

Paraklēsis: Creep

The verb creep has a few definitions; we're not going to talk about the noun here. As a mechanical engineer, and I know there are several fellow ME's reading this, creep is something that, if not considered in a structural design, can be devastating. A structure under constant load may be subject to creep and thus fail at some point in the future. Creep will weaken the material little by little over time. Creep is so dangerous, because even the best, most accurate calculations of strength can neglect the effects of creep. On paper, the design may be bullet proof and failsafe, but if conditions allow for creep, **the structure is doomed** - eventually.

Project managers also are aware of the disastrous effects of creep. I am referring to "scope creep." That is, when a project is initiated, generally, the people doing the work (the vendor) and people asking for the work (the client) define the scope of the work and they agree to it. Inevitably, during the course of work, additional tasks come up that are relevant and possibly even critical to the success of the project. But, they were not defined in the original agreement. These tasks take resources, and **someone needs to pay** for those resources. The scope of the project has crept... and if an agreement isn't made deciding who will bear that cost, the entire project could fail.

Surely everyone reading this remembers 9-11-2001, when the World Trade Center Towers were destroyed. You probably remember many insignificant details about that day. This tragedy changed the world, but it didn't creep into existence. **It happened at once, as an event.** Events that happen can be easily witnessed, analyzed, reacted to and maybe even prevented in the future. Creep, on the other hand, is gradual and subtle - by definition. Does anyone reading this remember when nudity was allowed to be shown on TV? Or **do you recall when bikinis became so small?**

There are many real world examples of how, what I will call "moral creep," has changed what society considers normal and acceptable. Most of those things we probably don't like or approve of, but **there is not a whole lot we can do** to change society or to reverse the effects of moral creep.

But, what about personally? What about in your own life - **are you individually subject to creep?** What about in your family? Do you set the rules for your kids? Do you set up standards to live by using God's word as a guide? Of course, these are rhetorical questions... You see where I'm going.

Creep is the mechanism that allows me to confidently drive on the highway at 75 mph in a 65 mph zone knowing that I won't suffer the consequence of a speeding ticket. **Creep allows me to easily break the law.**

Consider Num 15:32-36. Capital punishment for picking up sticks. Really? Isn't that a little harsh and extreme? I think the reason for God's strict, uncompromising enforcement of these directives (consider Uzzah in 2Sam6:6) is to **prevent creep in our obedience.** Without strict enforcement, the door is left open for creep. As soon as a law is allowed to be broken, a precedent is set beyond the original intent and going back is so very hard. Parents know this and, as a parent, I am painfully aware of this phenomenon.

Read the following scripture from Jude. Consider how truthful it sounds if you replace the word "men" with "ideas" or "habits" or "doctrines" - etc...

For certain men have secretly slipped in among you - men who long ago were marked out for the condemnation I am about to describe - ungodly men who have turned the grace of our God into a license for evil and who deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Jude 1:4)

These "men" (or "ideas," "habits," or "doctrines...") can creep unnoticed into our lives as well. And, just like in a mechanical structure, **creep can cause devastation**. Sin itself has the ability to creep into us. When we're confronted with a temptation, wrong thoughts can lead us to wrong feelings, leading to wrong words, to wrong actions to wrong habits... **Strict, uncompromising, and swift action is the only way to stop the creep**. What action? It depends on how swiftly you take action. With diligence, a sincere desire to obey (a.k.a. repentance,) some humility and the ambition to ask God for help, you can thwart the progression at the thought stage and be done with it quickly. Let it creep, and you will be faced with a harder task.

If I ask God to help me with the temptation to buy a bag of chips while I am still in the parking lot, I have a much easier time sticking to my list and leaving the store without a bag of chips to 'gluttonize' on my ride home. **The longer I wait to ask for that help, the less of a chance I have of succeeding**. Because I really like chips - especially Jalepeño Kettle chips...

Immediate enforcement and strict judgment is a way to set the precedent that "this is serious and there is no fooling around." And this can, and should, be applied to self.

But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. (Matthew 19:26)

"And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." (Matthew 21:22)

Peace to you...

-Nate

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