

“Castaway by the Seven Deadly Sins: PRIDE”
Proverbs 8:12-13; 1 John 2:15-17

It has been said, “Sin creates a desire to sin.” When I was a child – if I got away with telling a lie – it became easier and easier to keep lying. It was only after being caught that I began the process of learning that lying was not a habit that would get me the desires of my heart. When we get involved in sin – and the initial sin produces more sins – inevitably, the pattern of sin will cloud our conscience and corrupt our ability to exercise sound judgment when choosing between good and evil.

Inscribed at the Oracle at Delphi are the words: “*Know thyself.*” God’s Word says that we are all sinners. So if we are to truly know who we are, we can’t keep our sinfulness out of the picture - we can’t ignore it. The problem is, while we can usually point out the obvious instances – sin, and our involvement in it, can be very subtle.

Here lies the foundation for the history behind the Seven Deadly Sins. The Seven Deadly Sins never occur as a list in the Bible; rather, they are identified throughout the Bible, along with many others. The title “Seven Deadly Sins” originated within the early Catholic Church ... Pride, Greed, Envy, Wrath/Anger, Lust, Gluttony and Sloth/Laziness.

Why were they called “Deadly?” Because they were considered to be sins that, without repentance, would lead to spiritual death – damnation. The bad news is: these are not the only sins that lead to death. God’s Word says, “*The penalty for sin is death*” – it doesn’t matter what sin it is. But we also know the good news – “*The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Rom. 6:23). Through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and promised an eternity with Him, all because he took the penalty for our sin when he died on the cross.

Now, as imitators of Christ, we are to crucify the sinful nature – we are to deny its power over our lives by living according to the Spirit of God who now dwells within us. But to do that, we must know the enemy. So as we prepare to enter the season of Lent – a time for us to reflect upon our sinfulness and our need for the Savior – let’s take a closer look at these seven sins and discover how we can overcome them. [P]

This morning, we start with *Pride* – because it is *the first and foremost of sins* – the one committed by Lucifer when he fell from heaven; and then by our first parents Adam and Eve, when they listened to the Serpent instead of obeying God. Pride is essentially *a preoccupation with self* – self-love.

When we think of being prideful, certain people may come to your mind. But the first thing we have to come to realize is this: *We are more prideful than we care to admit*. The thing about pride is that it manifests itself in all personality types – it’s not only found in those who come across as brash or boastful.

Let’s consider some patterns of pride seen in daily life. There is the pride of vanity – *physical vanity* being the most blatant – everywhere you turn, another advertisement dealing with our appearance. This sells because so many are consumed with how they look, or how they think they should look. There is also *moral vanity* – where we are shocked by the faults of others, but quite satisfied with ourselves. And there is *mental vanity* – Paul talks about how knowledge puffs up ...

Which brings us to our “Gilligan’s Island Moment!” Some of you may recall me doing this a decade ago. Someone a while back noticed how each of the seven castaways of the classic TV show Gilligan’s Island strangely personify one of the 7 deadly sins. So, each week during this series, you’ll have a chance to “Guess who?”

So, who is the personification of pride? [Pause] Whose knowledge often puffed up only to be brought low? *The Pride of ... the Professor* – his intelligence and expertise often led to a denial of the problems he faced ...

But vanity is just one version! There is the pride of entitlement – “I deserve this!” There is the pride of ambition – “My hard work got me here; bring on the accolades!” There is the pride of independence. Classic example: men not stopping to ask for directions. I don’t need help; I’ve got this – “Lone Ranger” mentality – which, by the way, is diametrically opposed to God’s design for his Church. But no matter what version of pride it is, they all do the same damage. *Pride ruins the virtues we are called to live out by shifting our focus from serving others to serving self.* [P]

At the root of it, pride refuses to see the truth about who we really are and substitutes illusions for reality. In “The Nutty Professor,” Jerry Lewis starts out as a timid, goofy college professor. However, when he takes the potion he created, he becomes this loud-mouth lounge singer who thinks the world revolves around him. Whenever this alter-ego surfaces, he begins to live a fantasy that under normal conditions he would be afraid to even think about. That’s what pride does to us – it places us in a position where our reality no longer coincides with God’s reality.

In short, *pride causes blindness* – we become blind to the truth about ourselves and blind to God’s truth. When we draw closer to God, everything comes into His light – including our frailty and sinfulness. But when we choose not to acknowledge Him as being the source for everything we accomplish, it becomes about us and we live a lie. That is *why God hates pride – it cripples us, and enslaves us, and keeps us from being who God created us to be.*

Proverbs says, “To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance ... Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (Prov. 8:13; 26:12). Scripture makes it clear that when we become puffed up with pride, it impedes our ability to draw close to God – to become imitators of Christ. Instead, we preoccupy ourselves with ... ourselves. And when we are full of ourselves, how can we be open to the things of God? If I can’t admit that I’m *wrong*, how can I receive God’s forgiveness? If I can’t admit that I’m *weak*, how can I experience God’s strength? If I can’t admit that I’ve been *foolish*, how can I gain God’s wisdom? Pride is what so often makes God our last resort. [P]

When you have an eye test, they usually check your periphery vision – how well you can see things at your sides as you are looking forward. As you focus on one thing, the other things that you can still see become out of focus. You notice that they are still there, but you don’t see them as well. Pride does the same thing to our relationship with God. When we focus on ourselves, our focus on God becomes blurred. If we do this long enough, we won’t be able to see God at all. Likewise, if we focus on God, then we become blurred, and if we do this long enough, we will not be able to see ourselves at all, just God. Sounds like heaven to me! [P]

Another problem with pride is that every time it is challenged, our pride drives us harder to keep up appearances. A strong indicator of pride is competitiveness. Do not get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with playing to win provided the joy is in the act of playing. However, if our happiness depends on defeating others or knowing our child is the star of the team, we’re setting ourselves up for a fall. Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”

Someone once said, “Be careful of who you step on as you rise to the top because you will pass each one on your way down.” When the topic happens to be on pride during a message or in a Bible study, it can be easy for us to default to “I know some people like that – they really need to hear this.” Or maybe, “I’m glad I am not as bad as so-in so.” The truth is, it’s pride that keeps us from thinking we’re prideful!

Now, it’s not a bad thing to do something to your best and be able to appreciate the results. It’s okay to have joy over something that you worked hard at completing. However, when we begin *comparing* it to the accomplishments of others, we are in danger. When we start needing others to pat us on the back and give us *praise*, we are in danger. When we feel compelled to *share* our accomplishments in order to get such praise; our lives begin a quick decent to destruction. [P]

There has never been a doubt as to whether pride is a sin, but the question becomes how can we have self pride *without* crossing into sin? How can we deal with the poison of pride, since we recognize that its root is in our hearts? [P] Here are some ways to start the process of destroying the pride that leads to sin.

1. Be Grateful to Anyone and Everyone. Treat even the things that people are expected to do as gifts. Be grateful for your food, home, family & friends. Be thankful for the sunshine, the rain, the heat and the cold. Try to never lose sight of God’s activity in your life. Always be willing to give recognition to someone else. And treat others *better* than you would expect to be treated. Be grateful and gracious.

2. Ask the Lord’s Forgiveness for the Sin of Pride. Go before Him in prayer every day and ask His mercy. The more this offends us, the more pride we have. You see, pride is at the top of the list because it breeds so many other sins – but also because of its potential to separate us from God. We cannot grow in our relationship

with God, our understanding of God, and our appreciation for God when our focus is on ourselves.

3. Ask God for a Spirit of Humility. Proverbs 15:33 – “The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.” The only antidote for pride is humility. Throughout the Word, these two are held in distinct opposition to each other. The difference is – with pride, we lift *ourselves* up; with humility, we lift up the Creator rather than the created – we accept our true status as those made from the ground. As we are reminded on Ash Wednesday – we came from dust, and if we had remained in our sin without the salvation that comes in Jesus Christ, that is all we would ever be.

1 Peter 5:5-6 – “Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that you may be lifted up in due time.” Without God’s grace, we could never cast away our illusions. Without Him working in our lives, we would never be free from the poison of pride.

Jesus told those who believed in him, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). When we humbly accept His truth, we will then be able to overcome pride, and live in the freedom that Christ promises. We will be free to accept our faults and limitations; free to love others, and ourselves, as we are; and free to receive the grace that our God so wonderfully provides. So let us go before our Lord in humble submission and ask Him to break us of our pride so that we can live freely under His mighty hand – knowing that He will lift us up! “This world and its desires are passing away ...” Let us be those who do the will of the Father, knowing that because of the work of the Son, we get to live with Him forever!