

# **“Beware, Be Aware, Be Loved” – Pr Jim Sprengle**

## **Lent 3 – March 23, 2025**

- I. **1 Corinthians 10:1-13** – previously read
- II. **The people of God often get themselves into trouble.**
  - a. The season of Lent is partly a reflection on the things that get us into trouble, and what parts of our lives we should leave behind.
    - i. From the first Sunday’s reading where Jesus wanders for 40 days in the wilderness outside of Jerusalem, we get the idea that this temptation thing is going to be difficult.
    - ii. It’s not easy to avoid the temptations of sin that come from outside... and from inside of us.
  - b. Yet, the Lord is very clear throughout all of Scripture – whether it is the Old Testament or the New Testament – beware of sinning against Him.
    - i. Many of our stories in the Old Testament shed light on the sins of the people who don’t believe in God... and the sins of God’s own people who are called to believe in Him and obey.
    - ii. Remember, Paul, the one who wrote our passage today, was once a Pharisee trained up in all the Jewish tradition, and especially the stories of God’s people.
      - 1. He recounts the story of the Israelites as they were led out of Egypt... and how time and time again, they disobeyed God and paid a price.
      - 2. He says that God’s people disobeyed, they were idolaters, sexually immoral, they put God to the test... and they received the penalty for their sins...
      - 3. Paul says to beware, as they were examples to us for how not to behave.
  - c. How much do we consider the example of our spiritual brothers and sisters in the wilderness as we live our lives today?
    - i. On the one hand, Paul is well trained in the Word of God... which he uses to share with us the New Testament and inspired Word of God.
    - ii. Are we wise by knowing the stories of the Bible, helping us to live by God’s standards rather than our own?
      - 1. How many of us claim ignorance when it comes to God’s Word, and then live by our own standards?
      - 2. “Does God’s Word say that?” – and we act as if we don’t know that He calls on us to avoid idols and immorality... or maybe we don’t even know what idols and immorality are!
      - 3. Just as a person who gets pulled over and claims they had no idea they needed a driver’s license and insurance, it doesn’t mean they won’t face a penalty for their ignorance.

4. And this is where our reading from Ezekiel comes in... because God sends pastors and prophets into our lives to share the truth of His Word.

- a. God tells pastors that if they don't warn people of their sins, then the responsibility will come back on them!
- b. No one should be able to claim ignorance of God's will between learning God's Word for ourselves, along with the guide of a pastor and other Christians in our lives.

III. **Not only does God tell us to beware... but to be aware of temptations.**

- a. Yes, there is a due penalty for our sins, and we can see the Israelites faced the destruction and turmoil of sin getting out of control... but He also provides the strength to avoid temptations.
- b. In every case of God's people getting themselves into trouble, it had to do with temptations that they did not overcome... but instead they went down the path of sin and rejecting God.
  - i. It says that "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play," (v 7) and this means they were drinking and then were not following God's design for marriage and relationships.
  - ii. The Bible says in the Book of Numbers that they were ensnared by outsiders from Midian who tempted them to walk away from God.
  - iii. Time and time again they fell for it... they fell for the snares around them.
    - 1. God would tell them to watch out and be aware of these traps... like don't marry outside the faith... or don't drink to excess... or don't trust in things more than Me... or don't allow the world's views and beliefs to become more important than what I have taught you...
    - 2. And what did they do?
      - a. They didn't guard their hearts... be vigilant... or use the support of those around them to reject these temptations.
      - b. It says in James 1:14-15, "<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."
      - c. Their desires were not focused on God, and this gives birth to sin... and ultimately death... or as the Bible says... "the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23)
- c. The season of Lent offers us many opportunities to fine-tune our spiritual discipline, self-control, and our ability to avoid temptations that lead to sin.
- d. I often say that we are like moths drawn to a flame... and we flutter around the temptations trying not to get burned... kind of like an alcoholic who quits drinking but hangs out in clubs and bars and drinks only soda.

- e. Our troubles often begin when we let our guard down and then put ourselves in situations that will lead to the sins of the Israelites.
  - i. I know many Christian men and women who date and even marry outside the faith... when it's hard enough to just have different Christian churches and backgrounds!
  - ii. Some people try to avoid things like lust and immoral behavior but spend hours on phones that provide countless pictures to tempt.
  - iii. Others know that they are not being good stewards of the financial blessings God provides, and they go to shopping centers, malls and other places that tempt them to spend on junk they don't need.
- f. Again, God tells us to be aware – open our eyes – to the temptations that are around us, and He will give us the strength to avoid them.

IV. **The real blessing is that God never leaves us to struggle alone.**

- a. We may think that this is our own battle, but God walks with us every step of the way – and He gives to us people in our lives to support us too.
- b. From the moment we are baptized and come to faith, the moment that God gives us the gift faith in Him... we are called beloved... and we can be loved in a way that nothing else in all creation is able to give.
- c. It never ceases to amaze me how God is so steadfast in His love... How patient and longsuffering He is with people who are just the opposite with Him.
  - i. In fact, we know that “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)
    - 1. It is beyond our ability to grasp that God would send His Son to forgive us of all of sins... but He did just that... as our Lord and Savior was crucified without mercy...
    - 2. In that ultimate act of love, God's destruction for us was averted... and we continue the journey to the Promised Land.
- d. To be loved by God is to be strengthened and held up for the journey.
  - i. It's not easy to resist temptation and evil – but it says that God is faithful and will not allow you to be tempted more than you can stand... and He will provide a way of escape.
  - ii. God supports and fortifies us with His grace.
  - iii. He strengthens and gives us His blessings in the Lord's Supper... He reminds us of our baptismal grace and that we are His children always... He reminds us of His promises throughout His Word... especially that we are forgiven.
- e. I cannot stress how important it is to receive the gifts God provides when it comes to battling temptation and sin... and even when we fail, He never does... He is always there to pick us up and give us His grace and mercy again and again.
- f. As we arrive at this halfway point of the season of Lent, we have a wonderful reminder to beware of the sins that led to destruction in our

forefathers, to be aware of the temptations that will come at us... and we can now be loved by God through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus.

- i. Our God is faithful... He gives us everything we need in our journey through the wilderness... but especially His Word, and His grace.  
Amen.