

# Beware The Sins Of Sodom

by Sandeep Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of pressing on to perfection in our spiritual growth, drawing insights from Hebrews 6 and Ezekiel 16:49. It highlights the sins of Sodom - arrogance, abundant food, careless ease, and neglecting the poor and needy - as cautionary examples for the church. The speaker delves into the dangers of arrogance, overindulgence in food, misuse of time, and improper handling of finances, urging a focus on humility, self-control, purposeful use of time, and responsible stewardship of resources.*

**Scripture:** Hebrews 6:1, Ezekiel 16:49, Matthew 5:3, 2 Corinthians 8:12, 2 Timothy 3:4, Ephesians 5:15, Amos 5:24

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Humility and Stewardship"

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## Description

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## Transcript

One of the things that the Lord has laid on my heart for 2019 is this expression in Hebrews chapter 6 which says we must press on to perfection. God doesn't want us to just stay in the same grade, just like no parent wants their children to stay in the same grade. He wants every parent, father or mother, want their children to grow in understanding God into learning everything that they need to have for life.

So similarly for spiritual matters, it's very important that we grow to be more and more perfect like God is perfect. God says be holy as I'm holy, be perfect as I'm perfect. So we should be growing, pressing on to perfection.

And the verse that I'd like to highlight today is the verse from Ezekiel chapter 16, verse 49. I put together some slides that we can show on there that helps us follow along. It's not a very difficult thing to follow along, but I just wanted to put that along there with it.

Ezekiel chapter 49 tells me the real reason why Sodom went astray. We know, read the story about Sodom and how it got burnt up in Genesis chapter 19. But the real reason why Sodom got really burnt up is shown to us in Ezekiel chapter 16, verse 49.

And it says there, Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom. She and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food, careless ease, neither did she help the poor and needy. That's the real issue.

Not what we may have thought we have heard in Sunday school growing up. Here's the real reason why Sodom went astray. Now this is how we can apply it to our church.

This is how we can apply it, not to see do we have all the telltale signs of Sodom in all of their wickedness, because it says in verse 50, then based on that they were haughty and committed abominations. But way before the abominations were these sins. And I just wanted to quickly highlight all of those four areas.

The first one is arrogance. And I talked about this last week when I shared, which is this verse from Matthew chapter 5, verse 3, Blessed, truly happy, spiritually prosperous are those who are humble. Those who constantly and continuously keep pulling back the rating over their lives and they rate themselves as insignificant.

When you are bothered by somebody else, when somebody offends you, this is the time when we need to rate ourselves as insignificant. That doesn't mean we just need to put up with all the way they're hurting us. We can speak back.

But when we are tempted to judge, when we are tempted to have a desire to think and condemn them, this is when we say, Lord Jesus, I want to root myself of all arrogance. I can't stop other people from hurting me, but I want to make sure that I root out all arrogance. And this is the pathway to rooting out all arrogance.

No boasting, not in our earthly achievements, not in our spiritual achievements. We allow a curtain to fall over everything that has happened in our past, as I've heard my dad say. And we rate ourselves once again as being insignificant, because that's how we came to God.

That doesn't mean we have an inferiority complex. It doesn't mean that we just allow everybody to walk all over us. But in our ratings before God, we say, Lord, despite all these things that people are doing to me, who am I, Lord? Who am I? I'm just a worm that you've shown favor on.

I rate myself as insignificant. That is the final math that we should conclude all of our prayers with. That's the first one.

And out of the four, I'm actually going to spend my time only on two. I'm going to spend some time on the next one, which is abundant food. This is a sign of opulence.

This is a clear sign of any culture, at any time, when we have lots of food, where food goes from giving us sustenance to bringing us joy. I must be on guard because Sodom, that's where it started. This was the guilt of Sodom.

What's wrong with abundant food? It doesn't sound like there's any sin behind it. But because of the legitimacy of food, there's nothing wrong with eating food. The devil can use that to slip in sins.

I want to talk about those two things in food. The guilt of abundant food. First is controlled by my stomach.

Some of us, our problem with abundant food is just we eat too much. This is going to be a very practical sermon. I hope we can have more practical sermons.

We just eat too much. We must value self-control and discipline more than we value Bible study and spiritual zeal. Now, self-control and discipline is not limited to food, but it is an easy place where we can find ourselves out of control.

Some of us just eat too much. Some of us are controlled by our stomach, though. This may not be true maybe for the American culture, but I know this is true in some parts of Indian culture, that there are men who, when they get married, put a heavy weight on their wives, that their wives must cook like their mother, and it becomes a heavy burden.

And I think it's evil. I don't know if we've seen it as evil, but that's what the church is for. That's where we see how this heavy weight we can put on somebody else.

Is it a spiritual gift to cook? No, it isn't. Our mothers may have had wonderful abilities to cook, but the moment I, as a man, put that weight, and again, I'm not saying men can't cook and all that, it's fine, wherever we put a weight on somebody else, look, you've got to cook like my mother. In any way, let me tell you this, in any way, and I think I'm going to speak more to the husbands, in any way, we as husbands put a weight on our wives, and you must be like my mother.

I'm disobeying a verse, a command God gave to me, even before there was sin, where God said you must leave your father and your mother, and you must cleave to your wife. So I must throw out all perspectives of my mom's cooking, and I have to judge myself, and the serious ones will repent, and will ask for forgiveness, and say, darling, honey, never again will I hold you to my mom's cooking, or my father's cooking, or anybody else's cooking. Your cooking is my cooking.

I'm going to enjoy it. It'll make our marriages much happier. It'll lift a heavy burden that may be there on some wives.

But also to the extent in which we're controlled by our stomach, we will see an increase in our physical health, and you don't have to have a master's in nutrition, let me just give you one sentence, don't have saturated fat, don't have added sugars, don't have added salt. That's it. If you can just keep those principles in mind, you have, and don't eat too much, you've got a good diet right there.

Anything beyond that is complicating things. Because here's what I find, and this is what I want to underline. I find that the devil can slip in this oppression of basing our value on how we look.

Controlled by how we look. You know, brothers and sisters, this is a huge snare. And there is a mix between how food is connected with how we identify by how we look.

The world obsesses with how you look. You just have to go to anywhere, you'll see that. But what's happening is in the church, the church is starting to value themselves based on how they look.

And in the name of being healthy, and in the name of having a healthy lifestyle, we can get obsessed by food. What food to eat, what food not to eat, all kinds of different ways in which we do that. And we start evaluating ourselves by how we look.

I fear that we can be distracted to be more interested in looking good than being a fiery witness for Jesus. I fear that we may be more focused on having a pure diet than having a pure heart. What gets us down more? Are we happy and cheerful when we lose 10 pounds? Even though we still lose our temper, let me judge myself.

Am I discouraged when I gain 10 pounds, even though my husband doesn't seem to mind the gain in the 10 pounds? I'm beating myself up. My wife doesn't seem to mind the extra 10 pounds, but I beat myself up and I'm more interested in that than the fact that my heart is not pure. God is interested in not us losing a few pounds.

God is interested in losing our lives. If you don't lose your life, you won't find it, is what Jesus said. And I'm all for good health.

I'm all for watching what I eat. And I'm not believing this. I'm telling you what I practice.

I've given up a lot of foods that I used to eat a lot more. So I'm practicing what I preach. But I fear that we can spend too much time thinking about, reading about, discussing with other believers, the latest trick on how to lose weight, whether coconut oil is good or bad, whether it's saturated fats or carbs or sugar or salt.

What is it? And on this constant routine and this rat in a hamster going on a race endlessly, trying to find it all because our identity is not secure in Christ. We don't need fancy diets, family. We don't need hours and hours in the gym.

We don't need to keep watching endless documentaries and following all these bloggers that are dominating our Facebook posts or whatever it is. We just need some good old fashioned self-control and we need to depend on the Holy Spirit. That's all we need.

Self-control has got two parts, a part we must play and a part that Jesus, the Holy Spirit must give us. And it's that simple and we don't need, that's not what our church should be talking about. That's not what should be dominating our conversations.

I'll tell you something, family. This is how I looked at it. If I found that the men in this church were always exchanging stock picks, how to grow this money, how to grow that, how to do that, tell me, is financial investments good? But if I found, if we found that all our conversations was around, hey, buy this stock, buy that stock, let's grow your money 20%, grow your money 40%, you can retire early.

There's something wrong with our church. And similarly, I would say the same way, if we, even though financial security and financial stability is a wonderful thing, you know, we get made a seminar on it. But similarly, when we take something that's good health and we take it to a wrong end and when our church becomes talking about all those, all of those things, diet programs and accountability groups, try to keep each other honest about that, we've lost our center.

We can lose the fiery passion for God and God alone when we start thinking about those things. Ask yourself, how much time are you spending about getting to know the latest nutritional idea or getting to know God? I'll tell you. And so for those of us, I used to think this way, Lord, I just don't have self-control.

I've seen so many people who have discovered enormous self-control the moment they got the diagnosis that they have cancer. I found they all of a sudden gave up sugar, all of a sudden were able to have whatever diet so that they could do that. Very simply, all the things that are supposed to be good health.

So the self-control is within us. Maybe you need a cancer report. Before that comes, don't get caught up with these things.

Get caught up with pursuing Jesus. We need our church to remain absolutely pure. Every brother and every sister, as I look into your eyes, I need to know and you need to look into my eyes and know that I have a single focus on Christ and becoming like him.

And we must push aside all these legitimate things that can become like an idol. I'm not preaching against good health. You know this.

I'm not preaching against eating healthy. We must do that. But family of God, let's not lose our focus.

And the sin of Sodom is hidden in here. In the abundance of food and careless ease, let's spend time, less time thinking about and reading all the blogs and videos and all these things and definitely among conversations with one another. Let us reduce the amount of time we're talking about this.

What we need to do is become more like Jesus. There's not going to be a question on the final exam saying, you ate two grams of too much sugar. I'm going to be asked, did I become like Jesus Christ? And we'll free ourselves, family of God, we'll free ourselves from this addiction of what the mirror tells us we look like, or what the weighing machine tells us we look like.

And then we can make the way clear. Nothing between for God to tell us, I love you as you are. Family of God, let's watch out for the abundance of food.

Let us stop assessing ourselves by our weight. If you need to get healthy, go see a doctor and obey what they say. Pretty sure he's going to tell you to avoid saturated fats and sugars and added sugars and added salts.

Simple. Just do it now and set it aside. Focus on Jesus.

Careless ease. The next one, the next slide. There's a lot of careless ease.

This is a huge area in my life too, but I'm not going to spend a lot of time. We've heard messages about this. We heard last year, Jeremy speak on to gather up the fragments, the 12 baskets over.

We hear this. We've heard this spoken from Song of Solomon about catch the little foxes that are ruining the vineyard. Be careful as how you walk Ephesians 5, 15 and 16 because the time is evil.

Make the most of your time. Family of God, there is spiritual output that the Lord wants to produce through you as you spend time with him. To call people, to encourage other people, to write different ways.

Look what happened with children. They write simple things and you can write a song out of it. Hopefully they'll memorize it.

To you alone belong the glory. To you alone belong the power. This can come out of us very effortlessly.

It doesn't have to rhyme. But can you write a prayer to Jesus every day, a personal letter of a prayer to Jesus every day? That's not a very hard thing to do, is it? Maybe start with that. Make it a goal to say, Lord Jesus, every day I just want to write a little prayer, not say a prayer.

I'm going to write a little prayer. Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me. And then see what comes to your mind about why you're thankful to him.

And just do that for a month and just read it after a month. I've not been doing exactly that, but you should see my notes. It goes all the way back for years and it's massive how much the Lord has been able to speak to me, not through me, speak to me about his love.

Just as I decided to do little things like that, to talk to him. Because the days are evil, make the most of your time, careless ease, abundance of time because of automation and all the things we live on, I don't even need to get up to turn on the lights. I just say it and it comes out.

The lights turn on, TV turns on, this and that happens. So what am I doing with all that time that I could have, that I saved? If I've gotten to know God better, do I know Jeremiah better than I used to? Do I know some of the Psalms and the Proverbs better than I used to? With all that free time that automation has given me? The last one, not helping the poor or the needy. Look, we at NCC have a radically different view on money.

We tell you that it is not biblical and definitely not new covenant to tithe. God abolished tithing in the new covenant. So tithing means 10%.

God's replaced that with 100%. God controls all of your money. That's what he's replaced 10% with.

So I don't get to spend my money on whatever I want to spend it. None of it. Not 1%, not 10%, not 99%.

100% of it must be controlled by God. And God determines, not any church, but the Holy Spirit should be controlling how we spend our money. Some of us can be guilty about not giving enough.

We should be freed from any guilt that we have to give a certain amount. No. Read this passage when you've got some time, 2 Corinthians 8, 12, it says, for the readiness is present.

And he's talking specifically about financial giving. He's talking specifically about the Corinthian church giving to the poor in Jerusalem. And he says it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

That's how we should assess our giving, according to what we have. So the person who has more should give more, and the person who has less should give a lot less. Some people who have less should give nothing.

Have you ever heard that in any church, that maybe some people who have very little should give nothing? You'll hear it here. Go to God and ask the Lord to guide you, according to what you have, because there's another extreme of that is that maybe one where some of us are more guilty. I think there's some of us in each category here.

I know that for me, I have to judge myself more about spending money for my own pleasures. I'd like us to consider this exercise. Think about all the money you spend on discretionary pleasures.

It's not for food, it's not for all the things, bills you have to pay, but all what's left on it, for toys, for vacations, and then ask myself, Lord, how much did I give for others where I got nothing out of it? I'm not going to say I'll give it to my boy, it's not quite the giving I'm talking about, to the poor and the needy. We're definitely not inspecting anybody's giving here in this church, but I can't think of a better nonprofit than NCCF. But wherever you give your money, wherever you give, giving is a very important spiritual principle, and in the absence of teaching on giving and tithing and all of that, we can end up becoming misers and

lovers of money, and lovers of money proved by loving pleasure.

Let us think about that. Let us think, let us sit down with our spouses, and let us think about it, Lord, this is the sin of Sodom, help us to start rooting it out in its cause. And dear family, let's not feel guilty about not giving.

Some of us need to be giving nothing. In fact, if you have any questions, please come and ask us elders. We've encouraged multiple people, please give nothing.

If you have debts, if you have other things like that, don't give anything to the church. God doesn't need your money, this church doesn't need it. But some of us are living luxurious lives, and if we were to do the accounting, we spend a lot more on our pleasures and on God's kingdom.

So let me end with that final slide. Protected from the guilt of Sodom, I will be humble and rate myself as insignificant. This is God's way to being happy and spiritually prosperous.

Let me accept that, let me embrace that. Food, I will not be controlled by too much food, or how I look. I will live with self-control.

Time, the days are getting more and more evil, so I will make the most of my time to live with courage and purpose. Money, how I use the money I have, will prove that I love God and His kingdom. The books will be open one day, family of God, the books will be open.

Health, how I use my money, will prove whether I love God and His kingdom, or I give it on my own pleasures. I'm underlining the word pleasures, because I'm not talking about needs. We need to take care of all of our needs, all of our family's needs, and if our parents are aged, even consider your parents' needs.

But after that, when we're talking about our pleasures, let's say that Lord, 2 Timothy 3, you can look that up, in the last days, difficult times will come, because men will be lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God. Meditate on that, dear brothers and sisters. We don't want to fool ourselves with the magnitude of Bible studies, that we are spiritual.

We need to practically ask ourselves, where the rubber hits the road, if our actions prove that we're really on the Lord's side. Finally, if you have any questions about what I've spoken about, I've not run this by Bobby and Jeremy, but I submit to them. Talk to them.

I was bothered by something, what he said here. I am willing to learn, too. But I'll tell you this, as I judge myself, as I was preparing this sermon, I have only one desire.

I want you to look me in the eye, and I want to look each of you in the eyes, and know that Jesus is your only desire. If that's the case, we can talk anything. But that's what I'm interested in, as I'm interested in securing, we as elders are interested in securing simple and clean and pure devotion to Jesus.

That's my heart. So I hope you will also, in your desire to follow these things and look at these things, ask yourself, Lord Jesus, I want to go all out. I want to be simple and pure to you, and we'll see how the Lord works in our lives.

May God help us.

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