

Gradualism

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

A heavy rain had been falling as a man drove down a lonely road. As he rounded a curve, he saw an old farmer surveying the ruins of his barn. The driver stopped his car and asked what had happened. "Roof fell in," said the farmer. "Leaked so long it finally just rotted through." "Why in the world didn't you fix it before it got that bad?" asked the stranger. "Well, sir," replied the farmer, "it just seemed I never did get around to it. When the weather was good, there weren't no need for it, and when it rained, it was too wet to work on!" The lesson is this. When we avoid dealing with the spiritual issues that we face in life erosion sets in. Sooner or later the barn will come crashing down.

We have all heard of the story about the frog that jumped in the pan of water. The frog boiled to death in the water even though he could have jumped out. This is because the water was heated so gradually that he did not feel the effects of the change. This story gives us some practical insight about how we can gradually become numb to what is going on around us and the circumstances that are trying to change us forever. We can gradually become accustomed to the compromising spirit of our day and begin to boil in the pot of New Evangelicalism if we let down our guard and lose sight of what God expects from our lives which is complete allegiance to truth and holy living. We must beware of this kind of gradualism taking place in our lives.

What is gradualism? The Webster Dictionary defines gradualism as "the principle or policy of achieving some goal by gradual steps rather than by drastic change." The dictionary says this about the word gradual: "changing, moving, etc., by small degrees or little by little."

Today I want to focus on what takes place in our lives when we begin to let down the guard gradually or by the process of small degrees or little by little as Webster says. As fundamental Bible believing separatists we must beware of the drift of the times and not become so close to New Evangelicalism that it begins to weaken our stance

as a separatist. ***When we become cozy with error and begin to associate with places, people and programs that lean toward a New Evangelical outlook we can find ourselves gradually adopting the philosophy of infiltration and subtle compromise.*** After a while, things don't look as bad as they once did. We begin to see things through different lenses. They are the lenses of New or modern Evangelicalism.

We might find ourselves no longer wanting to make a distinction between what is absolutely right and what is absolutely wrong. We will fail to make the distinction between light and darkness (2 Cor. 6:14). Gradualism occurs in our lives when we compromise on a small scale. It happens when we begin to befriend a spirit of compromise in some setting or atmosphere. It happens when we slowly become comfortable with compromise.

David Cloud said:

“One of the greatest problems among Bible-believing churches today is the phenomenon of gradualism. Worldliness and ecumenical philosophies and charismatic music and many other injurious things are gradually making inroads into fundamentalist churches. This makes the problem difficult to detect and even more difficult to correct.”

I remember stepping on a greasy railroad track one time. Someone had smeared some kind of greasy substance on the rail and I took one step on that track and went sliding. May I say today that Christians, who were once practicing separatists, can find themselves stepping on a greasy railroad track that is going to allow them to slide in a wrong direction. In other words, if we are not careful we can slide down a greasy railroad track and cross over a bridge that will lead us into the vast New Evangelical arena of compromise. There is a greasy railroad track that many individuals, families and churches are sliding upon today. And at the end of the tracks is full-blown New Evangelicalism.

How does gradualism take place in our homes and churches? There are eight ways that gradualism occurs in our homes and churches.

1. Gradualism occurs when we fail to hate the evil and love the good.

The Bible teaches that we should hate all evil and only love the good. This means that every evil way should be challenged and forsaken no matter how big or little it might seem to be. Failing to forsake evil in every form and every phase begins to slowly break down the wall of separation, which in return leads to personal compromise, failure and into the New Evangelical sea of compromise. What do the Scriptures say about hating evil and loving the good?

Psalm 97:10 says:

“Ye that love the LORD, hate evil.”

Psalm 119:104

“Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.”

Psalm 119:128

“Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts *concerning* all *things to be* right; *and* I hate every false way.”

Psalm 119:163

“I hate and abhor lying: *but* thy law do I love.”

Proverbs 8:13

“The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.”

In these verses, it's clear to see that the psalmist had a strong hatred for evil and every false way. The psalmist despised and hated all lying and sinful ways, which were against the Scriptures. The same should be true of us today as believers. We should have the boldness to stand up for what is right and denounce every wrong way and worldly practice that is false and contrary to the truth. This may not be popular but is the right thing to do. Gradualism occurs when we start loving the evil way in some measure and embracing worldly practice. Failure to expose and hate evil ways will surely mean a gradual

softness and acceptance toward the world system and all kinds of error.

We must hate those TV programs that are promoting swearing and lust. We must turn them off or change the channel. We must hate all music that promotes a worldly beat and which defies the God-ordained musical pattern. We must hate all actions that run contrary to truth and godliness. God does expect us to hate these things and see them as offending His holiness and purity.

Some of you may think that I have hate in my heart today. Well, I do have hate in my heart! I don't hate people. God has told me to love people and I want to continually love people no matter who they are and what they practice – false teachers, New Evangelicals, drug addicts and all poor lost sinners without Christ. I don't hate people! But I hate every evil way that people practice and which seeks to invade my own life and the church life. I can learn to hate worldliness and every false doctrine and wicked compromising way without hating people. Hating the evil of false doctrine and worldly compromise is healthy. It's when we begin to lose hate for the evil world system that is against God that we begin to gradually slip into a position of tolerance.

Romans 12:9 says:

“Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”

The word “dissimulation” means hypocrisy or disguise. But you will notice how Paul goes on to explain how love is sincere or without hypocrisy – “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” Most expositors consider these two clauses as explanatory of the sincerity of love. In other words, if our love is sincere then we will want to discriminate between right and wrong. So the text is saying that true love will express hatred for that which is evil. True or sincere love is discriminating. It cannot condone sin and error but only be attached to what is good and clean. True love must deal with all error and worldliness. To try and cover up these things is not the mark of true love. When we condone sin and worldly practice then our love becomes hypocritical, and our lives become out of focus. True love rejoices in truth and not in error (I Cor. 13:6). It seeks to expose and

hate every evil way. This is why I hate all bad music that mimics the world system. This is why I hate all worldly practices that have invaded the church today and every false doctrine or philosophy that is being propagated such as psychology and humanistic self esteem.

According to this verse, we should have the backbone to detest evil and express our hatred for all that is false and wrong. It's not wrong to hate error, false doctrine and worldly practices. It is actually a sign of genuine love for truth, God and others. In following the commands of this verse, we will have to speak out against the evil errors of wicked people, false doctrines and worldly practices of today. Gradualism occurs when we fail to hate evil and allow error and worldly practice to filter into our lives and families. Little by little we can begin to accept error and worldly practice and find ourselves moving in a compromising direction. Gradualism occurs when we fail to absolutely hate evil and love good. Gradualism takes place when our zeal and love for what is right becomes secondary to some other purpose or cause. God said that He hates sin (Proverbs 6:16-19). The glorified Christ told John that He hates false doctrine and those practices that go against what is right and true.

Revelation 2:6

“But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.”

If God hates everything that is false and unholy, then certainly the believer must hate unholy things as well. He will learn to hate all evil if he is going to live godly or be like God in these last days (2 Timothy 3:12). In fact, he must hate every evil way that goes against what is right and holy. He must learn to denounce sin and not condone it. He must hate sin and wordiness with a holy passion. All magazines, books, music, organizations, speech and actions that go against the holiness of God must be shunned. The separated believer must make up his mind that he will not tolerate sin or compromise with worldliness in his life in any way. I must repeat what I've said earlier. *It's when we begin to lose holy hatred for the evil world system and every unholy way that is against God that we begin to gradually slip into a position of tolerance.* Gradualism takes us to the place where we will find ourselves compromising with sin instead of correcting sin and tolerating unholy practice instead of forsaking these practices. In

short, we will find ourselves *comfortable with compromise* when we gradually let down our guard little by little.

2. Gradualism occurs when we start viewing results above obedience.

This is called pragmatism. If something works New Evangelicalism will come to the conclusion that we can use it for God's glory and purposes. But God has never given to us the command to mix light with darkness so that we can be successful in some endeavor. He has said that light should never mix with darkness (2 Cor. 6:14). When results become more important than obedience we can find ourselves calling evil good and darkness light because of the seemingly good things that come out of the unholy mixture between truth and error or righteousness and unrighteousness.

Isaiah 5:20 warns of this philosophy or mentality when it says:

“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!”

When we begin to view results to be more important than anything else, it's then that we will find ourselves confusing light with darkness and the bitter for the sweet. This is because pragmatism, which produces unholy mixture, blurs the distinctions between light and darkness and the bitter and sweet. Micah 3:2 also says: “Who hate the good, and love the evil...” Unholy mixtures between good and evil can gradually create a love for that which is evil and wrong instead of a holy love for that which is good and wholesome. Unfortunately this is the sad ending when we condone error and worldliness in our lives. We begin to like the evil and push away the good.

What we must reaffirm today is that God honors our obedience above everything else.

1 Samuel 15:22-23

“And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For

rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry...”

Obedience is what God is looking for today. He is not looking for unholy mixtures and the New Evangelical blueprint, which fails to distinguish between light and darkness and what is bitter and sweet. God is looking for 100 percent bonafide obedience. We should be ashamed and convicted when we know what is right and then try to compromise our standards of truth for some other cause or program. ***Sometimes our feelings, friends, and family get in the way of our obedience.*** But we must bypass these blockades and always obey God. To obey is better than to sacrifice. In the end God will reward us for obedience. There will be no reward for compromise.

Galatians 6:8-9

“For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

Gradualism occurs when we forget about the importance of obedience in God’s sight. Timothy was exhorted to continue in those things that he had learned from his early days of discipleship. He was told not to depart from earlier truth that he had learned simply because everybody else was saying something different or doing something different or because he wanted to change his ministry in some new way.

2 Timothy 3:14

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.”

When we learn the truth of separation and get it down into our hearts we will be “assured” of it and not deviate from the holy path that God intends for us to walk. When we are “assured” of something we will not gradually slip into worldly compromise and error. We will see the unholy practice for what it is and separate from the evil compromise of the system that is against God. Being sure about what is right will keep us from sliding down the greasy railroad track of gradualism. And when we are sure that something is right we will want to obey

God above all else. We will not want to move away from a separated position and what God expects us to do and practice.

The townspeople gathered on the wall and watched in shocked silence as, one by one, Alexander's soldiers marched without hesitation right off the cliff to their deaths! After ten soldiers died, Alexander ordered the rest of the men to return to his side. The townspeople and the king immediately surrendered to Alexander the Great. They realized that if a few men were actually willing to commit suicide at the command of this dynamic leader, then nothing could stop his eventual victory.

I wonder if we are willing to be as obedient to the ruler of the universe, Jesus Christ, as those soldiers were to Alexander? Are you as dedicated and committed to the Lord as they were to Alexander? We are disobeying God when we begin to gradually loosen our standards of Biblical separation and slowly drift into the New Evangelical waters of compromise. Lowering our standards and letting down the guard to what we know we should practice is disobedience before God. Let us see it for what it is and stop trying to cover up our actions of disobedience. God is never pleased with disobedience.

Edwin Hatch wrote:

“Breathe on me, breath of God;
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what thou dost love,
And do what thou wouldst do.”

3. Gradualism occurs when we lose our will to discern.

Hebrews 5:14 says:

“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

This Bible verse says that mature believers should “exercise” or train their “senses” (faculty or mind or understanding) to “discern” (distinguish or judge) between what is right and what is wrong. This

means that we must not lose our will to discern between what is right and what is wrong doctrinally, morally, worldly, ecumenically and musically. We must not lose our will to discern or judge what is worldly and what is wrong in God's sight. ***When we lose this drive and determination to discern, we will gradually begin to condone worldliness and progress into a state of neutrality.*** God would want us to train our mind in regard to what is right and what is wrong by using the Bible as our standard. This will keep us from gradualism or this process of slowly beginning to adopt and accept worldly philosophies and worldly movements and worldly actions that run contrary to truth.

What happens when we begin to change our position and mindset on key doctrinal issues and areas of separation? What happens is that our conscience is no longer guided by truth. Instead, the conscience becomes guided and reformed by our own feelings and other outside factors instead of the Word of God. This process has been called the "vanishing conscience" in Christianity. When the conscience of believers becomes calloused in regard to light, absolute purity and the commands of Scripture, it's then that it begins to vanish away in relationship to truth and the important areas of separation. We must be on guard. Our conscience can become confused and begin to vanish away in relationship to the important areas of doctrine and clearly defined areas of separation.

When this happens we find ourselves and other Christians repeating the New Evangelical adage, which says: "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25). This is why we must keep exercising our mind and judging what is right and wrong or "good and evil." ***We have too much to lose when we lose our will to discern.*** We have our own conscience to lose and then our entire life and family to lose in connection with error and worldly practice. In the end, we will lose reward when we stand before the Lord. This is reward, which we otherwise could have gained had we stayed true to what is right. The price for losing discernment is too high.

A minnow-like fish called "Four Eyes," makes his home in Central and South America. What's unusual about him is his large, bulging eyes. They are so situated on his head that he can spend his time cruising along the water with only the upper half of each eye above the

surface. The top half has an air lens and the bottom half has a water lens, which amounts to a set of bifocals, giving him the ability to see in both the upper- and under-world.

This is the same kind of eyes of discernment that we need to have today as believers. We need to see what the upper world or heavenlies is pleased with (Colossians 3:1) and then make sure that the world below heaven in which we live and move matches up to what is holy and heavenly. May we continually seek to possess these eyes of discernment today.

Moses was very discerning and defined himself when refusing "to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Hebrews 11:24). He said no to something that the world wanted him to do. We as Christians must also learn to say no to many things. The Bible lists many things that are wrong (see Galatians 5:19-21; Eph. 4:24-32). And for those things that are not clearly mentioned in the Bible discernment comes through applying biblical principles to our decisions so that they do not override God's general revelation in regards to His holiness and righteousness.

4. Gradualism occurs when we associate with wrong people and fellowships.

1 Corinthians 15:33 says:

"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

The Greek word behind the older English word communications actually means "companionships." Paul is talking about close fellowships and inter-locking relationships where people are meshed together in some common goal or purpose. Who we associate with and have close ties with does have an impact upon our lives. The word "corrupt" means to defile or destroy and denotes how wrong associations can adversely affect our lives. These fellowship relationships can defile us from a spiritual standpoint. This has always been true. We deceive ourselves by thinking that some close relationship or tie with evil company cannot hinder our spiritual stance. **It can! It does! And it will!** It will happen if you hang around the wrong crowd long enough and develop close bonds and ties with them. Error and evil practices will rub off on us as we develop close

relationships with those who are living a different lifestyle, promoting a different philosophy and who possess an overall worldly bent to their lives. That is why we must always take the lead when we befriend sinners as Jesus did and try to lead them to Christ. We must be in the lead spiritually and stand against their wicked and worldly ways and not become closely attached and tight knit with those who practice evil and corruption. It's one thing to befriend sinners, but it's another thing to become closely attached to sinners and allow their mannerisms to rub off on us.

Evil comes in all kinds of shapes and forms. Sometimes it is subtle and inconspicuous. *We must also understand that the acceptance of evil and wrongdoing can also flourish in an environment that is good in many respects.* The old saying is true: "Error rides on the back of truth." Evil things and intolerance can find root in our lives even in good environments where Christians dwell together. So what should the Christian do?

The Bible also teaches that we should not knowingly create close ties with disobedient brothers who are not walking according to truth and holiness.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 says:

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."

The Bible teaches that there comes a time when we must not fellowship and associate with those believers in a tight knit gathering or union where evil is condoned, and worldliness tolerated. This can have a damaging effect upon our lives and can ultimately weaken our testimony and separated stand for God. Truth must prevail over erring brothers. The Bible also teaches that we should separate from those places where the unfruitful works of darkness are clearly being promoted.

Ephesians 5:11 says:

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

The command is to try and reprove or correct these unfruitful works of darkness. Never should we associate with them in a close environment where we become tolerant of certain worldly evils and compromise with error in any way. ***The greatest plunder of the modern-day church is tolerance.*** We begin to tolerate sin and evil and think that God will somehow overlook it and be pleased with our lives. This is the great Evangelical disaster and deception of today. God is never pleased with compromise, and we will lose reward in the end for compromise. This is why the discerning believer should follow the teaching of Bible separation and choose to not love the world (1 John 2:15-17) and have close ties with any unrighteous ways (2 Cor. 6:14). He is commanded by God to separate from the demonism associated with religious apostasy (1 Cor. 10:20; 1 Timothy 4:1; Rev. 2:9, 13; John 8:44). The Bible teaches separation from corrupt companionships on every level. This is because wrong company will sooner or later have an adverse effect upon our lives.

So we must be on guard. We do not want to allow ourselves to become interlocked with those environments, which are clearly promoting both secular and spiritual atrocities that go contrary to God's Word. When we fail to do this there is great risk that we will become infected with the virus of compromise. We should at all costs avoid those places and people that are clearly promoting sin and compromising truth and not allow ourselves to identify with the evil that is going on in those places. This is why the Bible teaches separation. Separation is not only required by God's holiness but also for the sake of our own purity.

Christians should be wise in relationship to where they go and what they do. It's true that we must rub elbows with the lost in the world and be kind and gentle toward all men. But we do not have to consciously place ourselves in those environments that are clearly promoting error and doing things that run contrary to truth and righteousness (1 Cor. 10:20). If we associate with the barnyard too long the smell will start rubbing off on us.

My grandpa used to go the cow barn and do his needed duties. As a boy I can remember how he came back smelling like the barn. Why? It's because he was hanging around the barn too long. After a while the barn smell started to become part of his clothing. Now this is what

happens when we hang around the wrong crowd. Their belief system and philosophy for living begins to rub off on us. We begin to smell like we have been hanging around the barn of New Evangelicalism.

What do you smell like today? In time, your spiritual smell will give you away. It will tell people where your heart really is and what direction you want to move.

5. Gradualism occurs when we fail to see how little things corrupt our lives.

The Bible tells us how little things can corrupt our lives and allow the devil to get a foothold in our personal life, family and church. Let's reflect upon some of these little things that the Scripture mentions. I would like to give you several biblical illustrations of little things that remind us of how seemingly insignificant things can cause great heartaches in our lives.

1 Corinthians 5:6 says:

“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?”

This verse reminds us how just a little sour yeast can permeate an entire loaf of dough and cause it to rise. The spiritual application cannot be missed. A little leaven in the church can create big problems. God has called the church to purity and when you allow leaven or sin to become openly acceptable it affects the entire testimony of the local church. Sin left unchecked will permeate the entire church and cause it to become leaven in its testimony and eventually its practice. This is what the Bible teaches. We cannot afford to miss this important principle for our churches today. We have worldly compromise coming at us from every direction today. We are troubled on every side. But we must take this truth into account today. The moment we begin to compromise we have started the leavening process that will lead to greater compromise and the rising or leaving process of sin and worldliness in the church.

Galatians 5:9

“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”

Here the issue involves false teaching where the church mixes law with grace as the final way of salvation. This was the Galatian error. Paul reminds us that just a little leaven of law (works salvation) will corrupt the entire teaching about the grace of God. If you add the leaven of works to grace then the entire message about grace will become leavened. Little things do matter. A little leaven left go will cause harm and doctrinal corruption.

James 3:5 says:

“Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!”

James reminds us of the danger of the tongue. The tongue is a little member of the human body or anatomy. And the tongue is likened to a little fire that is burning which can cause a brush fire to occur in a very short span of time. James says that the tongue can very quickly defile the whole body (vs. 6) by what it says and promotes. Thus, we can see how a little member of the body can create spiritual havoc in our lives and the lives of others. *Little things can very quickly get out of hand.* This is the Biblical principle that we must glean today from God’s Word. Do not treat little things lightly. Little things gradually become bigger things. And it’s the little things that take us on the road to gradualism, which in the end defiles the entire life.

Song of Solomon 2:15 goes on to say:

“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.”

Solomon reminds us of those little foxes or animals that would get into the grape vines and cause damage to the crop. The illustration is given to convey how little things in the marriage relationship can keep us from having fellowship together and which can create rifts in the marriage. We need to be on guard against those little intruders in our marriage, which can cause disruption and create disharmony. Once again, we see how little things can mushroom into bigger things.

Genesis 19:20 reminds us what Lot said:

“Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.”

God took Lot out of the city but the city was not taken out of the heart of Lot. Lot still longed for a little city (“a little one”) to dwell in so he could continue to thrive financially and have great success from the world’s point of view. His heart reflects the heart of many Christians today who want to play with little things, which seem insignificant to them. Many believers think that just a little bad music will be okay or a little swearing on the television will be acceptable or a little nudity or a little ecumenical spirit or a little psychology. But God does not put up with little things and neither should we in our personal lives, homes and churches.

When we have a love for the little things of the world, we will find that it will eventually grow into a greater and more captivating love. Gradualism occurs when we allow a love for little things to grab our hearts. Eventually this will lead us in a direction that we should not go in our Christian lives. Little things are why gradualism takes place today. No church loses its separated stance over night. Gradualism into worldly compromise occurs over a period of time as we allow the seemingly harmless little things to go unchecked in our churches and personal lives. This is why the Bible tells us to deal with all sin and keep our lives clean.

“A giant 400-year-old redwood came crashing down one day,” says Greg Laurie in his book *The Great Compromise*, “and no one could figure out why. The tree had survived four centuries of storms, lightning, and earthquakes. What had made it fall? On closer inspection, investigators found that tiny beetles had found their way inside its trunk and had begun eating away its life-giving fibers, weakening its mighty bulk from the inside out.” In much the same way, the devil tries to bring Christians down through a steady diet of small, seemingly insignificant compromises. While we are fighting and resisting him in one area, he may be setting up house in another area of our lives trying to get us to compromise in some subtle area. Satan will find ways to creep into our lives for the purpose of eroding our separated foundations until our fibers have become undone and we come crashing down to the ground by compromising with New Evangelicalism.

Show me a person or church who has fallen away from the stance that they once held, and I will show you a person or church who

started making compromises in their lives and ministries long ago. The Bible tells us to “hold fast till he comes” (Revelation 3:3; 11). Gradualism takes place when we allow little things to slip into our hearts and lives. We think that they are small and insignificant but in reality, they become lodged in the deep recesses of our heart and become a small starting point for compromise, which in return allows for greater compromise to take place.

This gradual movement away from the needful areas of separation begins with little things (a little leaven, a little fire, a little fox, a little city). The acceptance of these little things gradually begins to reshape our Biblical view on separation, and we find ourselves not growing in the truth about God’s holiness but growing away from the truth about God’s holiness and absolute standard of righteousness. We can begin to lose our footing on a slippery slope that will gradually take us down into another phase of living that is not pleasing to God.

Would you be willing to choose a little poison to eat with your sandwich? I think I know your answer. Nobody wants a little poison to eat with their meal. But many times we put up with a little spiritual poison in our Christian lives without realizing that the results can be devastating. I’m talking about the poison of compromise. Compromise is like Brill Cream. You remember the old saying about Brill Cream? A little dab will do you. Well, a little compromise will do you in many times. It does not take much mice poison to kill a mouse.

Have you been gradually slipping in your stance these days? Are you allowing little things to begin to make inroads into your heart and life? If so, you must deal with them and reaffirm your desire to do what is right and pleasing to God.

2 Corinthians 7:1

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

If we are not careful, we can gradually let down our guard find ourselves going in the same direction of New Evangelicalism. **Where are we today in comparison with our stance two, three, four or**

five years ago? Yes, we should have grown in the Lord in the past five years. But have we grown away from Biblical standards or separation and holiness? Beware of the drift of the times into the rippling waters of New Evangelicalism.

6. Gradualism occurs when ministries become obsessed with bigness and success.

God is not necessarily impressed with bigness! Many churches today see how other ministries are practicing various growth techniques so that they can gain numbers very rapidly. Therefore, other churches want to try and get in on some of the bigness and bright lights of New Evangelicalism. So what happens? Biblical commands, standards of separation and important truth are gradually put on the shelf and left to die for the sake of bigness and the need for money to keep the big business supported financially. Separation is thrown out the door for the sake of bigness and success.

Jesus said in Luke 12:32:

“Fear not, **little flock**; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Zechariah 4:10 reads:

“For who hath despised the day of **small things**? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.”

These verses teach us that God has never been impressed with the majority and big programs. In the day of Zerubbabel there were those people who felt that the rebuilding of the temple was a small thing. But God knew it was a great thing even though it seemed small in man's eyes. We must remember this. The older Jews may have thought that the new temple was a very small and insignificant work in comparison to the glory of the former temple under Solomon (Ezra 3:12-13; Haggai 2:3). Many people don't see the value in the smaller work of God today. They push for bigger programs, bigger buildings, bigger experiences and such like. They are impressed with bigness and the brassy pomp and pageantry of New Evangelicalism. But

remember what God told the people. He said that He has not despised the day of small things!

Joshua 1:8 then reminds us about true success:

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

The Bible says that true success only comes when we wholeheartedly embrace truth and do not back down from what God wants us to do. Only as we keep the standard of absolute truth high can we become successful in God’s eyes. God measures success differently than the world does. The Christian should want to be successful in God’s eyes and not the system’s eyes for in the end each Christian will stand before God and be held accountable for their lives. So we had better measure success by the right standard – God’s standard of truth.

Gradualism leads us to the place where we can become infected with the virus of New Evangelicalism. This happens when we begin to view the bigness of the world system as being successful, acceptable and appealing. We see the bigness of this system and it can become appealing and acceptable to us over a period of time. ***After a while we can begin to look at success from the system’s standards (New Evangelical standard) instead of God’s standards (truth, obedience, and separation).*** This happens many times and without even realizing it we make a shift and begin to use a different standard for measuring success.

We begin to compare everything with the world system rather than the Word of God in order to find out what success is all about. ***Instead of basing our decisions on the substance of the Word of God we find ourselves basing our decisions on feelings, emotions and a faulty view of success.*** We scrap Biblical standards for something that is bigger and more acceptable and appealing to everyone. We begin to measure success by the world’s standards. And in time we gradually find ourselves moving in the direction of our emotions, feelings and toward something that everyone easily embraces.

7. Gradualism occurs when we lose sight of the holiness of God.

Leviticus 11:45

“For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.”

2 Peter 3:11

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.”

These verses speak for themselves. Since God is absolutely holy in His being and character, we too should seek to emulate holiness in our own lives through the ministry of the Spirit. When we lose sight of how holy God is we can gradually find ourselves moving into the arena of compromise. The holiness of God will keep us from drifting into New Evangelicalism. The holiness of God demands separation from everything that is worldly, sinful and apostate. God’s holiness is the root or underlying premise for all Bible separation. The God of absolute purity and holiness has called us to remain separate in our personal lives, homes and churches. Holiness involves personal character that is like Christ and also demands that the believer does not adopt the world’s sinful philosophies, practices and lifestyles. I recently heard a saying that is very true: “If it looks like the world, sounds like the world; if it is written like the world and advertised like the world – it is the world!” God’s holiness demands a difference in our lives.

Frederick William Faber wrote:

“How dread are thine eternal years,
O everlasting Lord!
By prostrate spirits day and night
Incessantly adored!
How beautiful, how beautiful
The sight of thee must be,
Thine endless wisdom, boundless power,
And awful purity!”

8. Gradualism occurs when men are not leading the home.

I blame men for gradualism. Gradualism creeps into our homes and churches because men are not being the kind of spiritual leaders that God wants them to be. The old saying is true: "As the men go, so goes the churches!" Many men today have lost their backbone to stand up for what is right and true. Gradualism in families and churches today is the fault of the men who are no longer spiritual leaders in the home and the church.

Joshua 24:15 says:

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Men must make a choice for their families or homes today. The children do not make the choice or the wife does not make the choice. The man must make the choice about what direction he wants his family to go spiritually. Men must be leaders of their families today and stand in the gap. The man of the home must make the decision to lead his family in God's uncompromising way and teach his family the importance of following God's will and standard of separation from the 21st century Amorite god's of worldly music, worldly dress, worldly TV shows, worldly church services and other worldly practices of compromise that are being freely embraced today by Christians. What should be our response as God's people today as we seek to remain clean and pure in God's eyes?

Joshua 24:16

"And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods."

We need more men like Joshua today who will take their homes in the right direction and not cause them to slip into the New Evangelical gods of compromise. Joshua was determined that his house and the nation would not turn to the right or the left.

Joshua 1:7

“Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.”

What a message this is for the present hour in which we live. I believe it is a timely message for every Bible believing separated church that is still seeking to hold the line and honor God in the area of biblical separation. God is encouraging us to be strong in doing what is right. He is summoning us to remain true to Him. God is asking us to not turn to the right or to the left. This means that we should not deviate from the path of holiness and truth in any way. We must be strong and courageous in the battle. The world is constantly pushing at the door of our hearts and homes but God’s trumpet is sounding forth the battle cry – “turn not from it to the right hand or to the left.”

Gradualism occurs when our heart no longer fully embraces the doctrine of separation. It begins to happen when we deviate from the path in a little way. Gradualism in our personal lives and churches occurs when we begin to accept the blatant errors of modern Bible versions, the spirit of ecumenicalism, the noise of the modern rock beat and when we begin reading books that we should not read. It begins when we fail to screen our TV and computer in the home and when we embrace psychological preaching and when we begin to possess a general worldly bent or pattern toward those things that God is against.

Sometimes it seems that the separated Christian is against everything. But in reality the separated believer is not against everything. Let’s change the negative tune that everybody is playing today against the separatist. The separated believer is for everything – everything that is right! Now that is positive! But the truth of the matter is that we must be against what God is against. And God does not want us to turn to the right or to the left. God wants us to keep our standards high. ***Beware of gradually drifting where we look at things as not being so bad, or not being so unholy, as they used to be. We can become desensitized to unholy actions and our minds can become desensitized to worldliness.***

Our attitudes can change when we begin to think that things are not so bad anymore as we once thought they were. ***If we are not careful we can pass over the bridge into a subtle area of compromise and feel at home with the New Evangelical spirit of compromise.*** When the shift begins to take place we will no longer speak out against error and stand up for the absolute holiness of God in our associations and everyday Christian living. We may try to be fundamental and claim to be separated from the world while all along we are not taking the stand against the system that we once did. Gradualism has occurred in our lives. The next step is to slowly but surely accept New Evangelicalism (compromised Christianity). We begin to compromise more and more until finally we embrace full-blown New Evangelicalism.

Gradualism can happen to any of us. We must all take heed lest we fall (1 Cor. 10:12). That is why we need to know the principles of Bible separation and apply them to our lives as we make decisions concerning where we will go and what we do and whether or not we will associate with certain ministries, men and methods of evangelism as we seek to serve the Lord. And all of our decisions and actions must be done by the Spirit's enabling power so that we might become more like Christ (2 Cor. 3:18).

I want to close by saying several things. First, the grass is not greener on the other side. We may think that New Evangelicalism offers better grazing land for God's sheep than fundamentalism. We may gradually come to the point where we feel that things are not so bad as we once saw them. We then arrive at the conclusion that it's more spiritual to take a weaker stand than a strong fundamental stand against the system. The popular culture captures our heart and we actually believe that it is better than the old paths (Jeremiah 6:16). But let me tell you what is better. What is better is to obey God without compromising at all. **God never compromises on any issue!** So why do you think that Christians, who represent God, should compromise? Let us not forget what Proverbs 15:3 says: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

God sees all this compromise going on today. And He certainly is not happy when we compromise with the worldliness in the modern-day

church, which has manifested its ugly head in this present hour. For instance, we must be able to discern the gradualism of worldly music creeping into our homes and churches. Satan's music is one of the great worldly compromises of present-day New Evangelicalism. We must also be able to discern the gradualism of humanism, which slips into the church in the disguise of so-called Christian psychology. There is also the gradual occurrence of weaker powder puff preaching which is watered down and which bypasses sound doctrine on separation and important issues that call for attention. Weaker preaching, which neglects the important separated truth taught in the Bible, opens the door for gradualism to occur. ***Watered down preaching gives the devil time to gradually shift a ministry and the lives of many people into a weaker stance.***

Second, let me say that we must remember about eternal reward. God is not going to reward us for compromise. He is going to reward us for obedience. The greater obedience will result in the greater reward! Let us not forget the eternal dividends for obedience.

Revelation 22:12

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

In the early part of this century, an American ship was wrecked off the Scilly Isles near the coast of England. The sea had been calm and the weather clear, but the vessel was caught in a treacherous current that slowly lured it off its course. Before the captain and the crew realized what had happened, the ship had crashed into the rocks.

In life, too, powerful currents of compromise can catch the soul and carry us to a shipwrecked position. Spiritual drifting is usually a slow and sometimes imperceptible process.

Hebrews 2:1 says:

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

The Hebrew Christians were in danger of going back to the sacrificial system. They were in danger of slipping back into the rituals of the Mosaic Law and the old religion of pictures. By way of application,

we might also say that the believer of today, who is a separatist, is also in danger of slipping back into the system, which is against godliness and absolute truth. The Greek verbal action translated as “slip” was used for a river flowing by or a boat gliding by on the sea or drifting away from the dock – the point of anchor. Dear friend, we must beware of gradually drifting out to sea as a Christian where we become lax in the areas of separation and holy living. We must beware of losing our point of anchor and moving away from the dock. ***We know that spiritual drifting has occurred when we have lost the strong resistance to evil and the passionate desire for truth that we once knew.*** We can lose our love for the truth and holiness that we once had in our earlier days. We can fail to practice living separated because of the gradualism that has crept into our lives and churches.

Jesus said in Revelation 2:4-5:

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”

Be on guard that you do not lose your love for truth. Be aware that you can lose your light or testimony for truth. Be discerning about spiritual erosion in your own life and the church. Be mindful of the drift of the times. And most of all, beware of gradualism!

Some wild ducks were taking their annual northward journey when suddenly a flock of tame ones came into view in a barnyard far below. Leaving his winged friends in flight, one of the migrants landed and mingled for a short time with those on the ground. After eating some of their corn, he flew away. Soon he returned, however, this time remaining somewhat longer. The safety of the farm and the plentiful supply of food were so appealing that he lived among the domestic fowl all summer. When autumn came, he heard the cries of his former companions as they headed southward. He felt a strong desire to join them, but his added weight from eating so much kept him from flying very far. So he settled down and stayed all winter. In the spring he again heard the familiar call of the migrating flock. His eyes gleamed, and he began to flap his wings but made no real

effort to fly. That fall the sound of the wild ducks only caused him to raise his head, and from then on he paid no attention at all.

This is what gradualism does to us. In time, it will keep us grounded from a spiritual perspective so that we no longer look up at the heavenly life that God expects us to imitate.

Colossians 3:1

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”

When we begin to mingle with the world sooner or later we lose sight of what God’s calling is for our lives, who we once were, and where we used to be as a separated Bible believing Christian. In time there will be no conviction to go back to the place of obedience and separation that we once practiced. Instead, we will eat the pickings at the barnyard of the world system and find ourselves desensitized to where we used to be and what God expects of our lives. May all of us keep up our guard and beware of gradualism.

Some wild ducks were taking their annual northward journey when suddenly a flock of tame ones came into view in a barnyard far below. Leaving his winged friends in flight, one of the migrants landed and mingled for a short time with those on the ground. After eating some of their corn, he flew away. Soon he returned, however, this time remaining somewhat longer. The safety of the farm and the plentiful supply of food were so appealing that he lived among the domestic fowl all summer. When autumn came, he heard the cries of his former companions as they headed southward. He felt a strong desire to join them, but his added weight from eating so much kept him from flying very far. So he settled down and stayed all winter. In the spring he again heard the familiar call of the migrating flock. His eyes gleamed, and he began to flap his wings but made no real effort to fly. That fall the sound of the wild ducks only caused him to raise his head, and from then on he paid no attention at all.

Gradualism eventually changed the nature of the duck and gradualism will do the same to us if we don’t catch ourselves drifting and changing with the culture. Beware of the drift of the times. Beware of gradualism.