from the very beginning we have had the opportunity and the possibility of doing what is right**, as did Abel, as did Joseph. **But we also have the potential to be overcome by it.** As we noticed human beings are creatures of habit. And **if bad habits start, they propagate themselves and become stronger and stronger and we become more and more unfree, therefore addicted.** And **emotional bad habits** are just as addictive as nicotine or heroin, and emotional bad habits are very bad. For example **if we are in the habit of always thinking about ourselves in a negative way and we are always thinking about our past and how unfortunate we have been, then we become depressed.** And that's a very bad thing, but it's from a bad habit of always thinking about ourselves. **Or if we are thinking about ourselves in terms of the future, again in a negative way, not hopeful, not open to the many possibilities that God always opens up for everyone, then we become set into a bad habit of anxiety.** And both depression and anxiety can rule over a person, as do many other bad patterns.

So this is very true: "If you do well, you can hold up your head; but if not, sin is a demon lurking at the door"—lurking at the door, wants to come in, wants to take over the house. Will you let it? "His urge is toward you, yet you can be his master."