

“THE SIN OF GLUTTONY”
Sinning Like A Christian #7
Proverbs 23:19-21, 29-35, Ephesians 5:10-18, Luke 16:19-31
October 16 & 17, 2021

We’re working our way through the historical Seven Deadly Sins established by the early church. **These Seven have been identified as key sins that effect every human** and the way that these sins work within each person contributes to the overall condition of that person and the society in which we live.

As we’ve seen, many people could ask what the big deal is with Pride, or Envy, or Anger or Sloth or Greed. Why are these “sins” in the first place? What difference does it make that we have any or all of those in our lives? And why do we have to relate these to the Christian Church in a series called *Sinning Like A Christian*?

I hope you have seen that these sins may start out as something that seems innocent and could stimulate a person to do more in their life. However, when we put a great emphasis on each of these sins and make them a large part of our lives in excessive ways, these characteristics always bring us around to the detriment of our society. Surely it doesn’t take a lot of effort to recognize each of these Sins in our society today, but the hard part is recognizing them in our own life, and then begin to combat them so that they do not dominate our mind, body or spirit.

An important factor to notice is that **each of these Seven Deadly Sins works at convincing us that we are in control of our own lives and that we have no more use of God’s Laws and Commandments.** When these Seven become a part of us, we put God in second place in our life and we no longer rely upon Him alone to guide us. God is no longer the guide of our life, but now only an after-thought.

And when that happens to us, it is not long before we see the disaster that it causes, as the fall-out affects not only the person involved, but generally those around us, too. These sins are deadly because they make the individual person the most important one in their mind, at the total exclusion of all others. **These sins are deadly in what they do to our souls.** They deaden us to any love or support

to those around us, and we become isolated within ourselves, thinking only about ourselves, and living only for our own benefit. The deadliness comes as the sins affect us in mind, body and spirit. Our whole selves are influenced and affected by the way these Seven Sins work together within us.

We have seen how pervasive these sins are in our society, particularly because our society has downgraded them from “deadly sins” to just common, ordinary sins that all humans have in common. We have not only come to acknowledge these sins in our world, but we have seen how many people have even glorified them and lifted them up, not as sins, but as virtues that need to be involved in our culture. **They have become so common among us that they are only seen as sins when seen from the Christian worldview.** So the hope of the series is to help us to recognize these Seven Deadly Sins in our own lives as Christians, and to work on eradicating them from our lives in order to make a difference in our world today for the cause of Jesus Christ.

Now, the last two of these Seven Deadly Sins are very difficult for me to preach on and address because they have become so socially acceptable by our society, and to call them a sin flies in the face of so many people. Please hear me, that these are hard to hear about and recognize in our lives, but I want to help us to understand the danger of each of them. **The only way that we can make a difference in our lives is to come to grips that they are in fact sins, and that we need to work hard at getting rid of them in our everyday life.** Accommodating them into our society does not negate their deadliness, but rather acts to releases the guilt we may have as they are a part of our life.

So today we look at the Sin of Gluttony. “Gluttony is characterized by a limitless appetite for food and drink and overindulgence to the point where one is no longer eating just to live, but rather living to eat. 1) It is eating outside of a prescribed time (or mindless eating). 2) It is also anticipating eating with preoccupied longing to eat. 3) Gluttony involves consuming costly foods (eating lavishly simply for the purpose of conspicuous consumption) or not being content with “common” foods (in other words, always seeking delicacies or, perhaps, Supersizing).”¹

¹ (www.precisionnutrition.com/all-about-gluttony)

Now, at the beginning of the COVID 19 pandemic here in the United States, when everything was shutting down and businesses were telling their employees to stay home, people found themselves in a bit of a quandary. They could no longer go out to eat at their favorite restaurants, since they were “non-essential,” nor could they easily go to the local grocery store to purchase food for their families. So we began to see a lot more commercials on TV advertising delivery of foods right to your front door from the local restaurants and stores that we could no longer go to because of the lockdown mandates.

There was one commercial that I saw that just amazed me. It’s from an organization called Grub Hub. There’s a man who is hungry in the middle of the afternoon, and he gets his phone out and begins to look at all of the restaurants listed. He gets so excited that he contacts a whole bunch of restaurants through Grub Hub, and then the music in the background starts playing, “I want it all, I want it all...” The next scene shows about 40 delivery people right outside of his door, each wearing a Grub Hub T-shirt, and extending their bag of food for the guy to gladly take off of their hands. The last scene of the commercial is of this guy sitting on his couch, surrounded by ribs, sushi, spaghetti and meatballs, sub sandwiches, McDonalds, Burger King, Hardies, Pizza Hut, and so much more. In fact, there’s so much food that it covers every available space on tables, chairs, the counters – there’s food everywhere – and the song keeps playing, “I want it all, I want it all...” The last words of the commercial tells us, “You can get it all, right now, without leaving your door, from Grub Hub. Call now – operators are waiting. Don’t deprive yourself – eat what you want.” That pretty much describes the sin of Gluttony.

1) Gluttony is more than eating to live – it is living to eat. Gluttony is the worship of food in such a way that it becomes the #1 thing on the mind of the individual. The person begins to eat all the time, mindlessly eating whatever there is to eat; maybe because they’re bored; maybe because they’re angry or stressed. And when you’re stuck at home with no place to go, what do you do? Watch TV, eat, play a video game, eat, dial up the latest movie, eat, talk or text on your cell phone, eat, catch the local re-run of a ball game, eat. The cycle goes on and on. The COVID 19 pandemic created a lot of couch potato people with nothing to do but sit there and eat. But it wasn’t just the pandemic that got it going.

We had already developed bad habits of eating all the time.

2) **Gluttony becomes the mindset all about food.** If we're not actually eating, we're also thinking about food, to the point that we are preoccupied with getting the next bite. What are we going to get for supper tonight? Where should we go? It's longing for the next opportunity to eat, to the point where we have snacks in our desk drawers at work, we have refrigerators loaded with drinks, and whenever we get that tinge of hunger, we're off to get something.

And 3) **the sin of Gluttony drives us to getting the unusual and the expensive foods.** It's the ten-course, four-hour dinner marathon of the most luxurious and exquisite foods one can get. Or it's the Golden Coral restaurants, or the China Buffets, or the "all-you-can-eat" places where you put your money down and have-at-it, for as long as you want, with as much as you want. It's the "I want it all and there's nothing that's gonna stop me" mentality.

And our society plays right into this mindset. You ever go to a McDonalds and give your order only to hear the person at the other end of the PA system ask, "Would you like to Supersize that today?" Or what about the many additions that are available when you make an order at a restaurant? When I attended the Men's Breakfast Club this last Wednesday, I ordered 2 eggs and wheat toast. The waitress asked if I wanted bacon or sausage, hash-browns or potato pancake, fruit or toast. So many options at our beckon call.

And what about this. Have you ever wondered what part of the phone book is the largest when it comes to options? Attorneys at law have 14 pages in the Sheboygan County Yellow Pages. But restaurants come in second at having 6 full pages, and they have their own section highlighted by the red and white checkerboard pattern of the dining room table cloth. It's sure to get your attention.

But listen to these sad statistics. **Along with Gluttony always comes consequences.** "One-third of all Americans, approximately sixty-three million, are overweight. Fifteen percent of American children are overweight. Two hundred fifty thousand deaths are attributed to poor diet and inactivity. Fifty percent of cardiovascular disease is related to excess weight. We spend as much as fifty billion

dollars a year dieting. Laparoscopic gastric bypass surgery had become the new status surgery for the rich, more chic than a facelift. That fifty \$ billion for diets is more than we spend on education, training, employment, and social services. We spend more on dieting than the gross national product of Ireland.

“Gluttony has become a sickness, as have many of the Seven, a psychological problem...”²

Do you see how pervasive this sin has gotten into our lives? It’s becomes ingrained in our minds as normal. Is it any wonder then that the first of the 10 Commandments is “*You shall have no other gods before Me...*” (Exodus 20:3). God is calling us to let Him have the #1 spot in our lives so that we might have all of our needs met and find safety and happiness.

But Gluttony encourages us to displace God with food, and then we idolize things like the Food Channel, where we can learn all about Good Eats, or Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives, or Holiday Baking Championships, or The Best Thing I Ever Ate, or Cake Boss. Now these may be fun to watch, but do we really have to have a whole channel on TV dedicated for the focus on food?

And Gluttony exceeds more than just food. It involves over-excess in every part of our life. Proverbs 23:19-21 warns us of the dangers that eating and drinking have on us. Verse 21 tells us, “*Drunkards and gluttons will be reduced to poverty. If all you do is eat and sleep, you will soon be wearing rags.*” That’s pretty harsh, but very real, because it talks about the habits of being in excess, and whenever we are in excess, it always affects the rest of our lives.

And the later verses of that chapter (29-35) give us the result of indulging too much in excess when drinking. It affects us body, mind and spirit to the point that we no longer remember what we’re doing. Verse 35 accurately states it, “*I must have been hit, you will say; I must have been beaten up, but I don’t remember it. Why can’t I wake up? I need another drink.*” **The sin of Gluttony messes us up and we are no longer able to live our lives without the thought of another bite, another drink, another habitual habit that controls us and takes us away from our faith and reliance upon God’s guidance.**

² (William Willimon, *Sinning Like a Christian*, [Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005] pg. 126)

You see, Gluttony doesn't just happen, it is a sin that gradually builds up to the point that it becomes out of control. And with Gluttony, we have such mental illness side-effects as anorexia and bulimia. These two psychological conditions are driven upon the cultural expectation for thin bodies, so a person may gorge themselves with food or drink to the point where they are absolutely stuffed, but then they immediately purge the food with self-induced vomiting or the use of laxatives. Or they are so consumed with the number of calories they are taking into their bodies that it's all they think about. **The worship of food preoccupies the mind and then controls the body and spirit of the person.** The belly becomes their god, and their lives are adversely affected (Philippians 3:19).

William Willimon makes this tremendous statement; "Gluttony [becomes] a particular problem in a society of instant gratification, where we pursue cheap thrills, where we want momentary satisfaction. I remember the columnist William Rasberry giving a lecture on 'the most detrimental point in human history.' **What was the worst invention, that which led to the downfall of the human race? Rasberry said it was when humanity learned to refine sugar!**

"Earlier, when humanity wanted to satisfy its cravings for sweetness, it had to wait until it found some honey or until fruit ripened. Now, with refined sugar, we could have sweetness anytime we wanted. A genetically induced craving could be satisfied instantly, without delay or cost. This, said Rasberry, led to drug addiction, overeating, and a host of other problems. It's an awful lot to claim for granulated sugar; still, there is no doubt that ready availability of food, without any economic restraints upon consumption, aggravates Gluttony."³

So it's now the doctor, the personal trainers and the aerobics instructors who take up the call to inform our society about the dangers of sugars in our diets. **Remember how much we spend each year on diets? \$50 billion! Imagine what we could do with all that money to feed those people around the world that don't have enough food to eat to keep them alive?** If only we could control this societal monster called Gluttony! If only we could control our own habits of eating and keep God as our

³ (William Willimon, *Sinning Like a Christian*, pg. 128-129)

#1 guide!

So we hear the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:15-18, *“So be careful how you live. Don’t live like ignorant people, but like wise people. Make good use of every opportunity you have, because these are evil days. Don’t be fools, then, but try to find out what the Lord wants you to do. Do not get drunk with wine, which will only ruin you; instead be filled with the Spirit.”*

What is impossible with man is possible with God (Luke 18:27). When we can no longer control our appetites, yet we want to be faithful to the Lord in taking care of our bodies. The Scriptures tell us, *“do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought for a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”* (I Corinthians 6:19-20). **We don’t glorify God when Gluttony controls us!** Instead we become slaves at the altar of food and drink, and God is no longer in the picture.

And we see that in the Gospel lesson for today, Luke 16:19-31. Listen carefully to the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. (READ Luke 16:19-31)

The great dichotomy of this story can easily slap us in the face if we come to understand it in our own lives. The wealthy man had everything he wanted: rich clothes, rich food, rich housing, a rich lifestyle. Everything he did, he did to excess. His was a gluttonous lifestyle, focused only on himself and his family, for himself and his family. He had no compassion for the poor man, Lazarus, who was brought to this rich man’s house every day. In fact, being there so often, I’ll bet the rich man thought he had a new piece of lawn art, if he saw him at all. There was no yearning to share of his wealth with the beggar. There was no guilt when he ate the most scrumptious foods and drank the most delightful drinks.

Greed and Pride had closed the rich man’s eyes to Lazarus’ need, enabling him to look through Lazarus, every day. His rich delights were not for the likes of Lazarus. And his Gluttony satisfied his every wish, but not for Lazarus. Lazarus sat his door every day, longing for even the table scraps, desiring better health. Imagine the health care of the dogs licking his sores and even washing his face

and hands with their tongues. But his longings were denied to him and eventually he died due to malnutrition and disease that was surely preventable had the rich man noticed him.

In time, the rich man dies, too, but that was the only commonality that these two men had. While Lazarus was taken to heaven to be with the Lord, the rich man goes to the world of the dead, Hell. Only then does the rich man realize what his Pride, Greed and Gluttony got him. His stone-cold heart produced its result, and his eternity would be in want and anguish in the absence of God's presence. He enjoyed the riches of this world only while he lived, but forever after, he would be in great agony and pain.

Could this have been prevented? Yes. Had the rich man shared the blessings that God had given him to manage, touching the hearts and lives of those who were in need right around him, things might have been different. But the man made his choice to live it up, live for himself, at the exclusion of God, and found himself on the sharp end of the stick for the rest of time.

Only after he had died did the rich man look to instruct his family about the deadly end that his sins brought about. But by then, it was too late for him to do anything about it. His life had come to a close and the family had to figure it out on their own.

This is what makes these Seven Deadly Sins so deadly – they cause our hearts to grow cold and we miss out on the eternal blessings of God.

Gluttony can thus be defined as some kind of excessive consumption that 1) harms us physically and psychologically, 2) isolates us from ourselves and others, 3) shifts our focus to unhealthy domains and preoccupations, and 4) wastes resources. All of these combined turn us away from God and cause us to focus only upon ourselves.

Beware, then, of what you eat and drink, of how you view yourself, and how you treat others around you. Each of our time is coming to face the Lord for our own judgment. We don't want to end up on the wrong side of eternity.

Let's pray – Father, we thank You for Your abundant blessings in our lives. We here in the

United States have so much, and therefore it is so easy for us to fall into practicing the Seven Deadly Sins in our lives. Open our eyes to see the dangers of allowing them rule our lives. We ask, O Lord, to be content with the simple and the needed for us. Because we have so much, it becomes tempting to over-indulge and over-consume so much. So when it comes to food and drink, Lord, help us to take that which is necessary for life, eating to live rather than living to eat. Help us put You as our God and not our stomach. Help us to focus on doing Your work rather than focusing on us. Guide us to do All Things Well, for Your glory and honor. This we pray in Jesus' Name. AMEN.