

# *The Seven Deadly Sins ... and Godly Virtues*

Sunday 22 March 2015

*Self-centred ...*

## **Pride**

Brittle self importance  
Assuming I matter more



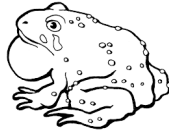
*God-centred and available to others*

## **Humility**

Content in my own skin  
Honouring others

## **Greed**

'Give me give me!'  
wanting too much



## **Generosity**

wanting to give more than to receive

## **Envy**

Comparing myself to others  
Low self-esteem  
Anxiety



## **Kindness**

Being fully present to others

## **Wrath**

Anger and bitterness  
Controlling or punishing others



## **Patience**

'Serenity prayer'

## **Lust**

Sexual desire  
outside of marriage

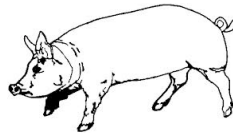


## **Chastity**

Healthy sexuality  
in partnership or singleness

## **Gluttony**

Must have! Now!  
(food, gadgets, attention ...?)

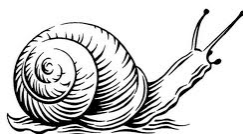


## **Self-control**

Simplicity. Content with 'enough'  
Temperance

## **Sloth**

Apathy, given up, passivity  
unreliable



## **Diligence**

Perseverance, faithfulness  
healthy goals & work habits

## **For reflection:**

*Which of these sins do you struggle with?*

*How might the people close to you answer that about you?*

*How has God grown more of the 'virtues' in your life?*

*What specifically might you ask God for?*

## **Sermon: The Seven Deadly Sins**

by Silvia Purdie

March 2015 (Lent)

*The classic '7 deadly sins' are not laws or rules. Nothing on this sheet is illegal. This isn't about being naughty or bad. The seven deadly sins are about character. The sins on this list shrink us as people. They suck the marrow from our bones. They are 'bad for us'. They shrink us because they pull our focus inward, into our own selves.*

...

Bible readings Galatians 5:22-6:10

John 8:2-11

You might have noticed that I don't preach about sin a lot.

I just figure that you've probably already heard enough sermons about sin to last you a lifetime. I mean, who wants to get out of bed early on a Sunday morning just so some person with the microphone can make you feel bad about yourself? I expect you already feel quite bad enough about yourself without me climbing in!

But, well, it is Lent after all. And not for much longer – we're celebrating Palm Sunday next week & I'm hanging out with the children while David Rees preaches. So today is my last chance to preach about Sin in Lent.

So I've picked the topic of the 7 deadly sins. Hands up if the 7 deadly sins were a big part of your childhood? Some churches made much of them. So much so that if you wanted to you could find something to feel guilty about every minute of every day!

My main memory of the 7 deadly sins is that at High School my maths teacher wrote a musical about them. I got the part of Envy. I remember my green dress. I don't remember my lines or my song, but I loved being in the production.

Seven Deadly Sins. It's not actually Biblical. There are various lists of sins and failures and various calls to repent, from Eve & Adam in the garden, to the prophets, the proverbs, Psalms of repentance, Paul calling the church away from destructive habits. Plenty of lists of what leads to destruction and condemnation, but not this particular list of 7.

And Deadly? in the past the church tied itself up in knots working out which sins were worse than other sins, which sins requires what form of repentance, which were worse for your mortal soul, which could threaten hell or barr heaven. Was this a venial sin or a mortal sin? people once used to fret about.

These days, though, sin is trendy. Vice is fashionable, celebrated. Sin is sexy, sin is cool. There's a set of seven delicious icecreams produced, one for each of the 7 sins.

Perhaps more of a serious issue for us, however, is that the idea of sin has become unfashionable. I have these debate with my 15-year-old, Aaron. He scoffs at any suggestion I make that something might be wrong ... his ethic is 'If two consenting adults do it, then who could judge?' .... anything goes so long as you're not hurting anyone else. He is born into a world in which the guiding moral principle is – if you want to do it, then do it!

Sure, people know that too much sugar or beer or hot chips could be bad for them  
and people know that sleeping with someone who is not your partner could be bad for their relationship – but only if you get caught!

If it's not illegal, and if its not hurting anyone, then what's the problem? It has become a strange idea that there might exist an external, universal set of values for how we should live as people with each other. But this is exactly what the Bible gives us. Threaded through all the different cultures and eras through the Biblical story are consistent challenges given to people – that underpin the various specific instructions and laws in the Bible.

As Christians we are freed from the law, in that our lives are not to focus on keeping every rule in the book for the sake of it. As Christians our calling is to follow Jesus, to live in relationship, in good relationship, with God and with our fellow human beings. What we call 'sin' is anything which damages that relationship.  
Right relationship we call 'righteousness'. Broken relationship we call 'sin'.

The list that I've given you today, the classic '7 deadly sins', these are not laws or rules. Nothing on this sheet is illegal. This isn't about being naughty or bad. The seven deadly sins are about character.

The sins on this list shrink us as people. They suck the marrow from our bones. They are 'bad for us'. They shrink us because they pull our focus inward, into our own selves. They are self-centred. Now, nothing wrong with being self-centred if you are a baby or demanding toddler. It's only as we grow that we embark on the journey out of ourselves. It's only as we grow into maturity that we can see other people clearly and be fully present to others. And, hopefully, as we meet the living God we allow Christ to shape us and grow more of his life in us and less of me me me. This overcomes the sin and grows the virtue in our lives.

Now, some of these come easy and some of these are hard fought. Different from each of us.

Me, I would like to be more humble and less proud. But actually, I could probably do with more sloth in my life, to be honest! I might make friends with sloth, might be good for me! Maybe just for a couple of hours.

Envy sneaks in and turns the head and poisons us ... Ministers are terrible for envy, you know! We look at how each other are doing in their churches and people ask me "How's it going at Milson?" and I say how wonderful you are but really I am jealous because my colleague had 3 adult baptisms last month! Shocking! Envy.

And gluttony? I'm not one for over eating, but over working is just as bad. Over emailing. Over Facebooking. We all have our own addictions. What's yours?

And you might not be one to yell and shout and throw the china around, but what do you really do with your anger? Don't tell me you never get angry, come on, how does it sneak out?

Come on, folks, time to 'fess up'. Grab your pens, tell the person sitting next to you if you dare ...

*Which of these sins do you struggle with?*

*How might the people close to you answer that about you?*

Quotes:

Counting other people's sins does not make you a saint

Oscar Wilde: The only sin is stupidity.

Sin has many tools, but a lie is the handle which fits them all.

## Edmund Burke

The first and worst of all frauds is to cheat one's self. All sin is easy after that.

## Pearl Bailey

And the greatest one-liner of all time, by our very own Jesus Christ, one of his favourite things to say to people: “Your sins are forgiven”

Right o. Time for a bit of a Bible study.

Paul's letter to Galatians.

The whole letter is a clarion call to freedom. Live free! Paul is almost shouting it at them.

5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery!!

5:13 you are called to freedom, not for self-indulgence but for love for one another!

the only law that matters, declares Paul, “Love your neighbour as yourself”

Then at verse 16 Paul gets down to brass tacks. He lists a whole bunch of stuff that he sees dragging people down again into slavery. ... and it is basically the list in front of us, scrapping, envy, boozing, sexual sin. Then he has the contrasting list, the fruit of the spirit: 9 of them, who can remember them?

The fruit of the spirit is: love, joy peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.

So far so good, we're on very familiar ground here. But lets keep reading, ...

Ephesians 6. Verse 1: forgiveness and gentleness, all good

2: Bear one another's burdens

3: don't think yourself more than you are, that's the pride one, all good.

But take pride in your own work, that's nice.

But what about verse 5?: All must carry their own loads

What does Paul mean by doing our own work, carrying our own loads?

Verses 7-10 Paul comes to a nice strong conclusion about how our values and choices ('what we sow') creates the kind of life we end up living and the effect of our life on others ('what we reap') ... and Paul's

basic call for us to live for the good of others, that this is his very definition of freedom.

But I want to go back to verses 4-5, doing our own work, carrying our own loads. It's odd though, don't you think? In verse 2 he's said "carry each other's burdens" and in verse 5: "carry your own stuff". Come on Paul make up your mind which is it?

When I was training as a counselor we used the word 'stuff' a lot. As in, we might comment that someone had a lot of 'Stuff' to deal with. Or I might say that some "Stuff" had come up for me from a difficult situation.

It's the same idea as Paul's word 'load'. Stuff we carry around with us. Not necessarily the physical stuff ... though the physical objects can be problem enough. Remember the trolley parked in the carpark last month? A sweet homeless man called Jeremy left it there for a couple of weeks. Thankfully came and got it just before I was going to take it all to the dump. He's a collector of bits and bobs, and to him they are all very precious, his torn backpack, a hairdryer, an broken chair. It's quite a good metaphor for sin really ... the bits and bobs we've picked up along the way that we can't quite bear to part with, our habits of mind, or instinctive ways of reacting to people, the assumptions that seem to us to be common sense.

Stuff. In counseling we meant by that an emotional response in the present which was fueled by pain in the past.

It is the loads we carry that pull us into some of these '7 deadly sins' more than others. These are the lies we have drunk with our mother's milk. These are the habits of thinking of a life-time. These are vulnerabilities in our souls. And the older we get the more our 'stuff' creates problems for us and for other people. This is what we call a MidLife Crisis, when we fight to sustain our unhelpful habits of self-centred sin. God finds ways to confront them, and often we find that darned unpleasant, in my experience.

Do your own work, says Paul. Carry your own load. This is the central work of growing up, to notice the baggage we carry from our past and to let it go, to try new ways of living.

That is what we call repentance. This is why we pray "Lord, I have sinned. Forgive me." Confession is a powerful opportunity for truth to break into the lies we tell ourselves. Confession opens up more of the

fruit of the Spirit right into the heart of our sins. How does God grow more of his virtue and love in our lives? Partly by calling us to confess our sin, so that he can prize our loads off our backs and lay them at the foot of the cross.

5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery!!