

The whole mess started because Satan wanted to be like God. Somewhere after the creation but before the fall into sin, the angel who was later called Satan, decided that he wanted to be like God. It happened somewhere between Genesis 2 and 3. The sin of pride came into full bloom. Of all the sins that plague us, the sin of pride may be our worst problem. If you think about it, pride causes most of our other sins, especially in our relationships with one another. Pride is what stops us from forgiving others even when they ask for it because forgiving them would remove us from our superior position over them and make the relationship level again. Even worse, pride prevents us from forgiving ourselves because in order to forgive ourselves we have to step down off our pedestal and admit that we failed.

We hate looking weak, and by forgiving others or admitting that we need forgiveness, we look vulnerable and weak. So we hide behind our pride and create other sins to protect us from the consequences of the initial sin. Essentially, pride takes us away from God and encourages us to depend on ourselves, to keeping propping up a façade with lie after lie. Pride is what causes us to

argue about who should be first and who should be last instead of just happily serving however and wherever God has placed us.

Daniel, and later John in Revelation, told us of the fall of Satan from Heaven. The Archangel Michael was sent in battle against him. We don't know a great deal more about Michael other than his name and his job as leader of the heavenly host. Look at God's wonderful irony in that the name Michael means "one who is like God?" The one, who really *was* like God, defeated the one who wanted to be like God. He was defeated in heaven but not everywhere. St. Michael threw Satan out of heaven but Satan was more than happy to take up residence on earth. Apparently, this serpent is not so easily thwarted.

He came to earth and began his plan for revenge. Think about it. If you really want to hurt someone, don't go after the person. Go after his family. Remember Sean Connery in the movie, "The Untouchables?"

"He pulls a knife, you pull a gun. He sends one of yours to the hospital, you send one of his to the morgue!" The writer of the "Untouchables" did not create that approach, Satan did. He found Adam and Eve by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and he led them into the exact sin that he knew so well. The sin of pride

had cost him his position in heaven and now he would use pride to destroy God's children and thus retaliate against God.

Genesis 3:5, "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." You will be like God. Well that sounds good. Where's the downside to that?

"I will be like God by disobeying God...oops...wait a second..." clearly Adam and Eve did not fully think this through. How can I become more like God by disobeying God? But sinful pride tells me that I can be better than God and he is just holding me back by keeping the really good fruit out of my reach. If I take what I want, I can be better than God, more powerful, in control of my own destiny!

Now before you blame Adam and Eve for all the sin in the world, ask yourself this. If you understand that sin causes all the problems, why do you continue to sin? You know the 4th Commandment and yet you continue to be disrespectful of authority – listen to the things you have said about our President, our Governor, our Village Trustees, our police. You know the 5th Commandment and you continue to murder in thought and word if not in deed. Think of the mean and hurtful things you have thought or said about people. The 6th Commandment: yet you continue to

commit adultery. Think about the lust you felt when you looked at that certain person to whom you are not married. The 7th Commandment: and yet you continue to steal. Think about the money you could have given to the Church and chose instead to buy a dinner out or a new outfit. Obviously, I could go on and if any of you need help finding the sin in your life, give me a call and I can help you see that we are all just as vile and Adam and Eve and like them, we sin because of pride.

Rather than hearing God and obeying, just like Adam and Eve, we regularly decide that we know better and will do what we want.

Michael pushed Satan out of heaven but that did not solve the whole problem for he led us into sin. As soon as we sinned, he had us – God’s most prized possession. Now what? Michael could not fix this one. Satan had won fair and square. We chose to follow him and ignore God. So the duty got bumped up the chain of command. From the Archangel of Heaven, it went to the Son of God, but this time not to fight Satan. Jesus could have just taken us back by force, but that would have been unjust and God cannot be unjust, even to Satan. We had sold ourselves to Satan and the only way to free us was to buy us back.

With his life, he redeemed us, bought us back and now we are eternally God’s. We are covered in the blood of Jesus. We were

washed in the blood at our Baptisms and receive the body and blood every week at Holy Communion. What Michael started, Christ finished once and for all. So if we look at the argument that the disciples were having in the Gospel...pretty ridiculous right? Who is first in the Kingdom of heaven? Who cares? We are all members of the Kingdom of Heaven, the very family of God waiting for paradise to begin.

We all struggle with our own private doubts and insecurities but who cares who is first and who is second? It doesn't matter, and to let hurtful words and actions divide us is playing into Satan's game. He figured it out from day one. Pride is our soft spot. If he can get us to believe that status matters on this earth, he has a foothold in our lives. If he can get us to think that God's Law is nice, but not entirely relevant for us, he has a grip on us. Our goal in this life is to serve and obey God and to rejoice in all the blessing he gives us both with respect to material things and to people. The more we pursue our goal, the more we become truly like God.