**Desire's Grandchild: A Look into the Spiritual Genealogy of Sin in the Life of a Christian.**

Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. James 1:15 NIV

There is a law in the realm of physics that states that all things in the universe move toward disaster. Interestingly enough, this can also be said of sin. The purpose of this paper, nevertheless, is not to find clever methods that allow for the spiritualization of the laws of nature, but rather, to examine three points:

1. The lethal effects of sin upon the heart
2. When enough sin is enough
3. The birth of spiritual death

A point this article does not seek to clarify, however, is whether a genuine Christian can sin to the point of spiritual death or whether anyone indulging in deliberate sin is in reality a Christian. One thing this article does aim to answer, nevertheless, is to prove that a person can come to know the Truth, receive the Truth, partake in the communion of the Holy Spirit, and yet, willingly turn their back on Jesus Christ.

**The lethal effects of sin upon the heart**

Several allegorical descriptions are used throughout the Scriptures to represent the human heart. In fact, the human heart itself is employed as an anthropomorphic aid to portray something far more complex and abstract: the human spirit (Psa. 51: 10; Luk. 1:46-47); the place where emotions (Deut. 6:5; Jn. 14:27), intentions (Gen 6:5; Mat 15:19; Heb 4:12), the will (Psalm 119:11), and the ability for worship reside[[1]](#footnote-0) ( Jonh 4:24). The same place where conscience also resides, or at least is closely related to it with the potential of affecting it (Rom. 2:15; Heb. 10:22; 1 Tim 1:15). Whichever the nature of such a place is, the Scriptures often refer to it as the core of the human being and the primary place to be washed or be made right with God when someone repents (Heb 9:14; Act. 15:8-9; Eze. 36:26; Heb. 10:22; Mrk. 5:8).

The purpose of metaphors or anthropomorphism in the Bible is to aid in the understanding of Spiritual principles[[2]](#footnote-1). By bringing an abstract aspect of the human being and assigning it the imagery of a heart, God can convey what role this mysterious part of the self plays in the process of spiritual formation—or deformation—of an individual.

The Word of God is Spirit (John 6:63), thus it talks to the heart[[3]](#footnote-2), the Spiritual dimension of a person (Heb. 4:12). Once the Word reaches a person's heart, that individual is responsible for cultivating it (Jas. 1:21) or rejecting it (Act. 13:46).[[4]](#footnote-3) If that Word is cultivated it will grow and produce fruit (Mat. 13:23), but if it is rejected, matters will not look the same the second time the Word is heard. The heart will be less responsive to it creating a layer of indifference every time this process of hearing and rejecting is repeated. The Bible calls this process the "hardening of the heart,” a process so closely identical to the physical weathering of a surface that it compares it to a callous on soft tissue (Isa 6:10). In the same manner a hand will develop death skin (callouses) when it is exposed to constant friction, so will the heart grow cold and immune to the Spirit of God and His Word if it does not allow the Word to penetrate. It will become a calloused organ, which after creating a layer of dead tissue, will lose its capacity to feel.

There is a specific instance in the Gospels known as the "Parable of the sower" that conceivably alludes to this idea[[5]](#footnote-4) (Mat 13:1-23). Jesus, himself, deciphers this parable for His disciples. He portrays the word of God as the seed to be planted and then He paints four different kinds of soil, which are meant to represent the heart: the road, the thorny ground, the rocky ground, and the good soil. The parable alludes to the idea that the receptor is responsible for the care of their soil (the heart)[[6]](#footnote-5). Interestingly enough, however, there is one kind of individual who has turned his piece of real estate into a road. A place that the seed can no longer penetrate.

It is common knowledge that a road does not form on its own. In order for the weathering to happen it has to encounter continual outside pressure. Not to mention that a path is most times intentionally formed. The Individual with this kind of heart is not an individual who simply has not encountered an opportunity to cultivate a seed or take care of his soil, but one who has had a wide array of opportunities and has refused to do it and is if it was not enough it has eradicated the possibility of life upon it by walking all over it.

This is the very danger a Christian must face when, after having come to know the light, chooses to indulge in premeditated sin, trampling over the blood of Christ (Heb 10:29).

There is a difference between going for a drive one Saturday afternoon and accidentally running over a pedestrian who violated a traffic signal versus watching that same pedestrian every Saturday for a month, making notes of the exact place and time at which they like to take a walk and make an intentional decision of throwing one's vehicle over them. In the same way, there is also a harsh difference between a sin committed against someone’s desire—due to humanity’s sinful nature[[7]](#footnote-6) (Rom 7:15)—and those birthed from a deep heart's desire as James warns the reader (Jas 1:15). It is a frightening thought to live in sin when someone is in the dark, but there are no words to explain how frightening it is to live under sin once one has known the light (Heb 10:31; 2 Pet. 2:21).

An individual’s attitude towards sin is one of the most fundamental differentiation factors between a genuine believer and a phony (1 Jn. 3:6). Nothing will harm and threaten the life of a Christian more than premeditated sin. This act is so dangerous because in order for it to take place several fences must be jumped: knowledge of the word of God must be ignored, the conscience must be violated and the precious Holy Spirit of God must be resisted. Premeditated sin is not an act that develops from one day to the next. James compares it to the process of pregnancy because it is something that must be incubated and nourished for a certain period of time before it takes birth. It can always be traced to a seed of corrupted desire; a seed that usually is the result of a deeper spiritual issue[[8]](#footnote-7). A hardened heart, therefore is, the result of a process of intentional, continuous acts of disobedience and resistance to the Spirit of God.

This is a progression that appears many times throughout the Scripture. The claim that Pharaoh was acting against light is not one that will be made here, after all, he was not part of God's Holy people. However, the point that he resisted the call to repentance, is clear. It is said of him that after God gave him ample opportunity for repen­tance, God "hardened his heart"[[9]](#footnote-8) (Exo 10:1) a phrase that some scholars say is better translated as "God made his heart firm.” In contemporaneous terms, this would sound as "he got what he wanted.” He wanted to do what seemed best to him, therefore God allowed it. It was he who chose his destination through his actions.

Very Similar, although more grievous was the case of Saul, who after rejecting the word of God for Iong enough and refusing to accept his wrongs, it was him who came to be rejected by God (1 Sam. 15:23) and therefore also abandoned by the Spirit of God (1 Sam. 16:14).

It is the erroneous thinking of those who live under addiction to drugs, alcohol, or any other addictive behavior or substance, that they can recant from it at any time. The same is the case of those who have known the light and choose to toy around with sin. They fantasize about the thought that they can repent and be made right with God at any moment; but just how much truth there is in that? None! For repentance belongs to God alone (2 Tim 2:25; Jn. 6:44). Can the heart, thus, become so tarnished that it loses its spiritual life? This question will be explored in the next section.

**When enough sin is enough**

Can a Christian sin indeed to a point of spiritual desensitization; a point where sin does not prick their conscience anymore? Can they find repentance again? Truly, that is a difficult question, for no one knows the mind of God (Rom 11:34). Saying whom He will show mercy to and to whom He will not, it is attempting to take His place. One can not generalize every case and say that God acts under the same timeframe and in the same manner under all circumstances. Nevertheless, the goal of this section is to prove that there is enough Biblical evidence to support the claim that there is an invisible line in the path of unrepentant, intentional sin, which after being crossed signals the firming of the heart[[10]](#footnote-9); a line that divides between the intervening voice of the Holy Spirt and His withdrawal from the person. Few have put this more eloquent than C. S. Lewis: words: “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’”[[11]](#footnote-10)

This, of course, does not mean that there is a point where God stops forgiving (1 Jn. 1: 9) it only means that there is a point when the sinning party loses the feeling of need for repentance. A point when the spirit of God is belittled long enough that ultimately, He departs (Isa. 63:10; Psa. 51:11), marking the Spiritual death of the person. This is the sin of death that John talks about in his first letter to the church (1 Jn. 5:16). A person who claims to be a believer and who is flirting around with sin, John recommends not to even bother praying for. But how can someone prove that John is truly talking about deliberate sin and not about a particular sinful act? The answer can be found by the execution of basic hermeneutical methods upon the text as, looking at the immediate context and the author's reason for writing. In Chapter 5 John opens by intro­ducing the distinctive characteristics between those who have truly been born of God and those who have not. He mentions 2 main factors of differentiation in specific; one, the adherence to the most fundamental belief of the Christian dogma: the Divinity of Christ, and two, the attitude towards God's comm­ands (1 Jn. 5:1-5). In verse 4 of the same chapter, he states that only those who have been born of God can overcome the world, and in verses 6-18 he explains who are those that have been born of God: the ones who do not continue to sin: (1Jn. 5:18).

Consequently, in verse 16, he exhorts the reader to pray for the brethren who have fallen in sin—the sin that does not lead to death—but he also advises to not bother praying for those who have willingly chosen to remain in it—the sin of death.

The reader can gain assurance that deliberate sin is the issue being discussed by looking at verses 17 and 18. Verse 17 states that all wrongdoing is sin but there is a sin that does not lead to death—in James’ words, a sin that has not yet birthed desire's grandchild). In addition, in verse 18 he develops his argument by immediately talking about deliberate sin, which supports the idea that such a sin is the sin of death.

It is also worth mentioning that the death in scope is Spiritual death, although some, who reject this idea, however, claim that John is not talking about Spiritual death, but rather physical death.[[12]](#footnote-11) This is irreconcilable with the context of the chapter and not only of the current chapter in sight, but also with the entirety of John's letter, which, as said before, has in view two main points: to affirm the incarnation of Christ and to warn against sin.

It is hard to see how the violation of any of those two points would bring about anyone's physical death. The world would not have nearly as close to eight billion people if the denial of Christ was a cause of death. In addition to that, the individuals John talks about in chapter 5:16 and to whom he addresses his letter are those in the church, not those outside of it. Certainly, no one who denies the incarnation can be called a brother or sister by a child of God, as John does in verse 16. But those are not the only hindrances to the idea that he is talking about physical death because actually all references to death in his letter, with the exception of chapter 3:16, talk about spiritual death.

In this way, John seems to indicate that there is indeed a line that can be crossed by sinning deliberately and that this one marks the Spiritual death of the individual. John is not alone in the subject, however. The writer of Hebrews develops the same argument[[13]](#footnote-12) and this time with much stronger words than the beloved disciple does. From chapter 5:11 to 6:8 the author warns about the danger of falling away and he is sure to clarify that those of whom he is speaking are those who have shared in God's Holy Spirit 6:4.

In addition to that, with more explicit arguments, he confirms that it is impossible for someone who has stepped all over God's Son to be brought back into repentance a second time:[[14]](#footnote-13)

“For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.” Hebrews 6:4-6 ESV

This verse is not talking about someone who has fallen into the same mistake twice, of course. The author is speaking of that person who has been made alive by God once and has opted for death rather than life. By stating that it is impossible to restore them “again”, the author is accepting that they had been restored a first time already[[15]](#footnote-14). Although deliberate sin is not specifically brought up in this passage as being the cause of a second spiritual death, he develops this argument once more in chapter 10, specifically in verses 26-29, where he states:

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? Hebrews 10:26-29 ESV

It is important to mention, again, that the author is not accusing God of being unwilling to forgive, but he is stating that the sinning party is not willing to repent[[16]](#footnote-15). Deliberate sin means fighting against God’s Spirit and willingly rebelling against that which the person knows to be right and true, therefore there is no hope of ever being made right with God again. The only thing left is a terrible expectation of fire[[17]](#footnote-16). Peter compares it to a dog returning to its own vomit and a swan returning to the mud and adverts that such individuals would have been better off had they never come to know the path of righteousness (2 Pet 2:20-22). They have known the path of righteousness and the path of wickedness and prefer­red the path of wickedness, hence God has answered the desire of their hearts and allowed them to give themselves into whatever their heart desires[[18]](#footnote-17) (Rom. 1:24-25).

This is the very state that the nation of Israel reached[[19]](#footnote-18). A state of constant rebellion against the Spirit of God and His word that ultimately God allowed them to have what they so much wanted, blind eyes and deaf ears[[20]](#footnote-19) (Jon 12:40; Mark 4:12). In these verses Jesus himself is stating that indeed, God will always forgive a heart that is repentant. Always! But the action in question is not whether God can forgive, but whether the person can repent. He affirms that a person can indeed reach a place where returning is not an option. For timely reasons, the following claim will not be expanded on, but there is enough evidence to propose that this sin is the same sin that Matthew, Mark, and Luke talk about: the sin against the Holy Spirit (Mat. 12:31; Mk. 3:28-29; Luk. 12:10). [[21]](#footnote-20)

The answer to the question posed in this section, hence, is yes. A person can allow sin to mature and birth death, the child in the genealogy of sin that closes the door to the road back home. Alas! And to think death's birth could have been avoided had its grandfather been halted on time.

**The birth of spiritual death**

As stated in the title of this paper, spiritual death is not a phenomenon that shows its ugly head from one day to the other. It is the process of serious, intentional actions that violate the Word of God, belittle His Holy Spirit, and gradually desensitize the conscience and Spiritual discernment[[22]](#footnote-21). An act of sin is not a mere act even when this is produced by a rushed impulse. Sin is always the product of a deeper part of the self and impulses are the failure to control or eradicate those desires and thoughts that lay so deeply within a person. Actions, in other words, simply voice our true character.[[23]](#footnote-22) That is not to say that every act of sin is intentional or that every impulse acted upon is the desired behavior by the person executing the act, it is clear that there are certain differences between acting upon an impulse and acting with all intention (Rom 7:14-23), but all sin, even if intentional, had deeper roots that go beyond the physical aspect.

Actions are thoughts and desires that have been acted upon. This is the reason for which Christ took the law to a higher level than mere actions when He stated "You have heard…but I tell you” (Mat. 5:21-48). In this famous, rhetorical template, the Lord takes an action prohibited by the Law and unwraps it before His disciples to show them that what produces it is a desire. In this way establishes the thoughts and desires of the heart as the new standard of obedience.

When a Christian—or any human with the ability to act upon their thoughts for that matter—surrenders to the ugly monster of lustful thinking, the question is not whether they can keep the fantasy in their mind, but for how long. Sooner or later desire will birth sin if the pregnancy is not ended. Once death has been birthed the person is one step closer to the third descendant, death. He or she not only has to fight against its grandfather, desire, but against the cruel son named Sin. By this time in the process, the person, who, as a frog that has slowly been burning in boiling water without noticing, retains the thought that repentance is always an option: "Sure, I can sin today but repent tomorrow" and plays it as a broken record in their mind. Ignoring that the very fact that they feel no need for immediate repentance is the first set of contractions before the third descendant in the dynasty is born.

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