

About five years ago, or so, a new phenomenon crept into social media. It began with Facebook, spilled over into Instagram, and now is a part of every social networking experience – no matter what app you use. You can't go online and look at the lives of the people you follow – your friends or your family or even complete strangers – without seeing a picture of . . . someone's food. Pictures of food are everywhere. Breakfast? Facebook. Lunch? Insta. Dinner? Twitter. Cookout? Snapchat. But the worst offender? I mean – we all know it – the worst offender is brunch. Personally, I don't go to brunch. I don't really need to. I've seen so many pictures of someone else's brunch, I feel like I can brunch vicariously through everyone else.

Whenever I'm in a restaurant and I see someone sitting at a table pull out a phone to take a picture of their entrée, I want to yell over at them, "It's getting cold." But that usually only happens in my mind.

Now that I've filed a public complaint, I think I need to confess something to you. I mean, this is church, and we have to tell the truth here. So, to be completely honest, I need to tell you; this past week, I had a weak moment. I broke down. I couldn't help it. I gave into temptation. I was at a new restaurant. And I ordered something that was just too good. And like a reverse Romeo & Juliet, my only hate sprung from my only love. I took out my phone. I opened the camera. And – I must confess – I took a picture of a hamburger.

Now – in my defense – this wasn't just any hamburger. It was a burger at this new place called Shake Shack in Uptown. And on this burger was cheese, pickles, and grilled jalapeno sausage from Pecan Lodge Barbeque. And it. Was. So. Good. And the only reason I'm not showing the picture to you right now is because it wouldn't be fair to do that to you. There's such a good sermon that's about to happen right now – the last thing you need is to be dreaming about lunch.

Now you know we're not talking about food just to get you hungry. You know that. Today, we're wrapping up our series Deadly Virtues with one more look at the seven deadly sins. But if you've been with us at any time during this series, then you know that we're not only looking at these sins that seem to be at the root of so much brokenness in our lives, we're also looking at the virtues that will help put these sins to death.

Before I go any further, I want to recognize that talking about gluttony can be a difficult subject for us to pursue. I know that in this room right now there are people who are already very uncomfortable with this subject. In a room this size, I know that some of you may have overcome or are – right now – battling eating disorders. Some of you may have a medical condition that impacts your appetite or your weight. And there are others of you who are battling serious addictions to food. So before we go any further, I want you to know this will not be a time when anyone will be shamed. Furthermore, you're going to see soon that gluttony, just like all of the other sins we've spoken about begins in the heart. We won't spend time just talking about dieting.

I also need to say up front that there's nothing wrong with desiring food. NOTHING! God gave us a desire for food for a reason – we need to eat! But this is the key indicator with all of the deadly sins. What begins as a healthy desire gets manipulated and contorted and turned in on itself and the desire becomes misguided. And what began as a healthy desire gets taken out of context and misapplied and becomes sin. This all becomes clear when you begin to consider that the Fall of man happened with a bite of food. Desire begins in the heart – not on the table. Gluttony is, at its core, a heart-issue.

It is possible to be skinny and be gluttonous. How do I know? Because this is a sin that I deal with, personally. I don't usually get this vulnerable on Sunday mornings and do mass confession, but I need to tell you that gluttony is not something I take lightly. I joked about taking a picture of a burger, but the temptation is serious. You ask anyone in the office who the coffee snob is? They'll direct you to my door. You ask anyone in the office who loves food the most and they'll show you my picture. I love to eat. I love it. And I am easily tempted to be gluttonous.

Because gluttony isn't only eating too much. It's also saying, "I'll only eat the nicest things." It's not being satisfied with a healthy meal, it's saying it has to be really rich and nice, too. It's going out to lunch with a friend and being more concerned with the quality of your food than with the wellbeing of the person sitting across from you or the person who brought the food to your table. It's eating to medicate yourself when you feel down or stressed. Gluttony is eating without paying attention to what you're doing and before you know it, you've gone through three baskets of chips and drained the restaurant of all its salsa. And all of these things are heart issues with physical ramifications. And while gluttony is most often associated with food, it can be used when we consume just about anything, whether it's food, drink, television, video games, smartphones, and even – dare I say it? – college football. Too soon? Gluttony is a spiritual sin.

We find the key verse to our whole series in Paul's letter to the Romans. In Romans 8:13, Paul writes, "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." It's a pretty clear-cut choice, isn't it? Live or die? Our desire in preaching this series is that we as a church would put sin to death in our lives. But note what Paul writes there – it is only by the Spirit that we can conquer the sin in our lives. We must seek to follow the Spirit's leading in our lives, focusing on His will, and how we ought to live if we are going to grow in character. In other words, if these sins – these vices – are going to die, we must cultivate virtue in our lives. When God instills these virtues into our lives, He puts our sin to death.

Now, I realize this is easier said than done. It is hard work to cultivate virtue in our lives. But it is good work and the work is worth it. As Gary mentioned last week, cultivating virtue in our lives is not what saves us. We are only saved by God's grace, through faith in Christ. We cannot earn our salvation. But we can put effort into growing up, as Christians. In fact, if you've not really put any thought into how you're growing yourself spiritually, please allow me to call you to action. There is hard work to be done, but the work is *good* and it will be worth it. So, for every deadly sin, there is a deadly virtue that we can deploy in our lives to put that sin to death.

If you have your Bibles with you, please open with me to the third chapter of Philippians. As you turn in your Bibles to Paul's letter to the Philippians, I want to talk to you about everything gluttony encompasses. Gluttony is more than just eating a lot of food. Eating a lot of food certainly qualifies, but gluttony really begins when we look at our lives with dissatisfaction. The dissatisfaction is often accompanied by a sense of entitlement. Gluttony begins as soon as we start telling ourselves that we *deserve* something that we don't have. I *deserve* that second helping. I *deserve* that extra scoop. I *deserve* that happy hour. I *deserve* more. And more. And more. And before we know it, we're consuming too much. It could be food, but it could also be drinking. Gluttony happens whenever we take in too much of anything.

And that's the problem with gluttony. Gluttony does not know when to say when. It has enough and then wants more. Gluttony looks to the temporary to satisfy the eternal. And gluttony carries consequences. Spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically, the consequences of gluttony echo into every aspect of our lives.

Let's read this encouragement by Paul to the church at Philippi that includes a warning about gluttony. We'll read Philippians 3:17-21. Chapter three. Verses 17-21: "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."

The first thing Paul talks about here is maintaining focus on Christ. To overcome gluttony, we must **Focus on Christ**. Paul begins this passage with an encouragement to follow himself and anyone else who has set an example in following Christ. Note that his focus is on lifestyle. He's not just talking about what they believe, or what they value, but he's talking about how they walk. "Keep your eyes on those who *walk* according to [Christ's] example." To fight gluttony, we must take Christ – and anyone who pursues him – as our example and seek to imitate those people.

So we see our mission statement intersect with scripture, here. At Fellowship Dallas we are calling each other to live out our God-given purpose in Christ every day. We must call one another to imitate Christ and maintain our focus on Him. And when you catch someone who lives in a way that exemplifies Christ, seek to imitate those Christ-like behaviors.

When we focus on Christ and on all of His gifts to us, we begin to see the things of this world for what they really are. As the old hymn goes, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." The Christian life is more than attending church or saying a prayer when life gets difficult. The Christian life is, at its core, focusing on and following Christ in everything we do. We must focus on Christ.

He then goes on to talk about the negative examples that we have around us. Let's read vv. 18-19 again: "For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things." When Paul says "tell you with tears," he's not saying that his eyes are a tad wet. The original words in Greek demonstrate that he is tearfully pleading with the church not to walk away from Christ. There are those who have strayed from the faith and Paul takes their departure seriously. And one of the reasons he's so concerned is because he recognizes the potential influence those who have strayed from the faith might have on the church. And – again – he doesn't point out something they believe as much as he writes about their lifestyle.

Paul is implicitly asking the church to assess their appetite. Spiritually speaking, if you want to avoid gluttony, you must **assess your appetite**. Assess your appetite. Look at how Paul describes these negative influences he references as *enemies of the cross*. He says:

- *Their end is destruction*. He's talking about their ultimate fate at the end of time. To be an enemy of God means that your ultimate destination can't be pleasant.
- *Their god is their belly*. They are so focused on pleasure and consuming too much, their love has been misplaced. Remember what I said earlier – you don't have to be overweight to qualify as someone *whose god is their belly*. But if you are overweight, there's a chance that gluttony is something that you deal with, too. We must maintain focus on Christ and assess our appetites.
- *They glory in their shame*. Not only do these people eat too much, they're proud of it. They're proud of their refined tastes and they boast in their liberty.
- *Their minds are set on earthly things*. Because they are enemies of God whose focus is completely on their own pleasure, they are only absorbed with the here and now. Their perspective is warped, sense they focus only on the temporary and not the eternal.

We must focus on Christ. We must assess our appetites. And we must **embrace hope**. Embrace hope. Paul references the end of time when we will see our ultimate transformation. We know that our bodies, marred by sin, subject to pain, will be resurrected and transformed into His likeness if we are not enemies of the cross. This is the hope of Christianity – that this life is not the end. There is an eternity. And this eternity isn't spent in the spiritual realm, but in the actual, blood and guts, new physical body realm with Christ reigning as King. This is the essence of Christianity.

And if we believe that Christ can transform us at the end of time, we have to believe that there can be transformation in the here and now. If Christ can conquer death, then I know he can conquer gluttony. And that is the hope we have in him. As citizens of heaven, we pledge allegiance the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the ultimate healer. And in the midst of our struggle against sin, we know that there is forgiveness and hope in Christ Jesus.

As we mentioned earlier, we've presented a virtue to go with every sin. I want to review the sins we've already studied. In this series, we've just chosen the traditional seven deadly sins, but there's nothing magic about the number seven. We could have stopped earlier,

focusing only on a few sins, and we could have gone on focusing on more. Let's be honest – every sin is deadly. There's a lot of sin we didn't have time to cover. Just because we didn't go over the subjects of borrowing your neighbor's lawn equipment without returning it or taking a coworker's sandwich from the break-room refrigerator doesn't mean those things are minor. Any sin can turn deadly, if left unchecked. It starts with a rake, and then before you know it, you've got a shovel, a lawn mower, and a tree-trimmer cluttering your garage. And when you see your neighbor get home from work, you're running around your house, shutting your blinds and turning off your lights. Deadly stuff.

Let's look at this chart that summarizes our journey through the deadly sins and the virtues that put those sins to death:

[Chart of Vices/Virtues:]

- Vainglory – Humility
- Envy – Love
- Anger – Patience
- Greed – Generosity
- (-)Lust – (+)Lust
- Sloth – Disciplined Routine
- Gluttony – Temperance

And the virtue that must replace gluttony – **the deadly virtue that will kill the sin of gluttony is temperance**. Temperance. Temperance is often associated with drinking, but it really just means self-restraint or moderation. It's saying enough and not going back for more. It's looking at what God has given you and saying "thank you" instead of "where's the rest?" It's pacing yourself. And one of the best ways you can develop the virtue of temperance in your life is through fasting. In fact, I would argue that temperance is a virtue best learned through fasting.

It can be taking a break from the television, your phone, or a meal. But it's not just skipping lunch, it's taking the time you would have devoted to your meal and spending it instead with God. Fasting can seem weird to us because we're so obsessed with food. But fasting is something that was practiced throughout the Old Testament. Jesus, His disciples, Paul, Peter, and the rest of the apostles all practiced fasting. It has been a spiritual discipline of Christians for 2,000 years. And there is much value in fasting. Not only does it reap spiritual benefits, but there are physical, emotional, and mental benefits as well. Intermittent fasting offers a holistic approach to health and can be a great way to discern more clearly the voice of God in an otherwise noisy world. If you've never practiced fasting, let me encourage you to pick something small and start there.

If we want to overcome gluttony, we must *focus on Christ, assess our appetite, and embrace hope*. We can do these things when we cultivate the virtue of *temperance*.

But one more thing. I don't want to leave you hanging. I need to leave you with one simple encouragement. Let remind you of something I said earlier. Food is good. *Food is good*. There's nothing wrong with food – in fact, I would argue that if you aren't enjoying your food at all, you're just as guilty as the person who enjoys their food too much! God has

given us food as a symbol of His provision to us. The fact that we need to eat every day is symbolic of the fact that we need God every day.

The goodness of food is found throughout the Bible. Jesus calls Himself the bread of life. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray, "give us this day our daily *bread*." The Promised Land is a land flowing with *milk and honey*. The Psalmist writes, "*Taste* and see that the Lord is good." Jesus' first miracle is with wine at a wedding reception. And when He shows Himself to His disciples after His resurrection, Jesus eats with them. In the Old Testament, the people celebrated God with feasts. They would gather together and eat! But they would do so with the recognition of God's provision in their lives. This is why it is okay to celebrate with food on Thanksgiving. It's also why it is appropriate to begin every meal with a prayer, recognizing God's provision in our lives with the food He's provided for that meal. And at the end of time, we will celebrate with God over supper. But when you eat, just eat enough. And nothing more. Pace yourself. Moderation. *Temperance*.

Perhaps the greatest example that we have from scripture that food is good is the fact that Christ instructed us to remember Him through communion, taking the bread and the cup. So, at this time, we will take communion. In the Last Supper, the Passover meal, Christ was not only looking back at all that God had done, He was also looking forward to the end of time. And that is what we do when we take communion. We are not only remember Christ, His sacrifice, His gift of life to us, but we are also proclaiming His death until He comes again. Communion is one of the physical ways we embrace hope. And as we pass the bread and the cup, let us take this time to focus on Christ. Assess your appetite. Embrace hope.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26:

"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

Let us pray.