



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHRISTIAN SINS?



By Gene Keith

May 3, 2009

What happens when a Christian sins? The answer to this question depends on who you ask or where you are when you ask it. There are basically three different views on this:

- One group believes in sinless perfection and they will say that Christians can't sin.
- Methodist and Pentecostals will tell you that the Christian who sins loses his/her salvation and must be saved all over again.
- Baptist and Presbyterians will tell you that Christians who sin will be chastised by their heavenly father. They will point out that God chastises His children to turn them around. God punishes sinners in hell for refusing to repent of their sins and believe the Gospel.

HEBREWS 12:5-13

Hebrews 12 provides the clear teaching of God's Word on the subject of chastisement. Let's read this first.

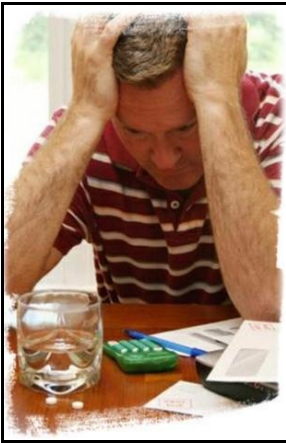
"5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6 For

whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. 11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. 12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; 13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

GOD'S SEVEN-STEP PLAN OF DEALING WITH SINNING CHRISTIANS

This following seven-step outline came from a sermon delivered in the Life Action Team in a crusade they held in the Countryside Baptist church of Gainesville, Florida.

1. Level One -Conviction of Sin.



The first thing God does when one of His children sins is to prick their conscience and make them feel guilty. This is called conviction." The purpose of this is to make them sorry for their sin and want to turn from it (repent).

2. Level Two - Light Chastening:



If a person does not respond to their guilty conscience, God will then send some "light" chastening upon them. This could come in the form of

physical sickness, financial troubles, or some other kind of problems. This is God's way of trying to turn us around.

3. Level Three - Christian Confrontation:

If we fail to respond to levels one and two God will then send a Christian friend (perhaps a pastor) to confront us. This is not pleasant and they seldom want to come talk with us, but God sends them in love to try to keep you from getting into worse trouble.

(Gal. 6:1-2)

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

4. Level Four - Church Discipline:

Often a believer is so bound by his/her sin at this point God is forced to take more serious

action. In these cases, God calls upon the church to administer the discipline.

(I Corinthians 5:1-8)

1 I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you, something so evil that even the pagans don't do it. I am told that you have a man in your church who is living in sin with his father's wife. 2 And you are so proud of yourselves! Why aren't you mourning in sorrow and shame? And why haven't you removed this man from your fellowship? 3 Even though I am not there with you in person, I am with you in the Spirit. Concerning the one who has done this, I have already passed judgment .4 in the name of the Lord Jesus. You are to call a meeting of the church, and I will be there in spirit, and the power of the Lord Jesus will be with you as you meet. 5 Then you must cast this man out of the church and into Satan's hands, so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved when the Lord returns. 6 How terrible that you should boast about your spirituality, and yet you let this sort of thing go on. Don't you realize that if even one person is allowed to go on sinning, soon all will be affected? 7 Remove this wicked person from among you so that you can stay pure. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us. 8 So let us celebrate the festival, not by eating the old bread of wickedness and evil, but by eating the new bread of purity and truth.

(Matt. 18:15-17)

15. If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the fault. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. 16. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. 17. If that person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. If the church decides you are right, but the other person won't accept it, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector."

5. Level Five - Severe Chastening:



When a person refuses to respond to levels one through four, God "gets tough." When they reach that point they begin treading on dangerous ground.

6. Level Six - Serious Physical Sickness:



Not all sickness is the result of sin. However, there is a sickness that God sends as chastisement on a sinning Christian.

(1 Cor. 11:30-31)

"30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

7. Level Seven - Physical Death:



When a Christian is so hard-headed they fail to respond to the first six levels of discipline, there is no hope for them.

God simply takes them home (to heaven) . It may be in an accident, it may be a heart attack, it may be on the field of battle, but however it comes - it comes from God.

(1 John 5:16-17)

"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him

life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."

SUMMARY

God's Word is very clear. A person who claims to be saved, yet continues in sin and is not chastised, is not saved. God calls them "bastards." God is not their real Father. They just think He is.

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