

Men Are Like Frogs

Cougan Collins, preacher at the Lone Grove church of Christ of Lone Grove, Oklahoma, delivered a sermon entitled "It Happens to Frogs and Men." This title got my attentions so I gave attention to his sermon from which I worked up the message for this morning

I remember as a boy hearing the story that you cannot kill a frog by dropping it into boiling water. The reason why is because the frog reacts quickly to the sudden temperature change and will jump out of the water. However, you put the frog in cold water and gradually raise the temperature to boiling he will not jump and will be boiled alive.

It may seem that the frog is foolish but are humans really any different when it comes to detecting gradual change? Notice what the book of Hosea says about the tribe of Ephraim. ***Hosea 7:8-10 Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. (9) Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not. (10) And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this.***

The children of Israel had mingled too closely with other nations to the point where they were doomed to suffer disaster. They were slowly but surely swallowed up by those around them. Their wealth was taken by taxes; their morality was destroyed by the heathen life style and their worship to God had been contaminated with false Gods made into idols. These things didn't happen overnight; it happened gradually and this life style became common place without the children of Israel realizing how far they had gone away from God.

Israel was gradually being drained of its spiritual strength and it's this gradual change that is focus of this lesson. If someone had made the changes suddenly then the children of Israel would have rebelled against such a dramatic change but since it was gradually, they seemed to be oblivious of their spiritual condition. You see both the frog and the children of Israel were led to destruction because the change was gradual and the same thing can happen to us today.

In the next few minutes I would like to look at some different ways that a Christian may find himself drifting toward spiritual destruction without them even being aware of it. ***Hebrews 2:1 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.*** That word slip means to slowly drift away. This is what we are talking about.

Our first consideration comes from the fact that many times we cannot see our own faults as easily as we can those around us. Jesus taught this in ***Matthew 7:1-5 Judge not, that ye be not judged.*** Then he gives a principle beginning in verse 3. ***(3) And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? (4) Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Now here is the principle, (5) Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.***

Notice what Jesus is teaching us here. He saying that before you begin judging and pointing out the sin of others, you need to take a closer look at yourself to see if you are guilty of that same sin or even more. There are some people who are hypocritical in this area. They may have a rotten attitude and talk about how horrible other people are, but they seem to be blind to their own faults. Paul says, ***2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?***

To illustrate what I am talking about, let's consider an episode in the life of King David. David was said to be a man after God's own heart, but he was not without his faults. There was a time when David committed adultery with Bathsheba and she became pregnant. His fear of exposure led him to try to cover it up by bringing Uriah, Bathsheba's husband from the battle field to spend time with his wife. When Uriah would not go to his wife, David had him put on the front line of the war and had the men draw back so he would be killed.

With this background let's now look at **2 Samuel 12:1-6** *And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.*

(2) The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: (3) But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

(4) And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. (5) And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: (6) And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

Here we see the prophet Nathan telling a story about how a rich man was doing a great injustice to the poor man and his story made David angry. He saw the sin of the rich man and even claimed that he deserved to die. Then Nathan said (v7) ***And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.*** Then he explains how God had blessed him with abundance and how he had treated a poor soldier, Uriah.

You see in this a great example of how a person cannot see the plank in their own eye sometimes. David didn't have any problems seeing the sin of the rich man because he thought it was somebody else, but his eyes were opened by Nathan as he revealed to him that he was that sinner.

It would be easy for us to find ourselves in David predicament because it very hard for us to judge ourselves or to see the sins we have in our life and if we don't try to examine ourselves we can slowly and surely drift away from God without realizing it. As Christians we need to test our behavior and actions against the word of God. If we see that we have that big plank in our eye then we need to repent and pray to God for forgiveness and try our best not to allow sin back into our life. So, Paul tells us to "examine ourselves."

ANOTHER THING THAT CAN CAUSE SPIRITUAL DRIFTING GRADUALLY BACKSLIDING FROM THE LORD. I'm talking about people that are no longer faithful in the church attendance. Usually this happens in a gradual way. While some people become bothered over some doctrinal matter or some personality conflict and leave, this is not what usually happens. Most of the time it comes from a gradual process and one day you turn around and such people have completely forsaken the church. We see this in other things; let me give you an example.

Let consider the graying of your hair. Your hair doesn't turn gray overnight. You don't wake up one morning and look in the mirror and notice very quickly that your hair had changed color. No, your hair turns gray gradual a few strands here and there you don't notice it as much and you kind of lose track of time not really knowing when you started getting gray hair. Compare some photographs taken of you over the years. In these pictures you can see the changes that have occurred to you gradually. If you compare a picture of yourself when you were 18 to when you were 70 or older. You will defiantly see a huge change.

Keeping this concept in mind of how much we change on the outside physically; think about how we also change on the inside gradually. Most Christians would not go from attending every service to not going at all. Things like that usually do not happen overnight. As time passes on gradually that person might miss a service now and then to attend some other outside interest. Then it becomes more frequent and gradually they

are missing more often than they attend. If we are not careful and we do not watch ourselves we can gradual drift away from God. Now listen to this saying that goes very well with what I have been talking about.

AN ACT OFTEN REPEATED HARDENS INTO A HABIT, AND A HABIT LONG CONTINUED PETRIFIES INTO CHARACTER.

This saying is very true and is why we should examine ourselves and try to notice the gradual changes we are making in our lives. If you are starting to miss church services because you don't feel they are important, you could very well be on your way of gradually drifting away from the Lord.

A THIRD THING THAT CAN CAUSE A PERSON TO SPIRITUAL DECAY WITHOUT REALIZING IT IS BY HAVING TOO MUCH INTEREST IN OTHER MATTERS. For instance, let's say that a once faithful Christian either gets a new job or new hobby. In either case they really enjoy this activity and it starts taking up a great deal of their time. In fact, it starts taking so much time this person is too tired to do what he needs to do to maintain a healthy spiritual relationship. He becomes too tired to study and/or meditate on God's word; his prayer life diminishes, and his influence on others is destroyed. Before you know it, this person will have no time left for the Lord and they will slowly drift toward spiritual destruction because they are so distracted by their activity. In short, we are talking about priorities.

We have to make sure and watch the activities that we get involved in. If we see they are causing us to forsake the Lord, then we need to stop that activity or find some way to modify it so that it doesn't come between us and God. We need remember what Jesus told us. *Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* If your priorities are not right it will be very easy for to allow a job or a hobby to lead astray.

OUR FINALLY POINT THIS MORNING IS THAT ENTIRE CONGREGATION CAN GRADUALLY DRIFT INTO ERROR WITHOUT EVEN REALIZING IT. There are many congregations that used to be sound in God's word which have gradually drifted into error. This it is a gradual process that happens slowly over time. It usually begins with some idea or program that seems innocent enough in and of itself but it gradually becomes bigger and bigger until it eventually become false teaching.

In Romans 16:17-18 Paul warns the churches to watch out for those who cause division, but also notice he describes these change agents or false teachers as having smooth words and flattering speech which deceive the simple. With that in mind lets think like change agent for a minute and see if we can come up with possible way we could sway the majority to use musical instruments. *Romans 16:17-18 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. (18) For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*

Knowing this, we should always be watching and studying our Bibles so that we can recognize when someone is trying to change the Lords church. Don't fool yourselves into thinking that it could never happen here because it could happen anywhere given enough time and because of a lack of watching.

Spiritual decay happens slowly and sometimes it happens without us knowing it. Examining ourselves and watching for these changes daily will prevent it. Just remember it happens to frogs and to men.

Now back to the frog illustration. Let's let the boiling water represents sin. You can sit in the water as sin gradually engulfs you and it will eventually kill you. On the other hand, you can jump out of the sinful environment by obeying the gospel. The choice is yours. Invitation.