

## “God Knows” – Pr Jim Sprenkle, February 20, 2021

- I. **James 1:12-18** – The Epistle from St. James previously read.
- II. **In many parts of our world, sinkholes are a part of life...**
  - a. I've told this story before, but when we went to Guatemala in 2010 for a mission trip, we spent the first night in Guatemala City.
    - i. We happened to be just a short distance from one of the largest sinkholes to ever open up – 65 feet wide and 330 feet deep...
    - ii. Like all sinkholes, this one caused the ground to collapse suddenly; but in this case it also sucked land, electricity poles, a three-story factory building, and even a security guard into the pit.
    - iii. I regret not walking over to see it firsthand, but maybe you have seen one up close.
      1. The thing about sinkholes is that everything appears to be normal.... Cars can be parked on a street day after day, then all the sudden, the asphalt caves in and cars disappear into a gigantic hole.
      2. Everybody says, “Wow, that hole came out of nowhere.”
        - a. But they're wrong.... Sure, the hole surprises people, but the process that led to it has gone on for days, or months, or even years.
        - b. The erosion taking place under the ground was not visible, but it was going on the whole time.
  - b. Sinkholes remind us of two things:
    - i. First, something can look good on the outside when under the surface, major problems have been going on for years... and at any moment disaster could strike
    - ii. Second, we make daily choices to give in to temptation and sin which can lead to sudden disaster.<sup>1</sup>
- II. **Our reading in James outlines the effects of our choices.**
  - a. I often use this passage as an example of the step-by-step process of going against God's will
  - b. James 1:14-15 says, “<sup>14</sup> But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. <sup>15</sup> Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”
    - i. So, the process is desire, temptation, sin and death.
  - c. Think about what it means to be “lured...by...desire” – why do you think it's called a “fishing lure”?
    - i. A tempting, shiny object that baits us into getting hooked
    - ii. The result is not good – it ends badly for the fish – and us
  - d. The problem is we allow desires...temptations... and ultimately sin to slowly erode God's will in our lives.

- i. God's will is that we love Him, that we use the first portion on Him... The first portion of our time... our treasure... our gifts that He gives us...
  - 1. But we spend the first portion of our time on Facebook, videogames, TV, reading, shopping, working...
  - 2. Maybe we do even more destructive things like drinking to excess, using drugs, or spending our time with pornography
  - 3. There is no end to the temptations, and as we continue to give in to them and sin against God... disaster awaits.
- ii. God's will is for us to grow in our relationship with Him, trusting in His work rather than our own plans and designs.
  - 1. But we often spend very little time getting to know God – little time in the Word, in worship, in Bible study with others...
  - 2. How much easier it is to be lured by the devil and temptation when we spend so little time with God?
  - 3. Just ask yourself, if my relationship with God were an earthly relationship with another human being, how well would it be going?
    - a. What if you spent 5 minutes a day connecting with your spouse or loved one?
    - b. What if you only thought about your loved one a few times a year (like Christmas and Easter?)
- e. God knows.
  - i. God knows the condition of our hearts, and He always wants us to return to Him
  - ii. God knows that the world is full of temptations that lead to sin and death.
  - iii. From the very beginning with Adam and Eve, the temptation to disobey God and go out on our own... to forge our own path... has driven our choices.
  - iv. The devil lures and entices..... while on the other hand, God pursues and seeks us.

III. **God knows what it takes to overcome sin.**

- a. As we try to forge our own way, God had other plans...
  - i. His way was the way of love... the way of the cross
- b. It's strange, but instead of punishing us... or even allowing sin and our own choices to take their course... (meaning the sinkhole of death...) God intervened with His Son.
- c. The sacrifice of a son becomes so real for us as we read the Old Testament story of Abraham and Isaac... a beloved son who meant so much to his father... and yet a willingness to give him up

- d. But with Jesus, God didn't have another plan... He didn't have a ram in a thicket for Jesus His Son... the sacrifice was carried out
  - i. The Savior of the world died on Calvary to pay the price for our sins
  - ii. Nothing else could be sufficient for the countless sins and rejection of God... only the death of God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ could pay for it all
- e. But God didn't stop with the payment for our sins... He actively pursues us with His love and care to apply what He did in our lives.
  - i. God wants you to have the benefits of the forgiveness that He won on the cross
  - ii. God knows what will stop that erosion of sin and death – and that is faith in Him and a trust in His promises.
  - iii. We don't go find Him, but He comes to us in the power of His Word as it continues to open our hearts to a deeper relationship with Him

IV. **Now our desires are on the same wavelength as God's...**

- a. We can overcome temptations by our connection to Him, and sin does not become a sinkhole of death, but a point of forgiveness and grace.
- b. And you might be asking, what's the difference between a temptation and the testing of God?
  - i. It's as simple as this: a temptation lures you away – a test draws you in to God's love
  - ii. In the end if you turn toward God and His will, then He has strengthened you to make it to the end.
- c. Sin softens and erodes while testing fortifies and strengthen us... the earth underneath the pavement will be fortified and strengthened as it is compressed and hardened by testing...
- d. God knows what you need, and He will never tempt you or lure you away from His love.
- e. Blessed are you as you remain steadfast through the trials of life, as you receive your strength from God Himself, the end is always the same... The crown of life is yours (James 1:12). Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Randy Alcorn; "The Cumulative Effect of Our Little Choices," EPM Blog, (5-8-17)