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# GLUTTONY

By Jarrod Jacobs



The subject of gluttony is misunderstood by many people. Sometimes, during the Thanksgiving holiday, or after some big meal, someone will jokingly say, “I hope the preacher doesn’t preach on gluttony.” At other times, I have been accused of “not preaching on gluttony” or “not condemning gluttony” when this is not the case. When I have preached against such sins as smoking, drinking alcohol, and other things, some who try to justify their sins will ask, “People today are also guilty of eating too much, so how about preaching on gluttony? Isn’t that a sin, too?” Friends, gluttony is a sin. What we fail to recognize is the sin of gluttony encompasses more than merely eating too much at a meal. It is indicative of a wrong attitude and a wrong manner of life that needs to be corrected.

## Defining The Term

The word “glutton” is found only twice in the KJV (Deuteronomy 21:20; Proverbs 23:21). Similarly, the word “gluttonous” is only found twice in the KJV (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34). (By comparison, the ASV, KJV, and ESV include Proverbs 23:20; 28:7; and Titus 1:12). When we look up “glutton” in a Bible dictionary and other similar references, we see that the word means something far deeper than just someone eating too much at a meal. Therefore, let us study this word and learn the truth.

In the *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, we learn that “glutton” means, “(Hebrew from *zalal*, ‘to shake,’ hence to ‘be loose’ morally). A debauchee (Deuteronomy 21:20; Proverbs 23:21); ‘gluttonous’ (Proverbs 23:20; 28:7), meaning a free liver, one who is unrestrained (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34)” (p. 480). Another definition for “glutton” comes from the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, which says, in part, “*zalel*, ‘to be lavish; ... To shake or pour out, ... to be lavish, a squanderer’ (Deuteronomy 21:20 and Proverbs 23:21). In Greek, the term is ‘*phagos*’, meaning an eater, a glutton. This was a term applied to Christ in His freedom from asceticism (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34). Also, Titus 1:12 (‘slow bellies’ = ‘Idle gluttons’); Proverbs 23:20; 28:7” (Vol. 2, p. 1239).

A third definition of “glutton” is from the *Holman Bible Dictionary*. “... greedy and voracious eating... Associated with stubbornness, rebellion, disobedience, drunkenness, and wastefulness” (Deuteronomy 21:20). A more general ... term ... good-for-nothing is reflected as, ‘wastrel’, ‘profligate’, ‘riotous’. When Jesus was accused of being ‘a glutton and a drunkard’ (Matthew

11:19) it was in this expanded sense of being one given to loose and excessive living. Gluttony makes one sleepy, leads to laziness, and eventually to poverty (Proverbs 23:21).” (p. 656).

## **True Gluttons**

When we take the time to define the word “glutton,” we see that merely thinking of gluttony as being guilty of eating too much does not give us an accurate picture of what God is saying. Yes, there are passages which condemn eating too much (as an example, Proverbs 25:16, 27). However, “gluttony” is far more than that. Overeating is but a symptom of the larger problem of laziness, of being idle, of having a sense of entitlement, having loose morals and being unrestrained. (Can we not see this multiple times in this society?) All of these actions are condemned by God in Scripture, and are all included in the word “gluttony”! Once we know this, we must examine ourselves to make sure that we, in this land of plenty, are not gluttons. Truly, this is just another example of how we who are Christians must live in the world, but cannot be like the world (cf. I Corinthians 5:10).

## **Jesus – A Glutton?**

By knowing the true meaning of the word “glutton,” we get a picture of just how insulting the people were to Jesus when they called Him a “glutton” and “drunkard” (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34). When the Pharisees saw Him teaching the publicans, sinners, and others, they turned this into an opportunity for scorn (Think: “Birds of a feather flock together”), rather than what it was – an opportunity Christ took to teach those who were lost in sin and needed salvation (Matthew 9:11-13). The result was that the people accused Jesus of being a gluttonous drunkard! In other words, they were calling Jesus a lazy man with loose morals who was associating with folks who were like-minded!

We know this was not the case at all. Jesus did not condone their sins, but went to them to teach them and bring them out of their sins. To Zacchaeus the publican, Jesus said, “*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10), and this included him (Luke 19:9). To Nicodemus the chief of the Pharisees, Jesus told him what to do to be in the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5). Jesus knew how folks showed favoritism (Matthew 5:46-47), but Jesus was not a respecter of persons! He taught the same thing to all people! (cf. I Corinthians 4:17).

Jesus was not a glutton. Rather, this insult was hurled at Him because the Jews who saw and heard Him did not like what He was doing.

## **Conclusion**

When we understand what the word “glutton” truly means, then we must say that the subject of “gluttony” has not been ignored or “glossed-over” by any true preacher of the gospel! When sins such as debauchery, loose living, laziness, etc., are condemned (cf. Acts 24:25; Philippians 4:6), then gluttony has been condemned!

The question is are we guilty of gluttony? Let us examine ourselves and see (II Corinthians 13:5). Let us see whether or not we are guilty of loose morals, of laziness, idleness, and the like.

Are we idle or lazy in the work of the Lord? We better not be (I Corinthians 15:58). Are we guilty of having a sense of “entitlement” when it comes to

spiritual blessings? May this never be the case, but may we always recognize the Source of all spiritual blessings who is above and be thankful (Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 5:8-9; Colossians 3:15, 17). Gluttony is a terrible sin. However, we can be forgiven of it and can avoid future temptation by being in a right relationship with Christ Jesus (Mark 16:16; James 4:7-8; Ephesians 6:11).