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CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (8)

"What Do I Do If I Sin After Becoming A Member of the Lord's Church?"

We have noticed in our previous studies that in order for one to become a member of the church and to have past sins "washed away", a person must be baptized (Acts 22:16; 2:38). We also saw that it is possible for one to sin after becoming a Christian (Gal. 5:4; 2 Peter 2:20-22). When one sins after becoming a Christian, what does God require him to do?

Since our sins separate us from God (Isaiah 59:1, 2), we need to learn what is necessary for the removal of those sins. Should we be baptized again or what? Let us study briefly Acts 8:9-24 for the answer to our question.

In this passage, we find the conversion of Simon, the sorcerer. Philip was preaching in Samaria and had baptized many (Acts 8:12). Simon heard this preaching and was also baptized (Acts 8:13). (NOTE: At this point, Simon was cleansed of his sins). As we read on, we see that Simon wanted to buy the power to give out the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18, 19). In doing this he sinned and incurred the scolding by Peter (Acts 8:20-23). Notice that Peter did not tell him to be baptized again, but to simply repent of his sin and pray to God for forgiveness. Simon was so concerned that he asked the apostles to pray for him.

For the non-Christian, baptism is necessary for the removal of sins. For the Christian, he must confess his sinfulness and ask God to forgive him. Compare these passages:

"Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." (James 5:16)

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

"He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy." (Prov. 28:13)

The blessed privilege of Christians is the ability to pray for forgiveness of our sins. We are instructed to confess our sins to one another and pray one for another. Matthew 18:15-17 teaches us to correct the sin with those who know of it. Christians need to "swallow their pride" and confess their sins and be like Simon: "Pray ye for me to the Lord, that none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me." (Acts 8:24).

Please give prayerful consideration to these things. Charles Coats

How many Christian soldiers have been wounded in battle with nothing more serious than hurt feelings have treated the wound as a fatality and so, have become "missing in action" when they are so badly needed in the trenches? Are you among the "missing?"

"There is no point in burying the hatchet if you are going to put up a marker on the site."

ELDERS - Men Under God's Charge

Dean Fugett

God's elders are not "office holders" or business managers. They are men with a divine charge of eternal consequence - for themselves and those they oversee. Webster defines **charge** as to "impose a task or responsibility on," "To command, instruct, or exhort with right or authority." Several divine charges are given to the elders as those who would function as overseers of God's people. Among these charges is the one to the Ephesian elders by Paul. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch . . ." (Acts 20:28-31).

The charge of responsibility and accountability is the same for today's elders as it was those of the first century. There may be an even greater intensity in the need for men to heed carefully the divine admonition today than there was in the first century. The subtlety of Satan's devices and the lethargy of many in the church augment the need for attention to God's charge to elders.

In view of the fact that the Lord DIED for HIS church, and that overseers are made by the Will of the Holy Spirit, Paul's admonition to the Ephesian elders was to: (1) "Take heed to themselves" and (2) take heed "to all the flock" (Acts 20:28). Some elders function admirably in both areas of duty. Some do neither. The latter are careless about their own lifestyles and morals and spiritual growth, and they spend little effort and time in the work of helping congregational spiritual growth and maturity.

In verses 29 and 30, Paul went on to warn those elders of two great and very real dangers:

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EDITOR Charles Coats
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ELDERS — MEN UNDER GOD'S CHARGE

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(1) Wolves would attack the flock, not sparing. Some elders today wouldn't recognize a wolf if they saw one, much less a wolf disguised as a sheep! Why is there so much havoc in the church today in the form of division and such? Is it not because wolves are working disaster for the flock and the shepherds refuse to deal with them? Many sheep are already dead and others are torn and maimed so badly that they can no longer be profitable to the Chief Shepherd. All because elders (shepherds) failed to heed God's charge.

(2) Some elders would arise with false doctrines to draw some to be their disciples rather than the Lord's. We have seen some otherwise good elders allow themselves to degenerate into men "speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." They began to run well, but pride got in the way. Power became intoxicating, and under its induced stupor, some forgot that they were charged with care of ANOTHER'S FLOCK, not building one of their own! An example in case: What earthly reason (except one of deceit and dishonesty, misuse and abuse) would any shepherds have for refusing to allow the other members of the flock, the church, to KNOW what was being done with the money those members had given for GOD'S USE? Such elders seem to have forgotten that the church belongs to CHRIST who paid supremely for it, and that it does not belong to THEM! They function under GOD'S CHARGE! As stewards they must accept responsibility and accountability TO and FOR those entrusted to their care (I Corinthians 4:1-2)

In verse 31, Paul continues that they should WATCH. REMEMBER his warnings, warnings that too many today

continue to ignore. In verse 32, he tells them where their instruction and strength for all challenges comes from - the Word of God's Grace. Beloved elders, turn and read again carefully this charge. If you cannot find Biblical authority for behaviors, abandon them.

Men, remember those God-given qualifications that you met and must continue to meet to continue to function with God's approval. Whenever you cannot, or will not follow God's charge, have the integrity and intestinal fortitude to do the best thing for God's church - REFORM OR RESIGN!! Don't be the cause of a division of the flock and the destruction of sheep - GOD'S SHEEP! (more to come) Rt. 1, Box 95A
Cave City, AR 72521

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Larry D. Mathis

The theme of the book is the superiority of Christ and Christianity as compared to antecedent Judaism. Christianity is not merely a "good" religion; it is shown to be the "best" religion of all. It is the best that God offers.

Christ Is Shown To Be Superior To All Prophets (1:1-3). Jesus is God's final revelation to humanity. The Hebrews (being Jews), would quite naturally have a very high regard for the prophets. However, the Son of God is far superior to any and all of them. He is God's spokesman now (Matthew 17:1-5).

Christ Is Shown To Be The Superior Revelation (1:1-3). The truth as a whole never comes to full light in the Old Testament but appears in a fragmentary way, in successive acts, in many separate revelations. The Old Testament came piecemeal, "here a little and there a little, line upon line, precept upon precept" (Isaiah 28:10-13).

During that age God spoke in a variety of ways, He spoke to Moses out of the burning bush; the law was written by God's fingers; Nebuchadnezzar had dreams for Daniel to interpret; Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the wall; an angel was caused to fly swiftly to Daniel to speak with him while he was engaged in prayer; and Adam and Eve heard the voice of God, walking in the garden of Eden. Though God once revealed His will in such fashion, He does not do so today! God does not now address individuals

through prophets, priests, visions, dreams, symbols, predictions, the Urim and Thummim, etc. God speaks to us today through His Son, the supreme revelation to man.

Since God has spoken in different ways we must acknowledge the fact and interpret the scriptures accordingly. This is where hermeneutics comes in (i.e., the science of interpretation). We must "rightly divide" or "handle aright" the word of God (2 Timothy 2:15).

Christ Is Shown To Be Superior To All Angels (1:4-14). God had, in the Old Testament times, used angels to reveal His will to the people (cp. Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19). However, Christ is far superior to them all. He is shown to be Deity whereas they are mere servants. He is a royal King with a throne and scepter; angels do not occupy the throne but are "round about it" (Rev. 5:11). Though the angels are "innumerable" (Hebrews 12:22), not one has ever been enthroned, and never will be. He is "so much better than the angels" (Hebrews 1:4). The message of the Son holds firm. Should "an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

Christ Is Shown To Be Far Superior To Moses (Hebrews 3). This great law-giver lived about 1500 years before Christ. Unbelieving Jews (those who rejected Christ and the Gospel in the first century A.D.), were clinging to Moses as their leader, guide, and authority in religion. However, Christ is shown to be far superior to Moses.

Christ Is Shown To Be Superior To Joshua (Hebrews 4). Joshua had offered the ancient Israelites (Hebrews), rest in a land that flowed with "milk and honey." That is, Canaan. Christ is shown to be far superior for He offers spiritual Israel (the church) an eternal rest in heaven "a better country" (Hebrews 11:16)

Christ Is Shown To Be Superior To The Levitical Priests And Priesthood (Hebrews chapters 5-10). There was a real danger that the Hebrew Christians, to whom the author wrote, would leave Christ and revert to Judaism (to the Mosaic Law, an inferior system). Jews, who were rejecting Christ and the Gospel, were still trying to approach God through the Levitical priests (the sons of Levi). They were failing to recognize that Christ is the High Priest and that Tabernacle/Temple services for sin were gone forever.

Christ Is Shown To Be Superior To All Animal Sacrifices (Hebrews chapters

9-10). The offering up of animal sacrifices for sins, according to the book of Leviticus, had ended when the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, was offered on the cross for the sins of the whole world (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 2:9). No one since has been required to offer such sacrifices!

The New Covenant Is Far Superior To The Old Covenant (Hebrews chapters 8-10). Obviously, since this is the case, the New Testament church is far superior to the old Tabernacle system. The Old Testament was written for our "learning" (Romans 15:4); for our "examples" (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11); written for our "admonition" (1 Corinthians 10:11); "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" (Galatians 3:24); and will "make thee wise unto salvation" (2 Timothy 3:15). Jesus was "born under" the law of Moses (Galatians 4:4); He "finished it" (John 19:30); He "took it out of the way" (Colossians 2:14); He "abolished it" (Ephesians 2:15); made us "dead to" it (Romans 7:4); "free from" it (Romans 8: 2); we are "not under it" (Romans 6:14); we are "not justified" by it (Acts 13:39). Any one who seeks justification by the Old Covenant will "fall from grace" (Galatians 5: 4). "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). "And for this cause he (Jesus), is the mediator of the new testament . . ." (Hebrews 9:15).

Paul Says He Wrote In Order To Exhort (Hebrews 13:22). The recipients of this epistle greatly needed encouragement because a massive falling away of the faith was threatening. A dangerous attitude had developed as is easily seen from the following verses: they were in danger of "drifting" (2:1); of being "neglectful" (2:3); in danger of "unbelief" (3: 12); in danger of becoming "hardened" (3:13); in danger of missing the eternal "rest" (4:1-3); they were "dull of hearing" (5:11); in need of being "taught again" the first principles (5:12-13); were in danger of complete apostasy, crucifying afresh the Son of God (6:4-6); "sluggish" (6:12); "abandoning the assembly" (10:25); guilty of "wilful" sin, reverting again to Judaism (10:26-29); in danger of casting away their "boldness" (10:35); of "failing to obtain the grace of God" (12:15); and, were being lead astray by "divers and strange teachings" (13:9).

We should realize the great honor and privilege of being a Christian. Christ is superior! Christianity is the best that God has to offer. Let us take to heart the message of the great book of Hebrews and "exhort" one another daily with its contents.

P.O. Box 23067
New Orleans, LA 70183

Jesus Is The Son of God

Richard England

There have been many good men live and die. Many of them die for some cause that might well have been noble. But, none have had such a great impact on the human race as did the man who was named Jesus. While he was alive on the earth he had ardent followers who were willing to give up all they possessed to be his disciples. After he died, many of them said he was raised from the dead and that they had seen him. That Jesus lived and died is not questioned even by his most bitter enemies. That many testified to having seen him after he was raised from the dead is also not reasonably questioned. The question worthy of consideration is: are they correct? Did they in fact see him alive after he had died? The answer to that question, whether positive or negative, is extremely far reaching in its implications. If negative, the Bible itself sets out the effects: preaching and faith are vain, those who said they saw him are liars, there is no forgiveness of sins nor life after death, and those who have sacrificed all for him have done so in vain and are to be pitied above all men (1 Corinthians 15:13-19). If their testimony is true, Jesus has been raised from the dead and he is the Son of God. Further, the Bible is true.

Their testimony that Jesus was raised from the dead and that they had seen him is either true or false. If false, there are only two possibilities: either they were deceived or they were gross liars. Consider each of these possibilities.

Were they deceived? Many people have fought and died for causes about which they were deceived. Though they received false testimony, or some reason or another, they believed it. This cannot be the case with the men who testified of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. John said: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you . . ." (1 John 1:1-4). Having been with Jesus during his ministry, seen him die and buried him, there was no way these men could have been deceived about the identity of the man they claimed to be Jesus raised from the dead. Paul said Jesus was seen by Peter, then of the twelve, after that by more than five hundred brethren at once. Lastly, he was seen by Paul himself (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). These men either saw Jesus after he was raised from the dead or they are gross liars. They cannot be merely mistaken.

Were they gross liars? Their dedication to their testimony, the moral standard they taught and practiced and the sincerity they displayed gives the evidence that **THEY CERTAINLY BELIEVED WHAT THEY WERE SAYING.** Their willingness to die for the cause they had espoused establishes their honesty. Martyrdom does not always prove the thing for which one dies, but it indicates honesty and conviction. Not one person who ever said that he saw Jesus after he was raised from the dead ever changed his testimony, even in the face of death. Most likely there have been a few men now and then in history that have been stubborn enough to die rather than retract some false statement they made. Yet, human nature is not such that so many people as involved in the report of Jesus' resurrection would stand by it, even in the face of death, if they knew the report false. On the contrary, it is amazing that at least a few of them did not change their statements regarding the resurrection when faced with such agonizing torment through which many of them had to go, even though they knew they had told the truth. Men lie for many reasons such as to save face, gain power, or obtain money. None of these could have motivated followers of Jesus to suffer and die for saying they had seen him alive after he was crucified. These men are not gross liars.

If these men were not deceived and not gross liars, then they told the truth and **JESUS WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD. Jesus being raised from the dead HE IS THE SON OF GOD.**

P. O. Box 3744
Jackson, TN 38303

STRANGE AUTHORITY (?)

Charles Coats

It seems that there is a new awakening to Bible authority among those in the churches of Christ. For years, we have "coasted" along, not questioning too deeply the things in which we are involved.

One thing that makes me aware of this is the questioning of the use of singing groups - choirs, quartets, etc. Some among us are beginning to question this practice that has been allowed to go on unquestioned for years. People who support these groups are being asked, "Where is your authority?"

In answer to this question, various lines of "reasoning" are used or the question is simply avoided. One of the strangest "proofs" for the authority for
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STRANGE AUTHORITY (?)

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singing groups goes something like this --
 "We sing songs that have parts. Therefore,
 it is allright to have singing groups." This,
 I find to be strange authority (?). Let us
 examine this statement:

(1) This statement assumes the
 authority for the first part without offer-
 ing any proof. This is not sound logic.

(2) Assuming the first part to be
 true, does the last statement necessarily
 follow?

(3) If this entire statement were true
 then would it not follow that it would be
 acceptable (authorized) to use singing
 groups during our worship assemblies,
 since we sing songs with parts during our
 worship assemblies? If not, why not?

I, for one, can find no authority for
 singing groups of any kind. I can find
 authority for people to sing (Ephesians 5:
 19; James 5:13), but I cannot find any
 authority for them to do it in the way
 choral groups and quartets do it!

In all that we do, we must constantly
 examine the action for **Bible** authority
 (Colossians 3:17). To get away from this
 idea, opens the door to apostasy. It
 matters not how many people are doing
 it, who is doing it, or how long it has
 been done. What matters is whether the
 Bible authorizes the action.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not
 in the counsel of the wicked . . . But his
 delight is in the law of Jehovah."

(Psalms 1:1, 2)

PROCRASTINATION

Procrastination is the road
 To Never-Never land,
 Where birds are always in the bush.
 But never in the hand.

Where trees drop saddened branches down
 With fruit of Might-Have Been,
 And brooks wash youthful dreams away
 Into the river When.

It is no fun to travel on
 Procrastination way,
 For promised work is never done.
 And gain is always Say.

I think I'd much prefer to walk
 The Do-It-Now highway,
 Where tasks grow never large or hard
 For him who works Today.

--Vivian A. Bruner

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

Mail all address changes to:
CHURCH OF CHRIST
 P. O. BOX 251
 MAMMOTH SPRING, AR 72554