

We are here today, as nothing short of the most blessed people on the face of this earth. We are Christians: true, faithful, followers of Christ. This means we are surrounded by His favor and His mercy and the hope of the greatest promise of all: an eternity with God in heaven one day. That's the best.

Hebrews 3:12-14 – But we must take care of this. For all of this, the relationships, the hope, the faith, can be lost. We can fall away. And that is not an empty warning – it has happened to so, so many.

- The heart slowly, incrementally, lets evil and unbelief in.
- Sin, a little bit at a time, here and there, and then daily, deceives some.
- We are partakers of Christ (a loaded term), but we must never loosen our grip on Him.

Recognizing that danger is an important personal step. Understanding how it can happen is a second important personal step. And then being careful and diligent to prevent it is the natural step to follow.

There is a song, written by a man named John Mark Hall. It is often performed by Christian music bands, though it can also be found recorded in A Cappella. We won't debate the merits of that today. But the lyrics have had a strong impact on Som. and me for a long time. "**Slow Fade**" – Let's look at the chorus:

*It's a slow fade when you give yourself away
It's a slow fade when black and white have turned to gray
Thoughts invade, choices are made, a price will be paid
When you give yourself a way. People never crumble in a day.
It's a slow fade, It's a slow fade.*

Let's first notice how this happens – It's a slow fade. **Hebrews 2:1** - A drifting away from God. Like a boat that just lifts the rope, paddles a ways, then floats off a bit more, all the sudden the tide has ripped it away – it took a long time to get there and a long time to get back, so most will just give up.

Let's note who causes it to happen – You Give Yourself Away. **James 1:12-15**. – God does not put people away from Him. The devil nor the world pull people away from him. It's a person's choice. Or more to the point, a series of seemingly little "thoughts invade" then "choices are made," then "price will be paid."

Okay, the good news – People never crumble in a day! This doesn't happen overnight. And it won't happen to you. It is incremental. But if we are on that path, it can be hard to recognize, a thought allowed here, a choice there, a little more gray than black and white, and if left to drift we can get so far that getting back seems impossible.

The song gives us a series of very healthy warnings and some quite useful insight. Let's use that as the driving force for this study and most certainly give it dimension with the light of Scripture.

I. "Be careful little eyes what you see"

- a. This sermon we've all heard many times. It comes complete with a reference to Job 31 – "I have made a covenant with my eyes..." and then at least a reference to David on the rooftop looking too long at a bathing Bathsheba. It's an accepted truth among all godly people.
- b. But look – pardon the pun – it happens. Our eyes drift to someone or in some way that is less than appropriate. Sometime images are put before us, in person or digitally, that immediately triggers a gaze or thought or temptation. This is NOT DRIFTING.
- c. **"It's the second glance that ties your hands, as darkness pulls the strings"**
- d. This is the slow fade. This is drifting. When one glance becomes two. When a quick gaze or eye contact or inappropriateness holds longer or becomes more than a single action.
- e. **Matthew 6:22-23** – I like this imagery. Through the eye fills the soul, whether good or bad. Windows can be opened and closed. But be personally mindful of longer looks, more frequent visits, a more steady flow of darkness in through the window and in to the soul.
- f. We could be talking about looking at people, eye contact with people, yahoo page links or darker things on the internet. It's slow, the changes, but a fade is CONSTANT and so is the drift into such darkness. Monitor your eyes, mind the SECOND GLANCE, KEEP CONTROL!

II. "Be careful little ears what you hear"

- a. Again, not a new warning. We've been teaching it to our kids forever. You don't need to hear everything. Profane words and negativity and hate – limit the intake on that! Don't watch R rated films, don't surround yourself with ungodly voices. AND YES, this applies directly to SOCIAL MEDIA and the INTERNET – which is typed words, same thing!

- b. Sermons often target **Eve** in **Genesis 3**, who heard deception that tickled her desires and led her against established good conduct. We can make application to modern religious error which is ALSO A SLOW FADE – from **II Timothy 4:3-4** – teachers that meet desires.
- c. **“When flattering leads to compromises, the end is always near.”**
- d. But the lyrics here focus on relationships and the pull away from God. When people say things to make you feel good about you, think about you, catering to you... beware.
- e. **Matthew 4:3,6,9** – You are important. You are deserving. What you want matters more than anything else. This is the warning we want to heed today.
- f. *Faithful people are pulled to false doctrine, faithful men are pulled to illicit relationships, devoted servants are lured to self-serving materialism... HOW? The SLOW FADE from God first to... maybe some me...by people and the world putting focus on you over him!*

III. **“Be careful little lips what you say”**

- a. Nothing new here. Watch what you say and type. It reflects on your faith, it shows the world what’s going on inside you, and it affects people. It affects people. The passage we generally use for that is so absolutely on point, we’ll read it today: **Ephesians 4:29**.
- b. We talk about not using profane or coarse speech. We talk about not being angry in your words to another. We talk about not lying. And yes, words are “just words” a lot of times, but they are AMAZING INDICATORS of the direction you are moving as a person. FADE.
- c. **“For empty words and promises leave broken hearts astray”**
- d. *NOTE – The first two we studied had to do with INPUT. What you let in through your eyes and ears. And how those inputs can lead you away from God, slowly but surely. But this one and the last one are different. They are about OUTPUT. What you say, where you go. And the implications of that slow fade aren’t about you, but those you affect!!!*
- e. Angry words, faithless words, hopeless words, worldly words – these are indicators of a person adrift. They tend to fuel and embolden that drift AND ... they fail to help others stay tethered to the Lord. They cause others to be led further away from God!
- f. **James 3:4-6** – Fire starter, fire stoker. Problem enlarger. For self and others. If you want a measurable indicator of your relationship with God, where you may be in the fading process, take very close and clear stock of the things you say – not a word here or there in a moment, but the THEME and TONE of your words. Please, others will be affected.

IV. **“Be careful little feet where you go”**

- a. Well, we are starting to get down to very measurable territory, aren’t we. Where am I going? With whom do I spend my time? What am I doing? I put this last, because that’s where it belongs. Once we are tangibly taking ourselves to ungodly places and doing ungodly things, the drift is advanced.
- b. It doesn’t mean we are too far gone. But it means we’ve gone a ways, and that physical distance from God’s people, worship, the right place, can put us in places where sin grows quickly.
- c. Think of Peter. So bold when with Jesus (Mark 14:31), then he created a little foot distance (14:53-54), then he was away from God’s people and around a fire with sinners (14:66,71) and he fails. He then is alone and overthrown with guilt (Matt. 26:75). Later he gathers with God’s people, lets his feet lead him the right way, and he finds himself and his strength again. (Unlike Judas).
- d. **Ephesians 5:15-19** – Walk Circumspectly. Evaluate where you are. Where you’ve allowed yourself to go. Is this a waste of my time with God or help use my time for God? Am I doing something wrong here, or inclined to? Or am I in a place of faith and doing faithful things (singing)? Because, verse 20, wherever I go, I should always have occasion to give thanks to Jesus and do right.
- e. But this isn’t the point the song is making. Remember, inputs affect you directly. But your outputs, what you say, where you go ... well ... **“For it’s the little feet behind you that are sure to follow.”**
- f. Your walk is not self-contained. Your drift is not in isolation. Whether we admit or understand or not, we affect people. Some will get stronger because you are stronger. The young will go to God because you lead them to God... and yes, the drift away from God works exactly that same way.

Conclusion – Let me finish with these lyrics: **“Be careful if you think you stand you just might be sinking”** – Let’s all be humble enough to self-evaluate. To really see where our boat is, many of which have family in it. Let’s **“DRAW NEAR TO GOD!” James 4:6-8**. “People never crumble in a day” “daddies never crumble in a day” “families never crumble in a day” “It’s a slow fade.” Say NO. Say it without an ounce of pride. The opposite. Humbly say no.