

What Jesus says to a leaking church

Seven Letters To Seven Churches, part 3
Pastor Bob Johnson, September 22nd, 2019

Jesus' Third Letter: Revelation 2:12-17

Four Keys To Stop A "Slow Leak":

- 1. R _____ the authority of _____**
(Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12)
- 2. R _____ the danger of _____**
(Numbers 22:5-6, 2 Peter 2:14-15, 1 Corinthians 15:33-34)
- 3. R _____ the influence of _____**
(1 Timothy 6:3-5, Titus 3:9-10)
- 4. R _____ the warmth of _____**
 - the hidden manna (Ex. 16:14,33) fellowship
 - the white stone (Isaiah 62:2) forgiveness

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:5-9 (ESV)

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This Week's Discussion Guide:

Welcome to week 3 of our Fall small group season at GPC. It is our prayer for our Sundays and small groups to provide the encouragement we all need to support each other as we desire to grow closer to God and build friendships in the coming weeks. This small group season will be for 7 weeks and wrap up the week of Sunday October 20th. In the weeks ahead, we will continue to discuss some insights from the first few chapters of the Book of Revelation where seven letters are written to seven different churches. These letters can provide insights in helping us grow closer to God and to each other and make a more positive impact with our lives in the world around us.

Getting Started:

Before we get started with some questions related to last Sunday's message, let's catch up a bit. What is something encouraging or not so encouraging that happened in the last few days that you can share. Let's take a little time to celebrate with one another and support one another.

In this third letter written to the church in Pergamum, Jesus says He will give a 'new name' to those who follow him faithfully. (Revelation 2:17) The new name reflects God's intimacy with each of his children. Speaking of new names, what were your nicknames people called you when you were a kid? Which one was your favorite? Which one ... not so much? Looking back, while you were growing up, what nickname would have best described you?

The concern Jesus had with this third church, was not their front door (what most see) but their back door (the presence of subtle compromises). Over time, if 'slow leaks' are not stopped, erosion will creep in and cause more decay than what we would think possible.

What are some examples of erosion that you are aware of in nature that took quite a while to see the outcome?

When has a 'small problem' that went unnoticed or was 'no big deal' eventually caused problems in your home ... or life?

From last week's message what was helpful or encouraging to you? Was there a question that you thought of after listening to the message we can discuss together?

Digging Deeper:

Compromise never occurs quickly. Read Hebrews 2:1 and Hebrews 10:23. These two verses offer us help to stop the subtle drifting that can begin in our lives. What is the difference between 'pay close attention' and 'being a casual listener' when it comes to God's Word? What are some practical things you can do to avoid being a casual listener to God's truths?

Over time, it is easy to slowly lower the bar regarding the guides and guardrails God gives us and replace them with standards that cost and require less of us. As a small group, how can we help each other *'hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering'*? To get us started discussing this, re-read Hebrews 10:23 and also the next few verses that follow it.

The Bible is full of positive examples to follow ... and plenty of negative ones to not follow. It is helpful to learn from both! Two men who sinned because of some slow leaks (small compromises that didn't stay small) are David and Samson.

Lessons from David's decline ...

David had his Godly moments ... but sadly, his sins included adultery and murder. Neither of these choices happened because of one weak moment. Earlier than the adultery and murder he began to compromise his responsibilities as King.
Read 2 Samuel 11:1-4

How did he compromise his responsibilities as a King in v1?
How did he compromise his eyes in v2?
How did he compromise his influence (how he directed his servants) in v3-4? These small steps eventually led to a total collapse of his integrity. What summary truths can we learn and apply to our lives?

Lessons from Samson's subtle slide ...

Samson eventually was captured, blinded and imprisoned by the Philistines. He was a leader of Israel for 20 years, but slowly some slow leaks began to grow and eventually sunk his ship!

Three areas of weakness in his life were impulsiveness, resentment and carelessness. In Judges 14:1-3 we read that he followed his impressions and made a quick decision on who to marry. How has being impulsive caused you to make a decision that later caused some trouble for you?

In Judges 15:11, we read an example of how Samson often chose to react in resentment. Rather than responding after reflecting for awhile, he let his emotions drive him and let the poor actions of others dictate his reactive behavior.

What examples in your life or in the lives of others that you are aware of, reveal how lowering ourselves to the level of others can get us in trouble?

What are some steps we can take to not be so prone to copy the negative behaviors of others?

Lastly, and sadly, Samson was careless with his commitments. He knew that his long hair was an outward symbol of his commitment to His God which gave him his unique strength. He was to not ever cut his hair as a symbol of his commitment to his God. But sadly, he kept toying with those who wanted to take his strength from him rather than helping the Israelites be free from their oppression.

Read Judges 16:16-21

After God let him experience the consequences of his compromising, he thought he still had the strength he often took for granted. He thought he could never be defeated. His carelessness cost him!

What insights regarding small compromises can we learn from his story?

Compromise is like a slippery slope - once the sliding starts, it is hard to stop. Fortunately, with God's help compromise can be stopped.

Samson's greatest victory was after his greatest compromise.

Any last insights from this story or anything else we discussed?

Before we wrap up, let's share some prayer requests and pray for each other. We are better together!