

CHASTISEMENT OR CONFESSION:
IF SINS ARE FORGIVEN, WHY CONFESS?

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Divinity in
Grace Theological Seminary
May 1978

Title: IF SINS ARE FORGIVEN, WHY CONFESS?
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Degree: Master of Divinity
Date: April, 1978
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In 1970 a book was published by Zondervan Publishing House entitled Love Is Now. Its author, Peter E. Gillquist, proposed that since the sins of believers are forgiven, they need not be confessed. It will be the purpose of this study to demonstrate that confession (or similar terminology) secures a forgiveness beyond that granted judicially at salvation--forgiveness from the necessity of temporal chastening.

Chastening, posed as the divine alternative of confession, is examined particularly in its New Testament usages. The Greek *παιδεύω* is a word used only of God's dealings with His own children and suggests a much broader concept than its English counterpart. To the Greek mind, chastening included all forms of instruction including that of scolding. The *παιδεύω* of God is never, in New Testament usage, the result of His wrath, rather it is the outflowing of His fatherly love guaranteed to His erring child.

In its many forms, both directly administered by God and indirectly through His agents, chastening is seen as purposeful. It is employed in most instances to child-train believers away from their sin. In the case of more severe and persistent sins, God occasionally chastizes His children severely as maintenance of their promised spiritual security. And He also seeks to produce, through chastening, rewardable character in His children.

It is the writer's contention that chastening, at least in its harsher forms, need not be experienced by the believer. Scripture teaches that correct self-evaluation and acknowledgement to God of the believer's sins removes the necessity of the Father's chastening hand. 1 Corinthians 11:31 speaks of "right self-judgement" as that action whereby divine judgement is averted. 2 Corinthians 7:9 adds to this another shade of meaning--that godly sorrow to the point of repentance has a similar accomplishment in turning away the necessity of chastening. These verses elucidate the activity of 1 John 1:9 "confession"(examined in depth).

It is the writer's conclusion that the believer has a recourse with God when he sins. His attitude (agreement or disagreement with God concerning his sin) will determine whether or not chastening is needed. Obviously, if a man's attitude is in harmony with God's, correction is not necessary. Sin may still have repercussions but chastening need not be employed.

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree
Master of Divinity

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INTRODUCTION

The writer has long been puzzled by the concept of confession of sins. It was questioned, "If sins are forgiven, why confess?", especially in the model of 1 John 1: 9, where forgiveness is clearly the benefit of confession.

The answer which this thesis espouses is that confession is made to God when the believer sins, in order that chastisement need not be administered by God. The two (confession and chastisement) are posed as alternative dealings with sin. They are thought to be among the primary tools of sanctification (confession is man's; chastisement is God's) and are analyzed accordingly.

It is hoped that the material to follow will specifically benefit the reader in answering the question, "Why confess?" All Scripture citations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New American Standard Bible.

PART I

CHASTISEMENT FOR NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS

INTRODUCTION

Chastisement is the divine alternative in dealing with the believer's sins. It is the answer to the question, "What if confession is not made?" To underscore the importance of confession, one needs merely to study the concept of chastening.

This portion of the thesis will seek to demonstrate, (1) the exclusiveness of the group of persons referred to as being chastened - believers only, (2) the forms of chastening - direct and indirect, (3) the purposes of chastening, and (4) the surety of chastening where needed.

CHAPTER I
FOR BELIEVERS ONLY

While the pages of Scripture are replete with references to the actions of a just God in dealing with sin, the believer's sins are dealt with in an entirely different way than the sins of those in unbelief. Christians take comfort in knowing that they have a special relationship with such a God as adopted sons (Eph. 1:5) and "fellow heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17)." It is this relationship which is implied in Romans 8:1, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

The word "condemnation" is *κατάκριμα*. Hodge says of *οὐδὲν κατάκριμα*,

Those who are in Christ are not exposed to condemnation. And this again is not to be understood as descriptive of their present state merely, but their permanent position. They are placed beyond the reach of condemnation.¹

Murray calls condemnation "the opposite of justification."² And, Lenski very pointedly states, "*Οὐδὲν* is stronger than 'no' condemnatory verdict; it is 'not a single one' of any

¹Charles Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p.248.

²John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), p. 274.

kind."¹

κατάκριμα is a condemnatory verdict with intended execution of punishment in view. Otherwise, it would be nothing but a meaningless threat. Christians, therefore, need not fear the existence of a decree of God against them and the attending punishment, for there is no such anathema against sons.

However, Christians are dealt with when they sin just as a human father deals with his erring children. "For whom the Lord loves He disciplines and He scourges every son whom He receives (Heb. 12:6)." The word translated "discipline" is *παιδεύω* which, along with its cognates, denotes much more than merely the sense of chastening. Kent says of it, "*παιδεία* was used in the Greek . . . world to denote the upbringing and handling of a minor child, and included such aspects as direction, teaching and chastisement."² This is the sense of the word throughout the Greek New Testament and in its Septuagint usages (one such is Prov. 3:12, the verse from which Heb. 12:6a is taken). Bertram says concerning this word, "The relation between father and son is shown to be a moral one by the education, discipline, and correction which the father

¹R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 494.

²Homer A. Kent, Jr., The Epistle to the Hebrews, (Winona Lake, Indiana: B.M.H. Books, 1972), p. 261.

accords the son in responsible love."¹ That which makes the "scourging" of sons noncondemnatory is the relationship out of which it is given and the purposes behind it. The purposes of chastisement will be covered in detail in a later chapter, but for the present consideration, suffice it to say with the writer of Hebrews, "He disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness (Heb. 12:10b)."

The relationship between God the Father and His erring child eradicates the possibility of judicial punishment. It can be demonstrated that the chastening activity of God only flows out of His love and is in no sense a payment for sin. The proof is found in the simple statement of Hebrews 10:18 which says, "Now where there is forgiveness . . . there is no longer any offering for sin." In these terms, chastisement (παιδείωσις) can be neither payment nor satisfaction for sin in any judicial sense; Jesus truly paid it all. Westcott's analysis of sin's consequences shows the distinction between the sin of the believer and that of the unsaved. "The consequences of sin are threefold: debt which requires forgiveness, bondage which requires redemption, alienation which requires reconciliation."²

¹Georg Bertram, "παιδείωσις," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Fredrich (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), V, p. 621.

²Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 316.

Christians may stray from God and require reconciliation, but they have no more debt (Heb. 10:18) and no longer require redemption (Eph. 1:14). Therefore, God's chastening activity may have a reconciliatory effect, but cannot again pay for sin. As a corrective punishment, the *παιδεία* of God can only apply to believers.

CHAPTER II

THE WORK OF THE LOVING, CHASTENING GOD

Hebrews 12:5-11 paints a beautiful picture of the fatherly character of the God who chastises. He addresses His children as sons and warns them that His discipline is sometimes harsh (verse 5). He assures them that discipline is to them an affirmation of the family ties that exist and that without it the relationship is not secure (verses 7,8). And, then, as a loving father, He tells of the need for discipline in their lives, asserting that it is best, even though not always understood (verses 10b,11).

This picture was very much in the mind of Paul as he wrote the words of Ephesians 6:1-4. He, being a devout Jew, understood the fatherly character of the God of the Old Testament, and gave a picture of that character here. The word for discipline in Ephesians 6:4 is again *παιδεύω*. Bertram says,

Here the basic rule of Christian education is stated--this is education which the Lord gives through the father. In the Pastorals, Paul's basic principle of evangelical *παιδεία* in the family is applied to the community. The significance of revealed Scripture is etched along these lines; it serves the purpose of teaching, correction, conversion, and instruction in righteousness, 2 Tim. 3:16.¹

¹Bertram, p.624.

God chastens those who are His children in a number of ways. He chastens both directly (without second cause) and indirectly. It will be demonstrated, however, that His chastening is always administered in the best interests of both the individual and the church at large.

Direct Chastisement

Permission of trials

The Father knows that His children are often attracted to the physical, to the immediate, and to themselves. But He wants them to realize that attraction to the spiritual, to the eternal, and to Himself is far better for them. And so, even if overt sin is not in their lives, He permits times of trial and testing to come their way to better them. It is questionable as to whether testings and trials should even be considered along with chastening, as they are not necessarily punishments. But, then, *παιδεία* isn't necessarily punishment either, but may be given for the believer's instruction. Kent's words are well to be remembered: "Christ, God's unique Son, learned through His suffering. . . , and believers should adopt His mind in the matter."¹ Theodore Epp says, He wants "to woo us away from temporary things."²

¹Kent, p.261

²Theodore Epp, Present Labor and Future Rewards (Lincoln, Nebraska: Back-to-the-Bible Broadcast, 1960), p. 48.

Beloved, be not surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation (1 Pet. 4:12,13).

The purpose of the "fiery ordeal" was not to punish these early saints, but only to add to their reward in heaven and their holiness on earth.

Paul was given a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 11:7) to keep him humble. And, after having sought for its removal from the Father, he accepted it and understood the purpose for its infliction: "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weakness, that the power of Christ may dwell in me (2 Cor. 12:9b)." Scripture also records the reliance on God which that trial worked in Paul's life: "Therefore, I am well content with weakness . . . for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Cor. 12:10)."

Trials have been beneficial to the growth of the church throughout her history. Hughes cites the words of Chrysostom on the effect of suffering within the early church,

How great is the advantage of affliction; for now indeed that we are in the enjoyment of peace we have become supine and lax, and have filled the church with countless evils; but when we were persecuted we were more sober-minded and more in earnest and more ready for church attendance and for hearing.¹

The popular concept of chastisement for the sole purpose of

¹Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), p. 454.

reproof would not encompass these occurrences of trial, but as suggested earlier, the Greek concept would. *Παιδεύω* involves not just the "spanking" but any instruction (even that which comes through suffering) in which the teacher seeks the best for the student. God is such a teacher.

Sickness and death

The account of unworthy participation in the Lord's supper in 1 Corinthians 11 is a good example of this harsh discipline. The ones addressed are definitely Christians as their unworthiness stems from their manner of partaking (verses 27 and 34) and not their being unregenerate. Also they are called by Paul, "my brethren (verse 33)" and their punishment is " ὑπὸ [τοῦ] κυρίου παιδεύμεθα (verse 32)", reserved for believers only. The major question to be answered is, "wherein lie the benefits of chastisements of sickness and death?" The writer agrees with Bertram in his analysis of this passage which again employs a form of the word *παιδεύω*. He says,

In connection with self-examination at the Lord's Supper, Paul takes up the idea of Jewish passion theology that the judgment of the Lord is for Christians' chastisement, but not for condemnation, as for the world . . . Illness and other divine punishments warn Christians of their sins. They are the *παιδεία κυρίου*, the outflowing of His fatherly love.¹

¹Bertram, p. 623.

There were some obvious benefits to the body of believers at Corinth. They repented of their sins and began to grow in the Lord. But what about benefits to the individuals who were sick and especially to those who had already died? Like the execution of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, these disciplined believers were ushered into the presence of the Lord "which is far better." They were kept from the guilt and possible moral decay which might have been theirs had their behavior gone unrecognized. They were possibly spared further loss of reward(1 Cor. 3:12-15), and they were kept from actually losing their salvation(1 Cor. 11:32). This latter idea will be examined in much more detail in the next chapter.

Indirect Chastisement

Sometimes God operates through second causes in His chastening work. In fact, much more is said in Scripture of this area than of the former. In this type of discipline, God's spanking or instruction is administered by His agent. The benefits are obvious and need no explanation. The following examples are presented as typical.

Body Rebuke

And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother(Matt. 18:15).

Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted(Gal. 6:1).

But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin(Heb. 3:13).

Collective church action

But if he(the sinning brother of Matt. 18:15 cited above) does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer(Matt. 18:16,17).

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us . . . and yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother(2 Thess. 3:6,15).

Ordained authority

Therefore, he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves . . . for it is a minister of God to you for your good(Rom. 13:2,4a).

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth (Eph. 6:1-3).

Pastors

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction(2 Tim. 4:2).

For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline(2 Tim. 1:7).

The Word of God

For the Word of God is living, and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart(Heb. 4:12).

Though God does not always discipline His children in ways which they understand, Scripture indicates plainly that,

He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness(Heb. 12:10b,11).

CHAPTER III
PURPOSES OF CHASTISEMENT

It has been demonstrated that chastisement is not in any sense a display of God's vengeance on His erring children; He is a loving father and disciplines His children in love. It is also not the satisfaction of a payment for sin, for that has been paid in full.

Chastisement is a term used exclusively for God's dealings with His own sons. It is purposeful and proceeds not from the justice of God (Heb. 10:18), but from His love (Heb. 12:6). Its purposes are, in the opinion of the writer, three: (1.) child-training away from sin, (2.) maintenance of salvation, and (3.) producing rewardable character in His children.

Child-Training Away From Sin

This is the most commonly understood purpose of chastisement: the temporal correction of behavior. It involves both the education of the child and, when necessary, the rod of instruction. These two ideas are found randomly throughout the Proverbs where, in some instances, $\gamma\delta\iota\upsilon\sigma$ is translated "instruction" (eg. Prov. 1:8; 8:33) and, in others, "discipline" (eg. Prov. 12:1; 19:20). The synonymic relationship between the Hebrew $\gamma\delta\iota\upsilon\sigma$ and the Greek $\piαιδεύω$ helps

to confirm the broad sense in which the latter may be taken. Concerning $\gamma\omicron\mu$, a derivation of $\gamma\omicron$, and its uses in the Greek Old Testament, Bertram says, "The Gk. words $\piαιδεία$ and $\piαιδεύειν$ are mostly used for $\gamma\omicron\mu$ and $\gamma\omicron$." ¹ Hence, the necessary components of child-training are adequately suggested in the $\piαιδεύω$ of God.

$\piαιδεύω$ and its cognates are not used as frequently, however, in the Greek New Testament for the mere education of the child (one example is Acts 7:22, "And Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians."), but more often in the sense of correction. The latter is the way in which the writer of Hebrews employs the term. Consider the possibility of substituting the word "correction" (this English word implies both the rod and the instruction) in this passage wherever the N.A.S.B. translators used the word "discipline."

My son, do not regard lightly the correction of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He corrects, and He scourges every son whom He receives. It is for correction that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not correct? But if you are without correction, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to correct us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they corrected us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He corrects us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All correction for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Heb. 12:5b-11).

¹Bertram, p. 608.

The point of God's intervening *παῖδεύω* in the life of the believer is obviously not just to scold, but to correct. Lenski beautifully explains the nature of God's corrective hand in his discussion of the phrase, "whom the Lord loves He disciplines."

ἀγαπάω . . . denotes the highest type of love, the love full of complete understanding and of corresponding lofty purpose, not the shallow, weak, grandfatherly love (seen in Eli), which lets sons go unchastised and uncorrected. The last line says still more: the Lord lashes or scourges every son whom He accepts as a son in His family.¹

God child-trains His own sons because He wants to produce in them "holiness" and "the peaceful fruit of righteousness." It is "peaceful" because the chastening is finished, and righteous because its lesson has been learned. It is spiritual child-training aimed at the development of godly Christian character.

A good illustration of such purposeful discipline may be seen in God's dealings with His people as He led them through the wilderness. In Deuteronomy 8:1-7, Moses explains the plan for the wilderness wanderings. He says in verse 3,

He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna . . . that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.

And in verses 6 and 7, he names this action of God, using the Hebrew word *נִסָּה* discussed earlier in this section and relates it to the keeping of the commandments. He says,

¹R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1938), p. 441.

God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.

God has used discipline or chastening in the past to keep those whom He called His sons from the breaking of His commandments and the consequent loss of His blessing. He uses it today in like manner to produce holiness in Christians whose contact with a sinful world constantly threatens their growth.

Maintenance of Salvation

The specific teaching of 1 Corinthians 11:32b seems to be that God keeps His own saved, as the need arises, through the chastisements which He performs. That it is indeed one of God's specific purposes for chastening would appear obvious from the negative purpose clause used in the verse: "But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world (1 Cor. 11:32, emphasis mine)." Believers are spared from condemnation by His chastening. Is this word "condemnation" speaking of mere physical death or of spiritual damnation? The latter is most plausible. The word is *κατακρίνειν* from the root *κατακρίνω*. It is used in Mark 16:16 in reference to the condemnation of those who have disbelieved and hence not been counted among the saved. Concerning this word, Büchsel has written,

When *κατακρίνεν* refers to human judgement there is a clear distinction between the condemnation and its execution, but this is irrelevant in the case of divine *κατακρίνεν*, where the two can be seen as one, Mk. 16:16; 1C. 11:32; 2Pt. 2:6: *πόλες σοδόμων καὶ τομώρας τεφρώσας καταστροφῇ κατέκρινεν*. Here *τεφρώσας* shows that both the sentence and its execution are meant.¹

In some sense, chastening is employed by God to actually prevent Christians from going too far in sins and losing their salvation. Rather than doing damage to the doctrine of eternal security, as some would suppose, it partially explains it. God is seen as active in keeping His own children secure.

The only alternative, it seems, to this understanding would be to take the more Arminian perspective, seeing this as a last-chance effort taken by God to rescue sinners from Hell. Godet says in this regard,

The present judgement, severe as it may be, is also an act of mercy on the Lord's part. It is not yet eternal condemnation; it is, on the contrary, a means of preventing it . . . The believer ought constantly "to judge himself"; such is the normal state. If he fails in this task, God reminds him of it by judging him by some chastisement which He sends on him . . . and if he does not profit by this means, nothing remains for him but to suffer in common with the world the final judgement from which God sought to preserve him.²

¹Friedrich Büchsel, "*κρίνω*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Fredrich (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965) III, p. 951.

²F. Godet, Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), p.169.

While this understanding may be grammatically plausible, its theological difficulties even presented problems to Godet. He is not consistent in his understanding of the entire passage, and calls even the judgement of death(vs. 29) only a "warning judgement."¹ If God purposes to use chastening merely to attempt to keep sinning believers saved and not in fact to keep them saved, why take their lives, thus preventing damnation? Earlier in the epistle, Paul spoke similarly of the believer involved in incest,

I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus(1 Cor. 5:5, emphasis mine).

It seems that God is keeping His own saved through the chastening which He employs - both direct chastening and through His agents such as Paul.

In searching the Scriptures to find other teaching along these lines, the writer has found nothing other than references to the physical death of believers (or potential thereof) due to sin in their lives (eg. 1 Jn. 5:15; Jas. 5:14-20; Heb. 6:4-8; Heb. 12:9b).

Producing Rewardable Character in His Children

While no specific verse of Scripture states that the attaining of rewards is a specific purpose of chastening, it is at least an intended by-product. Throughout Scripture,

¹Godet, p. 168.

the goal of sanctification is always the perfection which will be complete only in eternity. From the view given to a few followers on the Mount of Transfiguration to the vision given to John on Patmos, the glories of eternity have always been made foremost in the mind of the believer. Jesus said,

Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal(Mt. 6:20).

Peter wrote in his first epistle,

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time . . . And after you have suffered for a little, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you(1 Pet. 5:6,10).

In 1 Corinthians 9:24,25, Paul wrote of "an imperishable wreath" for which the Corinthians were to strive. And there are also indications in Scripture that there are crowns to be given(1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; Jas. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10; 3:11; 4:4). If the ultimate goal of sanctification will only be realized in eternity, then God's present work in the believer must purpose to produce holiness worthy of reward. Chastisement obviously does not directly produce rewards, but indirectly as it acts to restore the believer, it makes rewardable works both possible and probable.

CHAPTER IV

CHASTISEMENT: POSSIBILITY OR GUARANTEE?

It has been suggested that often it appears as though believers slip into sin and yet there is no apparent action taken by God. How can these things be? Do some believers sin and get away with it? The answer must be an emphatic NO! Scripture teaches that, despite apparent circumstances, a believer can bank on chastening if he fails to acknowledge his sin to God. The reasons are several. First, chastisement is associated with sonship (cf. Heb. 12:5-8) and thus guarantees the true child of God that he will be chastised when needful.

For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and scourges every son whom He receives . . . But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons (Heb. 12:6,8, emphasis mine).

These verses plainly define the limits of chastisement as pertaining to sons only, but they underscore its surety. It is so sure that the one lacking chastening is called an "illegitimate" and not a true son. Kent says of 12:8,

The author reminds us that to be without discipline is to reveal something about one's father. Bastards are those who are born out of wedlock and have no legal father . . . All of God's true children are called upon to be partakers of suffering . . . To be otherwise is to demonstrate that such are not properly God's acknowledged sons.¹

¹Kent, pp.262,263.

Second, chastisement is associated with God's purpose in the believer; He reproves His children to accomplish His purpose in them. Hebrews 12:10b says, "He disciplines us for our good that we may share His holiness." And Paul, in 2 Corinthians 7, mentions the effect of God's chastening of the Corinthian believers through his previous letter. It accomplished God's will. He says,

I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us (2 Cor. 7:9 emphasis mine).

Paul, as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, was in the position to make such a statement. He truly had the God-given ability and commission to carry out church discipline in ways which no church of the present exercises. The Apostles of Jesus Christ were endued with extraordinary enablements which they performed in behalf of Christ. In the case of church discipline, Peter's accusation against Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 was answered by divine execution. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 5:5, "decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh" who was engaging in incest. In Acts 13:8-12, Paul invoked temporary blindness on Elymas from "the hand of the Lord." His apostolic commission gave him authority to discipline in behalf of Christ and was not a thing to be taken lightly. But, praise the Lord, the Corinthians responded to the less severe chastening. God straightened them out with harsh correspondence. He had a purpose in

them which, by His own design, obligated Him to chasten. Were there no such purpose, there would have been no chastening.

The best statement, in the writer's opinion, of God's purpose for the believer is found in Romans 8:28,29.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren (emphasis mine).

When human parents mold the will of their children in line with their own purposes, they employ the instruction and correction of chastening. Likewise, because God purposes to conform the will of His children to that of Christ, He instructs and even scourges when necessary. If He did not, He would be guilty of the words of Proverbs 13:24, "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently."

Thirdly, chastening is guaranteed to the child of God as the protector of His promise of eternal security. This is the promise of 1 Corinthians 11:32 (already discussed) and may be what David had in mind when writing the thirty-seventh Psalm. In speaking about the security of the one who trusts in God he says,

The steps of a man are established by the Lord;
and He delights in his way.
When he fails, he shall not be hurled headlong;
because the Lord is the one who holds his hand
(Psalm 37:23,24).

So, chastisement is guaranteed to the needy believer, but why so often is there an apparent discrepancy in real life?

Robertson points out types of chastisement which may vary as to their degree, possibly offering a partial answer to the dilemma. *Παιδείω* , it is suggested, may mean: child-training (Acts 7:22), verbal discipline (2 Tim. 2:25), scourging (Heb. 12:7 cf. Luke 23:16), illness and even death (1 Cor. 11:30).¹ Therefore, its milder forms could be employed in the lives of erring brothers and sisters and yet be unnoticed to all but the disciplined.

Chastisements may vary as to degree and in still another way. They may be administered at varying lengths of time after the behavior in need of correction. God, who knows the heart, knows if it is near repentance, or if it is wavering in doubt rather than in actual rejection of the Holy Spirit's wooing. He knows when as well as how much chastisement is needed. And, furthermore, He may be longsuffering with sons as He is with the unsaved.

Finally, one more word is needful. Chastening is not reserved just for "big" sins. It is the opinion of the writer that God made a special point of chastening the sin of Ananias and Sapphira at the inception of the church age to teach a most important lesson.

The sin of this couple was petty in human terms. They saw the need of their less fortunate brothers in Christ and like Barnabas and others, desired to contribute to the

¹A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1933) IV, p.166.

common pot (Acts 4:34,36, cf. 5:1,2). They probably brought a fairly substantial sum of money and should have been commended for it--by human standards. But, they told a "little" lie; much smaller than the many convenient "little" lies of 20th century situational morality. God HATED it!! He executed them on the spot.

Now, imagine for a moment, if He had chosen to demonstrate His hatred for sin on some adultress or murderer within the church. The people would have thought they could get away with just so much sin, but not with adultery and murder. Not so! They realized from the start that they could get away with nothing in the eyes of their God. He wants and expects absolute purity of His set apart ones. Fear came over the church because of the character of the God who would execute someone for being a bit "stingy." The attitude behind the small sin is just as rebellious as that behind the major sin (if such distinctions may be made) and needs to be eradicated that sanctification may have its perfect work.

PART II

THE PREROGATIVE OF SELF-EXAMINATION: CONFESSION

INTRODUCTION

What is confession of sins? The title of the thesis suggests that it is one of two alternatives (Chastisement or Confession?) in the believer's dealing with sins he commits. If so, it seems by far the better alternative, and should be examined to understand its value as a substitute for chastisement.

The English word "confession" is a translation of the Greek *ομολογέω*. In secular usage, Michel says it literally means "to say the same thing," "to agree in statement." In reference to the "word group in the N.T." he defines *ὁμολογεῖν* as,

1. "to assure," "to promise," "to admit," "to concede";
2. judicially, "to make a statement," in the legal sense "to bear witness";
3. "to make solemn statements of faith," "to confess something in faith." ¹

He understands this specific use of confession of sins in 1 John 1:9 as belonging to the first usage group cited above. In this instance, "*ὁμολογεῖν* is the opposite of contesting of sin in 1:8. We admit that we are sinners and disclose specific sins in confession."²

¹Otto Michel, "*ὁμολογέω*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967) V, p. 200.

²Ibid. p. 207.

Quite literally, therefore, to confess one's sin is to say the same thing about it that God does--to acknowledge the sinfulness of an action to Him.

But, does confession really act as an alternative for the chastening of God? It is the contention of the writer that acknowledgement of sin (or similar terminology to be examined) is given its status as chastening's alternative in a number of passages. In Psalm 32:5 David says, "I acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.' And thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin." In this instance, confession saw the removal of "guilt" and of the "heavy" hand of the Lord (vs. 4). The chastening was lifted.

Proverbs 28:13 uses similar terminology but adds to the idea of confession that of forsaking sin. "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion." Confession, in this instance, is followed by restoration of prosperity.

In 1 Corinthians 11:31, Paul says, "But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged." Here, a judgement is set aside. Verse 32 indicates that this judgement is a chastening from God. And, again in 2 Corinthians 7:9, he writes that the Corinthians "were made sorrowful to the point of repentance" and were spared thereby from what he mentioned as "suffering loss."

Finally, John speaks of acknowledgement of sins to God in what is held as the classic passage on the believer's dealing with his own sin. He says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)." In this verse, acknowledgement of sins leads to "forgiveness," which, if this verse is speaking to believers,¹ the writer understands to be forgiveness of potential chastening.

Despite their divergencies, the preceding verses are similar for at least two important reasons (assuming, for the moment, that 1 John 1:9 is instruction for believers). (1) They are coincident in their time relationships--they take place after sin has been committed. (2) They are similar in their effects--potential chastening is lifted; sin is forgiven. Because of their similar nature, these expressions for dealing with sin have been organizationally lumped together in this portion of the thesis under the heading "confession." Their agreements and distinctions, it is hoped, will clarify the activity which has been proposed as chastening's alternative.

If chastisement is God's alternative, confession is man's. Very simplistically stated, either he confesses or He chastises. The remainder of the thesis will attempt to

¹Colman suggests that 1 John 1:9 is intended for unbelievers only and deals in salvation forgiveness. David F. Colman, "An Investigation of the Doctrine of New Testament Forgiveness as it Applies to 1 John 1:9," Unpublished Thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1977.

build evidence that the primary reason (apart from mere obedience) for confession is the removal of the necessity of chastisement. And, secondly, it will attempt to explain how 1 John 1:9 fits into the picture.

Three passages will be examined in depth for their contribution to the stated contention (1 Cor. 11:31, 2 Cor. 7:9, and 1 Jn. 1:9).

CHAPTER V

JUDGE OR BE JUDGED--1 CORINTHIANS 11:31

εἰ δὲ ἑαυτοὺς διεκρίνομεν, οὐκ ἂν ἐκρινόμεθα

But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged.

The statement of 1 Corinthians 11:31 is possibly the most comprehensive single verse explanation of the importance of confession in Scripture. While ὁμολογέω does not appear in the verse, the idea is definitely present. Paul told the Corinthians in 11:28 that a man should "examine himself" and in a similar way here to "judge himself" ("rightly" is an implication of the context). Even before grammatical analysis, there seems to be a logical tie between this idea and that of agreeing with God about sin (ὁμολογέω). This should be made clearer as the discussion continues.

The N.A.S.B. rendering (1 Cor. 11:31), while quite literal, is somewhat vague in exposing the idea behind διεκρίνομεν. What does it mean to judge oneself? Büchsel says, "since the simple κρίνω already means "to sunder," "to separate," διακρίνω is originally a stronger form (cf. dis-cerno)."¹

¹Büchsel, p. 946.

His mention of its use in 11:29 elucidates the sense here. Concerning the phrase "*μὴ διακρίνω τὸ σῶμα*," he points out that the Corinthian believer "'eats and drinks judgement unto himself,' because he does not distinguish the body of the Lord (from ordinary bread)."¹ "To judge oneself", therefore, may mean "to assess or to discern oneself" or "to distinguish" possibly between one's present behavior and some standard. Williams translates the verse very freely, but adequately expresses the thought. "But if we properly saw ourselves, we would not bring down this judgement upon us (emphasis mine)."²

The Corinthians were making a mockery of the Lord's Supper because they saw no special significance in the love-feast³ or in the symbolic elements (11:21,22,29). They did not "examine" themselves (11:28) to discern if they were taking communion in a manner "worthy" (11:21) of the Lord whom

¹Ibid.

²Charles B. Williams, trans., The New Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1952), p. 380.

³"Apparently it was the custom that these love-feasts were conducted after the manner which is today called "pot-luck," or carry-in, or picnic dinners. Each family would bring a supply of food, the poor perhaps very little, and those who were more able, more; then all would share together in the entire spread. But at Corinth, love was replaced by selfish greed. Each one hurriedly devoured his own supply without sharing. As a result, some were hungry and others were drunken." James L. Boyer, For A World Like Ours: Studies in 1 Corinthians (Winona Lake, Indiana: B.M.H. Books, 1971), p. 108.

they were remembering. They did not discern the inappropriateness of their greed and drunkenness (11:21) to such an occasion.

The grammar of 11:31 also suggests that the Corinthians were guilty of a wrong assessment (as a contrary-to-fact condition, it is assumed that the protasis is not being carried out). The verse is not speaking of assessment of each other; the object of the verb is *ἑαυτοῦς*. This is discernment or assessment of self--their assessment of themselves did not reveal their sinfulness, so there was no acknowledgment of their sin.

The Corinthians evidently thought there was little amiss with them. But Paul points out the value of systematic right judging of ourselves. We should make a practice (such is the force of the imperfect tense) of "distinguishing ourselves" (so, rather than "judge ourselves"), i.e., distinguishing between what we are and what we ought to be. ¹

The adverbial modifier "rightly" is not implied in the definition of *σεκρινομεν* (i.e., "to assess rightly") but is an implication of the context (a wrong or non-committal assessment of sin certainly could have no such value as to remove the necessity of judgement). The judgement for which right assessment might have been an alternative is spoken of as *ὅτι τοῦ κυρίου παρθεύμεθα* (11:32). Hence, right assessment of their sin prior to partaking of the Eucharist would

¹Leon Morris, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), p. 164.

have spared these Corinthians from the chastening hand of the Lord.

This terminology for dealing with sin (1 Cor. 11:31, 32) is, in the writer's opinion, very similar to that of the traditional concept of confession usually taken from 1 John 1:9 (to be examined in chapter 7). It differs, however, in that the Pauline statement is more explicit since it has none of the interpretation problems associated with 1 John 1:9. It adequately expresses an activity which believers can engage in to deal with their sin (correct assessment of one's own sin) and the benefit of such an activity (they should not be chastened).

CHAPTER VI

REPENTANCE UNTO RESTORATION--2 CORINTHIANS 7:9

νῦν χαίρω, οὐχ ὅτι ἐλυπήθητε, ἀλλ' ὅτι
ἐλυπήθητε εἰς μετάνοιαν· ἐλυπήθητε γὰρ
κατὰ θεόν, ἵνα ἐν μηδενὶ ἡμιψυθῆτε ἐξ ἡμῶν

I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.

Following the sending of the letter now called 1 Corinthians, Paul visited Corinth on his third missionary journey but was not received well. Commentators have referred to this visit as the "painful visit (2 Cor. 2:1)."¹ Judging from the content of 2 Corinthians, evidently his apostleship was questioned and his instruction opposed (1:23-2:11;11:5ff). At any rate, he followed the visit by a letter, which, by his own admission, was severe enough that he regretted sending it (2:3-11;7:8ff).

The severe letter was received well. The Corinthians disciplined the primary offender (2:6-8) and generally repented of their poor treatment of Paul (7:8-16). 2 Corinthians 7:9 is of tremendous importance because it explains the attitude

¹Paul's first visit was his founding visit (Acts 18:1-5) which was joyous. His third visit was upcoming (2 Cor. 12:14;13:1). The second visit must be that spoken of as "painful" (cf. 2:1, come . . . again).

of these believers in dealing with their sin--literally, they "were made sorrowful unto repentance . . . according to God." Tasker speaks plainly concerning their attitude,

All sorrow that leads to repentance can truly be said to be after a godly manner. For a man repents when he turns to God, sees his conduct as God sees it, submits to God's judgement and asks God to forgive him.¹

Notice that Tasker's discussion of "repentance" included the specific nuances of right self-judgement ("sees his conduct") and confession ("as God sees it"). While repentance (*μετανοέω*) may be said to involve these coincident actions, it is distinct in definition. Of its usage in the New Testament, Behm says,

The popular Gk. sense . . . is most likely at Lk. 17: 3f., where *μετανοεῖν* denotes regret for a fault against one's brother, and 2 C. 7:9f., where the combination with . . . *μεταμέλομαι* . . . *λύπη* and . . . *λυπέω* suggests remorse.²

This idea stems from the general Greek usage of the word (to which Behm refers in his discussion)--"to change one's mind." He says, "If the change of mind derives from recognition that the earlier view was foolish, improper or evil, there arises the sense "to regret," "to feel remorse," "to rue."³ He explains this idea further in a rather lengthy discussion of

¹R.V.G. Tasker, The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p. 105.

²J. Behm, "*νοέω*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967) IV, p. 999.

³Ibid. pp. 976, 977.

Paul's use of *μετανοέω* and *μετάνοια*, particularly their occurrence in 2 Corinthians 7:9.

In 2 C. 7:9f., the *μετάνοια* of the Corinthian Christians is the result of concern awakened in them by Paul. . . . it is revulsion of feeling, a sense of remorse. . . . In Christian, rather than Hellenistic terms, he regards *μετάνοια* as "the change in thought and will which releases from evil and renders obedient to the will of God."¹

The Corinthian believers were made sorrowful to the end that they had a change of mind² accompanied by remorse. They regretted the impropriety of their poor treatment of Paul and decided to treat him properly--they repented of their sinful behavior.

Like the preceding discussion of 1 Corinthians 11:31, the phraseology of this verse resembles the concept of acknowledgement of sins to God. It adds another shade of meaning to the activity in which Christians are to engage themselves when they sin, fitting under the broad definition of "confession" which the thesis seeks to develop. It is an activity entered into after sin has been committed and its benefit closely resembles that of 1 Corinthians 11:31.

"Sorrowful . . . repentance" kept the believers at Corinth from "suffering loss" through the Apostle Paul. A major lexicon defines *ζημιώω*, translated "suffer loss" in

¹Ibid. pp. 1004,5. Citation from A. Schlatter, K. p. 586. Source unknown; there is no complete listing of a "K" source by this author in TDNT that the writer could find.

²Similar to the idea of "forsaking" sin in Prov. 28:13.

2 Corinthians 7:9, as: (1) "suffer damage or loss, forfeit, sustain injury," (2) "be punished."¹ The context seems to indicate its use here of a punishment of some sort or possibly some loss of reward such as is intended by *ἐκμωθῆσεται* in 1 Corinthians 3:15. It seems best to the writer to understand the verse at hand as referring to a corrective disciplinary measure which was avoided.

Unlike that behavior addressed in the first epistle, there has evidently been growth among the Corinthians. Their correct self-assessment led them to repentance--with no loss.² "By divine overruling Paul's 'painful' letter, so far from causing the Corinthians to suffer damage at his hand, was a means by which they had received much blessing."³

In summary, repentance (a change of mind accompanied by remorse), so much like correct self-judgement, is spoken of as an alternative for chastening. The Corinthians' change of mind about their treatment of Paul relieved him from the necessity of disciplining them in behalf of Christ.

¹William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 339.

²Their earlier lack of correct self-assessment was disciplined by the loss of some of their number in death (1 Cor. 11:29).

³Tasker, p. 105.

CHAPTER VII

CONFESSION FOR FORGIVENESS--1 JOHN 1:9

*ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, πιστός
ἐστὶν καὶ δίκαιος ἵνα ἀφῇ ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας
καὶ καθάρσῃ ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας*

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

From youth, the writer has been taught that this verse is the model for the believer in dealing with his sins. It was suggested that in confession the believer acknowledged his sin to God and asked for forgiveness in the manner recorded in the Lord's Prayer (Mark 6:9-15; Luke 11:1-4). In later years, questions have arisen for which the present research sought answers. One is primary; the others of consequence to the first: (1) If sins are forgiven, why confess? (2) Is the teaching of 1 John 1:9 intended for believers or for unbelievers? and (3) If 1 John 1:9 is instruction for believers, how could "forgiveness" be understood to apply?

The first and primary question of the thesis has been answered at least partially in the preceding two chapters. Confession is made that chastening need not be administered. It is the believer's responsibility to be obedient to Scripture. When he disobeys, he is to assess himself

(*ῥαπίζω* --1 Cor. 11:31) and change his mind (*μετανοέω* -- 2 Cor. 7:9) to conform with God's mind in the matter. The loving chastening of the Father is only necessary when the sinning child is unyielding or persistent in his error. The question which now arises is whether or not this is the teaching of 1 John 1:9 or does John's instruction suggest some alternate dealing.

What 1 John 1:9 "Forgiveness" Cannot Mean

First of all, if this verse is addressed to believers, it cannot suggest a second cancellation of the debt of any sin (totally remitted at salvation--Rom. 8:1; Heb. 10:18).

Likewise, it cannot refer to cancellation of some awaiting punishment for believers at the Judgement Seat of Christ.¹ It is the writer's contention that the Bema will not involve punishment of any kind (except perhaps shame, which, it is thought, involves a man's conscience and not the overt action of the Judge). It will be demonstrated that judgement for sins is taking place right now (1 Cor. 11:32; 1 Pet. 1:17 cf. 4:17), and rewards are or are not being stockpiled right now (Mt. 6:20).

At the Judgement Seat of Christ, therefore, "each man's work will become evident/*ἐκάστου τὸ ἔργον φανερόν* "

¹Some hold to the idea that there will be punishment for unconfessed sins at the Bema. John Sproule takes this position in "The Christian and Future Judgement," Unpublished paper, Grace Theological Seminary, 1975.

(1 Cor. 3:13), but the judgements will have already taken place. There will be neither the actual loss of reward there nor punishment, for condemnation is no longer for the saints. Rewards will be presented by God and an accounting will be given by the ones judged, but chastening will have been completed.

Judgement is now.

The time of God's judgement of the works of His own sons is right now. "When we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord (1 Cor. 11:32)." Unregenerate sinners are now storing up wrath. "Because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself (Rom.2:5)." Believers are laying up rewards in heaven now. "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys (Mt. 6:20)."

Believers' works are being judged for their worth now. In 1 Peter 1:17, the Father is described as "the one who impartially judges (*κρίνομεν* --present active participle) according to each man's work." "For it is time for judgement to begin with the household of God (1 Pet. 4:17)."

The judgement is the persecution which these saints were undergoing, a disciplinary judgement designed to purify their lives. . . . the starting place of the judgement is the church, and from there as a starting point, the judgement goes on its way to the unsaved. 1

¹Kenneth S. Wuest, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), II, p. 122.

The unsaved are not being chastised now, for that is only for sons, but the day will come when they will be judged and sentenced to eternal death. The admonition that Peter gives in relation to present judgement of Christians, however, is that future rewards await those who earn them. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time (1 Pet. 5:6)."

Βήμα Recompense

Nowhere, to the knowledge of the writer, does any New Testament reference to the judgement seat of Christ include the mention of punishment. The Romans 14:10-12 passage says in verse 12, "So, then, each one of us shall give account of himself to God." This could be embarrassing, but not because it is a punishment inflicted by God. It is the conscience of a man, which God placed within him, that will also cause his shame at the judgement seat of Christ should he be found lacking there.

The 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 passage says in verse 15, "he shall suffer loss" in reference to the one whose works are valueless at the Bema. The word *ζημιωθήσεται* is not to be translated "punishment" as some have occasion to do. Stumpff speaks to this issue,

According to 1C. 3:14 the apostle will receive a reward . . . if his work survives the fire on the day of testing: *εἴ τις τὸ ἔργον μενεί ὃ ἐποικοδόμησεν, μισθὸν λήμψεται*. There is a precise antithesis in v. 15: *εἴ τις τὸ ἔργον κατακαήσεται ζημιωθήσεται*. The natural opposite of "to receive a reward" would seem to be "to suffer punishment"

. . . but it is doubtful from the context whether the word should be taken in its juridical sense. The thought of a *δικαιοσύνη* worked out in punishment is not in keeping with the passage . . . Nor can we link the phrase directly with the *αὐτὸς δὲ σωθήσεται* which follows. Hence we probably give the sense more correctly if we render *ξημιωθήσεται* by "to suffer loss."¹

2 Corinthians 5:10 records that "each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." The word "recompensed" (*κομίσ-ηται*) means "might receive back." It is plain that something will be given out at the Bema; the question is whether or not some of the returns there might be punishments (a recompense for bad works?). Similarly, in Colossians 3:25, Paul speaks of "consequences of the wrong" which a person has done. Does this suggest awaiting punishment for believers? The writer understands this to be both theologically and contextually impossible. The statements of Romans 8:1, Colossians 2:13,14 and those of Hebrews 10:10,12,14,18 eliminate the idea that sin might again be paid for. Also, 2 Corinthians 5:19 indicates that part of the message of reconciliation involves "not counting their trespasses against them." There can be no judicial punishment for the saved, but perhaps there will be a final chastisement at the Bema to complete the sanctification of the saints. This is also untenable.

¹Albrecht Stumpff, "*ξημιόω*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964) II, p. 890.

It is the writer's contention that sanctification is completed (and chastening likewise) at the rapture phase of the second coming, and, therefore, prior to the Bema, relegating any supposed further punishment to the status of "getting even." Sanctification's completion is assumed on the following grounds: (1) Paul's statements about the future immortality of the body describe the change as a rapture event (1 Cor. 15:42,51,52). Physical punishment (i.e., a 1 Cor. 3:15 "fire" treatment) inflicted upon a perfect body incapable of physical suffering is impossible. (2) John says that at the appearing of Christ (rapture) "we shall be like Him," because we shall see Him (1 John 3:2 emphasis mine)." This could be mere physical likeness, but the context will hardly permit such a restriction. In 1:29, John speaks of "righteousness" in Him, and in 3:1 of the distinctiveness (a temporal spiritual likeness with Him) which sets apart the believer from the world. These are brought to a climax at His appearing in a completed likeness with Him physically and spiritually (3:2).

Note how John's description of Christ's appearing relates to the Bema. In 1:28, John writes, "Abide in Him, so that if He should appear, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming." There will be "shame" at His coming for those who do not "abide in Him," but "confidence in the day of judgement (4:17a)" because of the believer's Christlikeness ("as He is, so also are we in

this world"--4:17b). 4:18 further indicates that "perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment." Boyer says of this verse, "Fear (of the judgement) is expelled to the degree that love accomplishes its purpose of making us like Christ. One who is like Christ has nothing to fear from Christ's judgement."¹ 3:2 says, "we shall be like Him" at His appearing.

Those who suggest that there will be punishment for sins at the Bema, also suggest that the same can be avoided through confession. It should be pointed out that none of the passages dealing with the Bema make any such suggestion. For example, the "consequences of the wrong" which a person has done (Col. 3:25) is not referring to only unconfessed wrong. And, the recompense "for his deeds . . . good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10) is not merely for unconfessed wrong deeds. All deeds are subjected to the "fire" of 1 Cor. 3:13-15 and those remaining are rewarded. Even sins which are confessed detract from the believer's reward. It is this all encompassing examination which the various Bema passages consistently present. The question surrounding the Bema is not, "How much sin has gone unconfessed?", nor "How much punishment is to be dealt out?", but, "How much reward is to be granted?" "Bad" works must only be counted there as worthless (not contributing to the believer's reward). It is the writer's

¹James L. Boyer, "Johannine Epistles," Course syllabus for class in Grace Theological Seminary, 1975, p.10.

opinion that the recompense for deeds is explained in Ephesians 6:7,8. Paul writes, "With good will render service as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free."

It seems that while the unregenerate are not earning rewards but only degrees of punishment, the regenerate are not earning punishment but only degrees of rewards. The following passages lend support to the positive nature of the Bema: Romans 7:15-8:3,15; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:16; Colossians 2:13,14; and Revelation 11:18; 22:12.

Consideration of 1 Corinthians 3:13-15

Each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it ("foundation . . . which is Christ Jesus"--vs.11) remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

Suggested interpretation: Each believing man is by his daily life performing actions (Phil. 2:16) which are judged temporally and disciplined accordingly (1 Cor. 11:32). When his works are meritorious, he lays up rewards for himself (Mt. 6:20). When his actions are selfish and non-Christlike, he receives discipline suitable to correct his future action (Heb. 12:10) in order that his life would yield righteous fruit (Heb. 12:11). At the Bema, his "wood, hay, and straw" works will be consumed by the refiner's fire, and

his "gold, silver, and precious stones" works remain to be conferred upon him at "the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:7)." He whose works are consumed will be embarrassed when his burned up works are "made evident" to him. They will be "lost" rewards not because they are taken away from him then, but because the fire will make it evident to him that they were never earned. He will escape "as through fire," but definitely not having gone through the fire personally (emphasis mine). It is the works and not the man which receive the fire treatment.

1 John 1:9 "Forgiveness"--Possible Understanding

Assuming for the time being that 1 John 1:9 is instruction to believers, how might forgiveness be understood? The word translated "forgive" in 1:9 is "*ἀφίημι* ." Of its general Greek usage, Bultman says,

ἀφίεναι , "to send off," is richly attested in Gk. from an early period, and is used in every nuance, both lit. and figur., from "to hurl" (e.g. missiles) to "to release," "to let go," or "to let be." . . . To be emphasized is the legal use much attested in the pap. *ἀφίεναι τινα* , "to release someone from a legal relation," whether office, marriage, obligation or debt.¹

Vincent says of *ἀφίη* in 1 John 1:9, "Primarily the word means 'to send away, dismiss'; hence, of sins, 'to remit,' as a debt."²

¹Rudolf Bultman, "*ἀφίημι* ," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964) I, p. 509.

²Marvin Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908) II, p. 322.

The "forgiveness" offered in 1:9, therefore, could be a remission (sending away or dismissal) of temporal chastisement (as suggested in 1 Cor. 11:31). This would necessitate the existence of two distinct kinds of forgiveness (i.e., for salvation and for daily cleansing).

Some would argue that divine forgiveness in the New Testament is narrowly limited to that given at salvation.¹ Others, however, would agree with Westcott² and Burdick that there is both an "initial forgiveness" and subsequent forgiveness "after salvation."³

The writer agrees with the latter position that Scripture teaches of the necessity of some sort of remission or forgiveness subsequent to salvation. There is remission in some sense when chastening is withheld (1 Cor. 11:31; 2 Cor. 7:9). The debt of sin was cancelled initially at salvation, but tutorial chastening is still potential. There is also temporal forgiveness granted in the kingdom--even for those judicially totally forgiven believers entering in. Obviously, the temporal forgiveness of the kingdom is dispensationally in a class by itself, but its existence at all for believers whose forgiveness is complete prior to the

¹with the possible exception of Luke 23:32, Colman, p. 27,47,48.

²Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, London: Macmillan and Company, 1886), p.39.

³Donald Burdick, The Epistles of John, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1970), p. 26.

millenium, suggests a broader understanding of the concept, and hence, two kinds of forgiveness.

1 John 1:9: Salvation or Daily Cleansing?

With much vacillation, even during the preparation of this manuscript, the writer has arrived at the present position. It is the writer's opinion that 1 John 1:9 is, as traditionally held, a verse dealing with moment-by-moment cleansing of the believer from sins committed. Because there is some room for disagreement with this conclusion, the major arguments of both views will be presented.

Arguments for the "salvation" understanding of 1 John 1:9

Briefly stated, the arguments for accepting 1 John 1:9 exclusively as a salvation verse are as follows: (1) When John speaks of having "fellowship with the Father" (1:3), "with Him," (1:6), and "with one another," (1:7), he is referring to sharing (*κοινωνία*) in a common life. James Boyer says of *κοινωνία* in 1:6, "to have fellowship is equivalent to being saved."¹ In other words, this particular usage of *κοινωνία* is held as indicative not just of close communion with God, but, more basically, of the existence of a relationship with Him. Those who hold to the salvation understanding of 1:9 see "confession" herein as a means of "fellowship"--salvation. (2) Throughout Scripture,

¹Boyer, "Johannine Epistles," p. 10.

"light" and "darkness" generally connote the ideas of "good" and "evil" respectively. This is obviously John's intention in 1 John as he states, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all (1:5)" and "if we . . . walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth (1:6)." Proponents of this view argue that the issue is nothing less than salvation or the lack of it. To address believers amidst giving warnings against false profession does seem inappropriate. (3) Verse 9 is a natural answer to verse 8. "If we say that we have no sin (1:8)" is exactly the opposite idea from 1:9 which could be translated, "If we admit our sins." Verse 8 presents the folly of a self-deceptive profession; verse 9, the rescue. (4) Colman argues that the entire concept of New Testament forgiveness refers exclusively (with the possible exception of Luke 23:32) to salvation. He concludes that 1 John 1:9 "confession" must be for salvation.¹

Arguments for the "cleansing" understanding of 1 John 1:9

The major arguments for accepting 1 John 1:9 as teaching confession for moment-by-moment cleansing are as follows: (1) In the writer's opinion, the strongest argument for this understanding is the tense of the verb "confess." *ὁμολογῶμεν* is present active subjunctive. Colman cites Robertson's Greek grammar to demonstrate a sense in

¹Colman.

which this particular usage may be considered an "aoristic present."¹ This is, by the writer's admission, a weak argument, but at least a possibility. However, it is more problematic in light of Robertson's own statement concerning 1 John 1:9. He calls the construction a "third-class condition . . . with ean and present active subjunctive of homologeō, 'if we keep on confessing.'"² This argues strongly for a continuing action of confession, necessary for cleansing, not for salvation. (2) In 2:1, John says, "I am writing these things to you that you may not sin." The most logical antecedent of "these things" is the teaching of chapter one. If so, verses 1:5-10 are not just instructions to the unsaved Gnostics within the church³ but have application to believers. Also, the advocacy of Christ (2:1b) further explains the workings of 1:9 "confession." (3) Some suggest that the plural "sins" in 1:9 is indicative of a confession subsequent to that of "sin" at salvation. This is a weak argument and can be explained easily as synecdoche, a literary device in which the part (sins) refers to the whole (sin). However, if cleansing is intended, presence of the plural would be

¹Ibid., p. 44.

²A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1933) VI, p. 208.

³Gillquist suggests that "in his opening remarks John was primarily turning in on the unenlightened Gnostics and telling them in no uncertain terms the solution that Christ has for their problems." Peter E. Gillquist, Love Is Now, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), p. 63.

quite understandable. (4) 1 John 1:1-10, which Gillquist subheads, "An appeal to know Christ,"¹ might be better entitled, "An appeal to know Christ correctly." Gillquist holds that the addressees of the first chapter are "unbelieving people,"² but John's consistent first person address ("If we say . . .; If we walk . . .; If we confess") suggests otherwise. This could be an editorial "we," but might just as well be hypothetical first person address.

While statements made in 1:6,8, and 10 are not naturally characteristic of a true believer, they may be so hypothetically. In other words, the addressees of John's first epistle may have been young believers ("My little children"--2:1), who were considering the tenets of Gnosticism which they heard from false teachers infiltrated among them. Even today young believers, if not nurtured to maturity in Christ, are easy prey for cultists. John evidently encountered some Gnostic ideas which had filtered into the church and gently sought to stop them by using hypothetical questioning rather than a more incisive method such as the 1 Corinthian correspondence.

¹Ibid., p. 62.

²Ibid. "These . . . are unbelieving people, most likely Gnostic in persuasion, which have crept into the church not knowing Jesus Christ at all."

Conclusion

While there are fairly strong cases for both views of the intent of 1 John 1:9, the latter seems the stronger. The writer is not so dogmatic in his interpretation of this verse as to rest his entire thesis upon its teaching and, in fact, happily looks to other texts (such as those presented in chapters 5 and 6) as more conclusive on this subject. The interpretative difficulties of 1 John 1:9 alone have been the basis for some error, such as not confessing sins at all.¹ It seems best to rely on 1 Corinthians 11:31, 32 as the clearest teaching on this important doctrine.

The writer understands the "forgiveness" of 1 John 1:9 to be the remission of otherwise necessary chastening. When the believer's attitude toward his own wrongdoing is in line with the Father's evaluation, there need be no prodding from the Father's chastening hand. Like any loving parent, God takes no delight in reproof and would much prefer willful turning from sin on the part of His children. "If we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged (1 Cor. 11:31)." Chastening is only employed to correct and improve. "He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9b, emphasis mine).

¹Gillquist suggests that the believer's sins need not be confessed for forgiveness judicially; with this the writer agrees. But in not presenting a purpose for confessing, he has left little motivation for dealing with sins at all. Gillquist, p. 55ff.

CONCLUSION

If sin is forgiven, why confess? Because, while judicial forgiveness has been granted in Christ, temporal chastening is still potential. Confession alone grants the dismissal (forgiveness) of chastening when the believer sins. Confession is a self-corrective measure (the human alternative in dealing with sin), which removes the necessity of divine correction.

Believer's confession as a doctrinal teaching should always be presented within the context of the loving discipline of God, else its value is questionable. The doctrine clearly reveals the fatherly love of God in chastening His children with the purpose of their sanctification in mind. It demonstrates the necessity of righteousness in practical, down-to-earth terms and aids in understanding both the trials and the "spankings" of life. It clearly reveals God's attitude toward sin and the believer's role in progression toward the image of Christ.

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