

## **GOD SPANKS HIS CHILDREN**

Proverbs 3:12 says, “For whom the Lord loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.” God is NOT an irresponsible Father who just lets His children do whatever with no discipline. No! God disciplines His children out of love. Hebrews 12:5-11 emphasizes that God disciplines ALL His children without exception.

### **Hebrews 12:7–8 (NKJV)**

**7** If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

**8** But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

Hebrews 12:10 is clear that God disciplines His children for the purpose of building “holiness” into their lives. No chastening is joyful but “afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” (Heb. 12:11). Christ says, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” (Rev. 3:19)

As God’s children we can be disobedient but in disobedience we can be sure that chastening will follow. For flagrant disobedience we can expect severe discipline. Paul told the Corinthian church that because of their mistreatment of one another many were “weak and sick among you, and many sleep” (1 Cor. 11:30). And then Paul went on to say, “For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” (1 Cor. 11:31-32). If we won’t deal with our sin and get right, then God will judge us with discipline and such discipline may result in sickness or death.

John the apostle deals with a sin unto death in 1 John 5:16.

### **1 John 5:16 (NKJV)**

**16** If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.

This is addressing a brother in Christ who has sin in his life. **Sinning** is the Greek word “*hamartano*”, which means “*to miss the mark*” or “*to wander from the path*”. We might say this person has spiritually “*gotten off-track*”.

Throughout the book of 1<sup>st</sup> John the emphasis is repeatedly brought out that believers will not habitually practice sin as a lifestyle (cf. 3:4, 6, 5:18, etc.). However, John also teaches that believers can sin (cf. 1 Jn. 2:1-2), and here in 1 John 5:16 we see that to a limited extent, they can “present tense” sin. Sinning here is in the **present tense**. However, we quickly point out that in such a case, disaster looms ahead. It is limited in extent, because there will be DIVINE DISCIPLINARY INTERVENTION. A “present tense” pattern of sin puts the believer on a path towards physical death. Sin in the life of a believer will not continue as an uninterrupted, perpetual pattern. In discipline, God will step in and intervene. If He doesn’t, then that is a sure sign the person is not a true believer, but merely a professor (cf. Heb. 12:5-11).

In 1 John 5:16 the definite article “**a**” is not in the Greek, meaning that John does not necessarily have some specific sin in view, but rather the issue is the ongoing qualitative nature of sin, whatever it may be.

If a brother in sin repents he is to be restored, and as we find in 1 John 1:9 he is forgiven. In such a case, we are talking about sin which will not lead to death. The reason it does not lead to death is because confession has taken place. In such a case God works through intercession so that the consequences of his sin are not fatal.

We see this same principle of intercession and restoration in James 5:16.

### **James 5:16 (NKJV)**

16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

A key component of this verse is intercessory prayer that results in being made whole. So, the sin of a believer not leading to death is sin that has been confessed in accordance with 1 Jn. 1:9. God honors intercessory prayer for those that are repentant. For the repentant God will stay the deadly consequences of sin, but He does it in conjunction with prayer. God would not need to work through intercessory prayer, but He often chooses to do so (cf. Job. 42:7-8).

**Footnote:** Note that not all sickness is because of a specific sin in one's life.

### **3 John 2 (NKJV)**

2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

John's point in 3rd John is that spiritually his readers were doing just fine and his prayer was that they would likewise also be in good physical health. The concern was their physical well-being, but it had no connection to sin in their lives.

1 John 5:16 says, "***There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.***"

There comes a point if a believer persists in sin and refuses to humble himself under the discipline of God, then you might as well save your prayers. If they refuse to confess and get right, well then, God is not going to answer prayer for their healing and well-being (cf. 1 Cor. 11:31).

Sin not repented of is sin leading to death. The disciplinary judgment of God stands over such a person that very well may result in death. That is serious business. In such a case, we cannot have confidence of God hearing us favorably and getting answers to the petitions we bring before Him. John does not say we should pray about this kind of a situation.

Sometimes, a professing Christian is living in flagrant sin and consequences start to accrue. Then, people ask for prayer for that person. They ask for God's blessing. In such cases, I often think to myself, "*We ought to be praying for repentance; and if they won't repent, there is nothing else to pray for.*" Until they repent there is no point to pray blessings upon them. Such a person is beyond prayer in the sense of having God's disciplinary action removed. They will continue on the path towards death until and unless they repent.

"Nothing lies beyond the reach of prayer except that which is outside the will of God." – **Anonymous**

"John is well aware that the nature of the sin being committed can negate the effectiveness of the believer's intercession..... Clearly the reaction is due to the nature of this sin, which John obviously believes was deliberate and self-willed. The effectiveness of intercessory prayer is limited by the mysterious power of self-determination with which God has endowed every human being." – (emphasis mine) **Edmond Hiebert**, *THE EPISTLES OF JOHN*, pp. 259, 261

One might wonder that if this is the case, then why aren't more professing believers either sick or dead from discipline? Well, to start with, many are mere professors and are not legitimately God's children. All true children are disciplined as needed, according to Hebrews 12. It is one of the things

that is evidence of truly belonging to God. If one can consistently get away with sin, it proves they aren't really God's child.

Also, timing belongs to God. God is patient. He sets the timeline in each situation and makes the call on every situation according to His perfect ways. He allows sin to a point, but at some point He deals very definitely with it. However, there does come a point where it is repentance or death. But that line is God's prerogative alone (cf. Ex. 4:24-26; Ps. 32:3-5; 2 Sam. 12:13).

God restores or removes disobedient children. As a responsible Father, He does not let us get away with sin! Blatant sin without serious disciplinary consequences as a pattern of life provides concern as to whether or not one is saved. The biblical pattern is that discipline is not long in coming for those who are truly God's children. Unbelievers are not disciplined but instead are under the WRATH of God (cf. Jn. 3:36; 1 Cor. 5:9-13).