

CASTAWAY: THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

Pride

Over the past 6 weeks we have addressed 6 of the most deadly sins known to human kind: Sloth, Envy, Gluttony, Lust, Anger, and Greed. Today we want to wrap up our series on these deadly sins. However, up until tonight, we used the Gilligan's Island show as kind of a fun take off on each subject. If you're keeping track, there is only one character left, the Professor. But because of the gravity of the topic and what it means to our faith, we didn't want to trivialize it in any way. So we are casting away Castaway. We've taken down the set for the most part. Instead, we want to look at this last sin of Pride from the beginning of time to the last moments of Jesus' life. Pride, like all the other sins, has been part of our world since the fall of humanity. Let's begin our worship by taking away the last piece of Castaway and coming back to the Cross.

Video on Pride

This morning we deal with the sin that caused the Devil to be cast out of heaven. We deal with the sin that God calls an abomination. It is the sin of Pride. CS Lewis calls Pride the Great Sin—The Spiritual Cancer. He says, "The devil would like to see your small cold cured in return to give you cancer. For Pride is spiritual cancer. It eats up love, contentment and common sense. The devil laughs because he wants you to control your anger, lust and greed, when all of the while, he is setting up the evil dictatorship of Pride." Pride is at the root of all other sin. Pride is the attitude that believes, "My way is the right way!" and "I know better than you do."

Before we go any further, you must realize that there are 2 types of Pride. One type keeps your chin up. It is the child patted on the back, the boss complimenting you for a job well done, or the Lord saying "I am proud of your passionate pursuit." In fact, this "chin up" pride appears in the Bible as Paul shows this type of pride to some of the people in Corinth, "I take great pride in you, I am greatly encouraged by you." Paul is holding his chin up, boasting with pride over them.

The other type, which is the type we will be addressing today, is the "nose up" pride. It is the "better than you" description we just gave. It is the unteachable spirit. It is the complete anti-god state of mind that I am bigger and better than you. Just remember that he who is too big for his britches will be exposed in the end.

Today we are going to show you the parallel of this sin of Pride throughout human history. We will be looking at two different stories separated by thousands of years or by 20 feet here on stage. We will be looking at its innocent beginning to its rapid spiritual disintegration. Here is how it all began.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is

in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die." But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. Genesis 3:1-7

Notice how the serpent attacked. He didn't attack her faith in God. He attacked her dependence on Him. He got her to trust in herself. The serpent doesn't test your belief system in God. He attacks your trust in God. This is where it all begins: **1) Pride begins as self-sufficiency.** Did you notice that the "Serpent" is the one who began to place untruths in the minds and hearts of Adam and Eve? The sin of pride, perhaps the most deadly sin of all, always begins the same way. The writer tells us that the "serpent" or Satan was "crafty" and deceitful. He approaches Eve with this: *Did God really say that you shouldn't eat from the tree?* In the Hebrew text, the question has the connotation of "scoffing." *Are you kidding me? Did God really say...* and you can feel the sarcasm that plants the deadly seed in the woman's mind that maybe God can't be trusted.

God can be trusted to have our good at heart. We need to take matters into our own hands. So with the seed of doubt now sewn in her mind, Satan goes to next step. *You will not die. You will know the difference between good and evil.* In other words, "the reason God doesn't want you to eat from that tree is that the fruit will make you just like him...knowing good and evil...and you won't need him any more!" Sin always follows the same path. It starts with a lie about God and that leads to lack of faith in Him so we put our trust in ourselves...that's the essence of pride...

Think about the culture we have created. We can go through most of the day fully meeting our own needs. Our cars go far and fast, our Internet links us to all the knowledge we need, our experience reminds us what works in life and what doesn't. Basically, we can do most things by ourselves. We may not say it this way, but we live with the idea, "God, I will come to you on the big stuff!" You can go years believing in God but not trusting in God.

From the beginning, self-sufficiency caused such destruction. Flash forward thousands of years...**Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called Passover, was approaching, and the chief priests and teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. Then Satan entered into Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented and watched for the opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present. Luke 22:1-6**

I want you to notice that sin began the same way as it did at the beginning of time. *Satan entered into Judas...* There he is again. He was the “serpent” in creation. By the time of the New Testament, the writers knew his true identity. He is Satan. Once again he plants the idea of distrust in God in the mind of a human.

Many of the scholars of the New Testament believe that Judas was a member of a secret Israeli insurgent group called the *Sicarii*. He is always called Judas “Iscariot” and many feel that the name similarities point to his involvement with that group. The name came from a long dagger that was carried under the robe by members of this insurgent liberation group. Whenever they would happen upon a Roman soldier alone or away from his post, the *Sicarii* would strike. The dagger became the principle means of assassination. By picking off the “enemy” soldiers one by one, the *Sicarii* hoped to eventually free Israel from their occupation force.

Could it be that Judas was frustrated with Jesus? He signed on to be one of the 12 insurgents who would help their “king” come into power and throw off the yoke of Rome. Now, as the 3 years of ministry dragged on, Jesus was not making the move toward political power. Could Judas have been thinking that the betrayal was actually an act of helping Jesus be forced into declaring his kingdom? After all, Judas might have reasoned that if it came to life and death, Jesus would put aside all that nonsense of a “spiritual kingdom” in order to save his life. Judas wanted to be on the sidelines to see that happen and take a lead role in the new government! Pride, at its root is self-sufficiency. *God’s not moving fast enough so I have to take back control!*

Back to the garden... **2) Self-sufficiency then creates Isolation.** At first we think self-sufficiency is the best way to go. Independence. But then we realize that it cuts against the very core of who we were created to be. We were created to be interdependent. Look at how the story continues in the garden of Eden. **Adam and Eve heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Genesis 3:8** Notice. We hide from God. God doesn’t hide from us. He pursues us. **But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." Genesis 3:9-10.**

In Adam and Eve’s case, temptation led to rebellion. Behind all of the 7 deadly sins is this willful, prideful disobedience. Whenever we take all matters into our own hands, we are saying, in effect, *God, you can’t handle it. We’ll take it from here.* Genesis teaches us that the inevitable end of that kind of step is alienation from God and isolation from God. Instead of becoming “like God” as the serpent promised, they found themselves ashamed (thus they used leaves to cover themselves) and pushed further away from God. Pride always has the same effect on us as well.

God knew very well where Adam was, he just wanted Adam to realize the consequences of his choice to be self-sufficient. The fact that God has to ask, “*Where are you?*” simply means that he wants Adam and Eve to come forward on their own. He

wants them to come to him in confession. That is the only response when you and I suddenly wake up and find ourselves away from the Lord and relying on our own self-sufficiency. The only thing to do is confess...and come back. He's promised us grace. What are we waiting for?

Fast forward again to the time of Jesus. Judas has played his "trump card." He feels he has forced the hand of his master to show his military strength. Undoubtedly, his friends in the insurgency were waiting for the call to arms. It was a lie that Satan planted in his heart. Judas could not see the insidiousness of his own actions, and how they had pushed him away from Jesus instead of uniting him behind the savior.

At the last supper, Jesus had given Judas every opportunity to change course. The last supper was eaten at a table called a Triclenium. It was a 3 sided table that was common in Roman culture. The host would sit at the second seat in. On his right would be his apprentice and on his left would be his most trusted friend. The trusted friend would be seated at his left because it was customary for a host to lean on his left elbow thereby exposing his back to the person on his left. With that in mind, read these two verses...

One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved (another name for John) was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." Leaning back against Jesus, he (John) asked, "Lord, who is it (the betrayer)?" Jesus answered, "It is the one whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him...As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night. John 13:23-30

It was night alright! It was night in Judas' soul as well as outside in the street. Jesus had placed him in the "trusted friend" seat to give him one more chance to confess...in much the same way as asking the question to Adam and Eve, God had given them a chance to come clean. But Judas refused the offer. What was the result? He "went out" into isolation and alienation from the One who loved him the most.

Jesus always offers a way out. If you have been a prisoner of your own pride, you can lay it down tonight. Jesus offers you a way out. He is putting you in the "trusted friend seat" tonight. If you've been feeling alienated from God, maybe it's your pride that's been blocking the Spirit.

We have seen the progressive downward spiral that pride causes. It starts with self-sufficiency which leads to isolation and then...**3) Isolation destroys our relationship with people and God.**

He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." Genesis 3: 11-12. Did you see him pass the blame? We have perfected that through the years.

That's exactly what Adam did. He destroyed his relationship with the only two people on the planet. Eve and God. "The woman who You gave me." He pushed Eve away and blamed God for creating her. In other words, if it wasn't for them, Adam would have been just fine. He destroyed those two relationships because of his pride!

Look at the results of those broken relationships. Adam and Eve birth two sons and Cain ends up murdering Abel (not a very large suspect list). Look at Cain's answer to God's inquiry, **How should I know where Abel is, am I my brothers keeper? Genesis 4:9.** See how quickly pride erodes the relationships around us? Pride isolates us from helping others. You know the most creative art project God ever pulled off is people. But as long as you think you are better than everyone around you, you will never see the gift of these relationships. You will find yourself becoming more and more protective of your time. You will say things like, "I am too busy." Or "I don't have the time." All the while you are actually saying, "I don't need you." "I am okay on my own."

Flash ahead one last time to the offices of the chief priests and elders of the Jewish law. Here comes a man shuffling along the streets. Many of the guards recognize him so they allow him to pass. **When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "It is your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went out and hanged himself. Matthew 27:3-5**

Satan's lies had finally been realized in all their power. Satan tells us that we can be great; that we have to make our own way; that God is somebody who will just get in my way! But Judas and Adam/Eve's lives tell the whole truth. Adam and Eve were forced from the beautiful Garden of Eden and forced to live with the consequences of their sin. Judas' life ended in tragedy, instead of redemption. Maybe that's why C.S. Lewis labeled "pride" as the deadliest of all sin. It is the root and the backdrop for everything else. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Where are you today? Have you been large and in charge of your own life? Have you been listening to the lies that you can do this on your own? You don't really need God? He's just trying to "hold you back" anyway!

Remember, it all starts with a lie. That leads to distrust of God and taking back control into your own hands. That leads to rebellion and disobedience...and that always leads to curse. We saw it in creation. We saw it at the crucifixion. In all these centuries, it's still the same. But Jesus gave his life to break the cycle. God gives grace to the humble. Are you willing to come, and humble yourself here at the foot of the cross...and crucify your pride. The end is far different. To the thief, Jesus said, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." We can have Paradise when we die and a loving fellowship while we live. What's it going to be?

Tonight, I want to give you a chance to give up on the kind of pride that God hates. It will alienate you from Him forever if you don't let it go. But let's not just focus on pride. We're ending our series tonight. Maybe it was sloth...laziness in your spiritual life that keeps bringing you down. Maybe it is the sin of envy...wanting what someone else has. Perhaps it is anger for you; or lust that keeps pulling you back into feeling unworthy. Perhaps it's gluttony that keeps you imprisoned in a cycle of food dependency. Maybe greed has a grip on your heart. Greed is the desire to acquire gone haywire.

All of you were given a shell when you came in tonight. You know a shell has to open up to discover the beauty inside. The pearl can never be discovered unless the shell opens up. It's the same with the human heart and spirit. I'm going to invite you to name the sin that most easily casts you away from God's presence. Then, in a moment, we're going to have some music. You come forward and put your shell in the trunk and leave it here. Let's be quiet for a moment...

Song: Take My Life and Let It Be (on WOW Hymns) While people come forward.

Lights out...moment of silence

Video: I Am Free...stage crew carries trunk full of shells out