

“A STUBBORN COW LEFT ALONE”

Hosea 4:15-19

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

INTRODUCTION

Be careful who you “hang out with.” “Stay out of trouble.” Do parents ever say such things to their children? How about: “Don’t let your friends lead you astray”? The Bible says: “Bad companions corrupt good manners.” (I Cor. 15:33)

Sometimes teens are stubborn; so are parents. So are Christians!

Stop being spiritually stubborn. Turn from your ways that God does not approve and let Him have His way in your life. [Illus: Pull a dog into the bath tub. Stick a cat into a moving car.]

I. DON’T FOLLOW YOUR FRIEND TO EVIL (15) Judah—don’t follow Israel—do not share their guilt.

A. Avoid Places of compromise

1. Gilgal—Not the Gilgal mentioned in the Joshua story; this one was evidently 7 miles north of Bethel. It was a prophetic center under Elijah and Elisha (II K. 2:1; 4:38). Now it had become, due to its location so close to Bethel, a center of false worship (9:15; 12:11; Amos 4:4; 5:5).
2. Beth-Aven (Bethel—“house of God”, under the mock code name “house of evil” or “vanity.” Why? It was one of the two chief cult centers set up by Jeroboam I.

B. Avoid Actions of compromise: Don’t take the oath (cf. Deut. 6:13; 10:20).
False worship gains no favor with God—only contempt.

II. LEAVE THE STUBBORN ONE ALONE (16-19)

- A. A Stubborn Heifer (16) [The calves they worshiped were a picture of themselves! Israel withdrew from the yoke and pulled backward.] **Even so, many hate “the straight and narrow way”.**
1. Restricted: in their hearts and lives (God won’t bless and release them.)
 2. Not released like a lamb: “Can the Lord now pasture them?” *The broad place is the place of blessing for the obedient and responsive!* (Cf. Is. 30:23)
- B. A Hopeless Sinner (17)
1. Joined to idols: attached, enslaved, controlled (See I Cor. 12:2). **They are under a spell, bewitched! Wholly given over.**

2. Given Over (Cf. Rom. 1:24, 26, 28) Sinners don't want to be tormented by conscience or God's warnings. **When left alone, the soul's numbness increases.**
[Illus: Falling asleep when extremely cold—never to awaken again!]
- C. A Shackled Slave (18)
1. Liquor—is gone; they finished drinking and now **are under its influence** (under the influence).
 2. Immoral Behavior. *This is an emphatic expression: "Being immoral, they were immoral."*
 3. Shame—those who should be the "shields" of the people (leaders) have become lovers of shame—shameful behavior due to the sinfulness of it.
- D. A Startled Sufferer (19)
1. They are Blown Away—"the wind wraps them in its wings." *This expression likely has reference to the Assyrian captivity and all that accompanied it. **Contrast Ex. 19:4; Dt. 32:11 where God's people are borne by the Lord as on eagles' wings.***
 2. Awakened to sin—eventually they will sense their shame; this is the first step to their recovery. They and their leaders had **loved shame** (v. 18) in their worship of false gods and their sacrifices to them; **but in captivity they give up their idols.**
HOW WE NEED TO BE ASHAMED OF SEEKING ANYTHING OUTSIDE OF THE LORD.

CONCLUSION

What we learn here:

- God hates sin! We cannot compromise with it.
- God's heart is wounded by sin.
- God loves the sinner.
- God makes a way to be reconciled to Himself.
- ARE YOU SAVED? ARE YOU RIGHT WITH THE LORD?

Try to help your friend do right—don't follow him in his sin! If he stubbornly refuses, *leave him alone until he is ready to listen.* **Let God deal with him.**

Be on Guard; flee youthful lusts.

IF YOU ARE A STUBBORN COW (HEIFER), RECOGNIZE:

- Your unnecessary restriction
- Your slavery
- Your shame
- Your ruin
- Your suffering.

BE ASHAMED AND REPENT.