

Shayla: 1 John 5:16 – What is the sin that brings death?

1 John 5:16-17 HCSB If anyone sees his brother committing a sin that does not bring death, he should ask, and God will give life to him--to those who commit sin that doesn't bring death. There is sin that brings death. I am not saying he should pray about that. (17) All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin that does not bring death.

Midrash:

God is our Father and He constantly works at adding to and improving His family. God disciplines His children¹ and sometimes that discipline can be quite harsh. Lest that put you off, think of what harsh measures He endured in order to make it even possible for us to be saved and adopted into His family. The only begotten Son went to the cross and endured terrible agonies for us. Long before that, He set aside His divine rights and became mortal, weak, and subject to temptation – all for our sakes. To be in His family is to be granted a high honor but also a great responsibility. The standard is higher for Adonaists.

Therefore, we should grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ,² and as newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word that by it we may grow in respect to salvation.³ We should be constantly growing, constantly becoming more and more like the Messiah. Every day we should be more humble, more grateful, more knowledgeable in the Scriptures, more sweet, more hardworking, etc. To rebel against that process is to rebel against life. Any physical child that did not grow would be considered sick. If the lack of health is sufficiently bad it may die. If the child does something supremely stupid or rebellious, it may die.

The process is similar to what we experience in God's family. We either grow or begin to die back. I'm not referring to salvation, which is permanent once granted. I'm talking about relationship and spiritual health.

As we do with our children, God uses different forms of discipline to inculcate spiritual health in His children. There is both positive and punitive discipline. Positive discipline is like requiring your children to make their bed or to go to school. Punitive discipline is like putting their nose in the corner, removing privileges, or even spanking them.

In some, like the Apostle Paul, God's positive discipline takes the form of physical struggles.

- **2 Corinthians 12:7-9 HCSB** especially because of the extraordinary revelations. Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so I would not exalt myself. (8) Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times to take it away from me. (9) But He said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.**" Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me.

Unfortunately, some talmidim do not live up to the great grace they've been granted in Jesus. They keep stubbornly refusing to heed the voice of the Holy Spirit and live consistently rebellious lives. Those children receive punitive discipline. That's what Paul is talking about when he writes:

- **1 Corinthians 11:29-30 HCSB** For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. (30) This is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep.

¹ Hebrews 12:5-13

² 2 Peter 3:18

³ 1 Peter 2:2

These believers were gorging on rich foods and allowing themselves to get drunk IN CHURCH while their brothers and sisters stood outside hungry and poor. God resisted this wickedness, first by warning them with sickness and as they persisted, with death.

This is was not an unusual case. Many of God's people died when they held a wild orgy that was so out of control that all the surrounding nations knew of it and were becoming threat.⁴ Two of Aaron's sons were struck dead when they failed to follow the appropriate procedures in the Tabernacle.⁵ Apparently, their lapse was due to drunkenness.⁶ Can you imagine showing up on duty as a priest before the God who visited the plagues upon Egypt drunk! God killed Achan when he deliberately disobeyed a direct command to take nothing from the wicked nations they were conquering.⁷ Just as the earlier golden calf incident had made Israel vulnerable to her enemies, Achan's sin ran the risk of introducing terrible plague to the nation. Aaron's sons' sin also represented a grave threat. If those who are put in charge of enforcing the law are themselves law breakers, what will happen? The nation will soon know chaos, lawlessness, and even civil war.

This approach continued into the New Covenant. When Ananias and Sapphira attempted to curry favor based on false pretenses and to lie to the Holy Spirit God killed them too.⁸ Then we have the example of the Corinthians who used Pesach' as an excuse to gorge and get drunk.

Does God still do this? Yes and no. I say yes because He does not change His nature, purpose or general methods.⁹ Having said that, if you look at the previous examples you quickly realize that He seems to be particularly sensitive to sin whenever a new phase in the grand plan is beginning. These examples show:

- The giving of Halakha
- The giving of the Levitical priesthood
- The giving of the Promised Land
- The giving of the Holy Spirit empowered Church

God is ALWAYS sensitive to sin because it threatens His family. However, He seems to be particularly harsh when instituting a new phase. I'm not sure why. Perhaps it is to clearly demonstrate that the new thing is indeed from Him. Perhaps He considers it a course correction.

So, how do we apply this to 1 John 5? Everyone sins – even believers.¹⁰ Yet, there is a difference between the daily sins that come by the accident of our inherent sin natures and ignorance and the sins that are deliberate, rebellious, and presumptuous.

The people who worshipped the Golden Calf, and Aaron who made the cursed thing, knew better but deliberately chose to follow the world's methods.

Nadab and Abihu knew better than to offer "strange fire". They'd had clear instruction and they'd just seen a positive example. They chose to show up drunk and stupid.

Achan and his family knew better. They'd all heard the instruction and they'd had an opportunity to see firsthand the results of the goyish sins. The fact that hundreds of thousands of his neighbors had not succumbed to the sin speaks against ignorance or lack of education.

⁴ Exodus 32:6-7, 19, 25

⁵ Leviticus 10:1-3

⁶ Leviticus 10:8-9

⁷ Joshua 7

⁸ Acts 5:1-11

⁹ Numbers 23:19-20; 1 Samuel 15:28-29; Job 23:13-16; Lamentations 3:22-23 Micah 7:20; James 1:17

¹⁰ 1 John 1:8

Ananias and Sapphira knew better. They received daily teaching from the Apostles themselves! They deliberately chose to go against that teaching and attempt to curry favor through dishonesty.

Sins that are not deliberate, that are immediately confessed and repented of, are sins that do not lead to death. Sins that are not based on ignorance but on presumption and rebellion are sins that lead to death. We may pray for those who commit the first, that God would forgive them and that the Holy Spirit would teach them better. We are NOT to pray for forgiveness of the second because it would place us on the side of defending rebelliousness which is the same as witchcraft.¹¹

Such rebelliousness is an imminent danger to God's people.

- **Isaiah 30:9-13 HCSB** They are a rebellious people, deceptive children, children who do not obey the LORD's instruction. (10) They say to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy the truth to us. Tell us flattering things. Prophecy illusions. (11) Get out of the way! Leave the pathway. Rid us of the Holy One of Israel." (12) Therefore the Holy One of Israel says: "Because you have rejected this message and have trusted in oppression and deceit, and have depended on them, (13) this iniquity of yours will be like a spreading breach, a bulge in a high wall whose collapse will come very suddenly.

God will fight such deliberate, continued sin tooth and nail and all of His obedient children will too.

- **1 Corinthians 5:9-13 HCSB** I wrote to you in a letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- (10) by no means referring to this world's immoral people, or to the greedy and swindlers, or to idolaters; otherwise you would have to leave the world. (11) But now I am writing you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother who is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a reviler, a drunkard or a swindler. Do not even eat with such a person. (12) For what is it to me to judge outsiders? Do you not judge those who are inside? (13) But God judges outsiders.

Put away the evil person from among yourselves.

Consider one last thing with me. Talmidim (disciples or believers) are a nation of royal priests.¹² When Nadab and Abihu were killed for their sin,

- **Leviticus 10:6-7 HCSB** Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not let your hair hang loose and do not tear your garments, or else you will die, and the LORD will become angry with the whole community. However, your brothers, the whole house of Israel, may mourn over that tragedy when the LORD sent the fire. (7) You must not go outside the entrance to the tent of meeting or you will die, for the LORD's anointing oil is on you." So they did as Moses said.

Aaron and his remaining sons were not allowed to grieve the death of Nadab and Abihu. They were not allowed to leave the Tabernacle to bury them. Why? Because to do so would be to say to the people that what God had done was wrong. To do so would be to put their own family and grief above their love and fear of the Lord. Does this sound harsh to you? Many centuries later, the Son of God repeated the principle.

- **Luke 14:26-27 HCSB** "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters--yes, and even his own life--he cannot be My disciple. (27) Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.
- **Luke 14:33 HCSB** In the same way, therefore, every one of you who does not say good-bye to all his possessions cannot be My disciple.

¹¹ 1 Samuel 15:23

¹² 1 Peter 2:9

God comes first above all other considerations. Any talmid who forgets that and begins to rebel against the Father will soon feel the weight of punitive discipline. If, like the Devil, they refuse to yield, they will soon find themselves face to face with Yahweh Shaphat, giving an account to their Father for their sin.

The rest of us should show such rebellion no sympathy. The sin that brings death can take many forms. The common denominator however is very clear. It is continued, presumptuous rebellion.