

THE  
CHURCH  
COVENANT

*Wayne Reynolds*

## CHURCH COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Saviour.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Saviour to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

## Index

Origin .....	Page	4
Introduction .....	Page	7
Paragraph One .....	Page	10
Paragraph Two .....	Page	21
Paragraph Three .....	Page	39
Paragraph Four .....	Page	67
Paragraph Five .....	Page	73

## **The Origin of the Church Covenant**

My studies have led me to the following conclusions concerning the origin of the church covenant. It seems the church covenant and the New Hampshire Confession were both originated by New Hampshire Baptists who wished to avoid the Calvinism of the Philadelphia Confession and the Primitive Baptists and the other extreme of what we would call today as free-will Baptists.

The date is 1835 or 1836. A man, Newton Brown, who was involved with the publications of the New Hampshire Baptists, published it in the Baptist Encyclopedia. These documents would not have gotten very far had not J. M. Pendleton incorporated them into his Baptist Church Manual published in 1869 and Hiscox published them in his church manual.

The following is copied from *Baptist Confessions of Faith* by William L. Lumpkin, published by Judson Press, Valley Forge, copyright 1959 by Judson Press, Revised Edition 1969, Sixth printing, 1989, page 360-361. The information was apparently gathered from *A Baptist Church Manual* written by J. Newton Brown, D. D. I would like to thank Brother Cecil Fayard, pastor of Elliott Baptist Church, Elliott, Mississippi, for guiding me toward this information, which strengthened my conclusions.

On June 24, 1830, the Baptist Convention of New Hampshire appointed a committee to prepare and present at the next annual sessions "such a Declaration of Faith and Practice, together with a Covenant, as may be thought agreeable and consistent with the views of all our churches in this State." The resolution calling for this action indicates that the feeling of the body was that the known Baptist declarations of faith were not "in precisely the same language as it is desirable they should be." In point of fact, the theological views of Calvinistic Baptists in the New Hampshire area had been considerably modified after 1780 by the rise of the Free Will Baptists (later called Free Baptists) following the leadership of Benjamin Randall. The Free Will Baptist message was welcomed with enthusiasm by the great middle class in New England and its warm evangelism produced a revolt against the rigid theological system of some Calvinistic Baptists. The New Hampshire Convention thus sought to restate its Calvinism in very moderate tones.

N. W. Williams, William Taylor, and I. Person were named as the committee to draw up and present the new Confession, but their work being unfinished the next year, the assignment was committed to I. Person alone. As instructed by the Convention, Person submitted the draft of a Confession to the Board of the Convention on June 26, 1832. The draft was then referred to a committee of Baron Stow, John Newton Brown, Jonathan Going, and the author for revamping. The committee recommended to the Convention the adoption of the articles, but the Convention referred the articles "to the disposal of the Board" and never took up the matter again. The Board, however, discussed the articles and

referred them for further revision to Brown and Stow. After more discussion, alterations were made upon the report of this committee, and Brown was appointed to prepare a final copy. This copy was presented to the Board on January 15, 1833, and approved after slight alterations. The Confession was published by the Board of the Convention and was recommended to the churches for adoption. (There is a footnote at this point: McGlothlin, op. cit., 300. Details taken from *Minutes New Hampshire Baptist Historical Society*, 1891.

The Confession might never have been known outside of New Hampshire except for the work of J. Newton Brown who, twenty years later, in 1853, was editorial secretary of the American Baptist Publication Society. On his own authority, in that year, Brown revised the Confession and published it in *The Baptist Church Manual*. In revising it, he added two articles to the original sixteen, one on "Repentance and Faith" and one on "Sanctification." In various church manuals this Confession became the most widely disseminated creedal declaration of American Baptists. In 1867, J. M. Pendleton, pastor at Upland, Pa., incorporated it in his Church Manual, and as a leader in the "Landmark Baptist" movement he secured its adoption as the doctrinal statement of churches and associations of the Landmark type. Its silence on the doctrine of the universal Church made the confession particularly adaptable to the emphasis of this group on the local, visible congregation. Hiscox placed it in his *Standard Manual* and his *New Directory*, enlarging it each time.

The Confession has been reasserted or adapted by several groups in the twentieth century. Landmarkers of the Southwest organized in 1902 a General Association of Baptist Churches (now the American Baptist Association) which adopted the Confession, along with a supplementary Doctrinal Statement. In 1933 a group of about fifty churches of the North, protesting against theological liberalism and denominational policies, withdrew to organize the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches. This Association adopted the New Hampshire Confession, with a premillennial interpretation of its last article. In 1925 the Southern Baptist Convention worked over the Confession, adding ten new sections, and published it as an expression of the faith generally held by Southern Baptists.

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Brother Albert Garner states in his book, The Church that Jesus built: The covenant involves two primary matters:

- 1) what church members should be, and
- 2) what they should do – in the context of the Holy Scriptures.

In the 1957 edition, page 57, of Brother Garner's book, The Church

Covenant, he states that (only partly documented) the church covenant was written by J. Newton Brown as stated by E.Y. Mullins in his book Baptist Beliefs, page 93.

Dr. Roy M. Reed wrote in his book The Church Jesus Built, pages 10-11, published by the Baptist S.S. Committee, that the church covenant was written and published in 1833, but he doesn't indicate where or by whom.

The church covenant did appear in J.M. Pendleton's Baptist Church Manual, in 1867. From undocumented sources, Brother Albert Garner has in his research notes that J. Newton Brown wrote it and read it publicly to a local Baptist association for the first time about 1827 or 1828 and that it was endorsed and recommended by the local association to be adopted by their people for the first time in 1833.

Brother Garner notes that there are two sacred vows that have no "if's" in them. One is the marriage vows and the other is our church covenant vows. So may it ever be as a standard or goal for our lives and services, Eccl 5:3-6a.

*Ecclesiastes 5:3-6 states, "For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words. 4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. 5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. 6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?"*

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It must be noted that the New Hampshire Confession and the church covenant go back to about 1827. That is a long time ago. But it must also be remembered that if these documents are not established upon the precious, holy Word of God, they are nothing at all. The Bible is our guide, not any other book, document, or writing. I am thankful to know the New Hampshire Confession and the church covenant are written to clarify the doctrines we believe and the manner of life we should live before a most holy God. It is my earnest prayer that God will richly bless you as you study the church covenant, and that you will become more and more like Jesus Christ.

***Bro. Wayne***

## **The Church Covenant**

### **Introduction**

This is a “church” covenant. The word “church” comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, (ek-klay-see'-ah) and means a calling out, a popular meeting, especially a religious congregation of members on earth, an assembly. The Bible never speaks about any sort of universal (visible or invisible) congregation.

This is a *church* “covenant”, not an *individual* agreement. The word “covenant” means an agreement, or contract to which both parties agree that both will uphold certain principles.

There are several different covenants in the Bible. There are covenants between God and all mankind, between God and nations, and covenants between people.

Genesis 6:18 is the first time the word “covenant” is mentioned. This covenant is between God and all of mankind. In this scripture, God made an agreement with Noah about building the ark and God would keep him and his family safe from the worldwide flood. In Genesis 9:11-17 God confirmed the covenant he made with Noah and his descendants. The sign of the covenant God made with Noah was the rainbow.

In Genesis 15:18 God made a covenant with Abram concerning the nation he would become. In Genesis 17:2-14, God confirmed and established the covenant by commanding that every male child be circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day. In Genesis 17:19-21 God stated that he would continue Abraham’s covenant concerning the nation of Israel with Isaac and his future descendants. The sign of the continuing covenant with Abraham and his descendants was circumcision.

A covenant can also be between two persons. In Genesis 21:27-32, Abraham and Abimelech made a covenant concerning the well at Beersheba. The sign of this covenant was when Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech and set seven ewe lambs aside. Abimelech would remember his covenant with Abraham each time he saw the seven ewe lambs and their offspring.

There is also a covenant between two people in Genesis 31:44, where Jacob made a covenant with Laban to not take any more wives and Laban made a covenant with Jacob that he would not cross this spot for harm. Genesis 31:45,46 reflects the fact that Jacob took a stone, and ordered his brethren to gather stones to make a heap of stones, which would be a sign to both Laban and Jacob that they had made a covenant together. Genesis 31:50 affirm the agreement was between Jacob, Laban and God. God was the ultimate witness.

The above scriptures show there is nothing wrong with each church member making a covenant with all the other church members before God. The sign of the covenant we have made with each other is this writing we call *The Church Covenant*.

Each time we see the church covenant, we ought to remember that we have covenanted together before God and the other church members.

There are some dangers in establishing a church covenant. There can be a holding to the “letter of the covenant” without a holding to the Biblical principles of the covenant. Simply having the covenant in a prominent place in the church building *can* give the illusion of faithfulness when there is no faithfulness. I have known people who believed that the presence of a church covenant made their church a church, and made them faithful, even though they practiced little faithfulness. This is exactly what Israel did.

Another danger in a church covenant is that people can hold the covenant above the Word of God. Many churches and fellowships will put a copy of the church covenant on the walls of their church buildings, believing it ought to be there because it helps make them a church. If they don’t live according to the principles set forth in the covenant, they have broken the covenant.

There can also be a holding to the covenant without a holding to the God of the covenant. This is what Israel did. Israel began to disregard the covenant God made with them by adding to the covenant things that God never intended to be there. Israel finally added so much to the covenant that it became something completely foreign from that which God gave them.

The word “church” and the word “covenant” reveal there cannot be a covenant without a local church which is in agreement. The individuals that make up a local church will be in agreement with God and one another concerning their beliefs. Individuals with different beliefs cannot all be right, cannot agree with God or each other, therefore they cannot be a church. They will be unable to find areas of agreement, because the only place to find real agreement with one another is to find agreement with God. If there is no common ground (or foundation: which is the King James Bible, correct theology concerning God and his revealed trinity, Jesus Christ as personal Saviour and Lord, scriptural baptism, local church, and whatever other doctrine is taught in the Bible) there will be few areas of agreement.

People who believe in a universal church declare they find agreement, not in doctrine, but in spiritual matters! What these poor folks forget, or ignore, is that spiritual matters *are* doctrinal. For example, people who believe in a universal church will declare they do not want to discuss doctrines, they want to talk about salvation, about Jesus Christ and what a blessing it is to live a good, wholesome, spiritual life. But think just a second: salvation *is* a doctrine. There *is* a doctrine of Jesus Christ, which is called Christology, that part of theology that deals with our Lord Jesus Christ. The doctrine of sanctification concerns living a good, wholesome, and spiritual life before God and man. You see, the only way there can be spiritual agreement is if there is doctrinal agreement. Doctrines come from the Bible, not from the “writings of the fathers”. Doctrines are not what men *believe* to be true, but what God *declares* to be true.

There is also a doctrine called “Covenant theology.” The people I know that use

this terminology basically believe what we believe, but they use different phrases that we are not accustomed to hearing. We will speak about election and they will speak about the covenant of salvation. We will speak about progressive sanctification and they will speak about Godly living because of the everlasting covenant, or something like that. We will speak about the rapture of the saints, and the Great Tribulation and they will speak about God's covenant with Israel and how he will fulfill that covenant to them. As far as I can tell at this present time, the doctrines are basically the same, but the terminology is different.

## **Church Covenant**

### **Paragraph 1**

**Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.**

This first paragraph expresses three facts of holiness. First, the fact of God's eternal calling: God has predestinated us to salvation in eternity, but our salvation takes place in time. Second, our salvation and public declaration of salvation by professing (with the mouth) and by being scripturally baptized. Third, the paragraph ends with progressive sanctification in the local church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Having been led**

We are led. This is an evident fact, for God added to the church daily such as should be saved, as recorded in Acts 2:47. There is a force outside ourselves which compels us to follow God, just like there was a force outside the people in the Bible that compelled them to follow God.

There are several examples of the Holy Spirit speaking to individuals.

- Amos 7:14-15 - *Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: 15 And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.* Amos did not “decide” to become a prophet. God called him to this position. Verse 16 states that King Amaziah should listen to the words of God through Amos. If King Amaziah were to hear the words of God, he would hear them through what Amos declared.
- Acts 22:1-21 – When Paul was taken prisoner in Jerusalem; he gave the story of his life and conversion. One statement he made reveals that he could never forget the stoning of Stephen. Listen to Acts 22:20, *“And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.”* Stephen preached a marvelous message the day he died, and we should not discount the message he preached in dying a martyr's death
- In John 21:1-3, Peter decided to go fishing, but Christ had other plans for him. Peter would be a stunning example to all unbelievers and believers alike. God spoke to him, revealing his will in the redemption of the Gentiles, bringing them into the first church.

- Moses ran from God, but God appeared to him in the form of a burning bush which was not consumed. Moses tried to get away from God but God would not let him get away. God put a burning desire in the heart of Moses to do God's will, even enduring the hardships of leading the Israelites out of Egypt, and forsaking the soft life of Pharaoh's son.
- In Jeremiah 1:4-10, God set Jeremiah to be a prophet before he was formed in the belly. Did Jeremiah have anything to do with his call to salvation and service? Of course not. Jeremiah was only called to obey.

The Holy Spirit produces within us a desire to change, not a desire to change everybody else. Acts 2:41-47 reveal that those that were added to the church on the day of Pentecost did not try to change the church, but continued in the apostles doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread. Listen to Acts 2:42, "*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*"

### **as we believe**

This phrase shows the joint working of God in our hearts and our actions to obey the commandments of Christ. Some believe God does everything. Others believe we do everything. The truth is between these two thoughts. We will not do anything if God doesn't give us the initiative to obey. We cannot do anything without the power of God upon us.

### **Receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour**

John 6:37 states, "*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*" The Father gives believers to Jesus Christ. I Peter 1:2 reveals we are "...*elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...*" What did God foreknow concerning election? What did God see when he looked into the future? Did God the Father see anybody believing? Read Psalms 14:1-3, "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. 2 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. 3 They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*" These verses state, and are quoted by Paul in Romans 3:10,11, that God saw none seeking him. God saw that all were gone aside, that all had become filthy, and there was none that doeth good, no, not one. If God saw all are sinners, then how did we, as believers, turn from sin to God? God elected (chose) us to salvation. God choosing us was not based on his foreseeing that we have faith, but rather on the good pleasure of God. Ephesians 1:3-5 states, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*" God chose us because that was what he wanted to do, not because of any good on our part. Ephesians 1:7 states, "...*we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace,*" while verse 9 confirms we know the will of God, "...*according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:*" Verse 11 continues by stating we have an inheritance,

*“being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:”*

Listen as God speaks to the nation of Israel in Deuteronomy 7:7-8, *“The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: 8 But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”*

God has loved us *“...according to the good pleasure of his will...”* and he loved Israel *“...because the LORD loved...”* them. There is nothing else to say. Our salvation is a free gift of God, completely paid for by the freely shed blood of Jesus Christ. We receive this free gift, and rejoice in it. The spirit of God led us to salvation when we were still lost. The spirit of God continually works in the heart of the lost to bring them to Christ. Many well meaning people believe that the Holy Spirit only convicts saved people. The truth is that the Holy Spirit of God comes into the heart of the unbeliever and brings him to Christ.

### **Upon the profession of our faith.**

Romans 10:8-11 declares, *“But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”*

Many have read this passage and removed salvation from the hand of God, who freely gives it, and placed it in the hands of sinful men. Many make salvation hinge upon the lost man saying the right words when right words won't save. It is Jesus Christ who saves. The lost person cannot save himself because he is dead in trespasses and sins. Many believe if they can just get the lost man to confess Christ with his lips, he will be saved. The truth is that the only way a lost man will be saved is when Christ gives him the ability to believe. Salvation is completely dependent upon God, not upon the lost sinner. The lost sinner will believe when God gives him the ability to believe. God also makes the lost person want to believe.

It is the word of faith that is believed, not just saying the right words. Romans 10:17 reveals that *“...faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”* The gospel message must be heard with the heart. Salvation is not just saying the right words. Verse 10 divulges that it is the heart, not the mouth, or mind, that believes unto righteousness. The mouth only confesses that which is already accomplished in the heart.

### **Baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.**

This is not talking about a particular phraseology, but about Scriptural authority. If Jesus alone has the authority to save, does anybody except Jesus have the authority to baptize? Many might say, “Well, it is true that only Jesus can save, but anybody can baptize; it really doesn't make any difference. Anybody can take you down to the

creek and put you under, call it baptism, and go on their way.” Men might call it baptism, but what does Jesus call it? If Jesus doesn't accept my baptism, I will be the loser, regardless of what men may say.

### **The Speech At The Time Of Baptism**

Note the phrase in Matthew 28:19, “...*baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.*”

Some believe this means three baptisms. Some baptize once in the name of the Father, once in the name of the Son, and once in the name of the Holy Spirit. We know this is wrong because the Bible says in Eph. 4:5, “*One Lord, one faith, one baptism.*” God is revealed to us in the three different parts of the trinity, but God is only one God. Notice also that baptism shows at least three things: the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. If we baptize three times, then we symbolize that Jesus died three times, was buried three times, and was raised three times. Jesus only died once, was buried once and rose once; and that is plenty for our salvation.

There is not necessarily any authority in saying the words “I baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” If I stand and say those words, that doesn't necessarily mean there is Scriptural baptism. Hang on to your hat and listen! There are four qualifications for Scriptural baptism.

- There must be proper subject – a person that is saved, a true believer in Jesus Christ as their personal saviour.
- There must be proper method – a saved person must be immersed in water.
- There must be a scriptural administrator – A church which recognizes the authority of Jesus Christ, not only as saviour, but also as Lord.
- There must be a scriptural purpose – A saved person is baptized to picture and proclaim that they are dead to their old way of living, that the precious blood of Jesus Christ redeems them and that they are putting on Christ and intend to live every day for him.

Sometimes people think they are baptized when they are not. It could be that the person being baptized is lost. Just because I say the right thing doesn't mean the person is baptized at all, because he is lost.

It could be that I don't have the authority to baptize. Suppose somebody knocked on my door one day and said, “Brother Reynolds, I'll pay you \$40.00 to baptize me.” I take him down to the local pond and say “I baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost” and put him under the water. Is he really baptized? No. I say “by the authority of God” and put him under the water and bring him up, does that mean he is baptized? No. Why? Because the local church is the representative of Christ's body on the earth. He is the head and the local church is his body. If the body of Christ doesn't know anything about a person being baptized, then God doesn't know anything about it, as far as authority is concerned.

That's why it's important to go through his local church for Scriptural baptism and service.

What I am going to say next may sound really far out to some, but please don't tune me out. Read all I have written before you call me a heretic. It is *not* necessarily Scriptural to say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It is just as Scriptural to say "I baptize you in the name of Jesus," or "I baptize you in the name of the Lord Jesus." Some will say, "That can't be right. All the preachers I know say, 'I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.'" "

Personally, I *always* say "I baptize you in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," because that's what it says in the Book of Matthew; and I think it clarifies the issue of authority better than to say "I baptize you in the name of Jesus." Some people might think God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are left out of my baptizing if I don't include them by saying so. I've *never* found an instance in the Bible where the one administering baptism said, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In fact, each time someone baptized in the book of Acts he was said to have been baptized in the name of Jesus. Notice the following examples.

- Acts 2:38 - *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you **in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*
- Acts 8:16 - *(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized **in the name of the Lord Jesus.**)*
- Acts 10:48 - *And he commanded them to be baptized **in the name of the Lord.** Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.*
- Acts 19:5 - *When they heard this, they were baptized **in the name of the Lord Jesus.***

This gets us into a very crucial area of understanding about the authority of Scriptural baptism. You see, it's not really so meaningful that the one doing the baptizing say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," but it is very crucial that God be there, and that his authority is revealed by what we say. This is what really counts. The speech that is made before baptism might not be what **we** think it ought to be, but if God is there it is Scriptural baptism.

Who has the authority to baptize today?

The same ones who had the authority when Christ was upon the earth. John 1:6 states, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." Matthew 3:13-17 declares that Jesus went from Galilee to Jordan so John could baptize him. It is approximately 80 miles from Galilee to Jordan where John was baptizing. Walking at 3 miles an hour, it would take almost 27 hours to walk 80 miles. Walking at 4 miles an hour, the trip would take 20 hours, or two 10-hour days. Why didn't Jesus get somebody at Galilee to baptize him? He must go to the one who had proper, God-authorized authority, and that one was John the Baptist.

Jesus is God; therefore, he has the authority to baptize. John 4:1,2 states, *“When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, 2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)”* Jesus allowed his infant church to baptize during his personal ministry because it was his body. The local church of the Lord Jesus Christ is his body, therefore when the church baptizes, it is the same as Jesus himself baptizing. This same principle follows through today, as only the Lord’s churches have the authority (and the responsibility) to baptize. Other religious organizations may put someone under the water, but God doesn’t recognize their actions as baptism.

### **What is the mode of baptism?**

The word “baptize” comes from the Greek word “baptizo”, which means to cover wholly with a fluid; to dip. Many believe baptism is a moistening (a part of one's person), or to stain. Baptism is an “Anglicized” word, which means the sound of the original Greek word was retained instead of giving the definition of the word. If the word “baptized” had been translated instead of Anglicized, the Church of England, who translated the King James Bible, would have to change their mode of baptism from sprinkling to dipping. Pictures that show Christ and John the Baptist in the River Jordan and John pouring water on top of Christ’s head make no sense at all. It would be unnecessary for them both to get into the water if all John was going to do was pour a little water on top of his head. John could have done that while still on dry land. Many believe sprinkling is the proper mode of baptism, but there are no scriptures that show this. The only reason sprinkling came in was because of infant baptism. I am told that many babies choked or died of strangulation when they were immersed in water, especially when they were immersed three times.

We do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

This is a public covenant, done with a willing heart and the full knowledge and consent of both the individual and the church. A covenant made with a group of people must necessarily be public. If it is done privately, without the knowledge or consent of the church, it is no covenant at all. A covenant made between individuals will be made with the full knowledge and consent of both of those individuals. It is not necessary that anybody else know about the covenant, but those individuals involved in the covenant must know about it. A covenant that is between two individuals would not necessarily be public, but it would be done in full knowledge and consent of the individuals. Any covenant that is made will be dissolved in the same way it is made. If the covenant is made publicly, it must be dissolved publicly. If the covenant is made privately (between two or three individuals) it must be dissolved in the same way.

A covenant will remain in force if not dissolved correctly. It is impossible for the covenant to be dissolved without the full knowledge and willing consent of both parties. Often a church member will break his covenant with the church of the Lord Jesus Christ because he is aggravated over something. Sometimes the church will

break its covenant with a church member over something. For the break to be right, both parties must understand the position of the other.

There are some people the church should not want to be a part of their body. People that don't have a desire to stop sinning and don't have a desire to live a holy, separated life show they might not have true salvation. A church that does not want to have Christ as its head and leader is not the place for a true consecrated Christian to have his membership.

A right covenant is prepared in the presence of God. God is present everywhere, but it is also true that people can go from the place where God is worshipped.

Genesis 3:8 reveals that Adam and Eve went from the presence of God when they had sinned *"And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden."* Sin drove Adam and his wife to hide themselves from the presence of God in worship. God was in their physical presence when he came to them and revealed their sin, but they were not worshipping until they got their sin right with God.

Gen. 4:16 reveals that after Cain killed his brother Abel, he went out from the presence of God. *"And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden."* This passage does not mean Cain went to a place where God was not. God is everywhere, therefore no person can remove himself to a place where God cannot contact him, judge him, or bless him. Cain, going out from the presence of God, meant he went out from the place where God was worshipped.

Job 1:6 states, *"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them."* This scene takes place in heaven. Notice that Satan also came into heaven, into the place where God was worshipped by all the created beings of heaven. Satan did not come to worship, but to receive permission to torment one of God's children. Job 1:12 reveals that Satan received permission from God to torment Job. *"And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD."* When Job refused to curse God, Satan went back into the presence of God to receive additional permission to torment the person of Job. Job 2:7 states that Satan received this permission from God. *"So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown."*

The earth is not afraid of God its creator, but when it comes to worshipping God, even the earth trembles. Psalm 97:5 declares, *"The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth."*

Jonah confirms that it is possible to get away from the place where God is worshipped, but impossible to get away from God. Jonah 1:3 states, *"But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD."* Jonah did get away from the place where God is

worshipped, but he could not get away from God, nor from the job God called him to do.

Even angels are present at the place of worship, never leaving the presence of God, even though they may leave the physical place where God is worshiped. I Peter 1:12 declares, *“Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.”* The angels are very interested in the matter of redemption and the affairs of men, especially when they have to do with the eternal covenant of God.

John 1:51 states, *“And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”* The time of this prophecy is difficult to ascertain. One thing is certain, however, the angels are very interested in the covenant God has made with man concerning salvation and the judgment of sin upon this earth. II Thess 1:7 confirm the angels’ interest in heavenly and earthly things. *“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,”* When Jesus Christ is revealed the angels will be present, watching all the events, doing what God bids them do. The angels sound the seven trumpets, and pour out the vials upon the earth. It is an angel that casts Satan into the bottomless pit for 1,000 years. I Timothy 3:16 declares, *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”*

People are in the presence of God and his holy angels when they make covenants with each other. These covenants are most sacred, whether the people involved take them seriously or not. In I Sam. 18:3,4, Jonathan and David made a covenant with one another before God. In this covenant, Jonathan declared that David would be the next king because Jonathan gave David his robe and his garments (which included his sword, bow and girdle). John Gill states in his comments on I Sam. 18:3:

A covenant of friendship; entered into a solemn agreement to keep up and maintain a cordial respect to each other, and to support each other's interest both in life and after death, whoever was the survivor; and in consequence of this David had a friend at court, when Saul fell out with him, and who pleaded his cause, and discovered his father's plots, and was the means of preserving David's life: because he loved him as his own soul; so that this covenant was not founded in mere words, but in sincere and cordial affection, and was lasting and inviolable.

II Samuel 8:18 reveals that the covenant between Jonathan and David was as long as either of them should live. David asked, *“Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?”* There is no doubt some believed David was going to kill all the remaining descendants of Saul. David knew in his own heart what he had in mind, and anybody who wanted to know that David’s thoughts and intents were honest would only have to wait and see what would happen next.

Many times people have made such a small covenant with other church members that they stay out of service for the smallest things, and often complain about many

small and inconsequential things. Hebrews 10:25 states, “*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*”

There is one body in Christ, as revealed in Acts 2:41. “*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*” When these souls were added to the church, they covenanted together with the church for the advancement of the kingdom of God through the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Today, when people are saved, scripturally baptized and added to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, they also covenant together for the advancement of the kingdom of God through the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. They become one body in Christ. They do not become **the** body of Christ, for there are many bodies of Christ scattered throughout the world. Eph. 4:4-16 reveals that in becoming one body in Christ all the various duties, privileges and helps are available to every member.

Read Eph. 4:4-16 very carefully, and see for yourself how Christ so established the church for the enrichment and spiritual maturity of each member. “*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. 7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*”

It is extremely important to understand that Paul is writing to one local church, the church at Ephesus. Paul is not writing to a universal church, because there is no universal church. The principle Paul is expressing to the local church at Ephesus is that each member (each of his children) is important to God. God has established the local church so each of his children can grow spiritually and can help others to spiritually mature.

Notice the following lessons in Ephesians 4 about the unity of the church, and how each member fits into that church.

- Verse 1 reveals that Paul desires the individual members of the church at Ephesus remain true to their life’s calling – their vocation – being a Christian.

- Verses 4-6 state that Paul is writing to the local church at Ephesus, explaining to them that there is one body of Christ in Ephesus, and the local church at Ephesus is that local body of Christ.
- Verse 7 reveals that God has given grace to each person, according to the gift he has given them. No person will be able to say they did not have the proper gift to achieve that which God intended them to achieve. Christ has given them grace to achieve everything God intends them to achieve. Any failure is a failure on our part. Our failures are never a failure on God's part.
- Verses 8-10 reveal we have this grace, power and ability because Christ died for us on the cross, taking our sins upon himself, then ascended into heaven for us. Remember that Christ is our substitute. We are as surely in heaven as Christ is in heaven. Our eternity is that secure. We have the fulfillment of the gifts Christ gave us just as surely as Christ is in heaven. Any failure to fulfill the gifts God gave to us is not the fault of God. It is our fault because we have not used the grace God gave us.
- Verses 11-16 explain there should be unity in the body of Christ at Ephesus, just like there is physical unity in the body of every person.
- Verses 11-13 reveal that God has given the church everything that is necessary for the perfecting (completion) of the saints. Any saved person who is faithful to the church God added them to will eventually be perfected (complete). Any saved person who refuses to be faithful to the church God has added them to will not be perfected.
- Verses 14-16 declare when saved people are faithful to God's church, and they learn what God wants them to learn, they will not be easily changed from their doctrinal positions. It must be remembered that there are many deceivers that are waiting to deceive a believer. When a church is filled with love for God, they will be filled with love for one another, and they will be able to help one another not be deceived. Every member of a church that God adds is necessary for the proper spiritual and material development of that church.

There are also some lessons in Romans 12:3-9 about the unity of the church. Read this passage very carefully. *"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness. 9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good."*

These verses explain there are many members in every local church, and all of these various members are only parts of the whole body. Every member of the local church has a different function, which is necessary for the completion and benefit of the entire body. Likewise, we have many members in our physical bodies, but each member is only a part of our whole body. Verse 9 declares that love is what ties all of the various church members together.

Instructions concerning the unity of each local church is also given in I Corinthians 12:14-27. Read these scriptures very carefully. *“For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? 18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20 But now are they many members, yet but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. 24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: 25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”*

Again, and I know I am repeating myself, it is very important to understand that the book of I and II Corinthians is written to a local church, not to a universal church. There is no such thing as a universal church.

I Corinthians 12:14-27 majors on the point that no member of the body (the local church at Corinth) should look down on any other member of the church at Corinth, regardless how useless or “in the way” they consider them to be. A body cannot really be a body if the various body parts are fighting one another. A body cannot really be a body if all the various parts are an eye. A body would look really odd if it was made up of one great big eyeball. The eye cannot say they have no need of the hand, because the hand makes movement and work possible while the eye can do no work. The eye will help direct the hand where to go, but the eye can’t go anywhere without the hand. The foot is another member, which the eye might say is not needed. But the eye would have a lot of trouble traveling were it not for the feet. The brain might think the stomach isn’t needed, but the brain will soon wither and die without the nourishment provided by the stomach. The stomach might think the teeth aren’t needed until an ulcer is formed in the stomach because there were no grinders for the food. You see, every member of the physical body is necessary for the maturity of the physical body, and every member that God adds to each local church is necessary for the spiritual and material development of that particular local church.

## **Church Covenant**

### **Paragraph 2**

**We engage therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.**

#### **We engage therefore.**

The word “engage” means “to pledge” or “resolve”. This is a vow, promise, or agreement. Deut. 23:21-23 states, *“When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. 22 But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. 23 That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth.”*

A vow shall not be broken, but shall be kept. Numbers 30 reveals that the husband or father has the final say about whether a vow is to be carried out or not. God will hold the person guilty if the vow is not kept.

#### **By the aid of the Holy Spirit**

The spirit of the church covenant will be fulfilled in the heart and life of the individual church member by the aid of the Holy Spirit. In paragraph one, our spiritual life was begun by the Holy Spirit. It is only by the urging of the Holy Spirit that we were drawn to Christ. It is only by the urging of the Holy Spirit that we will continue in the Christian life.

While our salvation and our life is dependent on the Holy Spirit’s guidance, we, as individuals, have a part to play. When we were lost, we did not know it was the Holy Spirit drawing us to Christ, we thought we were doing it on our own. After we are saved, we ought to know about the Holy Spirit’s drawing and leadership. As saved people, we need to submit ourselves to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, not relying on our feelings, our ambitions, or our personality.

#### **To walk together in Christian love.**

Christian love is the very beginning of everything worthwhile. Mark 12:28-31 states, *“And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? 29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: 30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. 31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”*

Christian love is having a love for God first, then this love for God causes us to love one another. If there is no love for God first, the love for one another will not be the right kind of love. There is a love people can have for those that help them. This is not the kind of love God has for us, or the kind of Godly love we ought to have for one another. The kind of love God wants us to have for one another is to love one another even if there is nothing the other person can do for us. This is the way God loved us!

Revelation 2:4-5 makes it abundantly clear that loving God is so important, that without it, a church will stop being a church. *“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”* The church at Ephesus evidently had all their doctrines right, but when they stopping loving God like they ought to, they were in danger of losing their candlestick: they would stop being a church.

What is the “first love”? Mark 12:28-31 states, *“And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? 29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: 30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. 31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”*

The first love is the greatest love – the love for God, which leads us to love other saved people. But the greatest love – the first love – doesn’t stop there. The greatest love – the kind of love God has for fallen mankind – will drive all believers to love even their enemies. Jesus declared in Matthew 5:44, *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;”* God so loved fallen sinners that he gave his only begotten son for their eternal salvation. God expects nothing less of his disciples.

I know someone will say they cannot love their enemies because they have done terrible things. Think! Christ loved us when we were his enemy. Christ died on the cross after a mock night time trial filled with cruel beatings and twisted judgment. Christ did not deserve to die because he had no sin. Christ died for us, who are totally depraved, filled with sin, and running from God. If we would be the children of God, we must do what God does.

I Corinthians 13 is the “love chapter” of the Bible. To really understand I Corinthians 13, we must first understand that I Corinthians chapters 12-14 are about one subject - spiritual gifts. I Corinthians 12:31 states that Christ is about to show the Corinthians a better way. Next follows chapter 13 - the love chapter. Paul intends for the Corinthians to understand that all spiritual gifts are nothing if they are not motivated and sustained by the right kind of love. What impresses the world is not our correctness of doctrine and practice - it is the love we show which reflects Christ and his love for them through us.

There are many examples and admonitions of Christian love in the Bible. Remember, the talk without the walk is hypocrisy, the walk must be according to the talk.

The love of David and Jonathan is an excellent example of Christian love. Jonathan loved God and his plan so much that he was willing to give up being the king of Israel to God's man. Jonathan was even willing to go against his dad, King Saul.

John 13:34,35 emphatically declares, *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* I suppose the reader has seen churches that gripe, fight and bicker with one another. Those kind of churches are not an example of true Christianity. Frankly, I am not anxious to be a part of a fussing, fighting church. I had much rather be a part of a church that loves God because of all his blessings. The kind of church that loves God will continually be thankful for the people God has added to their body; therefore they will love one another – even if there are differences of opinion from time to time. Differences of opinion are just that – differences of opinion. All differences of opinion are settled by "thus saith the Lord." It really makes no difference what I *think* – what makes a difference is what God *says*. Searching the Bible will reveal what God says, and that ends all arguments.

Romans 12:9-10 repeats the assertion that love is the greatest Christian attribute. *"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;"*

Romans 13:10 affirms, *"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."* Godly love demonstrates God's love to the world. Godly lives are the only Bible some people see. Never accept their sins, but always accept the sinner. This is what Christ did for us.

### **To Strive For The Advancement Of This Church**

I will work in this church. Accepting this Church Covenant presupposes a belief and adherence to the local church. This does not mean there are not other churches that belong to the Lord. This means that I believe the Holy Spirit has lead me to this church to work with this group of people for the advancement of the cause of Christ. I will not work for the advancement of any denomination, board, or convention. There are thousands of "Baptist" churches in the world that are not scriptural. Just because a church has the name "Baptist" over the door doesn't mean they are of God.

I believe there are some churches not called "Baptist" that are scriptural churches. They are scriptural because they have the same heritage as all of God's churches. In days gone by, all scriptural churches went by a name other than Baptist. I think it is remarkable to note that I have seen this Church Covenant posted in many ABA churches, and this covenant says absolutely nothing at all about striving for the advancement of the ABA or the Baptist denomination.

There are three things we will strive for in the advancement of this church.

- Knowledge.
- Holiness.
- Comfort.

**In knowledge.** We must re-establish that striving for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness and comfort is nothing at all if it is not preceded by a holy and Godly, sincere love for God, which causes us to love our brothers in Christ, especially our brothers in Christ which are members of the same church we are.

The reason we ought to strive for more knowledge in our church is because we must worship God in spirit and in truth. It has been said that many in the Pentecostal movement worship God with little truth, but much spirit; while Baptists worship God with much truth and little spirit.

Proper worship involves both spirit and truth. Truth will cause our emotions to be correct, and we will sometimes be “beside ourselves”. II Corinthians 5:13 declares, *“For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.”* II Tim. 1:12 states, *“For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”*

Luke 1:1-4 states the book of Luke was written to keep the believers informed about Christ. It is important that we know what we believe. Emotions are important, but only when they are accompanied by and produced by truth.

Acts 6:3 gives the qualifications of the “deacons” of the church at Jerusalem, *“Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.”* Stephen was one of the men chosen to be a “deacon”. He had great knowledge of the Old Testament as revealed in the message he preached in Acts 6:8-7:53. The Jews could not refute what he preached, because Stephen had his facts straight. So they killed him.

John Gill states in his commentary on Acts 8:40:

Acts 8:5-40 - Philip preached in Samaria, God opening the doors for a great revival meeting, then he left there and preached to the Ethiopia eunuch. From there he continued spreading the gospel message at Azotus, and all the cities until he came to Caesarea. Azotus is also called Ashdod, of the Philistines, which is famous for the temple of Dagon, described in I Sam. 5:1. Going from city to city, culling none, shows Philip’s great enthusiasm for preaching the gospel to all creatures. This Caesarea was not Caesarea Philippi, (Matthew 16:13) but that which was before called Strato’s tower, and was rebuilt by Herod, and called Caesarea, in honour of Augustus Caesar; and not by Caesar himself, as R. Benjamin says {w}: it was six hundred furlongs, or seventy five miles from Jerusalem, This place was famous for Jewish Rabbins, and their schools of learning.

Going to such a place as this shows that Philip was very knowledgeable about the scriptures and was able to convince even the learned Jewish Rabbis of the

righteousness of Christ. One of the best things a person can do is to learn what he believes. Hoshea 4:6 states, *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”* I Peter 3:15 declares when we really believe, we will have an answer. *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:”* II Timothy 2:15 reveals that these things are done for and unto God, not for show or to impress any man. *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*

**In holiness.** In the highest sense holiness belongs only to God, for Holiness is his name. The word doesn't necessarily have anything to do with morality, ethics, decency, or integrity. Holiness is more a sense of being like God. Therefore, as holiness applies to us, it refers to us being like unto God, or his son Jesus Christ.

Leviticus 11:44 states, *“For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”* Leviticus 19:2 repeats the admonition to be holy by stating, *“Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.”* Leviticus 20:7 declares, *“Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God.”* The prophet Amos states in Amos 3:3, *“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”*

One thing that will cause church members to be discouraged in holiness is to see other church members accepting sin and trying to live as close to the edge of Christianity as they can. Sin is often accepted when it is in our family, especially if it is me that is sinning. Sin should always be rejected, and the sinner should always be accepted.

True holiness has more to do with attitude in action, rather than just action. Matthew 7:1 states, *“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”* *“Judge not...”* doesn't mean we never see what is right and what is wrong. It means we do not look down our long noses at somebody's sins. Matthew 7:5 declares that we are a hypocrite if we don't clean up our own act before we try to straighten out somebody else. When we begin to see our own sinfulness, we will be extremely careful when trying to help somebody else with their sinfulness.

Galatians 6:1-5 states, *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. 3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. 4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5 For every man shall bear his own burden.”* When a brother is overtaken in a fault, those that are “spiritual” should restore them, being careful because the spiritual ones can also fall. Verse 1 makes the “spiritual” consider themselves before they try to correct the fault of another. What is spiritual? Are they spiritual enough to help, or will their meddling hurt? Will they fall into sin? Do they truly understand the dangers others face?

John 8:1-11 gives the story of a woman taken in the very act of adultery. She was not “let go” by Christ, but the guilt was fixed, not only in the heart of the woman, but in the heart of her accusers. Jesus instructed the one without sin to cast the first stone. As every man examined his own conscience, they began to leave one at a time. Her accusers understood not only that the woman had sinned, but they also held this same sin in their own hearts. When Jesus looked up again, he asked the woman where her accusers were. She replied there were none. Jesus said, *“Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more.”* This story is a perfect example of “spiritual” people restoring one overtaken in a fault.

Believers have an obligation to be holy; not only because of God, but also because of the influence our lives have on fellow church members. Believers, especially church members, have an obligation to be regular in their church attendance, not only for “God’s sake”, but also for the sake of other church members. John Doe might say, I would come to Sunday School and church services more, but there are people at services I don’t like, or I have something against. Matthew 5:23-26 makes it very clear that any offence must be reconciled before our worship is accepted. What is ironic about the above situation is that God is likely accepting the worship of those in services, but would not accept the worship of John Doe even if they did attend services.

**In comfort.** To strive for the advancement of this church in comfort means to speak to, address one, whether by way of admonition and incentive, or to calm and console, to be of good courage, be of good cheer.

Romans 15:14 states, *“And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.”* Everything we have gained in our study is for one purpose. And that purpose is to glorify God in this present evil world by comforting one another.

I Corinthians 1:3-4 states, *“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”* It is clear that all true comfort comes from God, yet we also know God has given us comfort from other sources. We have comfort from God, the Holy Spirit, the scriptures, and one another.

It must be stated that there is more than one kind of comfort. There is a physical comfort we all desire. There is the desire of having and fellowshiping with friends, which can be described as mental comfort. There is comfort in the midst of troubles, trials and tribulations. There is comfort when there are no difficulties. There is also spiritual comfort.

Listen to Acts 9:31, *“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.”* When God saved Saul, and changed his name and life, there was rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and comfort of the Holy Ghost. Believers had comfort from the Holy Spirit and one another when Saul was

persecuting them. When Saul was saved and serving God, the comfort from one another and the Holy Spirit of God was multiplied.

How can we have comfort of the Holy Spirit? Romans 15:4 states, *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”* The Holy Spirit of God leads us to a diligent study of the Word of God, from whence comes our knowledge, hope and comfort.

There are many scriptures that speak of receiving comfort from one another.

- In Ephesians 6:22, Paul sent Tychicus to the Ephesians to give them comfort. *“Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.”*
- In Philippians 2:19, Paul desired to send Timotheus to the Philippians so he could be comforted concerning them. *“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.”*
- In Colossians 4:7,8, Paul sent Tychicus to the Colossians so they could be comforted concerning him. *“All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord: 8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;”*
- In I Thessalonians 3:1,2 Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonians so they could be comforted concerning their faith. *“Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; 2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:”*
- In I Thessalonians 4:18, Paul desired the brethren to comfort themselves with the Word of God concerning them that had died in the Lord. *“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”*
- In I Thessalonians 5:11, Paul continued to give comfort to those concerning the tribulations of the last days and their faithfulness by stating, *“Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”*
- In I Thessalonians 5:14, Paul exhorted the brethren to *“...warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.”*
- Paul concluded the second letter to the Thessalonians by stating in II Thessalonians 2:16-17, *“Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, 17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.”*

### **To Promote this church in:**

The word “promote” means: to raise to a more important or responsible job or rank, to contribute to the progress or growth of; further, to urge the adoption of; advocate, to attempt to sell or popularize by advertising or publicity.

A very basic part of promoting is: never speak against the church, the members of

the church, or the projects and programs of the church. I would call this “external promotion” because it involves people that aren’t members of the church. At one church I pastored, a church member told me he wouldn’t be in church services because of some health problems, but he would know what was going on “down there” This same man didn’t let his health problems hinder him from going to dances and just about every other secular activity. When people criticize their church, and the members of their church, the people in the community know about it, and this hinders the gospel to them. When I resigned, I found out (through the next pastor) that the people in the community thought the church treated both the next pastor and me wrong. People in the community know when a church is in fellowship!

When church members brag on their church and other church members, the community knows about it, and this helps the reputation of the church. This is why Christ gave the commandment in Matthew 18:15-17 concerning how to handle disagreements. When there is a disagreement between two church members, nobody should know about that disagreement, but those two church members. People do wrong when they tell everybody else how they disagree with another church member, but don’t talk to the other person. Private disagreements are turned into public disagreements because church members don’t follow the scriptures. Then they wonder why God does not bless their church!

A more advanced way to promote your church is to understand the real meaning of church authority. I call this “internal promotion” because it involves only members of the church.

Oftentimes when church authority is bought up, church members immediately think of the authority to baptize, and the transference of letters. It is right to bring up the authority to baptize when church authority is mentioned, but baptism isn’t the only place church authority should be recognized. A very important part of knowing about church authority is that God has given to the church the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Matthew 16:19 declares, *“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* It is what the church joins and separates on this earth that is joined and separated in heaven. The bottom line is that the collective local church interprets the Bible. Every member should agree because this is given to the church to do.

### **Promoting the prosperity and spirituality of this church**

Promoting the prosperity and spirituality of a church go hand in hand. It involves a principle or philosophy of mutual dependence, interdependence, and codependency. The philosophy is: the whole is more important than the individual parts. The majority rules. This is the philosophy our nation was founded on but in recent years, this philosophy has been replaced with: the minority rules. Instead of the minority fitting in with the majority, the majority must now fit in with the minority. This is not a Godly principle!

The question is asked, “What happens when the majority is wrong?” The only

way the majority can be wrong is when they are not following the Bible. If the majority have consistent Bible verses for their beliefs, they will not be wrong.

There is a great deal of difference between following tradition and following Scripture. Prov. 11:14 states, *“Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.”* Prov. 15:22 continues *“Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.”* Prov. 24:6 confirms, *“For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.”*

There are those that will not take the advice of the majority. Prov. 12:15 states, *“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.”* The following proverbs reveal the foolishness of not accepting right advice, and the foolishness of following only your own thoughts.

- Proverbs 3:7 states, *“Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.”*
- Proverbs 16:2 states, *“All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.”*
- Proverbs 16:25 states, *“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”*
- Proverbs 26:12 states, *“Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.”*
- Proverbs 26:16 states, *“The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.”*
- Proverbs 30:12 states, *“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”*

I discovered a Godly principle a long time ago, and this principle has guided me during the majority of my ministry. I do not have to push my thoughts on you. If my thoughts are truth, God will work that truth on you, if you are interested in finding the truth. I am free to please God and not worry about whether or not you are following me. When this Biblical principle is followed, there is freedom to please God and not worry about whether or not you are following your pastor or any other man. You will be following God and your pastor, and the entire church will be united in truth and the entire community will know it. This is why I have preached over and over again that the most important thing is following Christ, not any one person. No person in the church is indispensable; God’s Word is indispensable!

**Prosperity.** There are at least two kinds of prosperity – financial and fellowship.

Fellowship prosperity is the most valuable of all. If there is fellowship prosperity, there will be financial prosperity. If there isn’t enough financial prosperity, the abundance of fellowship prosperity will be enough to make people happy. If these things I have already covered are correctly applied in the church, there will be fellowship prosperity.

Financial prosperity is gained only when a person and church obey God. Malachi 3:8-12 states, *“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. 12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the LORD of hosts.”* God will supply for the church when all the church members determine together that they will serve God by giving their tithes and offerings.

At one church I pastored, some of the “rich” ladies decided they needed to get rid of me, so they quit giving their tithes and offerings to the church. The church kept around \$18,000.00 in their treasury, and the older people, who were very faithful to God, trusted in the bank balance instead of God because they didn’t have the money to give. One older man in the church received part of his retirement in a lump sum. Instead of giving his tithe all at once, because the “rich” ladies of the church would spend it all quickly, he spread it out over almost a year, so I would have a salary. I did not find this out until I had already given my resignation. What happened is that God provided for my faithful church member, and for me.

We will also work to promote the spirituality of this church. How does a church member promote the spirituality of a church? John 4:24 states that we must worship God in spirit and in truth. Each church member must learn what the truth is, before they can worship God in that truth.

It is wrong for a person to leave the impression that regardless of what the church believes, preaches and practices, it means nothing to an individual until *they* see it. The Bible teaches that the church interprets scripture and settles doctrinal and personality conflicts. The Roman Catholic Church is right (in principle) when the “church” sets doctrinal policies. The Lord’s churches are also right when they settle on the doctrines they will believe, preach and practice. If the church disagrees with Scripture, they are wrong, of course. Everything hinges on agreeing with Scripture.

The spirituality of a church is promoted by every member when each member humbles themselves before God and other church members, believing others are able to understand the truth of God’s Word as well as themselves. The spirituality of a church is not promoted when individual church members determine *they* will decide what they will believe and practice, regardless of what others believe, or what the church decides will be believed. The Bible is what determines doctrinal beliefs, and every church member must yield to the majority so there will be harmony.

### **To Sustain this church in:**

Sustain means: to keep in existence; maintain, to supply with necessities or nourishment; provide for, to keep from falling or sinking, to support the spirits, vitality, or resolution of; encourage, to bear up under; withstand, to experience or

suffer, to affirm the validity of, to prove or corroborate; confirm, to keep up competently. Independence Baptist Church is the pillar and ground of the truth. I Timothy 3:15 states, *“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”*

### **Sustain this church in Worship**

We promise to sustain this church in its worship. You cannot sustain the church you are a member of if you aren't present in worship services. Heb. 10:25 declares, *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”* Notice in verse 23 that a part of our attending church services is holding fast the profession of our faith. Verse 24 states that another part of our attending church services is to be an encouragement to other saved people. Verses 26-31 gives us another reason to attend church services - to avoid the judgment of God.

People will give all sorts of excuses for not regularly attending services. Would your boss accept the sort of excuses you give God? If you didn't show up for work, do you think your boss would consider you for promotion? If you faithfully showed up for work, but consistently went to sleep on the job, would your boss consider you a good employee? People are often habitually late at church services. People often sleep through church services. They are not good church members.

One of the funniest things I remember about going to New Friendship Baptist Church when I was young, was a couple who always came to services late. They would often get there 10 or 15 minutes before dismissal. Once they pulled up in the parking lot after services when everybody was standing outside talking! Their coming to services after the services were over didn't seem to bother them. They got out of their vehicle and joined in the conversation, then went home to lunch. This couple was accused of arriving for church services so late that everybody had gone home. I don't know if they did that or not – I had already gone home!

Would your boss accept you constantly being late at work? If your boss would reprimand you for being late, do you believe God will let you get away with it?

Do you worship when you come to church? Many people don't know what worship is. Worship is to act (because of inward motivation) pious or reverent. Many people don't know what it is to act pious or reverent. It is to come before God with awe because of his absolute greatness and our absolute unworthiness. Worship is adoring God because we realize our unworthiness and his greatness. Worship is adoring God because of all the things he has done for us – even what we call bad things. John 4:24 states that we must worship God in spirit and in truth. Genesis 24:52 is an example of worship when we understand what God has done for us. *“And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth.”*

Matthew 20:20 reveals that the mother of Zebedee's children came worshipping Christ and asking him to allow one of her sons to sit on his right hand and the other

on the left. This word worship means to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand; recognizing the superior rank of their master and humbling accepting their place. When people don't faithfully attend worship services, they are not taking their place at the feet of God.

### **Sustain this church in its ordinances**

We promise to sustain this church in its two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper.

**Baptism.** Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer upon their profession of faith by a church with proper God given authority.

The proper candidate for baptism is a believer, not a person who is trying to believe. The person must be saved by the grace of God. There is no such thing as baptismal regeneration, but there is such a thing as the baptism of repentance. Many people "baptize" babies who are later confirmed into the faith or church. Babies are "baptized" based on the belief of "God parents". There is no such thing in the Bible as baptizing babies or "God parents". Some babies begin to be immersed about 200-300 AD, which often choked them. Therefore the practice of pouring and sprinkling was introduced. One error led to another.

There must be proper authority in scriptural baptism. God gave the authority to baptize to his local churches. A universal church, or a local pastor, does not have the authority to baptize, not to "free lance" anything. Baptism is through a local church.

There must be a proper mode in scriptural baptism. Immersion is scriptural because it is a burial. Pouring won't work because that isn't baptism or burial. Sprinkling isn't scriptural even though many people accept it.

There must be a proper purpose in scriptural baptism. Baptism isn't to save anybody, but to show to the world that the person has already been saved. Baptism is a picture that the saved sinner is dead to their old works, and determines to live for God, after the new man, from now on.

**The Lord's Supper.** The Lord's Supper is for the local church only. There are two elements in the Lord's Supper. Intoxicating wine (wine without any leaven) is the beverage, which represents the pure blood of Christ. Unleavened bread (bread without any leaven) is the meat, which represents the broken body of our Lord.

The Lord's Supper is for the Lord's Church only. Christ gave this supper as a remembrance supper for his church only, not for every false church in the world. The Lord's Supper cannot be scripturally taken with those who are not members of the local church giving the supper. Open communion (the giving of the supper to all) is unscriptural. Close communion (the giving of the supper to all of a particular belief whose churches fellowship) is unscriptural. It should be noted that "closed" communion was formerly called "close" communion. If you read old writers, they will use the term close communion to mean closed communion. In days gone by, there was no such thing as what is now called close communion. Close communion

meant closed communion. There was no such thing as two churches, who fellowship together, taking the Lord's Supper together.

### **How can I sustain the church in these two doctrines?**

- By fully understanding why these things are so. Don't come to church and practice these things without knowing why you are practicing them. How can you teach the next generation if you don't know these things yourself?
- By teaching these truths to others. Teach them to your children. Teach them to people at your job. Teach them to people you come into contact with.

### **Sustain this church in its discipline**

We promise to sustain this church in its discipline. Discipline is training expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behavior, especially training that produces spiritual, moral or mental improvement. Genesis 18:19 declare that Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel, was careful to command, train, and instruct his children. *"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."* Abraham would correctly discipline his family and servants, so they would follow the precepts of God after Abraham had died. We should be like Abraham in this manner. In order for a person to expect people to act a certain way, he must be aware of the way they ought to act. This may sound like a real stupid statement, but it is not. Another way of saying the same truth is, "A person cannot teach what they don't know any more than they can come back from where they haven't been." Are you teaching by your actions that it is okay to constantly be late for church services? Are you teaching by your actions that it is okay to miss church services? When a person constantly misses church services, they are saying publicly serving God is not important.

Discipline is also enforcing the characteristics expected. When a church disciplines a member, every member must treat that disciplined member the same. Church discipline often fails because some church member or members will take the side of the disciplined member. Often, the person who starts discipline procedures will take more flak than the disciplined member. A typical Satanic ploy of the disgruntled member is to attack the procedures used against him. This ploy is supposed to divert attention from evil actions, and direct attention at evil procedures. What it actually does is cast doubt on the honesty and integrity of the person initiating the discipline procedures. Often, the person who starts discipline procedures will take more flak than the disciplined member.

### **Sustain this church in its doctrines**

We promise to sustain this church in its doctrines. There are several doctrines Independence Baptist Church teaches. Which do you believe is the most important? Some would say the doctrines of Grace are the most important. Some would say the doctrine of the local church is the most important. Still others would say some other

doctrine is the most important.

All of these doctrines are of major importance, but the most important doctrine of all is the doctrine of love. If there is no love for God, any upholding of the doctrines of Grace will be for the wrong reason, and with the wrong attitude. If there is no love for God, any upholding of the doctrine of the local church will be null and void. Actually, I believe the doctrine of the local church is more important than the doctrines of Grace. I can fellowship with someone around the doctrines of Grace, or the doctrines of the local church, but when somebody starts messing around with the local church, the body of Christ on this earth, he is walking in dangerous places. Of course, when someone starts messing around with the doctrines of Grace, to the point that they begin to say a person can save themselves, I don't want to have any more fellowship with them. When a person begins to say that a lost person can come to Christ by himself, that is error, and I don't want to have anything to do with them.

The only way you can uphold the doctrines of Independence Baptist Church is to know what those doctrines are. These doctrines are all Bible doctrines, not just Baptist doctrines. When we understand that what we teach and preach and practice are Bible doctrines, it makes all the difference in the world as to our enthusiasm in obedience.

### **To contribute cheerfully and regularly**

This part of the church covenant is pertaining to the giving of money for the support of the various projects of the church. In a previous lesson, we studied promoting the prosperity and the spirituality of the church. That prosperity was mostly fellowship prosperity, but some of that lesson involved financial prosperity. This part of the lesson is involving financial prosperity.

How a church is not to raise money: pie suppers, rummage sales, or contests. The truth is that God does not want our worn out clothes, and worn out shoes! God wants the very best we have, not that which we are about to throw away! God wants us to give to him first, not last. I have known churches and ministers who promoted car washes and such for their young people, but not for the older members. These young people will grow up believing that car washes and such are okay, and then when they are adults, they will want their church to use the same methods to raise money. I have known Baptist ministers who taught their young people to raise money with car washes and such so they could go to church camp! What a joke!

How a church is supposed to raise money. Malachi 3:8-12 emphatically declares, *"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. 12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts."*

Note the difference between tithes and offerings. A tithe is a tenth of your earnings. An offering is everything above a tithe. You haven't given an offering until you give a tithe.

We promise to contribute cheerfully to this church. II Corinthians 9:7 states, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." This passage isn't talking about giving tithes and offerings. It is talking about the support of the poor saints at Jerusalem. The principle of giving is that it be done cheerfully, not of necessity. A person will give cheerfully when they understand the principle God works by. God might not give you great financial stability when you cheerfully give your tithes and offerings. God will open the windows of heaven and pour you out a great blessing. This blessing might be that your possessions will last longer. This blessing might be that you will be given more spiritual understanding. This blessing might be that you will learn to get by with less, therefore trusting God the more. Some believe that when they give a dollar to God, He will give them 10 times that back, or \$10.00. There is no scripture in the entire Bible that teaches this. God is not obligated to do anything, except what he has promised.

We promise to contribute regularly to this church. The church, like all organizations, and people, needs a regular income so plans can be made and accomplished. If there isn't regular income, the church plans must also be irregular. If you have regular income (yearly, monthly, weekly, or daily), you ought to give regularly.

We promise to give to the support of the ministry. There is balance in understanding the attitude of the church toward paying their minister and the attitude of the minister toward the church paying him. Some scriptures are for the minister and some are for the church. II Timothy 2:15 tells us to rightly divide the scripture, and this is absolutely necessary for proper understanding of what to do. For example: I Peter 5:3 is talking to the minister and tells him not to be a lord over the flock of God, while Hebrews 13:17 is talking to the church and tells them to obey them that have the rule over them (to obey their ministers). Therefore, the attitude of the minister is that he is not a lord over God's people, that he should rather be an example to the flock. The attitude of God's people toward their minister is that he is a lord over them, that he watches for their souls, that he cares for their spiritual welfare, that he says the things he says for their benefit, not for his own.

The responsibility of the church toward the pastor with regard to money is to take care of his financial needs. I Corinthians 9 speaks about the support of the ministry by the offerings of the church. Verse 10 doesn't mean that the minister should hope for financial gain from his preaching, but that he should hope that the people he preaches to will learn enough from his preaching to know that God will bless them if they follow and obey the man of God. I Timothy 5:17-18 continues this thought by stating, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out

*the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.*" In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 25:4 states, *"Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn."* In Judea, as well as in Egypt, Greece, and Italy, they made use of beeves to tread out the corn; and the same mode of threshing still remains in Arabia, Barbary, and other eastern countries, to the present day. The sheaves lie open and expanded on the threshing floors, and the cattle continually move round them, and thus tread out the grain. The natives of Aleppo still religiously observe the ancient humane practice, inculcated by this law, of permitting the oxen to remain unmuzzled when treading out the corn.

The responsibility of the minister to the church with regard to money is to preach the truth to them, regardless whether they pay him or not. I Corinthians 9:10 reveals that the hope of the minister is not for financial gain, but that those he preaches to will understand God's will enough to know their responsibility to the man of God. If those people truly understand their responsibility to the man of God, they will more fully understand their responsibility to the God of heaven, the God of their salvation. The minister of God should not let money stand in the way of preaching the gospel. The minister of God should work just as hard for the church that cannot pay him, as he does for the church that is able to pay him very well.

I Timothy 3:3 states concerning the desire of the man of God, *"Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;"*

I Peter 5:2 confirms this attitude by stating, *"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;"*

We promise to give to the expenses of the church building or meeting place. We promise to pay for electricity, water, heat and air conditioning; any expense in operating a vehicle, which is used in the service of God; and any expense in normal church maintenance, such as cleaning, and normal repairs. An annual piano tuning would be included in this category.

We also agree to pay expenses and costs that don't normally recur. These are additions to the building, or replacing major appliances, such as the furnace and air conditioning, replacing the carpet, or buying a new piano. Replacing the church vehicle would also come under variable overhead.

It is not the responsibility of any one church member to take care of these expenses. I knew a church that expected the treasurer to make up any shortages in the offerings. I knew a church that expected to receive an inheritance when some of its rich members died. I knew a church that expected to receive income from an oil well. I knew a church that expected to operate on the interest received from their large savings account. I knew a church that expected those that worked on the church to supply the materials to build or repair the church building. All of these are wrong. It is the responsibility of the church (all of the members) to supply all these things.

We promise to contribute to the relief of the poor. Some people have made a life work out of helping the poor. This isn't what Christ did. He made his life's work

doing his Father's will. It is true that helping the poor is a part of the Father's will, but it is not all of it. Preaching the gospel is the biggest part of the Father's will.

There will always be poor people. Matthew 26:11 states, *"For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always."* Most poor people are poor because they don't know how to manage their money, nor do they know how to manage the skills God has given them. Most of these people are looking for somebody to take care of them, whether it is the government, soft-hearted people in churches, or friends and neighbors. I knew a woman who wouldn't charge for her work. She would work two weeks on a quilt, and then charge \$20.00 for it. She was always poor.

Scriptures about giving to the poor include John 13:29 which state, *"For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor."* Acts 3:1-3 reveals it was a common thing to find beggars, who were poor and couldn't work. It was a natural thing to give to their support.

Qualifications to the church for helping widows. This principle would be applied for helping those that are perpetually poor or unable to support themselves.

Honour widows that are widows indeed. I Timothy 5: 4-16 states, *"But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. 5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. 6 But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. 7 And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. 8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 9 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, 10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. 11 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; 12 Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. 13 And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. 14 I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. 15 For some are already turned aside after Satan. 16 If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed."*

There is a reason government aid has become so common. Many people were not associated with a church, and therefore were not eligible for church support. Many people wanted to be supported by somebody, but didn't want their friends and neighbors in church to know they were on support; therefore they relied on the government. Many saved people in churches do not believe God would be able to supply the funds necessary to support those eligible to receive finances from the church. They did not have eyes of faith; therefore they looked with eyes of sight to the government. The point that is missed is, "If a church does what God tells them to do, he will make sure they have all the funds necessary." It is a very sick thought,

but I know one pastor who has a woman song leader. He believes the song leader should be a man, but he says that you use what God supplies. The point he missed is: God would not supply an individual who was not scripturally qualified to do the job. When God gave them a song leader, it would be a man, and he would be a man after God's own heart. God will supply the necessary funds, if the church will do what God says!

We promise to contribute to the spread of the gospel through all nations. I have heard it said that the heart of the church is missions. There is no doubt this is true, but I believe I have seen this misused. Some preachers preach that giving money is the heart of the church. I can see their point, because when the wallet is "saved" that is a sign that the man that holds the wallet is saved. But giving money, without giving your personal time in personal witnessing and personal study is not what God meant.

Giving money is not a substitute for personal witnessing. I knew a man who believed giving his money was the same thing as giving his time and energy. This man is sadly mistaken. God wants us to give our money, but most of all God wants US! Matthew 28:19 states: "Go **YE** therefore ..." This commission is given to all the individual church members, not just to the church at large, leaving the work to be done by "others." Who are the "others", if we are not?

Here are some scriptures about giving to Godly missionaries. Philippians 4:16 states, "For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity." II Corinthians 11:9 continues, "And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself."

## Church Covenant

### Paragraph 3

**We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Saviour.**

#### **We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion**

**Family devotions.** It is the responsibility of the husband to lead his family in devotions. This is probably the greatest failing of husbands. Often times husbands don't believe they have the time for family devotions. The most important part of family devotions is that the family understands and be able to live what the Bible teaches. In other words, while it is important to have family devotions, it is more important for the children to see Christianity in action and to be able to apply the principles of holiness to daily living.

**Formal Family Devotions.** Family devotions are often pictured as the family gathered around dad as he sits in front of them with an open Bible. There is nothing wrong with this type of family devotion. I have known people who used this type of family devotion very successfully. I have also known people who used this type of family devotion, yet their children never understood the first thing about proper religious attitudes. I have known preachers who held this type of family devotion whose children were a rebuke to him.

**Informal Family Devotions.** Family devotions are pictured in the Bible as a time of presenting the principles of Scriptural worship when the children asked questions. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 state "*And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.*" The parent must make sure they have the word of God in their own heart. Every parent must be conscious that it is their responsibility to teach their own children. Parents must talk about God when they sit in their house. This would include during mealtimes, at leisure times, at work times, etc. Parents must talk about God when walking for exercise, on the job, or at leisure. Parents must talk about God as they retire for the day. Parents must talk about God at the beginning of the day. Parents must point out the blessings and cursing of God in everyday life. If they don't see them, they can't point them out, and if they don't point them out, their children won't see them

Deuteronomy 6:20 states, "*And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What*

mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord Our God hath commandeth you? The questions asked by the children are a natural result of observing the religious duties of the parents. Deuteronomy 11:18-21 affirms that parents must know the blessings of God so they can teach them to their children. Note that God said he would multiply the days of the parents, and the days of the children. This promise specifically means that God will let them stay in the land of Canaan longer, and their time on this earth will be like heaven on earth.

Here are some examples of children asking why a certain thing is done. I firmly believe every parent can relate to children asking questions! When children ask questions, it reveals that children are with the parents when a particular thing is done. This shows that families ought to be together in worship, work and play.

Concerning the service of the Passover, Exodus 12:25-27 declares, *“And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. 26 And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? 27 That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.”*

- When the children see an ass or a lamb being killed, Exodus 13:11-16 reveals what the parents should tell the children. *“And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, 12 That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD’S. 13 And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem. 14 And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: 15 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem. 16 And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt.”* The proper answer by the parents will lead to an explanation of salvation.
- When children question why they should obey and honor their parents, Ephesians 6:1-4 is used. *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2 Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. 4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”* Children, as well as parents want to live long and prosperous lives. God has given the perfect solution.
- Parents can also refer to Proverbs 22:6, which state, *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”* I have heard some

parents excuse the waywardness of rebellious children by using this verse. They declare that there is no Bible verse that says the child won't rebel, but there is a promise that he will return to God after his rebellion. I believe this is a "cop-out". There is no reason or excuse for sin or rebellion. There is no necessity of any young person rebelling against God and sowing his "wild oats". It is true that many young people sow their wild oats, but it is also true that there will come harvest. Many parents seem to rejoice in the rebellion of their children, and those same parents will pray for a "crop failure". This doesn't happen, because God will always give the harvest according to what is sowed. Sin will always be paid for. The other day I was visiting in a home when there was a knock on the door. The lady of the house went to the door and let "something" in, I wasn't sure if it was a boy or a girl. Later, there was a knock on the door, and the door suddenly opened, and a young girl entered. The lady of the house motioned for the girl to go on into the room of her two young sons. The girl went on into the room of the two boys. She was wearing some sort of see through bra-like top, which revealed her form very clearly. I could hardly believe my eyes. This lady will soon wonder why her sons have gone wrong. She will vehemently declare that she raised them the best way she knew how and that she prayed for them, and did everything a mother was supposed to do. She will not understand why her children have gone astray. The truth is, she isn't raising them the way she is supposed to. I understand all parents' fail. I understand only God can raise a child. I also understand parents have authority and responsibility from God to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is wrong for young boys to be in their bedroom with a young girl, even if the mother is in the home. Parents must recognize their inability to raise children and pray earnestly to God that he would direct them as to how to raise them, that God would put his word in their children's heart, mind and life. This verse is a promise that if we train up a child in the way he ought to go, he will remain in that way all the days of his life.

Family devotions are good for the parents as well as the children. It is not that the parents do not know the Bible, but when truths are repeated, they often take on a new perspective. We all know and understand that when Satan's lies are repeated often enough, they come to be taken as the truth. Therefore we ought to also understand that when God's truths are repeated often enough, they are learned in new and better ways.

Secret devotions, or private devotions, are also very good for the development of Christian character. Everything a person is, he is privately. Many people believe they can be one thing in public and another in private. But this is not true. What a person is in private, is what they really are. If a person does not have private devotions, they probably will not have family devotions. You see, people that do not get in touch with God when they are alone, will have a hard time trying to help others get in touch with God. They will appear to be hypocrites, which they really are.

### **to religiously educate our children**

The Bible gives us many examples of families who religiously educated their children. I believe Daniel was one such child. Daniel 1:8 records that Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat because it was offered to idols, and to partake of the meat was a part of worshipping the idol. If my calculations are correct, Daniel is no more than a teenager. Why did Daniel purpose in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat? Where did Daniel get such strength of character? Daniel was a young man when he went into Babylonian captivity, therefore had to be taught by his parents what God expected of him. I believe Daniel's parents explained the principles of Godly living to him. Daniel understood these principles and determined at a very young age that he would live as God expected him to live.

Moses was another young person who was taught by Godly parents. Acts 7:22 declare, "...*Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.*" Moses was taught the ways of Egypt, and he learned what the Egyptians expected him to learn, but his mother also taught Moses what God expected of him. One day Moses decided to visit his brethren, the Israelites. How did he know he was an Israelite? Very likely because his mother taught him, and besides that, everybody else knew, so it was common knowledge. Not only had his mother taught him that he was an Israelite, she had also implanted the thought that he was the chosen of God to lead Israel out of Egypt. Moses understood the principles God expected him to live by.

According to II Timothy 1:5, Timothy was taught by his mother and grandmother and understood from a youth the principles of proper Christian service. "*When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.*" According to Acts 16:1, Timothy's dad was Greek, which is all we know about him. Regardless of that, we know that his mother and grandmother taught Timothy. Because Timothy understood God's methods, and ways, God allowed him to have a life full of holy service. Timothy traveled with Paul on many occasions, and was very useful as a messenger and servant to many people. All of this was because he had been taught at a young age how to serve God, and the principles of God's Word.

It is very important for parents to know what God expects and then to teach it to their children. There are many evil circumstances in this world because parents do not understand what God expects of them, therefore they cannot teach their children what God expects of them. I once talked to a man who believed it was okay for women to lead in church services, and for pastors to divorce their wives and marry other women while their first wives were still alive. Why did he think this? Because he had not been taught the Word of God. I tried to explain to him that one of the qualifications of a pastor was to be the husband of one wife. He thought that passage meant one wife at a time. When I tried to explain to him the principles of God's Word, he told me he didn't care what the principles of Gods Word were, he had had

women song leaders all his life, and had had pastors who had been divorced and remarried. His history made him think it was okay. This is the same thing as putting your past history (traditions) on the same level as the Bible. It is sad, but this man was an older man, retired when I spoke to him, and he never understood Biblical principles, nor how to apply them to his life. He was a “Baptist” and a deacon in the church I pastored! I think that is very sad.

To some, having family devotions is the same as religiously educating their children. The two are related, but they are not the same. It is true, there ought to be some sort of learning processes taking place during family devotions. There ought to be something given out during family devotions that the children can use all their lives for God’s service.

Family devotions have more to do with moral issues rather than doctrinal issues. Family devotions are the time to explain such things as Godly living, holiness, love vs. hate, faith, temperance, being a Christian example, etc. Family devotions are the time to teach Christian duties of husband and wife, and the general awareness of Christianity.

Religiously educating our children involves teaching our children the doctrines of the Bible. It is important to remember never to use the phrase “the doctrines of the church.” Many denominations have perverted the doctrines of the Bible, intermingling them with their own traditions. We are not teaching “the doctrines of the church”. We are teaching our children the doctrines of the Bible.

Remember, it is the responsibility of the parents to teach their children Bible doctrines. What are some of these doctrines?

- Bible.
- God.
- The creation of the world and the creation of humans and their role before God.
- The fall of mankind into sin, and the resultant judgment of God.
- Salvation, (and the freeness of salvation, the sovereignty of God in salvation, eternal destruction of the lost, eternal security of the believer, etc.)
- Repentance and faith.
- Sanctification, both progressive and instantaneous.
- The harmony of the law and the gospel.
- The local church (church ordinances, the way a local church operates, etc.)
- The Christian’s attitude toward government.
- Eschatology.

Some parents might feel inadequate when it comes to teaching these doctrines,

and would rather the preacher or church or somebody else teach their children. Listen, often parents feel inadequate because they do not understand Bible doctrines themselves. It is very important that parents understand Bible doctrines so they can teach those doctrines to others. Parents cannot be a witness at work if they do not understand Bible doctrines. Parents will not be able to live before God in an acceptable manner if they do not understand Bible doctrines. So parents, get in there. Learn Bible doctrines, and teach those doctrines to your children. You will never be sorry you did, but you will always be sorry if you do not.

In addition to teaching your children Bible doctrines, teach them the *principles* of God's Word. I repeat myself; it is impossible for parents to teach their children the principles of God's Word if they don't understand them for themselves. Parents, get your noses out of your job long enough to find out what the principles of God's Word are. Parents, get your noses out of the T. V. long enough to find out that the world turns in spite of T. V. Parents, get your noses in the Bible. Read it to find out what God is saying, not to prove that you know what he is saying.

If young children understand the principles of God Word, they will be able to make proper application to all sorts of situations. Parents, get involved in training your children on how to live in this life. Parents, don't just follow your children around and find out what they are doing. Take the initiative and show them what **God** expects of them, how **He** can *bless* them for obedience, and how **He** will *judge* them for disobedience.

**What are the Biblical principles that need to be taught? All of them.**

Parents should teach that the Bible is God's Word. The most effective way a parent can teach their children that the Bible is God's Word is to act like it is God's Word. Parents - read the Bible and explain to your children that you are letting God make most of your decisions for you because you actually believe he knows best and that he reveals his will through the Bible. It is very important to explain *why* God thinks the way he does, not just to expect our children to act in a certain way. This is explaining the *principles* God works under, therefore the principles God expects us to act under are revealed. The reason my high school friend went away from God was because he didn't understand *why* God did what he did.

It is important to explain *why* we believe the Bible is God's Word. It is important to explain *why* we believe in a spoken creation in six literal 24-hour days. It is important to explain *why* we believe in not buying and selling on Sunday. It is important to explain *why* we believe in attending church and worshipping God on Sunday. It is important to explain *why* we don't believe in working on Sunday. It is important to explain *why* men should look like men and women should look like women. It is important to explain *why* the family and the duties of husband and wife are important.

The reason so many have left the truth in the last 40 or 50 years is because parents believed if their children questioned their beliefs, they were rejecting them. Parents didn't have the answers, but expected their children to obey without understanding

why. Children, of course, didn't obey, but sought out their own principles to live by.

There has been a shift away from family instruction to public instruction. It has gradually happened over many years. Sunday School was started to provide the religious education children weren't getting at home. Public schools were started to provide a "better" education than parents could give at home. Public schools would provide "professional" educators who knew better than the parents how to teach and what the children needed. Public schools have now taken over many of the teaching responsibilities of the parents. Sex education is now being taught in public schools. Family living is now being taught in public schools. This includes the responsibilities of moms and dads and their relationship to the family. Public education has moved away from teaching "Reading, Writing and Arithmetic" to "Just feel good about yourself".

Down through the years, public schools have clamored for more parent participation, all the while rejecting the ideas of family, home and the responsibilities that go with the home. Public schools do not teach that young women ought to marry, bear children, and guide the house - feminism has entered the public schools. Public schools do not teach that a young man ought to marry a young woman: homosexuals have entered the public schools. Public schools have come to the place that they believe it is wrong to spank as a disciplinary measure because that is "big people hitting little people". School officials fear they are teaching children to hit. Public school officials have come to fear the child more than the child fears school officials. Many public schools have armed policemen or armed guards patrolling their hallways.

The problem, not only in our public education system, but in our society in general, is that the Bible has been rejected, and replaced by a humanistic values system. God has been removed from the public schools. Prayer has been made illegal. Bible reading is illegal, even carrying a Bible to school has been banned in some cases. Religious clubs have been banned on many campuses. It is illegal for schools to display a copy of the Ten Commandments just in case some student (or teacher) might see it and think there were some absolute rights and wrongs.

This happened when I was young, so the problem we are facing in our society is not an old problem. The example I will give is a personal one, but it can be repeated many times over in this nation. I went away to college, and my high school buddy also went away to college. We were both raised in the same church - Forest Hills Baptist Church of Benton, Arkansas. My friend's dad and my dad were both deacons, and leaders in the church. My friend was instrumental in leading me to the Lord. At college, I grew closer to the Lord, while my friend grew farther and farther away. Why, his dad asked my dad? Much of the answer is difficult to see at first glance, but here is what I think. My friend's dad worked at Alcoa, and my friend wasn't with him at work. My dad had the egg farm, and I was forced to help him with the work. My mom also helped. I was with my mother and dad constantly from the time I was 13 years on. Before that time, I didn't know either my mother or dad personally. I am

sure my life would have been different if my dad hadn't started the egg farm. My dad and mom taught me personally how to work, how to love and that hate didn't work. I saw patience first hand, as I watched them struggle to raise a family with very little income. I heard my dad pray at home, and saw him reading his Bible, searching for answers to daily dilemmas. Once, my friend spent an entire summer with us. He worked with me every day, and cried when he had to go back home to the city of Benton. That summer he found out things about himself that he had never known, and never would have known if he hadn't got out of the house into the open air. I believe one of the most important things that happened to my friend that summer was the personal contact he had with my dad and me as we worked together. The way my friend's dad worked, he didn't know what his dad was going through. My friend and his dad did some things together, but weren't able to be together all day, every day. There were many things my friend's dad believed and practiced that my friend simply didn't see.

### **to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances**

We have already discussed missions in the latter part of paragraph two: We will contribute regularly and cheerfully to the ... spread of the gospel through all nations. We should regularly witness to all people, especially to our family and acquaintances.

The church will use our tithes and offerings for four things: the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

Giving our money for local missions doesn't relieve our responsibility for personally witnessing in the local field. We can support local missionaries, which are establishing churches in surrounding local areas. This does not take away our responsibility for seeking the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances. A man in a church I once pastored came up with the "brilliant" idea that the church ought to hire someone to do visiting in the local area. He had this idea because he knew the local area was supposed to be visited, but he didn't want to do it. He had a lot of money and figured that his money ought to be able to buy his way out of responsibility.

It is "natural" for saved people to seek the salvation of kindred and acquaintances. We are closer to our family than anyone else. It is "natural" that we share the good news of the gospel with them before we share it with people we don't know. Next, it is "natural" that we share the good news of the gospel with our acquaintances before we share it with strangers. Lastly, we will "naturally" share the gospel with strangers we meet, whether shopping, visiting in stores or on the street, or whatever. It is not "natural" to knock on doors when we haven't talked to our lost family members about Christ.

I believe God expects families to serve him together. An example is the woman at the well. John 4:28-30 reveal the woman spoke to Christ until his disciples arrived, then she left to tell her acquaintances about her salvation and the Christ who gave it to her. John 4:39 disclose that many believed because of the woman's saying. John 4:41 continues by stating that many more believed because of the words of Christ.

In Matthew 4:18-20, Christ called two brothers, Andrew and Simon, to be disciples. According to John 1:40-42, it appears that Andrew was first a disciple of John, but they followed John only until he was killed by Herod. They then apparently returned to the secular job of fishing. It was here that Christ found them in Matthew 4 and called them into full time work for Him. John 1:43-51 reveals that when Christ called Philip to follow Him, Philip immediately searched out Nathanael and presented Christ to him. In Matthew 4:21-22, Christ called two other brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, to be disciples.

There is a remarkable story recorded in the Bible concerning the man who bore the cross after Christ. Matthew 27:32 declare that Simon, a man of Cyrene, carried the cross of Christ. From all I can find, Simon just happened to be in the right place at the right time. Previously, there is no record of Simon having anything to do with Christianity, or any of the other disciples. He seemed to be “in town” on business, and was forced by the Roman soldiers to bear the burden of the cross of Christ. Mark 15:21 states that Simon, a Cyrenian, is the father of Alexander and Rufus, Christians well known to the readers of his gospel. In Romans 16:13, Paul salutes Rufus, and his mother, who were well known to the Christians at Rome. This story reveals the importance of sharing the gospel with our family and acquaintances. Simon “just happened” to be chosen to carry the cross of Christ. This so impressed this man, that he told his family about the incident. This “arbitrary” act changed the life of Simon and his entire family.

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were another family that were involved in the service of Jesus Christ. John 11:5 reveals that Jesus loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus. This was a family that God blessed, and the entire family stayed faithful to Christ.

Even people in hell want to share the gospel message with their lost family and friends. Of course, it is too late for them to do any sharing, but this is exactly what they want to do. Luke 16:27-31 tells the story of the rich man in hell who wanted Lazarus to tell his five brothers about Christ and his precious gospel. The rich man did not want his brothers coming to hell to be with him. He wanted them to be saved, and go to heaven to be with Christ and the beggar Lazarus. The pride of the rich man was gone. It was too late for him, but not yet too late for his living brothers.

It is interesting to study Mary, the mother of John Mark, and one of the earliest of our Lord's disciples. Colossians 4:10 reveals that Mary was the sister of Barnabas. This entire family was very involved in worshipping and serving Jesus Christ and the spread of the gospel message. Acts 13:13 declares that a young disciple, John Mark, departed from Paul and Barnabas when the first missionary journey had barely begun. Nothing more is said about John Mark until the beginning of the second missionary journey, which is record in Acts 15:37-41. *“And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. 38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. 39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; 40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the*

*brethren unto the grace of God.”* Mary’s brother, Barnabas wanted to help the immature John Mark when Paul was ready to discard him. Some might criticize Barnabas for wanting to help his nephew, but we should remember that the “nickname” of Barnabas is “son of consolation”, Acts 4:36. In the end, however, Paul saw that Barnabas was right, that John Mark was simply immature, and needed someone to take him “under their wing” and bring him to Christian maturity. In II Timothy 4:11 Paul writes, *“Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”* According to Colossians 4:10, John Mark (Marcus) continued with Paul, helping him in the gospel work. *“Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)”* I believe it was a common thing in this family to reach out to others. This is revealed in Acts 4:37 where Barnabas (who was the brother of Mary, the mother of John Mark) disposed of his land and gave the proceeds of the sale into the treasury of the Church. The house of Mary probably was a common meeting place for believers. When Peter was released from prison in Acts 12, *“...when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.”*

### **to walk circumspectly in the world**

Eph 5:15 state, *“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,”*

Exodus 23:13 declare, *“And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.”*

Circumspectly means diligently, perfectly, accurately, or exactly. Also: keep, observe, heed, keeper, preserve, beware, mark, watchman, wait, watch, regard, save. Circumspectly means to walk with caution and habitual regard to what is God’s will.

Eph 5:6-12 states, *“Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. 7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them. 8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: 9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) 10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. 12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.”* When we walk circumspectly, we do not walk as fools, going forward regardless of the danger. We walk as wise, perceiving the evil and avoiding it. We perceive the good and pursue it. The worse and more corrupt that the manners of this world are, the more watchful we ought to be in every situation, and give regard to nothing but the will of God.

The believer’s walk is both inward and outward. His inward walk is by faith in Christ and is what God sees. His outward walk reflects his faith and is what men see. This walk requires strength and prudence, as the true believer will constantly pay attention to what is around him, staying away from wickedness and cleaving to that which is good. Unbelievers will not pay attention to the end result of their actions, but will plunge headlong into whatever feels good, then wonder why they have all this trouble.

Ephesians 5:16 states, “*Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*” Unbelievers will allow their lives to slip away from them, not realizing they can never retrieve the years that have slipped by, but believers will redeem the time, using every day for the glory and honor of God.

Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:7 teaches us all to serve the Lord while we are young. “*Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. 10 Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity. 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; 2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: 3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, 4 And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; 5 Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: 6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. 7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*” Evil days come very quickly. Quicker than we could ever realize. Now is the time to serve God, do not wait until tomorrow. Tomorrow will come soon enough, but today is the only day we are assured of having. Believers will be very concerned about what the will of the Lord is. They will not be satisfied to think they know what his will is. They must know exactly what His will is so they will not waste their lives.

There are many reasons we should walk circumspectly. Exodus 23:13 declares, “*And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.*” There should be an awareness that our actions today cause results tomorrow. Galatians 6:7,8 states, “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*”

Notice also Matthew 10:16, “*Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*” Everything that is heard is not the truth. Satan is the father of lies, and he tells some very convincing lies. Every believer should test what he hears, what he sees, and every advice against the truths of the Word of God. There are many wolves in sheep’s clothing. Their joy and pleasure is to deceive and destroy believers. All believers must be aware that just because someone appears to be a believer does not mean they are. Satan appears as an angel of light, therefore believers should not be surprised that his ministers are transformed into ministers of righteousness, II Corinthians 11:13,14. It must be remembered that all will be judged according to their works. All will receive from the eternal judge just judgment. Our concern should be that we do right, so we will receive blessings and rewards from God. Our concern should not be to see the wicked get their just due.

God dealt with Israel to walk circumspectly. Before Israel captured the land of Canaan, God gave them warnings as noted in Deuteronomy 4:9, *“Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons;”* Verse 15 continues this same warning by stating, *“Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire:”* After Israel captured the land of Canaan, God continued to warn Israel to walk circumspectly by stating in Joshua 22:5, *“But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.”* Verse 11 continues this warning, *“Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God.”* What are all these warnings about? Doesn’t God trust his people? It is not that God does not trust his people. The point is that God knows his people. God knows the weakness of his people, the frailty of the flesh, and the desire of the unsaved human nature to sin. Believers often think they will not sin, that they are somehow different from everybody. Believers frequently think they will not fall, even though many others have fallen. Believers often forget the admonition of I Corinthians 10:13, *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”* Temptation is common to every man, Jew and Gentile.

This is why God continually speaks to us about walking circumspectly. I Timothy 4:16 states, *“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”* Paul is not saying that good works will save your soul. He is saying good works will save your life. Temptations are everywhere, and we need God’s way of escape. God’s power will enable every believer to bear up under temptation, and allow him to be an overcomer.

Notice what God says about the root of bitterness, which is liable to spring up in any believer. Hebrews 12:15 states, *“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;”* It is very important for every believer to understand they can have a root of bitterness, which will trouble and defile many others. A believer might not think their personal bitterness will have any affect on others, but he is sadly deceived. Those closest to the bitter person will be the most affected by his bitterness. These are the people the bitter person wants to be affected the least.

Another remedy against sin, is care, or caution, it being impossible else to maintain purity of heart and life. Time is a talent given us by God, and it is misspent and lost when not employed according to his design. If we have lost our time heretofore, we must double our diligence for the future. Of that time which thousands on a dying bed would gladly redeem at the price of the whole world, how little do men think, and to what trifles they daily sacrifice it! People are very apt to complain of bad times; it were well if that stirred them more to redeem time. Be not unwise. Ignorance of our duty, and neglect of our souls, show the greatest folly.

Drunkenness is a sin that never goes alone, but carries men into other evils; it is a sin very provoking to God. The drunkard holds out to his family and to the world the sad spectacle of a sinner hardened beyond what is common, and hastening to perdition. When afflicted or weary, let us not seek to raise our spirits by strong drink, which is hateful and hurtful, and only ends in making sorrows more felt. But by fervent prayer let us seek to be filled with the Spirit, and to avoid whatever may grieve our gracious Comforter. All God's people have reason to sing for joy. Though we are not always singing, we should be always giving thanks; we should never want disposition for this duty, as we never want matter for it, through the whole course of our lives. Always, even in trials and afflictions, and for all things; being satisfied of their loving intent, and good tendency. God keeps believers from sinning against him, and engages them to submit one to another in all he has commanded, to promote his glory, and to fulfil their duties to each other.

### **To be just in our dealings**

I believe this subject concerns business and personal dealings. It means to be honest everyday, all day, about every thing. You see, the truth is the truth. When Christ reprimanded the Pharisees, he did so because that was truth. He did not side step the issue, but remained faithful to truth. This is what we should do, because this is what Jesus did. It is an eternal truth that people want others to be truthful with them. Therefore we should be truthful with others.

Deuteronomy 25:13-16 that unjust dealings are an abomination before God. *"Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. 14 Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. 15 But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. 16 For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the LORD thy God."* An abomination is a worse thing than a sin, which is missing the mark, or a disobedience of a commandment of God. This is a commandment with a promise of long life in the place where you are. This passage speaks about treating some people one way and other people another way. An example would be found in James 2:1-12, where James warns believers not to treat the rich with more respect and courtesy than the poor.

We cannot treat everybody the same way, but we should be equal in our transactions or relations with everybody. True religion is more than "flesh deep", it is "spirit deep", involving the practicality of everyday living. Note the following scriptures concerning honesty before God.

- Proverbs 11:1 states, *"A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight."*
- Proverbs 20:10 declare, *"Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD."*
- Proverbs 20:23 assert *Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good.*

We shouldn't treat someone bad just because that person treated somebody else bad. We might think we are justified in treating somebody bad because they have a bad reputation. We must understand that treating people badly is how people (including us) get the reputation of treating people badly. If a person really deserves to be punished, God will take care of them. It is better to suffer for righteousness than for evil. I Peter 3:14-15 states, *"But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:"* People may steal from us, and if there is nothing we can do about it, rest assured, God knows, and God can do something about it. We should not be overly concerned or anxious if we lose earthly material possessions. God owns the cattle on a thousands hills. He was the one who gave us that possession in the first place, and he is well able to give us another one, even a better one. If God does not see fit to give us another one, then we are better off without it. I firmly believe that sometimes God allows the wicked to take our possessions just so we will come to grips with where our heart is. Think of Job. God allowed Satan to take all of his possessions and all of his children. God allowed Satan to make Job sick, then Job's wife told him to curse God and die. Job did not curse God, and Job did not die of Satan's affliction. God blessed Job because he continually looked heavenward when he faced things he did not understand. Job is our example in this matter. May God help us to ever look heavenward, to eternal things, and not so much to earthly things which perish, rust, and soon fade away.

The Pharisees were guilty of defrauding widows and orphans, which thing Christ despised. Matthew 23:14 records the words of Christ, *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation."* These false religionists believed outward signs of prosperity, power and prestige were more important than true inward faith and hope. The Pharisees did not care if widows suffered, but Christ did. And God's people care, even if they are powerless to help.

### **Faithful in our engagements**

The word "faithfulness" is defined as being true, while the word "engagements" is defined as a promise or agreement about a particular thing. We often use the word "engage" to mean "the condition of being in gear". One thing is in contact with another thing to accomplish a certain thing. Two gears in a transmission are engaged so the energy from the engine can be transmitted to the wheels and the vehicle will move forward. If there is something wrong with one of the gears, the entire vehicle will not move. Proverbs 25:19 states, *"Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint."* An unfaithful man will break or give way at the time when you depend on it the most. An unfaithful man will declare he will stand by you, and help you through thick and thin. But when hard times come, they will fall away and be gone. Christians do not want to be unfaithful. They want desperately to be faithful. They want others to be able to count on them during times of trouble, temptation, or tempest. The true believer wants to be like Christ. The true believer

wants to be the kind of person who stands during hard times, even when others quit. Proverbs 26:6 give another viewpoint of the unfaithful person by stating, *“He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage.”*

Being faithful means to keep your word. In days gone by, a handshake sealed a deal. Today, lawyers write up long contracts with very small print. Both parties sign these lengthy contracts. Other lawyers then take up the task of misinterpreting the small print to get either or both parties out of the contract. Regardless of what others do, we should be faithful to our agreements because we have made a vow before God. It is not that are just being faithful before men. We are being faithful before God. He is our judge, the one who oversees all our activities, and the one we lovingly serve.

There are times when circumstances change and we cannot fulfill a promise or obligation we made. Those circumstances should be rare enough that others will see us trying, and forgive us and excuse us when we can't do what we said we wanted to do. We should also make sure we forgive those who say they are going to do something, then circumstances change and they cannot do it.

### **Exemplary in our deportment**

The word “exemplary” means: to illustrate by example, one that is worthy of imitation, a model, one that is typical or representative, an example, an ideal that serves as a pattern; an archetype, a copy, as of a book.

The word “deportment” has to do with the manner of personal conduct or behavior.

Whether you believe it or not, or acknowledge it or not, somebody is following you. Somebody is patterning their life after yours. Somebody looks up to you, expecting that you will give them the right answer, and that you are following Christ the best you can. Somebody believes you are a good example to follow. This is a scary thought, is it not?

About this time, somebody will quote Ephesians 5:1, which states, *“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;”* The purpose of quoting this scripture is to inform people they should follow Christ, not people. It is true that we should all follow Jesus and his perfect example, as is stated in I Peter 2:21, *“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:”* But it is also true that we follow the example of others. Paul stated this truth in I Thess 3:7 by stating, *“For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;”* Paul continues this thought in verse 9 by declaring that he was *“an ensample unto you to follow us.”* Therefore we should understand that others will also follow us. And this is not necessarily a bad thing. Young Christians are looking for examples of true Christianity, like we looked for good examples when we were young Christians.

Speaking of young, notice I Timothy 4:12, *“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”* Many

excuse impurity in young people because they declare they need to sow their “wild oats”. But this is a wicked, worldly thought. There is no need for young people to live wicked lives. Young people should live Christian lives, then they will not have to worry about reaping wickedness later in life. If we will live holy, Godly lives before God, our lives will be filled with peace, harmony, health, happiness and pleasure.

I Timothy 6:11 commands the man of God, the preacher to follow Jesus, *“But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.”* Is this admonition only for the preacher? Of course not. All true believers should follow the righteous example of other faithful believers. I Thessalonians 2:14 reveals this truth, *“For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews.”* While preachers, pastors, and all people of God should be faithful, it is recognized that those in authority have more influence than others. Hebrews 13:7 states, *“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”*

### **to avoid all tattling**

We often think of tattling as “telling on someone”. Young people often have a hard time with “tattle telling”. Their friends, who are guilty, try to make them feel guilty of telling the proper authorities (parents or others) on them.

There is a difference between gossiping and informing on what someone is doing. Often proper authorities need to know when a person has committed wrongdoing, and it is not wrong to tell. Gossiping is wrong. Tattling involves spreading gossip. The tattler is a person involved in excessive and often trivial or rambling talk. Gossip is intended to be injurious, and informing is intended to be helpful.

I Timothy 5:13 gives this warning about tattling and young unmarried women, *“And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.”* This word “tattlers” means: of persons uttering or doing silly things, garrulous, given to excessive and often trivial or rambling talk; tiresomely talkative: to be wordy and rambling; babbling; of things, foolish, trifling, vain.

Babbling means to utter a meaningless confusion of words or sounds; to talk foolishly or idly; chatter; to make a continuous low, murmuring sound, as flowing water; to utter rapidly and indistinctly; to blurt out impulsively; disclose without careful consideration; inarticulate or meaningless talk or sounds; idle talk; prattle.

Nobody would want to be a tattler or a babbler, especially when Ecclesiastes 10:11 is considered, *“Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babbler is no better.”* The serpent (Satan) and the tattler or babbler are alike. This person uses the tongue to hurt or injure. “Sticks and stones may hurt my bones, but words can never hurt me” is a favorite childhood chant, but it is not true. Words do hurt.

Paul was accused of being a babbler in Acts 17:18, *“Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other*

*some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.”* This word means “picking up seed” here and there, and going after nothing in particular. The word refers to lounging about the market place and picking up a substance by whatever may chance to fall from the loads of merchandise. So these folks were accusing Paul of being a beggarly parasite who was making a living by flattery and buffoonery. That was not so, as Paul was preaching the message God Almighty gave him to preach. What a warning to us! Just because listeners to the gospel message mock the message and the messenger is no reason for us to quit. Unbelievers may call us tattlers, babblers, or whatever, but we must continue preaching the everlasting gospel. We must continue standing for the truths set forth in the holy Word of God.

We must be careful to avoid all empty speech as described by Paul in I Timothy 6:20, *“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:”* This warning is repeated in II Timothy 2:16, *“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.”* Our discussions of religion and the things of this world should not be empty, void of knowledge and useless to those we are talking to. The more a vain talker talks, the more useless his conversation becomes. We want to be sure we pass on good information. We want our listeners to know we have something to say when we open our mouths. We want our listeners to listen to us because we have the message of God.

### **to avoid all backbiting**

The difference between “tattling” and “backbiting” is that in tattling, a person doesn’t go out of his way to speak evil about someone, but he does speak evil when it comes up. In backbiting, a person will travel to a place where he is able to speak evil about someone. Psalms 15:3 states, *“He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.”* This passage gives the credentials of one who will abide in the tabernacle of the Lord. It speaks of one who is honest before God and man. A backbiter is not honest before God or men.

Backbite means: to go on foot, spy out, foot it, go about, walk along, move the feet; to be a tale-bearer, slander, go about to slander; to go about as explorer, spy.

Proverbs 25:23 states, *“The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.”* This passage tells us how to scripturally stop a person who is backbiting. The word “backbiting” in this passage refers to the secret, wicked word that is spoken against someone. Backbiting is done in a covering, in a shelter, in hiding, in secrecy. The only way to stop this kind of wicked speaking and acting is to speak out indignantly against it. This kind of anger is not the same kind of anger Proverbs 22:24 speaks about. That passage states, *“Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:”* A furious man will not be able to control his temper or the words that come out of his mouth. This is a man to stay away from. But righteous anger, as stated in Proverbs 25:23, shows in the heart, not the face.

Backbiters are described in Romans 1:30 as, *“Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful,*

*proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,”* These people have rejected what the knowledge of God that is naturally revealed to every man. They are declared to be fools, because they worship and serve the creature more than the creator. They are involved in exceeding great wickedness, including homosexuality and lesbianism. Romans 1:28 expresses they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and verse 29 continues explaining they are filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, and a host of other wickedness to terrible to think about. In the middle of describing all this wickedness, verse 30 describes them as being backbiters. Is the Bible clear about how terrible it is to backbite? Backbiting is something every believer should refrain from doing, and stay away from. Yet listen to II Corinthians 12:20, *‘For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:’* The two verses above speak about backbiting as a lost person would do it. But saved people still have sin their natural bodies, and saved people can still be involved in the most terrible sins against God and fellow Christians. May God help each of us to refrain from backbiting.

#### **to avoid all excessive anger**

Ephesians 4:26 states, *‘Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:’* The emphasis is upon excessive anger, not righteous or ordinary anger. The difference in the right kind of anger and the wrong kind of anger is **why** we are angry. It is wrong to be angry with someone because they have embarrassed us, or done something against us. It is right to be angry with someone because they have gone against the clear commandments and teachings of Christ.

There are examples of God being angry, which, of course, is righteous anger. Notice the following scriptures.

- Deuteronomy 1:37, *‘Also the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither.’*
- Deuteronomy 4:21 – *‘Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance:’*
- Deuteronomy 9:8 – *‘Also in Horeb ye provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with you to have destroyed you.’*
- Deuteronomy 9:30 – *‘And the LORD was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time.’*

The Bible also gives several examples of men who became righteously angry.

- Ephesians 4:26 states, *‘Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.’*
- Titus 1:7 declares, *‘For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;’*

These passages make it abundantly clear that sometimes it is good to be angry. We should be angry at sin, not necessarily at the sinner. There is no Bible passage that says an elder should never get angry, although I have heard some people say that. There are plenty of occasions for righteous anger, but there is never an occasion of personal anger. Notice what Jesus said in Matthew 5:22, *“But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.”* There is a great danger of unrighteous anger because the heart is revealed. Unrighteous anger reveals an evil and unrestrained heart. Notice the following scriptures.

- Ecclesiastes 7:9 – *“Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.”*
- Proverbs 22:24 – *“Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:”*
- Proverbs 29:22 – *“An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.”*
- Ecclesiastes 5:6 – *“Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?”*
- Revelation 11:18 – *“And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.”*

#### **to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage**

It is very interesting to note that the church covenant prohibits the use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, but does not prohibit its use in the Lord’s Supper. The Bible declares that every true church of the New Testament used intoxicating wine in the Lord’s Supper.

I Corinthians 11:21 describe what was happening at the church of Corinth when they were taking the Lord’s Supper erroneously. *“For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.”* The word for drunkenness is the ordinary word for drunkenness. There is no indication of carousing caused by drunkenness, or prolonged drunkenness, or riot caused by drunkenness, or sickness or discomfort brought about by drunkenness. How could these church members get drunk if they weren’t using wine in the Lord’s Supper?

History tells us that every true church of the Lord Jesus Christ used intoxicating wine in the Lord’s Supper until the time of prohibition. During the time of the prohibition, **all** alcoholic products were spoken against, not just the wrongful use of that which God intended to be used for good. It is very important to understand that during the time of prohibition, many preachers who used wine in the Lord’s Supper

openly spoke of the error of overindulgence of wine and other alcoholic beverages. My wife's grandfather, Pastor J. E. Abbot, was only one of these pastors. He was actively against the misuse of alcohol, preaching and teaching against drunkenness. Yet he continually and consistently taught the use of wine in the Lord's Supper. I am not talking about what is read in a book. I am talking about an eyewitness account.

Most people today believe *any* use of alcohol is wrong. Alcohol is wrong *only* when men misuse it. Notice Proverbs 31:6,7, "*Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. 7 Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.*" Proverbs 31:4,5 explains that it is not for kings or princes to drink wine or strong drink, lest they forget the law, and pervert judgment. These proverbs were given to King Lemuel by his mother. Just because his mother gave the proverbs doesn't mean they are right, or wrong. These proverbs are right because God put them in his Bible. They are inspired, just like the rest of the Bible.

It is the misuse of that which God made for good that causes problems. Sex is meant by God to be good. It is the physical union of a husband and wife as one flesh, and is intended to draw the couple closer together. Men have *misused* sex outside of marriage, and have *perverted* sex between couples of the same gender. Pornography is a misuse of sex. God gave drugs for our health and comfort. Drugs are especially good during surgery, and for arthritis and headaches. Drugs correctly used aid the body in healing. In I Timothy 5:23, Paul tells Timothy to use a little wine for his stomach's sake. This word "wine" is the ordinary word for wine, and refers to the effervescent qualities of wine. Timothy wasn't to use a lot of wine, but a little, like a medicine.

There are Bible laws against excessive drinking. The over indulgence of wine (or any other type of alcohol) is always wrong.

Proverbs 20:1 states, "*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.*" Wine promises joy, a release from problems and troubles. *Excesses* of wine bring sorrow, and more trouble. Many homes and families have been destroyed because of drunkenness. Many children have gone hungry because dad spent all his money to get drunk. There are many cases of wife and child abuse because of drunkenness.

The Hebrew word for wine is yayin, {yah'-yin} (the most common Hebrew word translated "wine) from an unused root meaning to effervesce. The Hebrew word for strong drink is Shekar, {shay-kawr'} means "strong drink," any intoxicating liquor; from a root meaning "to drink deeply," "to be drunken", a generic term applied to all fermented liquors, however obtained. These two words show us very clearly that there is a difference between wine and other alcoholic beverages. Bible wines were made from grapes. Other alcoholic beverages can be made (and often are) from other substances.

Proverbs 21:17 states, "*He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.*" The proper interpretation of this passage is that the person who loves the "good things" of life so much that he spends all his time involved in them,

instead of working and doing some of the things that are not quite so enjoyable, shall spend all his money, and won't be rich, but poor. The word "love" is a human, physical love, not a spiritual love: therefore, the person that wants to indulge his flesh with physical pleasures shall not be rich. Work is hard, and in order for a person to be rich, he must put his body through some things that aren't very pleasant. Every day cannot be a vacation day! Alcohol must be paid for with the money that should be used for food, clothing, and shelter. The misuse of alcohol clouds the thinking of a person, so they can't reason enough to take care of physical possessions. Many drunken people will buy drinks for their "friends" when they will not buy necessities for themselves and their families.

Proverbs 23:29-32 give the result of too much drinking, *"Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? 30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. 31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. 32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."* Here is an excellent warning to stay away from intoxicating wine whatever reason. In verse 30, the Hebrew word "wine" is Mesekeh, properly a mixture of wine and water with spices that increase its stimulating properties. Isaiah 5:22 speaks of the exceeding great wickedness of mixed drinks which are very strong, *"Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink:"* Psalm 75:8 declares the judgment of God upon all who partake of strong drink to excess, *"For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them."* Proverbs 23:30 speaks of the person who has woe and sorrow as they that *"tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine."* Isaiah 65:11 describes people who forsake God for the temporary pleasure of drinking, *"But ye are they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink offering unto that number."*

When the Bible speaks about strong drink and mixed wine, it is speaking about all kinds of beer and whiskey. These types of alcoholic beverages are mixed with spices, which enhance and enlarge the stimulation of alcohol. Those types of alcoholic beverages are made to get a person drunk, while wine is not. A person can drink enough wine to get drunk, but that is not the purpose of wine.

Proverbs 23:33 states that drunkenness causes excessive sensual feelings for the opposite sex which leads to adulteries, while verse 34 states that the drunk will lay down anywhere, but even though he is laying down, it will seem that everything around him is moving every which way. Verse 35 states that alcohol "takes hold" of an individual, making him sick, and that alcohol has such a hold on a person, even though it makes them sick, they will seek it yet again. Getting drunk makes the drunkard miserable. The chemical change in the body drives the drinker to return again and again, in spite of the fact that he gets more and more sick. The problem here is the misuse of that which is a symbol of the pure blood of Christ. It is this chemical dependency which draws both the saved and lost alcoholic to the bottle again and again. Proverbs 31:4,5 declares, *"It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings*

*to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: 5 Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.”* This is very true for those in authority. This is one reason why our nation is going downhill spiritually. Alcohol does the very same thing to those not in authority. The mind becomes cloudy and a person cannot reason about anything.

Isaiah 5:11-14 states, that too much drinking leads to hell. *“Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! 12 And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands. 13 Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. 14 Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.”* The Hebrew word for strong drink is shekar {shay-kawr’}. This is a mixture, and the word indicates drinking to get drunk. The Bible declares that Israel drank too much, which caused them to forget God and his laws. They began to suffer the judgment of God just like every other nation that misused alcohol. Some of them went to hell because they loved wine more than their own souls. I am not saying that *all* alcoholics go to hell. *Lost* people go to hell. *Some* alcoholics are saved and *some* are lost. Only God knows who goes to heaven and who goes to hell.

Galatians 5:21 reveals that drunkenness is a work of the flesh. *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”* Please notice that there is a difference between drunkenness and using wine properly. Galatians 6:7 states, *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”* Ephesians 5:18 emphatically declares, *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the spirit.”* This passage clearly declares that excess wine drinking causes drunkenness, which is against the commandments of God. Drinking a little wine was accepted practice in Bible days, and in recent days in the United States. When prohibition came along, all drinking of alcoholic beverages became a sin in the sight of people; not necessarily in the sight of God. In our present society, it is good to leave all alcoholic beverages alone because it is offensive to others. In others countries, even now, this would not be the case.

I Corinthians 5:11 reveals that a drunkard is not supposed to be a member of the Lord’s local church. *“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”* I Timothy 3:3 gives one of the qualifications of a pastor, *“...not given to wine...”* I Timothy 3:8 continues with one of the qualifications of a deacon as, *“...not given to much wine...”* I must notice here that if the word “wine” means grape juice, as some believe it does, then the pastor is refrained from drinking grape juice as a beverage, while the deacon can drink a little. That doesn’t make much sense does it? It must also be noticed that the pastor is not to drink any wine, while

the deacon can drink a little. This is because the pastor is the leader of the people and needs to keep his wits about him at all times, Prov. 31:4,5. The deacon is a leader of the people also, but he is working under the authority of the pastor, therefore can have a little wine.

The following poems aptly describe the wickedness of the misuse of alcohol beverages.

### **A SALOON BAR**

A bar to Heaven, a door to hell;  
Whoever named it, named it well.  
A bar to manliness and wealth;  
A door to want and broken health.  
A bar to honor, pride and fame;  
A door to sin and grief and shame.  
A bar to hope, a bar to prayer;  
A door to darkness and despair.  
A bar to honored, useful life;  
A door to brawling, senseless strife.  
A bar to joys that home imparts;  
A door to tears and aching hearts.  
A bar to all that's true and brave;  
A door to every drunkard's grave.  
A bar to Heaven, a door to hell;  
Whoever named it, named it well.

### **ALCOHOLICS VICTORIOUS**

#### **Positively Negative**

I drank for joy and became miserable.  
I drank to become social and became argumentative.  
I drank to be sophisticated and became obnoxious.  
I drank for friendship and made enemies.  
I drank for sleep and awakened exhausted.  
I drank for strength and felt weak.  
I drank to feel exhilarated and ended up depressed.  
I drank for "Medicinal Purposes" and got sick  
I drank to get calmed down and ended up with the shakes.  
I drank for confidence and became afraid.  
I drank to make conversation flow more easily and became incoherent.  
I drank to diminish my problems and saw them multiply.  
I drank to feel heavenly and ended up feeling hellish.  
I drank to cope with life and caused death.

### to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Saviour

Matthew 28:18-20 relates the Great Commission Jesus Christ gave to all of his local churches shortly before his ascension to heaven. *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”* It is very interesting that whoever wrote this church covenant understood the necessity of working in the local church of the Lord Jesus Christ, *and* helping those saved people that are not members of any particular local church. We are studying the *church* covenant. The church covenant tells us what we can do to help our local church. It is absolutely true that we cannot be a help to our own local church while we completely disregard those that aren't in our local church, or in any church at all.

Advancing the local church is advancing the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is not the church of God. The family of God is made up of all the saved of all the ages. The kingdom of God is made up of all the saved on the earth at a particular time. They are not necessarily baptized, but can be. The church of God is made up of each local congregation of saved, baptized believers who have covenanted together to worship God. This part of the church covenant is speaking about helping those who are lost, those who are saved, whatever “church” they are a member of, or whatever they believe.

There are several things we will do in advancing the kingdom of God. We will be telling everybody we know about the gospel and the saving grace of Jesus Christ. When people are saved, we will be telling them about the right way of baptism and the importance of being a member of one of God's local churches. After they are saved and baptized, we will continue in the work of the Great Commission, *“...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...”*

We need to understand that everybody we talk to won't believe. When we talk to a lost person, that doesn't mean they will believe, but our responsibility is over when we talk to them. When we speak to a saved person about scriptural baptism, our responsibility is over whether they understand and submit or not. When we speak to a fellow church member, their blood is not on our hands, whatever they do with the Word of God.

Do we join or separate from every person, organization, and denomination that doesn't believe exactly like we do?

- Mark 9:38-50 – *“And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us. 39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. 40 For he that is not against us is on our part. 41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. 42 And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck,*

*and he were cast into the sea. 43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: 48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. 50 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.”*

- Luke 9:49-50 - *“And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. 50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.”*

Do these scriptures teach separation from other believers, or compromise with other believers? I don't believe Christ expects us to separate ourselves from all other believers who differ from us doctrinally, nor does he expect us to accept everyone who shows signs that God is with them. Christ instructed the early Christians (church) to “...forbid them not...” Christ **did not** say for the early church to join themselves to them, nor did he say not to join them! After the discussion about the one who was casting out demons and followed not Christ, the early church continued following Christ. There is no record of any change in direction or motive.

There are many people and churches today who are not following God, nor obeying him in any respect, although they believe they are. We are not to join ourselves to them because they think they are serving God. We are to separate ourselves from them, and have nothing to do with them. II Corinthians 6:14-18 states, *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”* There are many people today who are saved and are serving God with what he has given them. We are not to forbid them to serve God, nor are we to join ourselves to them because they are serving God. There are many of the Lord's churches today who do not believe exactly like we believe the Bible teaches. We are not to forbid them to serve God, nor are we to join ourselves to them because they are serving God.

There is a very important point to notice in these verses: who can do miracles and where did the man in Mark 9:39-50 and Luke 9:49-50 get the power and authority to do miracles? If God gave the power and authority for these people to do miracles, we

had better not oppose them, but if God did not give the power and authority to do miracles, we are right to oppose them. When we cannot tell who gave the power and authority, we should leave them alone. When we do not know the final outcome, we should stay away and be careful to obey God, regardless of what anybody else does.

### **People in the New Testament that performed miracles.**

Christ was the first in the New Testament to do miracles. The reason Christ did miracles was to prove in a tangible, physical way that he was the Christ. It is interesting to note that the religious leaders didn't believe Him even when they saw the miracles, John 10:22-30. It would be impossible to list all the miracles He did, for many have not been revealed to us. *“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”* John 20:30,31.

In Luke 10:1-16, Jesus sent seventy disciples to prepare the way before him. He gave them power to heal the sick, cast out demons, and preach the kingdom of God with power. In verse 17, they returned rejoicing because even the devils were subject to them through the power of Christ. The man in Mark 9:38-50 and Luke 9:49-50 could have been one of the seventy disciples who were still performing miracles, and glorifying God, teaching the people about the Christ.

Matt. 10:1-15. The twelve apostles are the next group that performs miracles. Christ said to them in verse 8, *“Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.”* It is obvious that the man wasn't one of the apostles.

The only other people the New Testament records as doing miracles were the two deacons; Stephen, Acts 6:8; and Philip, Acts 8:6-13.

### **There were three groups of people that performed miracles in the Book of Acts.**

The first group was the apostles. There is no record of any of the seventy disciples performing a miracle in the book of Acts. In the first five chapters of Acts, only the apostles are mentioned as performing miracles.

- Acts 2:43, the apostles
- Acts 3:6, Peter and John
- Acts 4:33, the apostles
- Acts 5:12, the apostles
- Acts 5:15,16, Peter

It is very interesting to note that, in the book of Acts, no one else performed miracles up to this point.

The second group were the men the apostles laid hands on. In Acts 6:6, the apostles laid hands on seven Godly men (all non-apostles). Immediately, the Bible records that Stephen did miracles among the people (6:8). After the account of Stephen (6:8-7:60), the text records the fact that Philip worked miracles in Samaria. I

do not believe the Philip of Acts 8 is Philip the Apostle, but Philip the “deacon”. One reason is that the context, of Acts chapter 6-8, begins to tell the work of the men the apostles laid hands on. Secondly, if Philip (the apostle) preached and did miracles in Samaria, why didn’t he lay hands on the believing Samaritans so they would also receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit? The clear implication is that they got this ability when the apostles laid hands on them.

It also seems that non-apostles were not able to transfer their miraculous gifts to others without the aid of an apostle. When the apostles heard that the Samaritans had “...received the Word of God...” (8:14), they sent Peter and John to Samaria because the Holy Spirit “...was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (8:16). When the apostles laid hands on the Samaritans, they “...received the Holy Ghost.” (8:17)

Some people feel that the Samaritans were not truly saved until Peter and John came, for how can a person be saved without having the Holy Spirit? It seems more likely to me; however, that “...they received the Holy Ghost” means “they received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit”. For one thing, 8:14 says that the Samaritans “received the Word of God...”. For another, in 8:18, Simon the sorcerer “...saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money...” This implies that the Samaritans received outward, visible signs, not an inward work of grace. It seems therefore, that as a non-apostle (in the technical sense of the word apostle), Philip received miraculous gifts under the supervision of the apostles. It seems also that those receiving such gifts were not able to confer the power to others without the aid of the apostles themselves.

The third and final group is composed of one man, Ananias. In Acts 9:10-19, Ananias, who was not an apostle, received a special vision from God to heal and baptize Saul, who is later called Paul. Ananias baptized Paul under the authority of the church of Damascus, of which he was a member. Ananias can be compared to John the Baptist, who was not an apostle, but was called of God to baptize the apostles, Acts 1:22. Paul is an apostle “...born out of due time.” I Corinthians 15:7,8. He is able to do miracles and transfer the gift of the Holy Spirit because he is an apostle.

All of this information leads us to ask this question – Where did the man in Mark 9:38 and Luke 49 get the power to do miracles? One thing is for sure - he didn’t get the power from Satan. If he had got the power from Satan, I’m sure Christ would have revealed this to his disciples. It appears that the man got the power to cast out demons (or do any other miracle) from God - he was possibly one of the seventy of Luke 10:1. Exactly who the man was, we will never know - all our guessing is just that: guessing. Christ didn’t condemn, or approve, the man or his actions.

Christ didn’t tell us where the man got the power to do miracles because he had a higher principle in mind that the disciples (and us) need desperately to learn. The principle is of tolerance, not the new tolerance of this age, but the tolerance of not taking offence so easily, and faithfully following Christ. Saved, baptized, church

members can easily begin to believe they are better than other saved people because they understand the authority of Christ in his local church.

Mark 9:41 states very clearly that anybody that helps any believer in the name of Christ, because they are a believer, will not lose their reward. *“For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.”*

Mark 9:42 states very clearly that it is a terrible sin before God to offend one of the little ones whose doctrinal understanding is not perfect. *“And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.”*

Mark 9:43-48 states three times that if there is an offense, every effort should be made to stop that offense. *“And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: 48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”*

Mark 9:49-50 states, *“For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. 50 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.”* Every person will have incidents in their life that will teach them to rely on God alone. Let every person use their own personal incidents to grow in the Lord. Let us each one be seasoned with salt, and not be telling someone else what to do. We have enough to do to take care of our own problems. Let each one of us have peace within ourselves, and with one another. True peace comes from God, not from our circumstances, and not from those around us.

## **Church Covenant**

### **Paragraph 4 - The continuing, growing love for each other**

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Saviour to secure it without delay.

#### **Introduction**

This paragraph states a very simple, yet very profound fact of Christianity. It is very “natural” that saved, baptized believers would covenant together in Christian love, yet very little of this is seen in the world today.

There are several reasons why very little true Christian fellowship is observed today. First, it may be that many churches are filled with lost people who believe they are saved. They are able to attend services and be attached with some of the people there without having an attachment to Jesus Christ. To them, the church is little more than another club; therefore they treat it as a club.

Secondly, many churches have organized Godly service and fellowship to death. By this I mean that the regular duties and responsibilities of church members have been given over to the “experts”, and the “regular” church members feel inferior and inadequate to take care of routine matters.

For example, many churches have established a “church staff” that takes care of all the preaching and administration responsibilities; therefore there is nothing for the regular church members to do. They have also established a “minister of visitation” who takes care of visitation; therefore the regular church members do not feel responsible for doing that. Many churches have established a minister of music, (with semi-professional singers and musicians) who takes care of all the music of the church; therefore regular church members are not good enough for that. Most churches have established a youth minister, who ministers to the youth, leaving all the other church members nothing to do with them. In many cases the youth minister will take over parental responsibility of teaching the Word of God, and instilling in children the principles of Godly service. In many churches the “staff” handles all church fellowships. Regular church members have nothing to do with any of that organizing. They are supposed to show up on schedule, bringing the proper materials, and enjoy.

The problem with all the above is that individual initiative is completely left out. When God saves a sinner, it is the most “natural” thing in the world for that individual to be a minister of the gospel (to declare the gospel to others, and arrange circumstances so this is possible); to be a minister of visitation (to visit the sick and

the lost); to sing both publicly and privately (the sound may not be so pleasing to the ear, but it is to the soul, and to God); to be a youth minister (not in the modern sense, but in the sense of deeply caring for the welfare of the youth and doing all they can do to lead them to a closer walk with Christ); and to arrange their own fellowships by visiting in other church members homes and having them in their homes.

Church members need a minister that understands that it is individual church members responsibility to work for God. Churches do not need to regulate or control the work of God that individual church members do. God will regulate and control it. Jesus Christ is the head of his local church. The minister, nor the church staff, is the head. This is what this paragraph of the church covenant is all about.

### **To Watch Over One Another In Brother Love**

It is very possible to have *acquaintances* outside of “Christianity”, but our true *friends* are our Christian friends. The following scriptures reveal the depth of real Christian friends. Romans 12:10 states, “*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*” I Thessalonians 4:9 declares, “*But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.*” Philemon 1:7 pronounces “*For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.*” Hebrews 13:1 declares, “*Let brotherly love continue.*” I Peter 2:17 - *Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.*

A sign of salvation is when we love other brothers and sisters in Christ. I John 3:14 states, “*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*” I John 4:20 declares, “*If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*” I John 4:21 continue, “*And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*”

This love for each other will cause us to “watch over” each other. This “watching over” will create a Christian community of love, caring, and unity. This is what will convince the world that Christianity is real. Our “watching over” one another will not exclude the unbeliever, but will encourage them to be saved, be scripturally baptized, become a member of our local church, **and** become a part of the Christian community. It is very important to notice that a person can be saved, scripturally baptized and a member of the local church without being a **part** of the Christian community in that local church. The way to become a part of the Christianity community in the local church is not to wait until invited - you are already invited. Don’t stand back and wait to be included - you are already included. You will become a part of the Christianity community in your local church only when you begin to “watch over” others. You must forget what you consider to be your needs, and minister to others. When you minister to others, what you consider to be your needs will be fulfilled.

### **To Remember Each Other In Prayer**

We are admonished to pray for one another as stated in James 5:16. “*Confess your*

*faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* Colossians 1:9 continues *“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;”* I Thessalonians 5:23 confirms, *“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Paul desired Christians to pray for him. In I Thessalonians 5:25 Paul said, *“Brethren, pray for us.”* In Hebrews 13:18 he emphasized *“Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.”* Paul admonished the Ephesian church in Ephesians 6:18, 19 *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,”*

### **To Aid Each Other In Sickness And Distress**

Real Christianity is to help those (especially other Christians) who are in need. Proverbs 27:9, 10 says it is better to get counsel and help from a friend who is close by than from family that is far away. *“Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel. 10 Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off.”*

There are literally thousands of church members who do not understand this verse, nor do they understand what it is like to be a long way from your family when troubles come. They have never been in this situation, and never stop to think of the needs of those people who do not live close to family. This type of church member never thinks to be a help to those whose families are a long way off, especially on special holidays and such. I know, I have been in this situation. In Deuteronomy 15:7-11, God commanded Israel to help all those poor Israelites because there would always be poor Israelites. As we help them, we understand more and more the significance and value of earthly treasures and how God is able to supply all our needs. We don't need wealth to help others, we need God. Prov. 19:17 states, *“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.”*

In II Corinthians 8, the churches of Macedonia supplied physical necessities to the poor saints at Jerusalem. I John 3:17 confirms *“But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”*

What if the people cause their own trouble? (Most of us do cause our own problems, don't we?) This doesn't leave us free to let them wallow in their own misery. Each person will reap the result of their own actions - we will too. We can still be friends of people while they are suffering for their own actions.

## To Cultivate Christian Sympathy In Feeling And Courtesy In Speech

It must be noted that Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy must be cultivated. Cultivated means developed, and enlarged upon. Some might think these things come automatically once a person is saved, but they don't. They must be worked at, developed and matured. This takes a lifetime.

The whole purpose is to cultivate *Christian* sympathies toward everything and every animal. There are two extremes here: extreme environmentalists are one extreme and people that abuse God's creation are the other. We must find the balance God wants from us.

Proverbs 12:10 states, "*A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*" In the old western movies, the good guy always took care of his horse before taking care of himself because it was a "dumb animal." In those same old western movies, the bad guy never took care of his horse first.

Deuteronomy 22:6, 7 reveals how God expects us to care for nature. "*If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: 7 But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.*" I do not believe for one instant that God wants or expects his people to be a "tree hugger", or an extreme environmentalist. God does desire that his people take care of that which he has given them.

How should we feel toward criminals? Deuteronomy 19:13 declare that our eye shall not pity the guilty when they are punished. We should remember the innocent victim instead. In Numbers 15:30-36, Israel found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day, and put him in ward (jail) until they could discover what to do with him. God said that all Israel should stone him with stones. Therefore, all Israel came together and brought the man outside the camp and all of them stoned him with stones that he died. This is capital punishment. Their eye should not pity the man as he cried for his life. He brought the condemnation upon himself.

Luke 23:39-43 tells the story of Christ being crucified between two thieves. Christ never said that the judicial system of the Roman government ought to be fixed because it allowed capital punishment. Christ never had pity on either of the two thieves because they were paying for their crimes. But - he did have compassion on them, and saved the one that asked to be remembered.

There was a man that came to our church building because he was hungry. One of our men went downstairs and got him something to eat. When he received the food, he said "This is what a church is for." Indicating that churches were supposed to feed the hungry. I told him that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ was to fulfill the gospel, whereupon he stated that Jesus fed the hungry and that was what all Christians were supposed to do. I told him that Jesus fed the hungry one time, then sent them away, and that was what I was doing to him. He has his food, now he is welcome to leave. The moral is: It is necessary to help the poor, but their lives are in

their hands, not in mine. I do not feel guilty because I work and God supplies for my family and me. I do not feel guilty because the poor are supposed to work and supply for their own families. These scriptures show that it is very important not to pity the guilty when they are punished, but we ought to have compassion for their souls and their wasted lives.

A part of being a Christian is acting like one. There is no way we can act like a Christian if we don't have the heart of a Christian. Studying and applying the Word of God to our everyday lives is the only way to cultivate Christian sympathies.

We should be courteous in speech. I have known people who always speak their minds, offending everybody in the process. It isn't necessarily wrong to speak our minds, but we need to be careful not to offend when we speak those things we think are necessary. We need to be careful of how the other person receives what we say. While we are being careful of what we say, we need to constantly remember that God expects us to always speak his truth, regardless how people accept it. The point is - we don't want to be offensive, but if the Word of God offends, that is the other person's problem!

James 3:1-12 shows the fire of hell that is in each of our tongues. *"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. 2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. 3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. 4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. 7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. 11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? 12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh."*

We must remember that our tongue is the meanest member of our body, indeed the meanest member of the church we are a member of. The tongue offends all, and all have a tongue that offends, therefore all offend in word. It may be difficult for us to realize we offend by what we say, but that is what the Bible declares. It is not that we mean to offend, we just do. Often our tongues are speaking before our brains are engaged in conversation!

It is very easy to offend in speech, but Jesus said in Mark 9:42, *"And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea."* Jesus also stated, in Matthew 15:18 that what comes out of the mouth, comes from the heart, *"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man."* These verses make it imperative

that each of us consider well what we say. None of us want a millstone hanged about our neck, and then be cast into the sea, or to let others know what is really in our hearts. We must do all we can possibly do to control our tongues, realizing that our words will either condemn us or approve us.

Proverbs 21:23 states, *“Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.”*

To be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Saviour to secure it without delay

Luke 17:1 declares, *“Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!”* I Corinthians 14:20 continues, *“Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.”* A child does get offended, but they won’t hold it very long. Just because offences aren’t held on to, doesn’t mean that the truth is forgotten or passed over. The truth is always upheld, but never in a hateful manner.

Don’t go around with your feelings on your elbow, expecting somebody to offend you. Proverbs 10:12 emphasize, *“Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all sin.”* This passage is not saying that a person will cover his own sins, but he will overlook the sins of others. A man who hates is probably lost, or at the very least is a saved person who has never grown up. Proverbs 15:18 states, *“A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.”* Proverbs 16:27 declares, *“An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire.”* Proverbs 28:25 - *He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.”* Proverbs 29:22 continues, *“An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.”* The person whose heart is full of hatred will stir up strife over the smallest incident, enlarging a small incident completely out of context. The person who loves with Godly love is showing the work of God in his heart. The attitude of the saved person is completely different from the attitude of the lost person. Proverbs 17:9 states, *“He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.”* I Corinthians 13:4 states, *“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,”* James 5:20 declares, *“Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”* I Peter 4:8 confirms, *“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.”* I John 3:15 emphatically declares, *“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”* The person who constantly hates his brother and stirs up strife between “friends” probably has a heart problem: he may be lost. At least this is what the fruit of his life shows.

Matt. 18:15-20 shows the proper handling of offences. This passage is speaking about private offenses, not public offenses. The difference between a public offense and a private offense is the number of people that know. Matthew 18:15 is a private offense always starts out between two people only. Matthew 18:16 is a private offense is still private when the offended takes two or three witnesses with him. Matthew 18:17 is a private offense becomes a public offense only when the offender will not hear three or four people (the offended + two or three witnesses).

## Church Covenant

### Paragraph 5

**We moreover engage that when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.**

### Introduction

There were people in the Bible who moved from community to community. We are able to use them for examples of what we should do when it is necessary to move from our present community.

### “Traveling” History of Priscilla and Aquila

Acts 18:2 states, “*And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.*” This passage states that Aquila was born in Pontus, and had moved from Italy to Corinth. Pontus is a region north of Israel and immediately south of the Black Sea. On the west is the region of Bithynia and Armenia is on the east. Aquila had apparently left Pontus and settled in Rome some time before Claudius commanded all Jews to leave that city. Sometime after Aquila settled in Rome, Claudius gave the command that all Jews had to leave, and when that command was given, Aquila and Priscilla left Rome and came to Corinth. I do not know when Priscilla and Aquila were married, nor where Priscilla's homeland was. There is no record of when Aquila or Priscilla were saved, but it seems they were saved either before they met Paul, or soon afterwards. Acts 18:3 declare that Aquila and Priscilla, like Paul, were tentmakers, and worked and lived together. (The word “abide” in Acts 18:3 is the same Greek word as “abide” in John 15:4 where Christ encouraged his disciples to abide or dwell, or live in him.) Therefore I conclude that Aquila and Priscilla were already married, but when they were saved is undeterminable. This verse also tells us that Paul “lived with” Aquila and Priscilla and “wrought” or they worked together. Verse 5 declares that when Silas and Timothy came to Corinth, Paul preached to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. When the Jews blasphemed God, Paul no longer preached in the Synagogue, preaching instead from the house of Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house was right next door to the Synagogue.

Acts 18:18 give us some history about the travels of the Apostle Paul. “*And Paul [after this] tarried [there] yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn [his] head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.*” This passage continues the previous discussion concerning Aquila and Priscilla. Paul left Corinth, heading first into Cenchrea, a town just west of Corinth which served as the east harbor for the city of Corinth. He traveled with Priscilla and Aquila some 230 miles west across the Aegean Sea to Ephesus where he spent a little time because he wanted to keep the feast at Jerusalem. Apparently, he returned later as is

recorded in Acts 19 and spent some two years. Aquila and Priscilla accompanied Paul as far as Ephesus where they remained, Acts 18:19. Some might believe that such close friends should always remain together, if they separate that indicates a “rift” in their friendship has occurred. There is no “rift”, but both are following the commands of God and God will bless both in their own place. Aquila and Priscilla remained at Ephesus and God sent Apollos who was in need of further instructions. (See Acts 18:24-28) Aquila and Priscilla were instructed by Paul, therefore were willing and able to give much needed instruction! Nothing happens by accident, does it? When all parties will let God lead them, they may have to separate for a little while, but in the long run, they will be closer together.

Acts 18:26 states, *“And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto [them], and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.”* This took place at Ephesus, mainly because Aquila and Priscilla were following the leadership of God in learning while they traveled with Paul, and by staying in Ephesus when Paul was to travel on to Antioch. It is good for Christians to be used to strengthen other Christians. See the latter part of the previous paragraph for additional information.

It is difficult to ascertain just exactly when the following verses were written, but it is not difficult to understand that Aquila and Priscilla and Paul became fast Christian friends. They were a help to each other, as God’s children are supposed to be.

In Romans 16:3 Paul states, *“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:”* I know Paul wrote this letter from Corinth, but I do not know exactly when he wrote it. It is known that Priscilla and Aquila were now living in Rome, and had a church in their house. This leads to the conclusion that this was the second time they lived in this city. The first time Claudius forced them out, but they didn't stay out. (This sounds just like persistent Jews, doesn't it?) There is good reason to believe they loved this city because it was the place they moved to when they left Pontus, their birthplace. It is apparently the place they learned about Christ, were saved, and were instructed in the ways of obedience.

Verse 4 of Romans 16 further shows the greatness of this couple because all the churches of the Gentiles gave them thanks. It is important to note that the churches of the Gentiles not only knew who they were, but were thankful for the work they had done. There is no doubt many things this couple did are not recorded for us, but God has recorded them in his book!

Romans 16:5 further states that this couple had a church in their home. This shows their continued effort at not only spreading the gospel, but also in carrying out the entirety of the Great Commission to baptize the believers, and then to teach them the all things of the Word of God.

Another reference to Aquila and Priscilla is found in I Corinthians 16:19. *“The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.”* There is some evidence that Paul wrote the first letter to the Corinthian church from Philippi, but more than likely he was at Ephesus when this

letter was penned, I Cor. 16:8. When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth while at Ephesus, there is no wonder Aquila and Priscilla would salute the church *much*. This statement also shows that Aquila and Priscilla kept in communication with the churches they had formed, and continued to pray for them. They loved Paul, even to the point of risking their lives for him, and those that held the truth, because they loved the truth more than life itself. This couple worked in the background, but their lives were a blessing to those that God ordained to work in the foreground.

There are others in the Bible who moved around because of persecution. Acts 8:1-4 reveals that during the persecution that arose around Stephen's death, the disciples were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. The apostles were not scattered. God kept the church intact. These members of the church at Jerusalem went everywhere preaching the Word.

Acts 11:19-26 reveals that the disciples organized churches everywhere they went, which churches were recognized by the church at Jerusalem.

The following is a quote from Holiman Bible Dictionary for Windows, version 1.0g Copyright, 1994, Parsons Technology. Topic Aquila and Priscilla Author: Taylor Field. AQUILA and PRISCILLA were a married couple who came from Italy to Corinth after the emperor Claudius ordered Jews expelled from Rome, became Christians, and assisted Paul in his ministry. They were tentmakers by trade (2 Tim. 4:19). They came into contact with Paul, who was a tentmaker, in Corinth (Acts 18:2). It is not clear whether they became Christians before or after meeting Paul; but, they became workers in the gospel, and accompanied Paul to Ephesus (Acts 18:19). There they instructed Apollos in the Christian faith (18:25). A church met in their home, and they joined Paul in writing to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 16:19).

Aquila and Priscilla were apparently influential among the "churches of the Gentiles" (Rom. 16:3). This reference in Romans probably indicates that Priscilla and Aquila moved back to Rome. Some scholars think the church at Ephesus received a copy of the last chapter of Romans. The reference to the couple in 2 Timothy 4:19 may indicate the couple was in Ephesus.

Paul thanked Aquila and Priscilla for risking their own lives for him (Rom. 16:4). The circumstances of this incident are unknown, although it may have occurred during Paul's trouble with Demetrius the silversmith (Acts 19:23-41).

The church covenant states, When we remove from this place, not "if" we ever remove from this place. It is unavoidable that people will move from place to place. This has always been, and the 1990's hasn't changed the history of the ages.

I have known people who are living in a certain place (where they were born and raised, and will never move from that place, regardless of what happens, or what God directs them to do. I know that it is difficult for parents to think that God might move their children away from them, but it is far better for them to move away in order to serve the Lord than to stay and not serve the Lord. I know that it is difficult for children to think that God might move their parents away from them, but it is far

better for them to move away in order to serve the Lord than to stay and not serve the Lord.

It is important to note that sometimes it is necessary for both church member and church pastor to move, sometimes, it is necessary for the entire church to move. Baptist history tells us of entire churches that had to move from a given locality, or stop worshipping God. The people in the churches in the Valley of Piedmont were forced to move to that area to escape persecution for what they believed. They were finally persecuted in that place, and forced to move again.

I believe it is important to state at the very beginning of this discussion that it is no more the pastor's responsibility to seek the will of God in where he will live as it is the church member's responsibility. Many times pastors are known to move "all over the world", roaming from church to church, while church members never move. Anytime there is a disagreement in some churches, the first thing that is thought is that the pastor must go. If the pastor is at fault, the church will often "move their problem out of the parsonage" into another church's parsonage. Seldom does a church think of correcting their pastor. There is very seldom any thought that some of the church members ought to go: be excluded from the church fellowship. If a church member is at fault, most churches often "overlook" the problem, because confronting the problem is very difficult. Seldom does a church think of correcting a church member. These things have caused most of the problems in Baptist churches today.

I think it is very interesting that the framers of this church covenant believe that in these days the name "Baptist" is attached to the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in spite of that, make this statement, "...soon as possible unite with some other church, where..." They didn't state that the uniting would be with another "Baptist" church. The solution to this is very simple. All true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ are not called "Baptist" churches. In days gone by the true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ went by several names: Paulicians, Montenses, Donatists, Numidians, Novatians, Anabaptists, and many other names too numerous to mention.

I do not believe for an instant that the framers of this church covenant intended to mislead anybody into thinking they would freely go to another denomination, even though there are churches in every denomination that teach much of the truth. There are also other denominations that teach practically none of the truth. The churches typically called Baptist hold the body of the truth once for all delivered to the saints. The truth they teach cannot be ignored for personal preference in church attendance.

While the framers of this church covenant didn't approve of going to other denominations, they also didn't approve of going to Baptist churches that don't teach the truth of God's Word. They gave the explicit instruction that anyone moving from one community, from one church to another, should look into the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word to determine if that is where they should join. "...spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word."

Is it necessary to move from one community, from one church, to another community and church? These questions will be answered from the position of what is spiritually correct. The issue of moving from a community because of job offers, or following a job will be discussed later.

### **The negative side of moving from a community and church.**

I spoke to a couple who were members of a Baptist church whose pastor believed that you were out of the will of God if you moved from their community, or from their church. A church like that is little short of a cult, and should be quickly left.

I know a couple who were both saved, scripturally baptized and active members of their home church. As this couple prayed and studied together, they determined that it was God's will for them to move from their present community and church to another community and church. This couple then met with their pastor and told him what they believed was God's plan for their lives. The pastor talked them out of leaving that community and church. It wasn't long before that couple was divorced. A big part of the reason, according to the wife, was that her husband wasn't following the Lord; he was following the pastor *instead* of the Lord.

### **The positive side of moving from a community and church**

It is sometimes necessary to move from a community and church to preserve spirituality. When a church begins to fall away from following the true spirit of worshipping God in sincerity and in truth according to his doctrines, it is time to leave. We must make sure we aren't leaving because of personality conflicts. We must make sure we aren't leaving because the church isn't doing what WE think they ought to do. The matter of a church vote is to be carefully considered. If a church votes on a certain thing, we should go along with it as much as we possibly can, even if we think it is wrong. It just may be that we, not the entire church, are wrong!

A very important point to remember about moving to another community: God will never lead to you to a place where you can't worship God. There are many saved people who have moved from their community and church to another community and church because of jobs, and now have no place to worship. Those people are not **trusting** God for their daily needs. They have moved because they aren't trusting God for their daily needs. The scripture says that if we put God first, He will supply all our needs. If this were believed, there would be no "job chasing." There would be "God chasing!"

Have you ever heard of a preacher who moved to another community, then lamented the fact that he didn't have a church to pastor? He would be told he shouldn't have moved to a community if there wasn't a church for him to pastor. The pastor might reply that he moved to that particular area because he really liked the area and the community. Do you see what I am trying to say? It is as wrong for a pastor to move to a community where he can't pastor as it is for a church member to move to a community where he can't worship.