

March 29, 2009

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS: GLUTTONY
NUM 11.4-23, 31-35; MATT 4.1-11; 1TM 4.1-5

1. THE CHARACTER OF GLUTTONY

A. APPETITE: THE VIRTUOUS HOST OF GLUTTONY

Gluttony takes the God-given appetites of man, especially for food, and twists them so that food becomes an idol that brings death to the worshiper.

Alexander Schmemmann: God created man “a hungry being and the whole world as his food.” (11) Gluttony is *not* a mere appetite.

Gen 1.29 - The second word to man was about food. Food and appetite for it are gifts from God. In them we realize our status as creatures and dependence upon our Creator. We have communion with God through food.

Note examples: Tabernacle/Temple worship; liturgical calendar focused upon feasts; deliverance from Egypt was for the purpose of feasting (Ex 5.1); Kingdom of God = a feast (Isa 25; Gospels).

The answer to Gluttony is not the rejection of certain foods and drinks. Note 1Tm 4.1-5: apostasy was measured by their “forbidding to marry” and abstaining from certain foods and drinks.

Paul is fighting what was and remains a huge problem in the church: the belief that the physical world as the physical world (i.e., creation, ‘material’ things) is at odds with our relationship with God. These things are evil in themselves (they think).

Everything created by God is good and *nothing* to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. It is sanctified, made holy, by God’s word (i.e., by his declaring it good) and prayer (i.e., the giving of thanks for it).

B. GLUTTONY: OBSESSION WITH FOOD

1Cor 6.12: “‘All things are lawful for me,’ but not all things are helpful. ‘All things are lawful for me,’ but I will not be enslaved by anything.” Gluttony consists in being mastered by your cravings. You don’t control your cravings. They control you. You are a slave to your appetites.

Num 11: had been experiencing God’s provision even before arriving at Sinai (cf. Ex 16; manna and occasional quail).

Deut 8.1-3 - God was testing them; allowing them to hunger and feeding them with manna in the wilderness so that they would know that “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” Israel failed the test.

They grumble and complain wanting meat. God gives them over to their cravings and it brings about their deaths. Place where this happened = Kibroth-hattaavah, the graves of cravings.

Gluttony is characterized by *ingratitude*. Think that you deserve better than what you have and are not thankful for what you have.

Manifestation: excessive picky-ness about what you eat and drink, esp. when it has been provided for you by someone else.

Doesn’t mean that you can’t have things that you prefer. But to reject the graciousness of others because you are finicky reflects gluttonous ingratitude.

Gluttony also has the feature of *impatience*. Focused primarily on self and how fast I can get what I want.

Manifested, e.g., in the manner in which we eat. Fairlie: “Gluttony does not give a particular value to anything it consumes. It does not savor. It only devours.”

Impatience of gluttony isolates the Glutton from others. Eating many times is a social event. Gluttony focuses on self.

Gluttony is *idolization*. Cf. Num 11.20. They turned food into an idol. Idolize food through *quantity* and *quality*.

Over-indulgence is obvious. Can’t get enough fast enough. Obsessed with having more. Pushes to the front of the line. Making sure you have more than others. Etc.

Idolization through *quality*. E.g., everything must be “just so” or it is not good enough.

Our culture: gluttony is a sin, but it has been redefined. We are obsessed with “health foods.” Being “bad” means that you had a piece of cake.

Os Guinness: “The weekly Weight Watchers weigh-in has replaced the Catholic confessional as the prototypical act of self-disclosure.”

This religion has enslaved us. Serious eating disorders like Anorexia and Bulimia have resulted from our worship. That which should be a joy to us has been turned into a burden.

No matter in which manner food is being idolized, whether it be in the over-eater or in the cult of health food, each Glutton is seeking salvation through food; whether through finding life in over-indulgence or through eating only certain types of foods.

Augustine: care for your body as if you were going to live forever; care for your soul as if you were going to die tomorrow.

Gluttony is a *failure of faith*. It is a failure to believe God, trusting him for proper provision of all things. It is a fear that God may not give us what we need even though we pray with the assurance of his promise, “Give us this day our daily bread.”

Failure to enjoy what is lawful.

2. THE CURE FOR GLUTTONY

A. GRATITUDE

Gratitude is a proper appreciation for the gifts of God. When you give thanks to God for them, you are realizing in word and deed that you are dependent ultimately upon him, not only the dead food that you are about to eat.

B. CRAVINGS FOR GOD HIMSELF CONTROLLING US

Test: Can you laid aside certain pleasures and even bodily necessities for a time when your vocation calls for it? This is precisely what Jesus did.

There is nothing wrong with eating. Jesus did it often. But there was a time when he had to lay it aside because his mission demanded it. His mission was more important than the cravings of his body at the moment.

Fasting helps us to focus on our vocation, realizing that life is not ultimately found in food itself but in the God who provides it.

Understand that mere denial of the flesh is not the answer to Gluttony. Unbiblical prohibitions can turn into pride and other sorts of excesses that feed off of Gluttony. Paul deals with this in part in Col 2 where he says that self-denial, asceticism, has a show of wisdom, but it is of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

Denial of our legitimate cravings or trying to squash those cravings as if they are the problems themselves only enflames the cravings because you are still consumed by thoughts of food. Biblical fasting is a denial of our legitimate cravings, recognizing that they are legitimate, done for the purpose of our vocation as Christians.

The answer to Gluttony is to have a greater vocation that is more than satisfying our own cravings. This vocation must be defined by God himself. This vocation is serving our God, and we do that by serving others.

C. FAITH

It is believing that salvation is not found in what you consume or don't consume but in Christ alone. This frees you up to eat like you should and enjoy it; even that occasional decadent piece of cake.

Faith keeps you from the fear of not having enough, knowing that when you pray as our Lord instructed us—“Give us this day our daily bread”—that he will surely fulfill this petition.