

Deuteronomy 13:6-11  
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“If your brother, your mother’s son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul [i.e., persons who are very close to you], entice you secretly [i.e., unlike the false prophet who enticed publicly; see Deut 13:1-2], saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods’ (whom neither you nor your fathers have known, <sup>7</sup> of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end), [advocating rebellion/treason like the false prophet] <sup>8</sup> you shall not yield to him or listen to him [i.e., reject the peer pressure to turn away from the Lord]; and your eye shall not pity him [חַסָּד *chus* – to pity, look upon with compassion], nor shall you spare or conceal him [i.e., don’t hide his crime of promoting disloyalty and sedition against the Lord]. <sup>9</sup> “But you shall surely kill him [because he is advocating treason against the Lord]; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death [the accuser was to cast the first stone; cf. Deut 17:7], and afterwards the hand of all the people [the community was to act as a unit; all this assumes two or three witnesses verified the original charge; see Num 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15-19]. <sup>10</sup> “So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. <sup>11</sup> “Then all Israel will hear and be afraid [public punishment deters criminal behavior; Deut 17:13; 19:20; 21:21], and will never again do such a wicked thing among you.

**Observations:**

In the previous pericope, we learned about false prophets that Moses anticipated would openly seek to seduce God’s people into idolatry (Deut 13:1-5). In this section, Moses saw danger in a sibling, child, spouse, or close friend who might entice an Israelite to treason by turning away from the Lord and worshipping false gods. Israelites who succumbed to such an enticement would open themselves to God’s cursing (Deut 11:26-28). Moses opens this section, saying:

If your brother, your mother’s son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods’ (whom neither you nor your fathers have known), of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end), you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him (Deut 13:6-8)

Unlike the false prophet who enticed rebellion publicly, Moses anticipated a scenario in which close family or friends would privately promote rebellion against God (Deut 13:6-7). If/when this happened, the person who was being enticed was not to yield or listen to the satanically inspired counsel of his/her close family or friend. At that moment, the close family or friend who advocated treason was actually seeking the other person's harm. Moses said, "your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him" (Deut 13:8b). Naturally one would be inclined to protect loved ones; however, Israelites were to love God and protect their relationship with Him above all else. The obedient-to-the-word Israelite was not to yield or listen to the family or friend who was enticing idolatry. Nor were they to show pity, which meant strong emotional ties were not to be a factor when doing God's will. The Israelite was not to give asylum to the offender. In this scenario there were two temptations: 1) the temptation by a close family member or friend to engage in treason against the Lord by going after other gods (Deut 13:6-7), and 2) the temptation to show compassion for the close family or friend who was promoting criminal-evil behavior and to hide that person from the divine consequences due them.

For better or worse, close family and friends have the potential to wield great psychological pressure which can influence thoughts, values, and behaviors. God had delivered Israel from slavery and oppression in Egypt and the nation had agreed to enter into a contract relationship with the Lord at Mount Sinai (Ex 19:1-8). As Israel's Ruler, Lawgiver, and Judge (Isa 33:22), He promised to guide, provide, and protect them if they would follow His directives, but would also curse them if they disobeyed (Deut 11:26-28). Above all else, Israel was to maintain their relationship and walk with the Lord, not only for their own spiritual wellbeing, but for those around them. To turn to other gods would be a violation of the first commandment, which states, "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Deut 5:7), as well as the great commandment which states, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut 6:5). The believer's allegiance was to God above all others. The obedient-to-the-word believer would know God's blessing, and this would spill over into the lives of others. However, Satan and his demonic forces are always at work in the lives of rebellious people, and these collaborate to push or pull God's people away from the Lord. Satan cannot force the believer to leave the ground of God's Word and God's blessing, but he can and does seek to entice or pressure the believer to sin. If/when believers make the choice to turn away from the Lord, they become their own worst enemy and open themselves up to discipline. This will not only bring punishment upon God's erring child, but will negatively influence the lives of others. Choices have consequences, either for or against God and self. Godly actions open doors of opportunity for serving the Lord and blessing others. Sinful actions close doors of opportunity for

serving the Lord and can bring God's cursing on self and others. No doubt Satan desires to turn as many people away from God as possible, and what starts as an individual act can spread to family and friends, communities, and the whole nation.

Moses realized that sentimentality connected with family or close friends might hinder justice in the moment. But divine justice must take priority, as Moses said, "But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people" (Deut 13:9). The punishment was to fit the crime, and the witness was to have a part in the judicial process, which included the execution of that person who advocated treason against the Lord. This was a most serious situation that required total allegiance to God and personal integrity. The participation of others in the community showed their understanding of the seriousness of the crime and its potential harm on them all. If allowed to spread, the idolatry might endanger the community as a whole. Moses went on to say, "So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Deut 13:10). God had rescued Israel from slavery and bondage, and they owed their allegiance to Him.

Moses had previously stated that capital punishment could not occur on the basis of a single witness, saying, "no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness" (Num 35:30b). Later in Deuteronomy he would state, "On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness" (Deut 17:6; cf. 19:15). There was always the possibility that a false witness would rise up against a person and seek their harm. The Lord had forbidden this, saying, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Deut 5:20). The two or three witness policy would mitigate against this sort of falsehood. In fact, there was a statute that condemned the false witness to bear the punishment he/she sought to bring upon another, if they were caught in their falsehood. Moses said, "If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing...[and] if the witness is a false witness *and* he has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother" (Deut 19:16, 19).

Moses taught that allegiance to God must take priority over family or friends. If God's Word was obeyed, this would create a healthy fear within the community, which would prevent further enticements of idolatry. Moses said, "Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such a wicked thing among you" (Deut 13:11). Punishment for crime can deter others from committing similar acts.

Because sin is contagious, an egregious sin such as idolatry could spread from one family to another, to communities, and eventually infect the whole nation. Failure to follow this instruction would allow the spiritual disease to spread throughout the community, which could bring about the death of the nation. Unfortunately, this is what happened, as idolatry was permitted. A terrible example is seen in Solomon who allowed his wives to influence him to worship foreign gods (1 Ki 11:1-10), and this had a negative impact on the nation of Israel, as it encouraged others to worship idols. Because Israel pursued idols, this brought God's judgment, which ultimately led to the nation's destruction (2 Ki 17:6-23).

Like Israel, Christians will encounter people who seek to lead us away from God, and these may even include family members. Like Israel, we are to resist those who seek to damage our walk with God, and this can mean taking extreme action in order to preserve our relationship with the Lord. However, unlike those under the Mosaic Law, punishment by death is not commanded, but rather, exposure and separation from the offending person. The reason for separation is to maintain our walk with the Lord. Peter wrote, "like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'you shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet 1:15-16). Living holy means we are set apart to the Lord for His purposes. However, if/when another Christian with whom we are in fellowship should turn away from the Lord and live sinfully (not the occasional sin, but ongoing sin), this can have a negative influence on us and impede our own walk with the Lord. After all, "bad company corrupts good morals" (1 Cor 15:33). If/when this happens, we are to disassociate from that rebellious person and preserve our walk with God. Paul stated, "I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one" (1 Cor 5:11). Disassociation was for the purpose of maintaining holiness with the Lord. We always hope the sinning Christian will come to his senses and come back into fellowship. In another place it is stated, "I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them" (Rom 16:17). And, "We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us" (2 Th 3:6). Such actions are never easy, for we love fellow believers and desire friendship with them. However, our walk with God must always take priority, for He is our greatest Friend, and allegiance to Him secures for us all that is strong and good and meaningful in life. And if/when the erring believer turns back to the Lord and resumes their walk-in-the-Word, then all will be as it should.