

- **\*READ JAMES 1:12-15/PRAYER\*** Hopefully all of us are well aware of the dangers of poison. I doubt that any of us would ever willingly take poison that we know would be dangerous for our health, but we know that drinking poison isn't the only way in which we could be affected by it. In fact, there are many animals that are poisonous in their bites, stings, or other kinds of attacks. Not only are there animals, but there are also plants that can also be hazardous to our health. Berries, mushrooms, and other type of vegetation can have extremely harmful affects on the human body...even to the point of death.
- So with this being the case, wouldn't it be wise for us to want to know what types of animals or plants could be poisonous and therefore harmful to our health? I think we would all agree that this would be the wise move...but we all know that there are some people are foolish and don't care about such things. So when they go out on a hike in the woods or something of that nature, instead of paying attention or considering whether something might be harmful to their health...they're just out there picking up any snake they come across or popping just any little berries they find. What do you think is going to end up happening to that person? More than likely, that person is going to end up getting bit or eating something he ought not too. And you know the worst thing... this guy is foolish and probably wouldn't even seek out treatment for an antidote to heal his body. Really...that guy is going to end up dead from his foolishness.
- Now, you might be sitting there asking yourself, "Nick, what does this have to do within anything?" Good question, and the reason I bring this up is because there are some strong parallels between poisons in this life and sin. The truth is that like poisons, sin kills. While poisons kill the physical body, sin kills us spiritually. We see that in **James 1:15**, that after temptation is presented, sin is conceived, and then spiritual death is brought forth into the life of the guilty individual.
- This year we have been much of our attention to the book of James and its practical teachings concerning wisdom in the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ. As we continue our focus on this idea, it would be well worth our time to consider how wise disciples approach sin. James teaches us and we must recognize that sin will be the spiritual death of us all. Therefore, how ought we understand, approach, and treat sin? We want to answer these questions as we consider the wise disciple and sin. The wise disciple will understand, approach, and treat sin a certain way recognize the danger of it...while the foolish man will do these things differently. Let's consider these differences this morning.

#### I. The wise disciple seeks to know what is sin in the eyes of God.

A. The fool would rather live in ignorance and not worry about God's standard for man.

1. Like the guy who doesn't care about poisonous things, this foolish person doesn't care about what things are sinful in the eyes of God. But why not? Why would someone not care about what the Creator says?
2. It might be that the fool doesn't acknowledge God. We know those who do not believe there is a God are called fools in **Psalms 14 & 53**. If someone does not acknowledge God, then it makes sense that they would not give effort to know what displeases God.
3. But what else? It might be that a person doesn't believe that there are things that are actually sinful in God's eyes. This begs the question...well what exactly is sin? If we believe in God and if we believe that He has the right to make the rules, then it would make sense to understand that sin is a transgression against the rules of God. This is exactly what is taking place in **Genesis 3**. God told Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He even told them that in the day they did eat of it they would die....they would be spiritually dead to God. Their sin was breaking God's commands and they suffered for it.
4. However, there are some people who act as if there are not commands of God today. They would argue that God's love allows them to do as they please. Certainly we see the foolishness of this type of thinking and mindset. God had rules in the beginning, and He continues to do so today. But the question is...how can we come to know God's rules and standards?

B. Thankfully, God has given us the Bible which contains His will for us in this life.

1. God communicates with us just the same way as we communicate with one another, today. In the Bible, we find instances where God told, showed, and implied to others, and by extension us, what pleased and displeased Him.
2. We rarely have a hard time understanding those instances where God plainly tells us that something is wrong in His eyes. We are well aware of some of the "laundry lists" of sins that are found throughout the Bible that apply to us. Solomon really makes things easy for us in **Proverbs 6:16-19** when he says "These six things the Lord hates." Obviously, those things listed are sins and would result in death for the sinner. Likewise we could look to places in **Romans 1, I Corinthians 6, Galatians 5, etc.** These things are the easiest for us to understand.

3. But then we can also come to know what displeases God based upon what we see in Scripture as far as examples go. We know that God was displeased with Uzzah touching the Ark because He was struck dead. I doubt anyone else would have risked touching the Ark after he died. (**II Samuel 6:7**) The same thing could be said for the episode involving Ananias and Sapphira. I doubt anyone wondered if lying to the Apostles in such a way would be displeasing to God based upon their deaths. (**Acts 5:1-11**)
4. Finally, we can know what is sin in the eyes of God by recognizing implications. The simplest example of this that comes to mind is Jesus's teachings on marriage. In **Matthew 19:1-9**, Jesus speaks about God's design for marriage and states that God made males and females and a marriage constitutes one man and one woman. By implication, this means that a marriage between man and man or woman and woman would not meet God's design. The same would be true for multiple men or women in a single marriage.
5. The wise man is diligent to come to know what pleases and displeases God because he wants to do what is right and avoid the wrath of God that is shown when His will is ignored and sin occurs.

## II. The wise disciple will seek to avoid sin at all cost.

- A. The fool wants to get just as close to the line as possible without getting burnt.
  1. It seems as if it is just human nature for us to want to push the boundaries of things as much as possible. We do it as kids. Our parents might tell us to not go near something, but we inch closer and closer just to see how close we can get until they tell us to stop again.
  2. The fool acts like a child in this way. He might know that he struggles in a particular way with temptation, but instead of avoiding the situation where that temptation might be present...he allows himself to constantly be put in situations where he has to battle against giving into that particular temptation. His foolish decisions make things much more difficult on him than they have to be.
  3. But why would this person do this? It might be because he doesn't take sin as seriously as he ought to. Sure he \*shouldn't\* sin, but he doesn't want to miss out on the other fun things that will also be eliminated if he avoids the temptation all together. Avoiding sin isn't worth having to sacrifice certain situations that might involve other things that he enjoys.
- B. If we understand the severity of sin and the holiness of God, then we will want to be as far away from sin as we can possibly get.
  1. Even if we never get "burned", what type of attitude and understanding of God are we showing by constantly pushing the boundaries of godliness and holiness? Can we say we are wise or taking our faith seriously by doing such a thing? Certainly we can't say that we understand how much God is hurt by our sin. If we truly grasped how hurt God is by our rebellion, then we should be moved to avoid sin at all cost. God is hurt to the point that He can't even look at us. His prized creation, the person He sent His son to die for, and He can't even look at us because we have rebelled against Him. (**Isaiah 59:2; Habakkuk 1:13**)
  2. So what does this look like? What does the person do who is trying to avoid sin at all cost? It looks like the disciple who is willing to avoid certain situations where he knows he will be tempted to the point of sin. He might be tempted with alcohol and he knows that if he goes to his friend's party then he'll be faced with a decision about whether or not to participate in the drinking. It looks like the disciple who struggles with keeping a mind of purity and he or she knows that going to the beach and seeing all of those people not dressed appropriately will really bother him, so he or she decides to just not go.
  3. It might also mean that we rid our lives of negative influences that lead us towards sin. If that friend continually tries to get us to be a part of situations where we will be tempted in our weaknesses...well it might be time to leave that friendship behind. We can't allow negative influences to infect our lives with sin. (**I Corinthians 15:33**)
  4. So how do we get this place? We get to this place by first being honest with our weaknesses. We take some time to truly inspect what tempts us in this life. We might be tempted by alcohol...we might not. We might be tempted with impure thoughts...we might not. We might be tempted this way or not this way. Whatever our personal points of weakness are, we must be strong enough to acknowledge those and stay as far away from the temptations that can lead us to sin and eventually eternal spiritual death.

## III. The wise disciple will seek to acknowledge and rid his life of any and all sin.

- A. The fool ignores the sin that has crept into his life and continually suffers the consequences of such...ultimately he suffers banishment from the presence of God forever.
  1. Just like the fool who is bitten or ingest poison of some sort, the person who continues to allow sin to be present in his life will eventually suffer the ultimate consequence for it.
  2. The fool either ignores the sin or ignores the ultimate consequence and that type of pathetic mindset will eventually lead him to the worst possible consequence which is God's eternal judgement against his sin.

- B. The wise disciple recognizes when sin has infiltrated his life and will do whatever it takes to fix the problem.
1. The wise disciple is able to recognize the sin in his life because he first knows what is sin, and then secondly he has trained himself and his conscience to be aware when he has allowed himself to get loose in his faith and stray from the righteous path of God. The call is to be wise in all things, but we know that we sometimes fall short of that...so what are we to do when that happens?
  2. When the wise disciple finds himself in this position, he truly only has one thing he can do if he wants to get back on track and that is to put into practice what is James says in **James 5:16**. The wise disciple will recognize that God created the church for a reason, and that reason is so we will have one another to lean upon when we suffer through difficulties in this life.
  3. Now, this doesn't mean that we must come forward every single time we make a mistake...there are things we can confess to God alone and seek His forgiveness. (**1 John 1:9**) However, let me suggest that if we find ourselves constantly struggling with a particular temptation and sin that we do reach out to someone in the congregation for help or advice to overcome. Again, God put shepherds in leadership positions for this very reason (**Heb. 13:17**) and we have one another to lean upon for help.
  4. Sadly, I think we try too hard sometimes to handle things on our own without seeking our help. We might ask God over and over again, but when things don't get better we just stop and give up the fight and give into the sin. It reminds me of the drowning man who has a boat come by with the life preserver, but he turns it down saying that he was waiting on God to help him. A helicopter comes by a little later and lowers down a rescue diver, but the drowning man turns him away too, again saying that he was waiting on God to send help to save him.....God has sent us the things that can assist us in our sin and those things are often one another and our shepherds. The wise disciple uses the blessings that God has surrounded him with in order to overcome sin and put it out of his life.

Poison and sin share a lot of commonalities. Both will destroy and kill. Both need to be identified. Both need to be avoided. Both need to be treated as quickly as possible. But we recognize the far reaching eternal consequences of not giving the proper attention to sin. God demands righteousness and holiness from His people, and we must strive every day to avoid sin at all cost, but also deal with it properly if we fall into its deadly hold. May God help us to be wise disciples and understand, approach, and treat sin as God would have us to so that we might please Him in all that we do.