

Overcoming the Gods!

#0092

Study Given by W. D. Frazee

“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” Revelation 14:8.

The wine of Babylon represents her doctrines and all the agencies which she uses to intoxicate the nations. Physically, mentally, and spiritually, the influence of Babylon is to benumb the higher centers, to confuse the thinking, and to lead men to do insane things. And every agency—whether it is chemical, physical, mental, sentimental, religious—that confuses the thinking of people is part of the wine of Babylon. God's messenger deals with truth, with reality, entirely apart from all pretense, all make-believe, all fiction—everything that is contrary to fact and to truth.

Here, 800 years before John wrote on the Isle of Patmos, we hear the announcement of the fall of Babylon. Notice what falls *with* her:

“...And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground” Isaiah 21:9.

So with Babylon's fall comes the fall of all her gods, her idols. Babylon is an idolater. *Ancient* Babylon was a *city* of false gods; *modern* Babylon is a *world* of false gods.

“A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols” Jeremiah 50:38.

The idols of Babylon bring insanity to those who worship them. This is the influence of idolatry. Among all the gods of Babylon is the god of mammon (or money), the god of appetite, and the god of lust. These are three great gods in the worship of Babylon.

I would like to study with you some of the agencies that God has given, some of the instruction that He has given, designed to keep us from this idolatry. These points that I would like to bring are simplicity, generosity, labor, and modesty (moderation/temperance). By putting these into His message for today, God has built-in protection against the appeal of the worship of the gods of Babylon.

When we think of Sodom we usually think of the most depraved impurity, the most awful perversions, and all this is correct. But there are some things lying back of it that the prophet Ezekiel exposes:

“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good” Ezekiel 16:49–50.

God deals not with the terrible excesses and perversions of Sodom. He deals with the underlying problem: “pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness.” Yet this “fullness of bread and abundance of idleness” is exactly what characterizes America today. There was never a time when money flowed so freely, and the things that money could buy were sought after and found so greedily. Very few people in America today are hungry in the sense that they cannot get anything to eat. As a nation, there is plenty to eat. We are repeating the history of Sodom. This abundance of food and of leisure leads in America just what it did in Sodom. It leads to gluttony and perversions of all kinds. It leads to impurity, immorality, fornication, adultery, and other perversions. And if God is calling you and me from the worship of the gods of Babylon, if He is calling us to a pure life, He will call us to simplicity and economy and industry. He will call us to physical exercise, to puritan plainness and simplicity, to hard work and plenty of it. This is a part of God's remedy and preventive for the things that were the downfall of Sodom.

“It was God's purpose to alleviate by toil the evil brought into the world by man's disobedience. By toil the temptations of Satan might be made ineffectual, and the tide of evil stayed. And though attended with anxiety, weariness, and pain, labor is still a source of happiness and development, and a safeguard against temptation. Its discipline places a check on self-indulgence, and promotes industry, purity, and firmness. Thus it becomes a part of God's great plan for our recovery from the Fall” *Counsels to Teachers*, page 274.

What is toil? Hard work. A person ought to spend at least 15 minutes a day at it. Its discipline places a check on self-indulgence. That's why the sinner doesn't want it. That is why he spends his time inventing ways to avoid it. That is why he is more interested in playing the ponies or stock market than he is in getting out and working. Labor promotes industry, purity, and firmness, and it becomes a part of God's great plan for our recovery.

There has never been a time since the days of Sodom when it was so hard to preach and practice what we are studying about tonight. There never was a time when it was so easy to take life easy. People are in the rat race, but the rat race is not

concerned with digging ditches. We have machinery to do that. The rat race is not concerned with anything that involves physical toil. It is largely using the brain to try to outwit the other fellow, to scheme and get the better of it, to build up one's self at the expense of others. This is much of the rat race. But to get out and produce by work, sweat, toil, pain, this is unpopular. It is not even known by millions today. We are living in a time when literally millions of people have grown up on welfare.

Someone says, "Sure. So what?"

I say we are repeating the days of ancient Rome. We are repeating the days of Sodom. We may thank God for the efforts of well-meaning people to help the blind, the crippled, and those who can't earn their living, but millions of people are burdening the welfare rolls of our country. The worst thing about it is not the wastage of the public funds; it's what happens to the recipients.

But before we pat ourselves on the back, friends, remember that no amount of labor of the mind can take the place of use of the muscles.

Have you gotten far enough away from Babylon and Sodom so that you really appreciate God's plan of physical labor? Would you do it if you didn't have to? In some parts of the world, unless men work, they don't eat. But millions of people in America are engaged in trying to prove that it isn't necessary. Which way does your mind work? If you should suddenly inherit a million dollars, would you keep on working hard, using your muscles?

Someone says, "What for?"

As a part of the plan of salvation. And the man who allows his muscles to atrophy through disuse is going in the direction that leads to the sins of Sodom. As Isaac Watts wrote many years ago:

In works of labor and of skill,
I would be busy too;
For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.

Whether idleness comes from government welfare, or from some oil well that your grandfather owned, or some bank stocks that your rich uncle left you, or whatever the reason for your idleness, the Devil will take advantage of it and lead you in one or all of three directions—to greed, to gluttony, or to lust. And the man who is obsessed with the greed for gold, the man who is obsessed with finding new ways to tickle his stomach, the man who has time and leisure to meditate and think upon lust in all its various forms, that man is far from the kingdom of God. And to come out of Babylon is more than ceasing to give lip service to any or all of these gods.

Flee out of the midst of Babylon. The Loud Cry of Revelation 18 says:

“...Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” Revelation 18:4.

We must come to the place where we hate greed, self-indulgence, the slavery to appetite and passion, and where we love simplicity, love labor, love purity, and love modesty. This is an experience. This is an education in which our *past* education must be put in the garbage can. Babylon is fallen, and all her idols are falling with her. But those who go *with* her will *fall* with her.

And so I challenge you to think through this matter of labor, your *attitude* toward it, and your *relationship* to it.

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” Colossians 3:5.

What does ‘mortify’ mean? It means “put to death,” “take the sword and chop its head off,” “take the spear, and thrust through to the heart,” “crucify.” What is it that is to be killed? Yourself, the old man, these natural inclinations. Covetousness is idolatry. The golden calf is being worshipped by millions today. Covetousness is the love of money; it's the greed for money. And you can *love* money whether you have any or not. So if you are poor, don't pat yourself on the back. There are poor people who are just as greedy as rich men, and here are some rich men who are very generous.

God's goal is not to get all of His saints poor—God's goal is to get all of His saints free from covetousness. And what a pity if the only way God can cure us from the love of money is to see that we don't have any! The people who are best equipped and best prepared to handle money are those who have been delivered from the idolatry of covetousness.

What is God's remedy for covetousness? Continual giving starves covetousness to death. There is a call for me for the *foreign* mission fields, for the *home* mission fields. Or we see some poor person. Or there is some opportunity to do good. But if we are within a mile of that god of mammon, he bellows at us and says, “Don't do that. You need that money for yourself. Don't respond. But if you do, do it in a very meager way that will make God sorry He ever asked you.”

God loves a cheerful giver. Continual giving starves covetousness to death. When mammon bellows at me and says, “Don't give,” I tell him to keep still. I give and keep it up. I use that muscle of generosity. What happens eventually to covetousness? It's starved out. This is why the calls are increasing. This is why the opportunities to give are multiplied. They're not going to stop. You and I can dry up the springs of benevolence, but what a pity.

How much better it is to understand what this is all about. God is trying to deliver me from the idolatry of Babylon, and one of the gods of Babylon is mammon. I don't want to worship that golden calf. Oh, no. Babylon is fallen, and all her graven images are broken.

Wouldn't you hate to get to the place where you loved greed, where you just loved to gloat over money that you've gathered, and not have any interest in other people? Wouldn't you hate to be like that? There are some people who want money not to hoard it. They spend it as fast as they get it (some *faster* than they get it), but they spend it on *themselves*. They look with contempt on the miser and say, "I would hate to be that stingy." They are generous all right, but they are spending it all the time for food and drink, for clothes, for automobiles, furniture, houses, boats, you name it. Spending, spending. They are extravagant. They are selfish. This was the iniquity of Sodom.

"...Pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (Ezekiel 16:49). There were some poor people in Sodom? Did the rich people look after them? No, they spent their money on themselves.

Would you be economical even if you didn't have to? Would you be careful with how you laid out money for food, furniture, automobiles, houses, even if you didn't *have* to? That's quite a test, isn't it? God trains some of us in the school of poverty. It's a wonderful school. But sometimes God lets them graduate into the school of prosperity so that they can find out whether they've really learned the lesson or not.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Here is a man who is making a living. He has to watch and pinch his pennies. He has to cut corners. He has to be careful, but he is making a living. He is not in debt. He is paying his bills, but just barely. He is paying a faithful tithe and giving some offerings. Suddenly, his income is doubled. What should happen to his tithe? It should double. What should happen to his offerings? Should it double? It is rare to find anyone whose income has doubled, and offerings also have.

Do you think a person who has been living decent, and his income doubles, ought to spend twice as much for food as he did the year before? Twice as much on automobiles, furniture, homes, boats, hi-fi, this and that? This is what is happening in America. The picture is worse than that. Most people in America are not only spending all they're getting, but they are spending *more*. They are going into debt. What for? For extravagance. And extravagance leads directly to the full worship of the god of gold, the god of appetite, and the god of passion and lust. Extravagance leads away from the cross which would keep people from the worship of idols.

The blessed Jesus came down here to give us an example and show us how to live. He was an example in all these matters. He never worshipped the god of mammon. He always had his appetite under control, every passion. He met temptation

with a firm resistance. He's our Example and our Pattern. Let's follow Him. What do you say?

But my lesson tonight is on this point: on appreciating the things that God has given us to keep us *from* this idolatry. He has given us a lesson of simplicity and economy instead of extravagance.

Is there something besides the empty purse that keeps you from spending? You go to town, and along the way are the billboards, beckoning you. If you are so unfortunate as to have a TV or radio, beckoning not only with the finger but through the ears, "Come and spend money." If you open your mail, there is almost sure to be some invitation to spend money. What for? To be happy, to get something to fill your stomach or to make you more beautiful and more attractive to someone, to satisfy and pamper some appetite or passion or lust. Then you go into town and go in the stores and see all sorts of displays. Tell me, can you run that gauntlet and get the one object that you went to get, that you really need, without getting some other things that you didn't really need? Well, you can if the only money you have in your purse is what it takes to buy the one object.

But now my question is: Is the only thing that keeps you from spending money selfishly, on extravagance, on display, the state of your finances? Could God trust you with a million dollars, and you would still stay simple, economical, careful in your management? Could God do that? I want to tell you something, friends. There are men and women and young people here tonight that God would *like* to trust with far more money. And if we will be faithful with pennies and not even waste one-tenth of a dime, God is going to give some of us the privilege (if we've been faithful over a few things, to be faithful over many things) but not for our own glorification, not so we can ride in high-priced cars and have the Babylonians come in and show them all the golden things in our homes, and make them greedy so they will come and take us captive so they can have our houses and furniture. No. May God give us a view of Calvary that shall spoil the pull of the gods of this world. Oh, that God may bless us with an appreciation of the sacrifice of Christ, so we love simplicity and hate extravagance.

Is there something besides not having a car, or the car having a flat tire, that keeps you at home instead of gadding around? Or makes you walk when you could ride? Is that a good question? Usually, out on the highway, we see somebody that's not riding, we know it's because they're so poor that they can't afford to ride. Thankfully, it isn't so on this campus. Is there something besides a scanty meal that leads you to moderation instead of overeating? There are places in this world where everybody at every meal eats all he can get. In some parts of the world, people don't have enough to eat. In some parts of the world, people go to bed every night hungry. I don't know people like that around here. It is a wonderful thing to sit down to a good meal, furnished with good food and plenty of it, and be able, at the right time, to say, "No, thank you, I've had enough." And mean it, and stick to it. Let your moderation be known unto all men. In other words, is temperance, moderation, self-restraint your way

of life? Are you temperate when you could be indulgent? Are you saving when you could be extravagant?

Let's look at another angle of this:

"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" 1 Timothy 2:9–10.

What is modest apparel? There are very few people who even know what modest appeal is. But if you will begin wherever you are in the comprehension of the subject and utterly refuse to wear anything that is immodest, never blunt your conscience or dull it by what you think is immodest, and you pray and study the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, your vision of modesty will grow, and your clothes will grow to agree with your vision.

Modest apparel is that which covers the body so that there is nothing conducive to awakening lust. Modest appeal is that which is so simple that it does not call attention to the wearer.

There are two things that characterize the dress of Babylon: one is exposure and the other is extravagant adornment. And Christian dress is the opposite on both points. Christian dress adequately covers. There is nothing in the material or the way the clothes are made that suggests exposure of the body and a way to awaken lust and passion. Nothing like it. Nothing that dares; it's with shamefaced sobriety. And its simplicity is the direct opposite of the extravagant adornment of Babylon.

"The love of dress endangers the morals and makes woman the opposite of the Christian lady characterized by modesty and sobriety. Showy, extravagant dress too often encourages lust in the heart of the wearer and awakens base passions in the heart of the beholder" *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 4*, page 645.

I think of all the time and money and effort that is being made to doll up these poor bodies. What for? Why are hundreds and millions of dollars poured out in beauty shops? What a travesty. What are beauty shops for? To take from and add to the natural beauty that God created; to twist and pervert and cripple beauty. Beauty is created by God, and we have a work to do to dress the garden and to keep it, to guard it, to preserve it.

Do you think beauty can be bought with money? The remnant church, in its final attack on the fortress of Babylon, will be characterized by simplicity—simplicity in dress, diet, education, worship, and in every phase of life.

In the dream that the Lord's servant had a hundred years ago in Battle Creek, she saw the people of God starting out traveling with loaded wagons. As they advanced, the path grew narrow, and they had to leave the wagons and go on horses. Finally, it became so narrow that they had to leave the horses and proceed on foot. Then for safety, they had to remove their shoes and stockings and go on bare feet until the path was stained with blood.

What does this mean? When you study it, you will find that it points to economy and sacrifice rather than extravagance. You will find that it points to simplicity rather than the increase of facilities and ways of spending time and money. You will find that it calls for increased labor, more physical exertion on our part and more dependence on God.

I am so thankful that God has given His people a positive message of reform in diet, dress, education, and reform in every phase of life. What for? That we may be a *simple* people, a *humble* people, a *modest* people, a *pure* people. This is what Jesus died to purchase for Himself; to purify unto Himself a *peculiar* people, zealous of good works.

As we think of these things, let each heart examine itself. Let us not try to judge our fellow men. God has never made us judges. But deep within our hearts, let us say, Dear Lord, am I worshiping the gods of Babylon? Have I been taken in with the spirit of this extravagant and indulgent age? Are my wishes, my longing, my effort directed to filling my stomach or satisfying some other physical desire? Have I become infected and affected with a greed for gold, either to hoard or to spend extravagantly? Or have I learned, am I learning, to walk with Jesus the ever-narrowing path of self-denial and to rejoice in it because here I find fellowship with my Lord.

To enjoy, to save, that we may give, rather than that we may hoard or spend extravagantly, this is a joy. To enter into physical labor not because we have to but because we choose to, that we may have fellowship with Jesus and develop these physical bodies in harmony with His will, this is joy. To choose the modest way, the simple way in every phase of life, is the happy way with Christ. It crucifies the natural disposition and develops those traits of character which will fit us for the society of saints and angels.

May we bow our heads?

Precious Lord, rightly interpret to our hearts the things we have studied tonight. May the Holy Spirit apply them specifically in our inmost souls. And as we behold the cross, may we indeed pour contempt on all our pride.

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