

“Anathema”
Exodus 22:18-20
(Preached at Trinity, April 20, 2008)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We’ve been looking at the section of Exodus known as the “Book of the Covenant.” It covers **Chapters 21-24** of Exodus. As we’ve seen, this section of the Book of Exodus God begins to give a lengthy application to the Ten Commandments. It contains civil laws based upon the Moral law. The Ten Commandments is a statement of God’s moral law; what God requires of men. The “Book of the Covenant” gives instructions of what to do when the Law is broken.
2. The Book of the Covenant gives us practical application to the Moral Law in the daily lives of God’s people. Although this section of Scripture deals with civil law as it applied specifically to Israel it also has practical application for God’s people today
3. These chapters cover a wide range of situations.
We’ve looked at the subject of masters and slaves and of how slaves should be treated.
We’ve looked at matters of personal injury.
We’ve looked at how to apply the Law with regard to personal property. These passages are speaking of justice as it ought to be.
4. Last week we looked at **Verses 16-17**, a section dealing with the matter of sex before marriage. God gives us rules as to how we should live. There are only two courses of life. We will either live God’s way or we will live according to our feelings. We will allow God to direct our lives or we will seek to satisfy our lusts.
5. Tonight as we look at the next passage we are shaken by its bluntness. We might be offended that the Bible looks at such things, especially **Verse 19**. The Bible is open and direct as it describes human depravity.
Genesis 6:5 – “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.”
Genesis 13:13 – “But the men of Sodom *were* wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.”
Romans 3:10-18 – “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹² They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. ¹³ Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips: ¹⁴ Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness: ¹⁵ Their feet *are* swift to shed blood: ¹⁶ Destruction and misery *are* in their ways: ¹⁷ And the way of peace have they not known: ¹⁸ There is no fear of God before their eyes.”
6. These are things that lost human beings have done. These are things that still go on today. Yes they are exceedingly wicked. Human beings are capable of doing exceedingly wicked things.
7. As we look at **Verses 18-20** you might ask what relationship they have to one another. They are three distinctly different sins but they share a couple things in common. Tonight I want to direct your attention to these fear sins.

I. First, they share a common motive

Each of these sins is a repudiation of God – a complete denial of God. Each involve a false worship

A. **Verse 18** – “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”

1. God is the Creator, the source of all things.
 - a. All things are under His sovereign dominion
 - b. God has ordained whatsoever comes to pass
2. The Hebrew word קַשָּׁפָה (Kashaph) – refers to witchcraft or sorcery
 - a. This is the same word used to describe the Egyptian sorcerers
 - b. They dealt with the occult through Satanic rituals. They told fortunes, communicated with the dead, conducted magic
 - c. Witchcraft and the occult is a direct assault upon God’s sovereignty. It is seeking power and control beyond God.
3. In our generation we tend to see such things as harmless
 - Disney was full of magic and witchcraft – Fantasia, Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, Mary Poppins, Bedknobs and Broomsticks.
 - Then there’s the Harry Potter phenomena.

Isaiah 5:20 – “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

4. God has something to say about such things
 - a. God doesn’t allow us to treat witchcraft and magic as cute or harmless. He doesn’t allow us to animate it into a cartoon and teach it to our children.
 - b. Scripture is clear on this

Deuteronomy 18:10-12 – “There shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, *or* that useth divination, *or* an observer of times, *or* an enchanter, *or* a witch, ¹¹ *Or* a charmer, *or* a consulter with familiar spirits, *or* a wizard, *or* a necromancer. ¹² For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.”

Galatians 5:19-21 – “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰ Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹ Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

B. **Verse 19** – “Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death.”

1. This is so vile it makes us shutter with revulsion
2. It is repeated with greater detail in **Leviticus**

Leviticus 20:15-16 – “And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. ¹⁶ And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them.”

3. Human beings were created in the image of God. We were created high above the animals.
4. Human sexuality was created as a means of procreation – of extending that image. Union with an animal is a vile repudiation of God’s natural order. It is a complete disregard for God. It is a high act of rebellion against God.
5. Some of the pagan religions included this practice as part of their worship thinking it would help them to unite with their gods.
Again, it is a complete repudiation of the one true God.
God’s curse is upon such nations.

Lev18:23-25 – “Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it *is* confusion. ²⁴ ¶ Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: ²⁵ And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.”

C. **Verse 20** – “He that sacrificeth unto *any* god, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.”

1. As with the two previous verses this was an utter repudiation of God. God is the one true God. All worship is to be directed to Him alone.
Exodus 20:3 – “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”
2. To offer sacrifice unto another god is to declare that the one true God is not worthy of worship

II. They share a common penalty

A. It would appear that this is just a simple case of capital punishment

1. We saw a list of such penalties in **Chapter 21**
Exodus 21:12 – “He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.”
Exodus 21:15 – “And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.”
Exodus 21:16 – “And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.”
2. The result of these crimes was far worse than death

B. Those guilty of such a denial of God were utterly cut off

Verse 20 – “He that sacrificeth unto *any* god, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.”

1. **חָרָם** (charam) – to utterly destroy, to exterminate
It also carries the meaning, to consecrate, devote, dedicate
2. Those guilty of such crimes were to be utterly destroyed. They were dedicated for destruction.
ESV “shall be devoted to destruction.”
3. We can see this with the city of Jericho
Joshua 6:17-18 – “And the city shall be accursed, *even* it, and all that *are* therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that *are* with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. ¹⁸ And ye, in any wise keep *yourselves* from the accursed thing, lest ye make *yourselves* accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.”
4. This has eternal consequences – Those guilty of casting God aside will be accursed.

5. Paul used such an expression
Galatians 1:8-9 – “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”
ἀνάθεμα - a person or thing doomed to destruction, a man accursed, devoted to the direst of woes

- III. This has particular application for those who claim to be dedicated to God
- A. These sins were being applied to the Children of Israel.
1. They had a knowledge of God. They had received his Word through Moses. God held them to a strict accountability.
 2. God holds us to a strict accountability. We belong to Him.
- B. It is a dangerous thing to sin against knowledge
1. This is the essence of our Lord’s warning about sinning against the Holy Spirit – it is sinning against knowledge.
Mark 3:28-29 – “Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: ²⁹ But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:”
 2. There are many sins people are redeemed from
 God is merciful and forgives all who turn to Him through Christ Jesus
1 Corinthians 6:9-11 – “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, ¹⁰ Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”
- C. But it is a fearful thing to know of Christ and then turn away
1. I’m not talking about those who have been saved – justified. I’m talking about those who have learned of Christ and made a pledge to follow Him but then turn away.
 2. There are millions today who have falsely professed Christ – those who profess Christ with their lips but their hearts are not turned towards Him.
 3. It is fearful to walk with Christ for a season and then turn away.
Hebrews 6:4-6 – “For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, ⁵ And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, ⁶ If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame.”

Hebrews 10:24-27 – “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: ²⁵ Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. ²⁶ ¶ For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”

John Bunyan in *The Pilgrim's Progress* told of a man in an Iron Cage

Then said Christian to the man, What art thou? The man answered, I am what I was not once.

CHRISTIAN: What wast thou once?

THE MAN: The man said, I was once a fair and flourishing professor, Luke 8:13, both in mine own eyes, and also in the eyes of others: I once was, as I thought, fair for the celestial city, and had

then even joy at the thoughts that I should get thither.

CHRISTIAN: Well, but what art thou now?

THE MAN: I am now a man of despair, and am shut up in it, as in this iron cage. I cannot get out; Oh now I cannot!

CHRISTIAN: But how camest thou into this condition?

THE MAN: I left off to watch and be sober: I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts; I sinned against the light of the word, and the goodness of God; I have grieved the Spirit, and he is gone; I tempted the devil, and he is come to me; I have provoked God to anger, and he has left me: I have

so hardened my heart, that I cannot repent.

Then said Christian to the Interpreter, But is there no hope for such a man as this? Ask him, said the Interpreter.

CHRISTIAN: Then said Christian, Is there no hope, but you must be kept in the iron cage of despair?

THE MAN: No, none at all.

CHRISTIAN: Why, the Son of the Blessed is very pitiful.

THE MAN: I have crucified him to myself afresh, Heb. 6:6; I have despised his person, Luke 19:14; I have despised his righteousness; I have counted his blood an unholy thing; I have done despite to the spirit of grace, Heb. 10:29: therefore I have shut myself out of all the promises and there now remains to me nothing but threatenings, dreadful threatenings, faithful threatenings of certain judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour me as an adversary.

CHRISTIAN: For what did you bring yourself into this condition?

THE MAN: For the lusts, pleasures, and profits of this world; in the enjoyment of which I did then promise myself much delight: but now every one of those things also bite me, and gnaw me like a burning worm.

CHRISTIAN: But canst thou not now repent and turn?

THE MAN: God hath denied me repentance. His word gives me no encouragement to believe; yea, himself hath shut me up in this iron cage: nor can all the men in the world let me out. Oh eternity! eternity! how shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet with in eternity?

INTERPRETER: Then said the Interpreter to Christian, Let this man's misery be remembered by thee, and be an everlasting caution to thee.

Conclusion:

1. Is it possible for a Christian to be cast off? No!
2. Is this a warning that we should heed? Yes! We must never be guilty of presumption. We are to watch and be sober.
Never play games with Christ. Never play the harlot with other lovers – always turning to the world to satisfy your desires.
3. How do you know that you haven't committed this sin? Check your vital signs.
Is Christ altogether lovely in your life? Do you love Him? Do you have a hunger to please Him? Then you haven't committed this sin.
4. Have you delayed receiving Christ? You've been taught about Him. You know your need of Him, but you've delayed. Do not presume. The longer you wait you become harder and harder.