

Caging the Beast Within

Exodus 20:14

Introduction

Turn in your Bible to the book of Proverbs, chapter 29. I want to introduce our sermon today with a verse of scripture that is often misunderstood. In fact, it was brought to my attention again recently. It deals with the authority of scripture, and although it does, it is easy to overlook that fact. Look at verse 18a, which says,

Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained . . .

I have often heard the word for “vision” used in reference to goals. A church should have goals, if a church has vision. People are to have goals and objectives, if they are a people who have vision. A church and people are to have personal and corporate goals.

However, that is not the word that is used in this verse. In fact, the Hebrew word is “chazown,” which literally means, “revelation from God”.

Now let us read it again with that translation.

Where there is no [revelation from God], the people are unrestrained . . .

The words “the people are unrestrained” may be translated “perish” in your version, but means, “the people are without restraint”.

That is a powerful thought. If you take from a congregation or from a society, the authority of declared revelation; if you rob a country of declared truth, people are without restraint; people do anything; we do anything we care to.

It is interesting, as we continue our study of the Ten Commandments that God has chosen to give to us by way of revelation, if you take out of our society those ten commands, you will have a people and a church without restraint.

Four ways the authority of scripture is attacked

In our society and in our small town, the authority of scripture is under attack. There are four fronts on which this battle is fought; four ways in which the authority of scripture is attacked.

Public opinion

1. The first is simply and obviously, public opinion. Public opinion will attack the authority of scripture because when they are without it, they can do whatever they want.

I read an interesting survey recently. It stated that seven hundred people – only seven hundred people – produce seventy-five percent of everything that is on television. Television is where the public espouses its views.

These seven hundred people were surveyed by a national organization, and some rather startling facts were revealed. If you have wondered why television is what it is, the results of this survey tells us why:

- Eighty-four percent of the seven hundred people never attend or very seldom attend a church or a synagogue. In other words, they are without revelation from God because they are apart from the propositional truth that should be declared.
- Eighty-four percent say that government should have no laws regarding moral behavior.
- Fifty-five percent say that adultery is perfectly moral.
- Ninety-five percent say that homosexuality is not wrong.

When the authority of this Bible, upon which our authority hangs, is removed from public opinion, the people become without restraint.

Accommodating theology

2. There is another attack on the authority of scripture, in addition to public opinion. It is accommodating theology.

Not only is there confusion in our society, but there is confusion in the pulpit; confusion among people who say that they believe the words of scripture or believe in God. My friend, if you say you

believe in God and do not believe in the authority of the Bible, then you are confused.

There are people around the world who have cut from the heart of the Bible certain passages and declared them fables and myths. They have taken other passages from scripture and declared them not to be from God. To them, I would declare the words that John wrote in the final chapter of the Bible; that is, Revelation, chapter 22, verses 18 and 19,

. . . to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from [eternal life]. . .

Those are pretty strong words. God does not want His authority tampered with.

So public opinion and accommodating theology attack the authority of scripture. There is confusion in the pulpit, and as a result, there is confusion in the pew.

Christian opinion

3. Thirdly, Christian opinion often attacks the authority of scripture.

If you talk to enough Christians, you will find enough to disagree about.

I have a plaque hanging in my study, kind of over in the corner so you do not see it when you first walk in, that has a lot of truth to it. It says, "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there will be disagreement as to what the Bible teaches."

Opinion is not our basis for life, however, revelation is. We are to pursue the teachings of scripture, to discern those teachings, and then, to live by them. Otherwise, we live confused.

This problem is not new. If you go back to the first church in Corinth, you find that they were divided right down the middle because they had a man who had married his mother. Right in the middle of the church there was an incestuous relationship going on. And they were not excising that person; they were not asking him to either repent or leave. So, Paul had to write, in I Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 1,

It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of

such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles . . .

There is confused opinion when there is no authority of scripture.

Delayed consequences

4. There is a fourth way in which the authority of scripture is attacked, and that is, delayed consequences.

Ecclesiastes, chapter 8, verse 11, says,

Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men . . . are given full to do evil.

We can fool ourselves, and our society can be fooled, into thinking that because God's judgment does not fall immediately, there must not be a judgement at all.

Robert Ingersoll is an example of this thought. He was a man who used to stand on a stage before thousands of people and take his watch off. He would hold it in the air and say, "If there is a God, let Him strike me dead in thirty seconds."

He would then count the time down, "Twenty-nine, twenty-eight, twenty-seven . . .".

The crowd would gasp. When Ingersoll would get to the end of the count, "Ten, nine, eight, . . . three, two, one," he would say, "see, there is no God."

It is the delay of consequence that fools people into thinking there is no penalty for sin. They think, "If I violate the Bible and nothing happens to me, it must be all right to violate it."

So opinion, as a result of delayed consequences, also attacks the authority of scripture.

So, what do we have today, men and women? We have what one man writes about in a fantastic little book called, *The Integrity Crises*. Warren Wiersbe, the author, says,

For 1,900 years, the church has been telling our world to repent of its sins and to live pure. Today, 1,900 years later, the world is looking at the church and saying, "Repent of your sins and live pure."

For 1,900 years, the message has been suspect. Today, men and women, the messenger is suspect.

Why? Because there is no longer an authority of scripture in the home, in the church, in society.

I never thought I would be put into such a boiling cauldron as I have been since starting our series of studies on the Ten Commandments as we go through the book of Exodus. Yet, I have discovered that the writings of scripture deal with every aspect of life. God has spoken directly to such things as moral purity. In fact, He selected ten commands, that we have been studying in Exodus, chapter 20.

The Command – You Shall Not Commit Adultery

One of the Ten Commandments is very specific concerning moral purity. In verse 14 of Exodus, chapter 20, God says,

You shall not commit adultery.

There is a period on that verse – not a question mark, a period.

This command is expanded in the New Testament, with other words used in the original language.

The New Testament counterpart for the Old Testament word “adultery” is the Greek word “moichos,” as we see in I Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 9. This is illicit thoughts, activities, and relationships involving those who are married.

The New Testament Greek word for “fornication” is “porneia”. This is immorality or illicit thoughts, activities, relationships among unmarried people. Paul will tell us in I Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 18, to flee this. We get our word “pornography” from this word.

So, as far back as the beginning of written revelation from God, we have a declaration toward moral purity. We are told:

You shall not commit adultery.

How the Sin of Adultery Invades Our Lives

Now one thing that I want to do today is help us discover how this sin of adultery invades our lives.

Let me say from the beginning that we are all impacted by this potential sin. In fact, according to Matthew, chapter 5, verse 28, Jesus Christ says,

But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

James even expands it further, in chapter 4, verse 4a, when he says,

You adulteresses [and adulterers], do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? . . .

In other words, adultery covers a wide spectrum. We are going to deal primarily with a moral spectrum, but it knocks on the door of everyone. I realize the gravity of this kind of sermon and the way in which it may impact my own life.

So, how does this sin invade our lives? Let me give several ways.

Adultery is an ever present capability in a person’s flesh

1. First, the sin of adultery is an ever present capability in a person’s flesh.

Galatians, chapter 5, verse 19 (KJV), says,

Now the works of the flesh are . . . adultery, fornication . . .

I want to lay the simple foundation that we recognize – within us lies a beast. It is unwise to call it anything less.

The apostle Paul said, in Romans, chapter 7, verse 24,

Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

In other words, “Who will set me free from this beast within?”

There is the capability in all of us, ladies and gentlemen, to do heinous crimes against our God. It is an ever present capability in our flesh. So let us call it what it is – let us call it, “the beast,” and let us call ourselves, “dormant beasts”. Okay? There is no pride in this. Let us call it what it is.

I read a story recently that was rather interesting. Dr. Howard, a great expositor in Australia, was preaching at his church and it was his typical approach to call sin, “sin”. We need more of that today. An officer of the church approached him and said, “Dr. Howard, don’t you understand that by being so specific, you could cause problems. In fact, let’s suggest that you call things, not necessarily ‘sin,’ but refer to them as ‘mistakes’.”

Dr. Howard got up from behind his desk and said, “Follow me, sir.”

He went down to the basement of his church, into a utility room, and pulled a bottle off a shelf. He wiped the dust off of the bottle and showed the man

the label. Dr. Howard then said, “The label obviously reads, ‘Rat Poison’. What you are suggesting is that we take this label off and replace it with one that reads ‘Peppermint Candy’.”

The point was made. To call it anything other than what it is, actually makes it more dangerous.

So, let us begin with ourselves and call ourselves what we are in our flesh. As Galatians, chapter 5, verse 19 (KJV), says,

Now the works of the flesh are . . . adultery, fornication . . .

There is a beast within all of us that must be caged. We are going to work toward that end.

Adultery is an evil creation in a person’s mind

2. The second way this sin of adultery invades our lives is that it is an evil creation in a person’s mind.

Jesus Christ, of course, made this clear, in Matthew, chapter 5, verse 28, when He said it does not necessarily have to be an act, it can be a thought. In other words, it can be a creation in the mind.

This sin can be a silent, secret thing that no one else knows about except you and your thoughts. And that which is a capability, then becomes a creation in the mind, where it begins.

Adultery is the erotic culmination in a person’s senses

3. This sin of adultery which is a capability in the flesh, turns to a creation in the mind, and then, thirdly, finds culmination – erotic culmination – in a person’s senses.

We are given the beginning of David’s decline in a verse of scripture that says,

. . . and . . . he saw . . . (II Samuel 11:2)

The first words recorded from Samson’s mouth, in Judges, chapters 14 to 17, were the words,

. . . I saw a woman . . . (Judges 14:2)

We need to be very careful, men and women, of what we see, what we hear, and what we allow to influence us. This is especially true on the basis of the survey that I mentioned – we need to watch what we allow to invade our living rooms and what we listen to. Why? Because in the pathway that leads to

destruction, there is the sensual, there are the senses that find their culmination in evil deeds.

So beware of what we see and hear. When we see something or listen to something that does not honor God, take the advice of the apostle Paul, who said, “Flee fornication.”

Run! Get out of there! Get moving! Do not flirt with it. Do not cuddle it. Move! Run! It is very clear.

Adultery is the enveloping control of a person’s future

4. If the erotic culmination of this sin of adultery in a person’s senses finds activity, then fourthly, it is the enveloping control of a person’s future.

Be very careful of what you allow to invade your senses. In the later years of David’s life, he says in Psalm, chapter 101, verse 3a (KJV),

I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes . . .

I was twelve years old before my family got our first television. Before we ever turned it on, my father wrote on a piece of paper that he taped to the screen,

I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes . . .

That irritated my brothers and I, as well as ruined a lot of programs! He was trying to instill in us the necessity of discernment and the necessity of making that kind of commitment.

Ultimately, if we allow this sin to invade our lives, it will control our lives, as we are going to see in a moment in Proverbs. It is a battle. If you feel like you are the only one who faces that battle today, you are wrong. It is a battle in the life of every believer who pursues Jesus Christ. So take heart.

I will never forget sitting in the office of one of the most godly professors that I had in my seminary experience. He was a man approaching seventy years of age. He impacted my life like no other. We were sitting there and the news had just erupted of a man in spiritual leadership who had fallen morally. He was exhorting me, as I viewed the ministry of moral purity. I kind of chuckled and said to him, “Boy it’ll sure be nice to turn seventy.”

We laughed. He did not flunk me; he laughed. Then he looked me in the eye and said, “The older I get, the more difficult the battle becomes.”

I said, “Thanks a lot!”

That is the truth. Why? Because the flesh is not laid off at sixty or seventy or eighty, we take it to the grave. And while we are in the process through life, we cage it; we discipline it; we guard it; we watch it, lest it control our lives.

How the Sin of Adultery Affects Our Lives

If we allow the sin of adultery into our lives, what are the results?

Turn to Proverbs, chapter 5. Let us take a look at one who fell. What are the results? How does it impact a life that is given to its control? I am going to give you three clear points.

Immorality defrauds your husband or wife

1. First, immorality defrauds your husband or wife. I will add to that, if you are currently unmarried, immorality defrauds your future husband or future wife.

Immorality is a thief. It steals the delight of discovery from that one you will marry. It takes from that one you are married to and it gives, in a defrauding way, to someone else. God never intended that.

Let us take a look at what the scripture says in chapter 5, verses 7 through 18 of Proverbs.

Now then, my sons, listen to me and do not depart from the words of my mouth.

Keep your way far from her [the seductress] and do not go near the door of her house,

or you give your vigor to others and your years to the cruel one;

and strangers will be filled with your strength and your hard-earned goods will go to the house of an alien;

(Do you see what a thief immorality is?)

and you groan at your final end, when your flesh and your body are consumed;

and you say, “How I have hated instruction! And my heart spurned reproof!

“I have not listened to the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to my instructors!”

“I was almost in utter ruin in the midst of the assembly and congregation.”

Drink water from your own cistern and fresh water from your own well.

Should your springs be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets?

Let them be yours alone and not for strangers with you.

Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth.

Do not take from your spouse what is theirs. Do not allow someone to steal. Do not give it away.

F. B. Meyer, a great teacher of scripture, said that for a man to be involved with another woman, or a woman to be involved in the life of another man, is like a bank robber coming and robbing a bank. It is money that does not belong to him. But in the confines of the arrangement that God has designed by His delight and for our delight, it is like putting deposits into a bank, making investments in a relationship that will last for life.

Immorality defrauds; it steals.

Immorality deceives your intellect

2. Secondly, immorality deceives your intellect.

I will refer to this, not just in adultery alone, but in anything that is immoral; any activity that violates the authority of God’s scripture; anything that is sin according to His book – it deceives; it depreciates your intellect.

The most classic illustration of this is the life of Samson. Samson is immorally involved in the life of Delilah. Delilah is on the payroll of the Philistines. She has been promised something like 11,000 shekels of silver if she can discover his source of strength. So, she comes to Samson and says, “Samson, what is the source of your power and your strength?”

Samson toys with her and says, “If you bind me with seven fresh ropes, my strength will be gone.”

So the next morning, he is awakened by Delilah, who says,

. . . The Philistines are upon you, Samson! . . . (Judges 16:9)

Samson says, "What's this? Seven fresh cords about me."

He snaps them and takes the lives of the Philistines.

Now Samson, what do you do? You wring her neck! She has tried to take your life. I mean, whew, think!

What does he do though? The scriptures tell us that she comes to him at a later time and says, "Samson, you didn't tell me the truth. Tell me now what will take your strength."

He again toys with her and says, "If you weave my hair into seven braids and pin it, that will do it."

The next morning, Delilah says once again,

. . . The Philistines are upon you, Samson! . . . (Judges 16:14)

Samson says, "Say, what is this? Seven braids of hair with a pin."

Now imagine you are Samson. What do you do? It is a clear situation. She is history.

No. What is the problem? I will tell you this because you and I can get involved in the same thing. Immorality robs a person of the ability to discern.

Have you ever considered the thought that personal purity provides a foundation for right decisions? Have you ever thought, "How in the *world* could that man do something like that? How could someone be so *stupid*?"

I will tell you how. They are involved in things that have entrapped their intellect and it is depreciating their ability to discern right from wrong; to discern what is dangerous and what is safe.

One of the greatest reasons to live a pure life is to be able to make decisions that honor God and protect our lives.

Let me point out what Proverbs says along that line, in chapter 6, verse 32,

The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense . . .

Look at chapter 7, verse 7 of Proverbs,

And I saw among the naive, and discerned among the youths a young man lacking sense,

There it is. It is not until you and I repent of immorality and sin and come back into fellowship with Jesus Christ that we are given again that

foundation for making decisions that will honor Him. But, if possible, let me warn those who are involved, when you are in that situation, you may make grave errors of judgment because the foundation for judgment, in part, is personal purity.

As a young boy, my older brother and I slipped out of bed one night and went to the bathroom. My younger brother was in the crib and my youngest brother had not been born yet. My older brother was old enough to get on the counter in the bathroom. I was not tall enough for that yet, so he handled the job. Now, do you remember the children's aspirin that tasted delicious? I cannot remember the brand name, although it was a unique name, but they were orange, just like candy. We would fake headaches just to get them. Well, on this particular night, my brother and I slipped into the bathroom, and I am sure it was his idea! He climbed up on the counter and got a brand new bottle of those aspirin, opened it, and we ate them all. We then went back to bed.

My mother woke, some time later. We are not even sure how much later, but she went into the bathroom and saw the empty bottle lying in the sink. She came rushing into our room, where my brother and I were fast asleep. The next thing I remember is laying on my side staring at the waist of the biggest nurse I have ever seen in my life as she pumped my stomach. For me, that sleep could have led to death; it could have been disastrous. I desperately needed intervention. That is the point.

For some of us involved in immorality; doing things that do not honor God, there may need to be intervention. It may come in the form of this sermon or a close friend who is warning you. However, for some, the only thing that may ever wake them up is something that is a near disaster.

The best way to learn not to eat more than two aspirin is not by experience, but by instruction. The best way for you and I to learn that immorality defeats, defrauds, and deceives is not by experience, but by instruction.

Immorality destroys your character

3. Let me give a third point of the way in which immorality affects lives. It defrauds, it deceives, and it destroys your character.

This is referring to an unrepentant person who refuses to give the immorality up, whatever it might be.

Listen to these words in Proverbs, chapter 7, verses 24 through 27,

Now therefore, my sons, listen to me, and pay attention to the words of my mouth.

Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths.

For many are the [I will insert the word “moral” here – moral victims] victims she has cast down, and numerous are all her slain.

Her house is the way to Sheol [the grave], descending to the chambers of death.

Let me say that he is referring to immorality with a woman, but this can refer to anything that is immoral – if we pursue it, its steps lead to death.

Immorality leads to the death of what? It leads to the death of our character. The engagement of immorality may take our character unless we come to Jesus Christ and repent.

We need to call it sin. And I want to stop at this point, before we get to the solutions, and say that there is a word in scripture that is beautiful. It is the word, “forgiveness”.

Isaiah writes, in chapter 1, verse 18,

“Come now, and let us reason together,” says the Lord, “though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow . . .”

In other words, the Lord says, “Come, let’s talk together, though your sins have left a deep scarlet stain, I can wash them as white as snow.”

I John, chapter 1, says,

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So, if I admit it is sinful; if I confess my sin, He is faithful and just to forgive my sin and to cleanse me from all – ALL – unrighteousness.

We begin, however, by calling it sin; by admitting before God that we have violated His command.

What would you think of a doctor who found a tumor within your body and said, “Take two aspirin and come back next week.”? That would not be an appropriate response to what he found.

What would you think of a fireman who responded to a three-alarm blaze by saying, “Well, it’ll probably burn itself out soon enough. Just wait.”

What would you think of a police officer who arrived on the scene of a bank robbery and said, “Well, boys will be boys.” That is an inappropriate response to what has happened.

Last week, my children found some paint that we had not stored high enough. I should have learned from the aspirin! I was not there when my wife discovered the three little Michelangelos out in the garage, but I felt the earth move beneath my feet in my office! There was an appropriate response!

That is what God wants from us. Let us just take a look at what this stuff is, and call it what it is, and admit it.

Application – Overcoming This Sin In Our Lives!

When we confess our sins, it opens the way, by His forgiveness, to do three things. Victory precedes all three. Let me give them to you.

Victory over this sin begins with a determination to abstain

1. Victory over this sin begins with a determination to abstain.

Put this sin down. It is not going to be easy. It means a persuasion in our soul that we will *NOT* violate, by the grace of God, His command. It begins with a determination and a commitment. It means simply saying, “God, I’m not going to make any excuses about my sin – *no* excuses. I’ll obey You. I’ll call it what it is without any excuse and, by Your grace, never do it again.”

Some of the most hilarious things I have ever read are the excuses that people who were involved in a car accident wrote to their insurance companies to try to talk their way out of paying the claim. You may have heard these, but let me give some of them to you.

These are classic:

- Some guy writes, “An invisible car came out of nowhere, struck my car, and vanished.” (I am sure they believed that one downtown!)
- Listen to this one, “I have been driving my car for forty years when I fell asleep at the wheel and had the accident.” (It is about time he pulled over!)

- Listen to what this guy wrote, “The pedestrian had no idea which direction to go, so I ran over him.”
- Another person wrote, “Suddenly a tree was there where no tree had been before.”
- This one is the one that I love the most, “I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law, and headed over the embankment.”

Excuses – aren’t we good at them? We can really go to God and say, “Oh, listen, I’m sorry I made a mistake. I flubbed up.”

No excuses. Victory begins with a determination to abstain.

Victory is strengthened by discipline

2. Secondly, victory is strengthened by discipline.

David wrote, in Psalm, chapter 119, verse 11,
Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.

That is discipline.

Have you ever found it easy to sit down and memorize a verse of scripture? Absolutely not. I have never talked to anyone who said that it was easy. But it is part of the discipline.

David understood the value of it. It is a discipline. David said in Psalm, chapter 101, verse 3a (KJV),

I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes . . .
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In other words, “I will watch what I see; I will be careful what I allow into my life.”

Let me say a word to every mom and dad. At this point in your children’s lives, be careful that you help discipline them; that you help them create a sense of what is right and wrong. Be aware of what they face – they are not in the same world you were in. They face incredible temptation. It has changed even from my day. “My Heart Beats for You, Betty Lou” is not on the top ten anymore. Now, it is, “Tonight’s the Night.” That is the theme.

Teenagers were surveyed and the results are unbelievable to me. After having been a youth pastor in a former church, this has just grabbed me. Thirty-six percent of all the teenagers interviewed could not

say with any sense of authority that relations outside of marriage were wrong. Is it any wonder that the next statistic is true? Forty-six percent of “churched” teenagers have given away their purity.

I challenge every father and mother to be aware their teenagers are facing incredible pressure and to get involved.

Victory is assured by dependence

3. Thirdly, victory is assured by dependence.

Galatians, chapter 5, verse 16, says,

. . . walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

This does not say, “get five minutes of the Spirit,” or “get a taste of the Spirit”. Paul is saying to, “WALK by the Spirit”.

The Greek word for “walk” is “peripateo,” which gives this phrase the meaning, “all that surrounds my life, as I go through my life, will be depending on the Spirit of God”. It is that kind of life that will protect me from fulfilling the lusts and the desires of the flesh.

Men and women, let us apply that verse of scripture. This holiness will never sneak into your life. Moral purity is *not* a coincidence, it is a pursuit.

Have you ever asked yourself, “How can I be seen as distinctively different in the world today? How can I, as a Christian, shine like a light at the job and in the neighborhood?”

This is probably one of the greatest emerging ways – moral purity. It makes our relationship with God more apparent than ever before to say, “I will live a pure life to the glory of God.”

We, collectively, will live lives so clean that the world will look at us and say, “There is something different. There is hope for me.”