

## "The Leaven Of Compromise"

Nineteenth century Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard told an interesting story about a wild duck. While flying across Europe in the springtime with his mates, the wild duck came down and landed in a Danish barnyard where there were tame ducks. He enjoyed their corn, so he stayed for an hour, a day, a week, then a month. Finally, because he relished the good fare and the safety of the barnyard, he stayed all summer long. But, one autumn day when the flock of wild ducks were winging their way south again, they passed over the barnyard and he heard their cries. He was stirred with joy and delight, and with a great flapping of his wings he rose in the air to join them in flight. However, the good life had made him so soft and heavy, he could rise no higher than the eaves of the barn. He dropped back down to the safety and goodness of the barnyard. Every spring and autumn when he heard the wild ducks honking, his eyes would gleam and he began to flap his wings. Ultimately, the day came when the wild ducks flew overhead and uttered their cries, but he paid them no attention. He had grown complacent and content with lesser things and forgot that which he was born to do.

In these days of political correctness and cultural sensitivity, if there is one skill our generation has become highly practiced and polished at performing it is the art of negotiation. However, our obsession with the fear of being labeled old-fashioned, narrow-minded, and intolerant has left us drifting deeper and deeper into the waters of compromise. When writing to a church that had become proud of its efforts to accommodate the crowds and blend in with the world, Paul pointed out in 1 Corinthians 5:6, "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" Like "a little leaven" that secretly and silently passes through the dough, compromise quickly spreads and sours the whole unless it is removed. We want to be known as godly, but we also want "...to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." We want the poor to be cared for, but we also want the comforts of being "...rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Nineteenth century American theologian Tryon Edwards wrote, "Compromise is but the sacrifice of one right or good in the hope of retaining another – too often ending in the loss of both." The price of compromise is never in equal proportion to what you receive in return! Consider with me the devastating effects of compromise.

Compromise **weakens the structure of our beliefs.** Long before Samson became a captive of the Philistines, he had been a man captivated with the Philistines. Five times in Judges 14 and 15, we are told Samson "went down" and lingered near the enemy camps. Having successfully learned how to straddle the fence that separated good and evil, Samson lost a sense of danger and the discernment of what was right or wrong. How true a statement it is that a man who will not stand for something will fall for anything. Fence walking may be a wonderful circus act, but anytime you walk in the middle of the road, that is the place where an accident is most likely to occur! Lot compromised for greater wealth, but he learned to only see the price and not the value of things. Saul compromised for the praise of men, but their applause disguised the difference between character and reputation.

Jesus made it clear that as believers, we are in the world, but "...not of the world..." A boat is most useful when it is in the water, but when water is in the boat it is destined to ultimately sink beneath the waves. Noted American theologian Donald Bloesch once wrote, "The Christian way is not the middle way between extremes, but the narrow way between precipices." What tragic disaster awaits society when even the church begins to "call evil good, and good evil..."?

Compromise warps the standard of our **behavior**. In 2 Samuel 11, we find the darkest hour in David's biography. The harvest season was now over and a great battle had just been won, but there were still other battles to fight. It is then we read, "...But David tarried still at Jerusalem." This decision seemed harmless because it was not sinful, but it was inconsistent with his life and character. Having grown comfortable with his success, David casually drifted in his convictions and settled for a substitute for fulfillment. Choosing the calm of the rooftop proved to be more fatal than the storm of the battlefield. American businessman William Danforth said, "Lines of least resistance make crooked rivers and crooked men." How quickly life can jump the tracks in an unguarded moment of compromise. Who would have ever thought it would be possible to find drunkenness in Noah, lying in Abraham, murder in Moses, idolatry in Solomon, or cursing in Peter? Inconsistent character lies at the root of every compromise, and the true reflection of what we really believe is revealed in our conduct. A bent heart will never possess feet that consistently walk a straight path!

Compromise **withdraws the substance of our bravery**. In 1 Samuel 15, Saul compromised God's direction by sparing the best of the spoil of the Amalekites. This decision would cost Saul the favor of God on his life and leave him a bitter coward. When Goliath came taunting the army of Israel, courage was a quality Saul admired, but he was hoping to find it in someone else! Compromise is such a subtle enemy because it is always willing to make concessions for you to receive something, but you must be willing to give up something in return. Vance Havner wrote, "If you can peacefully coexist with sin, then at some point you have paid its price." As Christians, we have been called to "...earnestly contend for the faith..." In our efforts to seek the approval of the world we have eagerly given up ground that men laid down their lives to preserve! Oh, that God would give us another Daniel who cannot be spoiled or bought by the king's riches. Oh, that God would raise up another Nehemiah who will stay at God's task with a trowel in one hand and a sword in his other hand. Oh, that God would send another John the Baptist who is not afraid to call a spade a spade. The church cannot continually bend over backwards to please this world without it ultimately weakening our spine!

Compromise poses such a deadly threat because it is so contagious. Just as germs that spread infection throughout the body, the effects of compromise stretch from the foundation to the pinnacle of society. However, like throwing seeds to the wind, we can never predict where it will come up and its effects are felt the greatest. While we quickly rush to compromise for gain today, we may be leaving the next generation as sitting ducks!

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