

What Happens to Christians Who Live Like the Devil?

by Terry Cadwell

God desires restoration and repentance for Christians who live like the devil, but if refused, consequences such as physical death or damage to one's life may occur.

Duration: 39:40

Scripture: Matthew 18:15, Matthew 18:17, Galatians 6:1, Galatians 6:7, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Sin And Consequences", "Gods Judgment"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of God deleting people who hold onto sin and refuse to be obedient to Him. He shares that he has witnessed God physically causing the death of individuals four times as a result of their sin. The speaker also reflects on why God doesn't delete more people, acknowledging that God cannot be fooled and that everyone will reap what they sow. Using a torn shirt as a metaphor for the fabric of creation, the speaker explains that God created the world with a moral standard, and when individuals choose sin, it is like the program of their spiritual software is not responding. The speaker concludes by sharing a personal story of a man named Kevin who admitted his wrongdoing and betrayal, highlighting the consequences of not turning away from sin.

Transcript

Lord, you are a great, great God. And Father, there's no way, there aren't enough words in our vocabulary to be able to describe how great you are. But Lord, it's fun to try.

Lord, I thank you that when we meet together in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, that you are right here in our midst. And Father, I ask you to be here in our midst today. Lord, that by your Holy Spirit, God, the truth that is your word, that you will apply it into our lives.

God, there's all kinds of ways the devil would like to twist and turn the truth that is your word. And Lord, I just ask you that you would keep him from doing that today, Lord. But instead, we would hear the truth that is your word and we would know, we would understand it and apply it where you want it applied in our lives.

God, I ask you too to fill me with your Holy Spirit. Lord Jesus, you said you're the vine, I'm just a branch. And Lord, I don't know that anymore than when I'm here with the responsibility of teaching your word.

So Lord Jesus, I just ask you to fill me with your Spirit so that nothing in me gets in the way of you. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

When Patsy turned 50, I told her that she better treat me nice or I was going to trade her in for 225s. She very quickly said that I couldn't even keep up with her. What made me think I could handle 225s? And, you know, I was joking, I really was.

But what if I had done something like that? I mean, not that I could find 225s that would want me, but, you know, most of us have known Christians, Christian leaders even, who have just sort of abandoned the Christian life and started living like the devil. And what does God do with those people? Take your Bibles and turn to Galatians chapter 6. Galatians chapter 6. When Kevin became our worship pastor, we weren't aware at the time that he was having trouble in his marriage. Actually, they had been having trouble in their marriage almost from day one.

They tried all kinds of counseling. Nothing seemed to work. But Kevin, Kevin was committed to his marriage.

And so he just was bound to determine they were going to make it work, even if it took the rest of their lives. Well, Karma was one of our youth interns. She was also on Kevin's worship team.

Actually, she was a very important part of his worship team. She was his best vocalist. And so there were many times when Karma and Kevin stayed after a practice in order to work on music that they may have been going to be doing together.

Well, as their relationship progressed, one of the other ladies on the worship team became concerned. And so she tried to warn Karma. And then when that didn't work, she came to talk to me.

Well, I went and talked with Kevin and try to find out if there was anything going wrong. And Kevin was very forceful. He's with me for forceful.

That's the wrong word. He was very, very upfront. And he said, yeah, I'm fond of Karma, but our relationship is strictly a professional relationship.

So for the time being, without any more to go on than I had, I dropped it. Well, a few months later, someone else saw Kevin and Karma together, but this time it was obviously an inappropriate relationship. And so this person also came and talked to me and told me exactly what she saw.

Well, then, as Matthew chapter 18 says, I had something else I needed to do. Matthew chapter 18 says that if we see, excuse me, I lost it here. Matthew chapter 18 says, if your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault just between the two of you.

And I've already been to Kevin once. So I felt like, OK, I've already done this part, this first part, although I wasn't really sure. At least I pulled it out there in front.

It says, but if he listens to you, then you've won your brother over. But if he will not listen to you, then take one or two others along with you so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. So I took a youth pastor with me.

And first, we went to see Karma since she was one of his youth interns, took our youth pastor. We went to see her and she denied that there was anything going on between she and Kevin. Well, then we left

Karma's and went to talk to Kevin, and he still denied that there was anything inappropriate in their relationship.

But then before I could even get back to my office, he had already sent us a letter of resignation. And in the letter of resignation, he had also asked us to remove him from membership in the church. Well, the dots were connecting, and they really connected because by that night, he had already left his wife and three kids and moved in with Karma.

Well, about a week later, I managed to find a time when I could get with Kevin again. I had some other fellows with me, two other fellows with me, and I just confronted Kevin. And I said, Kevin, what's going on? What's going on in your life? Where's God in all of this? And Kevin, very up front, he said by every standard, he said my relationship with Karma, his relationship with Karma had been an adulterous relationship.

But then he justified that relationship by pointing to all of the problems in his marriage. You know, that shouldn't be a surprise to any of us. Proverbs says all the ways of a man are right in his own eyes.

And so for Kevin at this time, he was able to justify what he was doing based on what was going on in his marriage and had been for the last 10 years. I look at Galatians chapter six, beginning in verse one, Galatians chapter six, verse one. Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.

But watch yourself or you also may be tempted. But what if he doesn't want to be restored? What happens then? OK, let's back up to Matthew 18, because I wasn't we weren't finished. Matthew 18 says it says if he refuses to listen to the two or three of you, then tell it to the church.

And if he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Now, folks, we're not talking about the IRS here, although although it's about that time, isn't it? And and the pagan tax collector, we see that all the way through the New Testament. And in our culture, that would be talking about.

Drug dealers and mafia types and criminal folks who would like to take advantage of you and get something from you that doesn't really belong to them. And so Jesus says, once it's come before the church, your relationship with this guy is going to be totally different from then on. We can pray for him or her.

In fact, first John chapter five says we should pray for this person continually. If we see that person in public, we we can remind them of our love for them and we can tell them that we're praying for them, which just wins a whole lot of points about that point, by the way. And and we can even even ask them if if they're if maybe they've reconsidered or thought anymore about about the Lord and what's going on in their life.

But those are things we can do. But what's God going to do with this? What's God going to do with Kevin and Karma? You know, folks, situations like this are so absolutely tragic and depressing that they literally make me sick. When things like this happen in the church, I know that I know what's coming there.

There are anti God people who are going to point to this and mock God and and mock Christians in general. There are Christians who who who sins or may be more socialized, whose legalistic condemnations of of of Kevin and Karma are going to totally drowned out the gospel message that goes

with Jesus Christ. I know that's going to happen.

But what's even more depressing to me is that when something like this happens, I know that other Christians who are struggling with the same sins that people like Kevin and Karma are struggling with, they're going to use Kevin and Karma as an excuse to stop struggling and just give in. They're going to say something like, well, they got away with it. Why can't I? But is that true? Is that really true that that they got away with it? Is God just going to sit by and say, oh, I'm too bad.

Wish they hadn't done that. Now, let's clear something up here, folks. The issue here is not whether or not Kevin and Karma are going to hell.

That's not the issue. John chapter five says once a person becomes a Christian, they have already entered into eternal life. And John chapter 10 says nothing can take that eternal life away from them.

But does that mean that Christians can live like the devil and God is not going to do anything about it? Let's go back to Galatians chapter six, verse seven. Galatians chapter six, verse seven. Do not be deceived.

God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature or sows to please his flesh, literally flesh.

From that nature, he will reap destruction. The one who sows to please the Spirit, on the other hand, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. What does that mean when it says God cannot be mocked? What do you think that means, God cannot be mocked? What? He's not fooled.

We can't fool God. And then he says, in fact, he says, don't be mistaken. He says, a man is going to reap what he sows.

And folks, you know what? There's a sense here in which God doesn't have to do anything. Charlie, I need you to do something for me. This is a shirt.

Okay? In just a second, I'm going to ask you to tear this shirt. By the way, if you run into trouble, there's a little hole on the back there to get you started. Okay, now before Charlie tears this shirt, let the shirt represent the fabric of creation.

Okay, rip away, Charlie. Alright, good shot. Thank you very much.

Okay, now hold on to this. Okay? We have a torn shirt. Folks, the fabric of creation, the Bible teaches this, that when God created, using wisdom, that God, using wisdom, put together a creation.

And that wisdom that put together creation includes a moral standard. The fabric of creation includes a moral standard. Now, on the one hand, living up to that standard doesn't make us any better than the next person.

Because there's nobody, other than Jesus, who has ever lived up to that standard. And so, living up, or trying to live up to that standard, better than the next guy, doesn't make us any better than the next guy, and it doesn't earn us a relationship with God, and it doesn't earn us eternal life. But on the other hand, choosing to ignore God's moral standard, like Kevin and Karma were doing, is tearing the fabric of creation.

Now somebody may say, well hold it, preacher, we've been talking about grace for the last five weeks. Can't grace fix it? I mean, grace restores broken things, doesn't it? And the answer is yes, yes, yes, yes. And if Kevin and Karma come to their senses, then God will restore them into a right relationship with Himself, so that they can then, in their lives, produce the fruit of the Spirit.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. If they come to their senses and quit ripping the fabric, God will restore them to Him and produce the fruit of the Spirit. But in restoring them into a right relationship with Himself, and in fixing what has been broken in their relationship with Himself, God is not going to move the clock back before they tore their shirts.

There's a difference, see? Yes, He fixes them, but He doesn't move the clock back. And in addition, the Bible says, if Kevin and Karma continue to live like the devil, if they don't come to their senses, then there are at least three other possibilities that can happen down the road, and none of them are good. Some of you... Alanna, what do you do with a document on your computer that you're not going to use anymore? You delete it.

Does God have a delete button? What do you think? You think God has a delete button? You don't think so? In Acts chapter 5, there was a couple of folks in the early church that were really testing the Lord's patience. They were lying to the church about how much they were giving to the church and how much they were withholding for themselves. And they kept lying about this for, you know, a little while.

And so finally, in the early church meeting, Peter, I believe it was, the Lord kind of let Peter know what he was about to do, and so Peter confronted this guy, his name was Ananias, and he said, Ananias, you haven't just lied to man, you've lied to God. And the instant Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And it says, and great fear seized all who heard what is happening.

I imagine it did too. Folks, God deleted Ananias. And that's one of the possible outcomes that happens to Christians who insist on living like the devil.

They can be deleted. Now, what's going to happen if God chooses to delete Kevin and Karma? This is not that hard, y'all. What's going to happen? I heard somebody said something.

They're going to be physically dead. You ever seen God do this? Yep, me too. Not many times.

Four times, actually. And it was scary. Seen it.

Four times. When God deleted somebody, and there was no other explanation other than there was sin that they were holding on to, and they would rather have that sin than be obedient to the Lord, and finally God just deleted them. You know, when I was a younger Christian, I often wondered why God didn't hit the delete button more often.

I mean, it just looked to me like there was a lot of people that needed to be deleted. But you know, I discovered something somewhere along the line. In Ezekiel, God says, Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the sovereign Lord? Rather am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live? He says, I don't get a pleasure in hitting the delete button.

He said, My pleasure comes when they turn around, so I don't have to hit the delete button. And then down in verse 32, same chapter, He says, For I take no pleasure in the death of anybody, declares the sovereign Lord. So repent, turn around, turn to Me, and live.

Now folks, this doesn't imply that we should abolish the death penalty. But it does seem like God is not happy about having to use it. And I found myself, after I read that, I thought, okay now, is this why that there can be a car crash between, but if a drunk driver can have a car crash with a strong believer, and the drunk driver walk away from it, and the strong believer die.

Is that why? Because God doesn't take any pleasure in the death of that drunk driver. He would rather that drunk driver repent and live. And that believer, he's alive, John says, even though he's dead.

Is that why those sort of weird things happen that just in our minds don't seem right? Why did the Christian die and this ungodly person live? And God says, Because I don't desire the death of the wicked man. Now folks, this is good news and bad news. Okay? This is really good news because are there people that you love, you really love, but they're living like the devil, and you're waiting for them to come to their senses.

Well, did you know that Ezekiel tells us that God is just as anxious, even more anxious for them to come to their senses? And he has a lot more influence over them than you do. And Ezekiel indicates he's going to wait as long as it takes. That's the good news.

Now here's the bad news. God feels exactly that same way about the people that have hurt you, or that have hurt the people you love. The people that you're just waiting to see them get what they deserve.

God's response is, Hold it, wait, wait, wait, wait. I don't desire for them to get what they deserve. You're right, they deserve death, but I don't delight in that.

He says, My delight is if they would turn around and live, even though they've hurt you. He says, They've hurt me a lot more. My son Jesus died for them.

Now my desire is that they will turn and live. Let's go on. 1 Corinthians chapter 5. There was a horrible situation going on in the early church.

And in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 we're told that Paul writes to the Corinthians and he says, It's actually reported that there is a sexual immorality among you and of a kind that doesn't even occur among the pagans. A man has his father's wife. So there's an incestuous relationship between a guy and his stepmother, evidently.

And then it goes on down in verse 3 and Paul says, Even though I'm not physically present with you. He says, I've already passed judgment on this one, the one who did this. Just as if I was there.

He says, I want you to hand this man over to Satan so that his flesh, his sinful nature, his flesh may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. A Christian was committing sexual immorality in the church that was even a worse sexual immorality than the unbelievers were getting into. And Paul said, I want you to deliver him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh.

Now folks, I don't claim to understand all that this implies about being delivered over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. But it sounds really bad. I remember one time a few years ago, I was in the church in Tyler.

I was in the office and I heard this scream coming from the outer office. And I went running out there. I thought, I didn't know what was happening.

And so I went running out. It was one of our secretaries that screamed. And I said, What happened? And she said, I think my hard drive just crashed.

Now folks, I'm not a computer person. I don't know what it means when a hard drive crashes. But it sounded pretty bad.

Well, it's the same thing about this being delivered over to Satan for the destruction of a person's flesh. I don't know exactly what that means, but it sounds bad. So let's call this second thing, these physical consequences that can happen, damage to your hard drive.

God is not opposed to using physical consequences to turn people's lives around. In 1 Corinthians chapter 11, we're told that there were a number of people in the Corinthian church who were sick because they refused to face the fact that there was sin in their lives. In 2 Samuel, we're told that David, who was supposed to be the man after God's own heart, the king, the godly king, from whom would come the lineage of the Messiah, that he got involved in an adulterous relationship.

He committed murder, and he didn't even feel guilty about it. And as a result of all that, there was the death of a son. There were several other murders, including a murder of another one of his sons.

There was unbelievable family conflict. There was even civil war. Physical consequences because of David's sin.

In Hebrews chapter 12, we're told that God's discipline hurts. It hurt the Corinthians. It sure hurt David.

Hurt a lot of other people. I've been there, and it does hurt. And I think back to the Kevins and the Karmas that I've had to watch.

And there's so many times when if God had just deleted somebody, like Ananias, but he didn't. And then there's a lot of times when there may be consequences, but they're not visible. You can't see it like you could in the Corinthian church or with David.

There aren't any visible consequences like with David. And so for a long time, I didn't understand this. It didn't make sense to me that God would let his people, who were supposed to belong to him, just live like the devil.

And I'm watching for something to happen, and nothing happens. But let's go on. Look in Galatians chapter 6, beginning in verse 7. We already looked at it.

Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

The one who sows to please his sinful nature or his flesh will, from that nature, reap destruction. The one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit, will reap eternal life. That word there, deceived, implies it's not what it looks like.

So, Terry, even though you're looking at these Christians living like the devil, and they're sort of flaunting it and all of these sorts of things, and, Terry, it's not what it looks like. He said there's destruction taking place. And that word for destruction is the word that is connected with death.

Something is dying, and actually, it's going to rot. That's that word for destruction. But how? Lord, how? There's Kevin and Carmen, and it doesn't look to me, or it didn't look to me, like they're experiencing any

death or destruction.

Romans chapter 1 says that the wrath of God is being revealed against all of the wickedness of men. It says their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. It says God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity.

Their women even exchanged their natural relations for unnatural ones, and the men also, they abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. It says that they received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. It goes on, and he says, so he gave them over to this depraved mind to do what ought not to be done, things like evil and greed and envy and murder and strife and deceit and malice.

They are gossips, they're slanderers, they're God-haters, they're insolent and arrogant and boastful. They invent ways of doing evil. They disobey their parents.

I want you to notice something here. It says the wrath of God is being revealed. That's present tense, right now.

In other words, the people in Romans 1 who were living like the devil were already experiencing God's wrath. Now, it was ongoing, it was happening, because God's wrath, according to Romans 1, is revealed when He turns a person's mind over to the sin that they insisted on living with. And when that happens, everything in that person's life that reflects the image of God begins to die.

And in place of the image of God, what is replacing it is wickedness, evil, greed, envy, hate, strife, deceit, gossip, slanderer, hating God, arrogance, rebellion against parents. All of those things in Romans 1, that begins to replace what could have been the image of God. Now, we say, well, hold it.

We're talking about non-believers here, but did you know that Ephesians chapter 4 says the same thing applies to Christians who live like the devil? That a Christian's capacity to produce the fruit of the Spirit, things like love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control, that a Christian's capacity to produce that fruit is replaced with wickedness and evil and greed and all of those other things in Romans 1? And you know what? The person who has given over to this sin, they may not even know they've lost something. And the reason is because it's their thinking that has become perverted. It's their thinking, their hearts are darkened.

In other words, the light's off. I mean, there's something up there, but the light's off. And so their mind isn't even telling them that something is missing.

You know, sometimes when I'm working along on my computer, everything just stops. And this little message for idiots comes up there. And it says, sorry, fellow, this program is not responding.

And you know, I can sit there and watch that thing forever. And nothing happens. It's not responding.

So let's call this third possibility with Kevin and Karma. Okay, the spiritual software's there, but the program's not responding. Because God disables the software.

You know what? If you're ever close enough to a person who's being given over to sin, you can actually see the change taking place in their life. Some of you have probably been there and done that. It's like their soul is just sucked out of them.

And all of those internal qualities that made them special and valuable, they're not there anymore. And so Paul says, he says, so watch yourself. Watch yourself.

Don't get there. He says, brothers, if someone's caught in a sin, you who are spiritual, restore him. But do it gently.

But at the same time, watch yourself. You know, there are those of us who might be struggling in marriage. And we see Kevin and Karma.

And we say, okay, it's okay to bail out then, isn't it? But Paul says, no, it's not okay. Watch yourself. It's not okay.

Because Kevin and Karma, they're not getting away with it. They didn't get away with it. And neither will you or will we.

There are those of us who are struggling with some sin, and we see Kevin and Karma, and we say, wow, they broke all the rules and they're okay. So that means I can break all the rules and I'll be okay too. And Paul says, no, it's not okay.

You won't be okay. Three years ago, Kevin came to see me. He and Karma had one child, and she had another one on the way.

We sat down at a little coffee shop there in Tyler. And before I could... I had no idea what this meeting was about. He just looked me across the table and he said, Terry, I was wrong.

He said, you tried to turn me around. He said, but I didn't want to turn around and I didn't listen. He said, I lied to you and I betrayed your trust.

And then he said, okay, this is two kids down the road. He said, if I could go back and change what I did, I would do it. Now, folks, I have no idea what was going on in Kevin and Karma's life.

I just had Kevin across the coffee table telling me the truth for the first time in a long time. I don't know what God had done with Kevin and Karma, and I don't know what their life was like, what God was doing then. But you know what, I was glad that Kevin and Karma, Kevin, anyhow, decided to choose God again.

And folks, isn't that all this amounts to? Isn't it just choosing God? I mean, we have all these other options and so many of them are destruction, they lead to death and being deleted and all those things. But doesn't it just amount to choosing God? Now, let me ask you something. This is our last Sunday in Galatians.

Do some of you know a Kevin and a Karma? I mean, maybe they're not involved in sin the way Kevin and Karma were, but somebody, a Christian, who's living like the devil, don't ignore them and don't condemn them as if you had never sinned, because you know that's not true. Instead, why not do what Paul says in Galatians 6 and ask God to make you His instrument in His hands in order to restore them. So maybe they will choose God again.

You can pray for them and then talk to them and just ask them, where is God in all this? And just say, hey, I'm really going to pray for you and then keep praying, but don't give up on them, because God is not going to give up on them. That's what He says. He says, I don't take pleasure in their death.

He says, I'm pleased when they turn around. So don't give up on them. God's not giving up on them.

You know, God doesn't want to delete them. God doesn't want to crash their hard drive or shut down their spiritual programs. He wants them just to choose Him so they can live.

And we can be a part of that. When we see our brother, our Christian brother and our friend that gets involved in sin, if we say, oh God, give me the grace, the wisdom to be an instrument in your hands, so that maybe they will choose you. Choose you, God.

Okay, but let's take it a step further. Would you say, you know, I'm kind of like Kevin or Karma? I'm sort of living like the devil. I know I'm a Christian, because somewhere back there I really did choose God and I asked Jesus Christ to come into my life, but I'm living like the devil.

God hasn't done anything, maybe, because He doesn't take pleasure in your death. He doesn't want to delete you or damage your hard drive. I mean, your spiritual programs are probably shut down and there may be some evil, wicked things going on, but God really doesn't want to take the next steps.

He would much rather you turn around and live. You know, and your shirt may be ripped, just like Kevin's and Karma's, but God can take a ripped shirt and make it really beautiful in a way that honors Him. Just choose Jesus.

Galatians is a book about grace. It's not about reaping what we sow. It's about reaping what we don't sow.

But in order to reap what we don't sow, we need to choose Jesus. Let's pray. Lord God, my God, Father, You are the one who by Your Holy Spirit has already walked through every life here in this room.

And God, I just ask You that by Your Holy Spirit don't let us walk out of here just as if we haven't heard anything today. God, this is Your Word. It's alive.

It's active. It's sharper than a two-edged sword. It pierces right to our innermost being.

God, as we leave here...

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