



**“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God,”** I Corinthians 2:12.

### **Declaration: Dependence and Love**

**Covenant:** We engage therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love.

**Aim:** To note that upon becoming a member, the believer declares what he purposes to do in the church

**Text:** I Corinthians 2:9-13; I John 2:10-17

INTRODUCTION—The Church Covenant describes “the ideal church member.” It is not a set of rules used to threaten the wayward. It is rather an expression of the ethical standards which a consecrated Christian, who is a member of a Baptist church, may be expected to emulate. It is simply a summary of the Bible teaching concerning the proper conduct of the Lord’s people.

Today’s lesson theme is set forth in the portion of the covenant which reads, “We engage therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love.” Three things are suggested in this statement. (1) We assume an obligation (“engage”) in church membership. (2) We are aided by the Holy Spirit in this Christian duty. (3) We are vitally related to Christian brethren in Church work.

Harmony and progress should mark the work of each of the Lord's churches. Is it true in your church? Are you making some contribution to the harmony and progress of your church? This lesson may be studied with an eye turned inward that each may determine his place and contributions. Here is an opportunity to give an account of your stewardship as a church member.

It is a serious matter to be a member of one of the Lord's churches.

Because the pastor urges people to follow the Lord in repentance, faith, baptism and church membership, it may appear to some that the church is begging for members. This is not true. It is a holy privilege for a believer to be a church member. He should perform his responsibilities as such with a sense of stewardship.

## EXPOSITION

### I. WALKING UNDER OBLIGATION

Each church member enters a solemn obligation in joining a church. Observe the repeated expression, “we engage,” as it occurs in the Covenant. To engage means “to bind, to make liable, to promise, to assume an obligation.” So entering an engagement to “most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ,” the believer enters into an abiding obligation.

The very nature of the church illustrates the member's obligation. She is not a fraternal club or an ethical society. She is the body of Christ! With Christ as her Head she becomes a holy institution. Neglect of her worship, ordinances, doctrines, or discipline involves serious error. It is not of major significance whether one lives up to the requirements of some social club. There is, however, an abiding obligation and solemn responsibility for a member to be faithful to his covenant of church membership. Loyalty to Christ demands loyalty to the body of believers who constitute His church in a local community.

The obligation upon church members is indicated in the high purpose of the church. Whereas all fraternal orders exist for the temporal and social welfare of men, the church exists to serve their spiritual welfare. She is a “society of heaven” set in the earth to point men to the Lamb of God. This is the most important business on earth and must not be neglected.

While there is nothing wrong with people entering social and fraternal organizations, the church is more important than them all. First allegiance must be given to Christ through His church. In that day when “every one of us shall give an account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12), we will account for the quality of our stewardship as a church member. **“Unto him (God) be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen,”** Ephesians 3:21.

### II. WALKING WITH GOD, I Corinthians 2:9-13.

1. We walk with God toward unseen glories, verse 9. That which eye did not see and which ear did not hear is now made evident. That which has never entered into the heart of man is now a basis for his hope. That which has been prepared of God in heaven is now made manifest to men that they may rejoice the more in Him. The unseen, unheard, and unimagined things are now clear and distinct because “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit,” verse 10. God wants to encourage the hearts of His children by giving them foretastes of the glories awaiting and the magnificence of His divine person. So He shares the things of eternity with them now.

2. We walk with God as our unseen Teacher, verses 10-12. Here is how the things unseen, unheard and unimagined are known to us. There is an unseen Teacher who makes them known. In no wise are they found out by man's wisdom but by revelation of God.

This teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential to spiritual understanding. Paul draws this analogy: “A man's purposes, thoughts, motives, etc., are known only to himself. No one else knows these things about him. Just so, no man knows the things of God. Only God himself knows them fully. Therefore, only God can reveal the things of Himself.”

Unaided, man could never find out the truths of God. He is not unaided, however, if Jesus is his Saviour. The believer has not the spirit of this world but the Spirit of God; “that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God,” verse 12. What man failed to find out by his own wisdom, God has revealed to believers. The Spirit “searcheth all things:” The term “searcheth” is used to refer to a professional researcher's report. The Spirit not only searches but also reveals the deep things of God. The spirit of material things—science—cannot speak of the “deep things of God.” Only the Spirit of God can do so. He is the believer's teacher.

In His blessed ministry to the believer, the Holy Spirit is a teacher, I Corinthians 2:13; a guide, John 16:13; a sanctifier, Galatians 5:16; a companion, John 14:16; an intercessor, Romans 8:26; and a convictor of sin, John 16:8-11. How poor believers would be without the Spirit's help.

3. We walk with God and share unseen treasures, verse 13. God imparts wonderful truths to those who walk with Him. These are not truths of mathematics, chemistry, psychology, and like subjects, but truths of “spiritual things.” He does this by combining or matching spiritual things to spiritual things.

The terms here used could be either masculine or neuter. If the former, it means God teaches by matching spiritual persons to spiritual truths, If the latter, it means matching spiritual ideas to spiritual words. Either makes

sense. Spiritual persons should speak spiritual truths. Spiritual ideas should correspond to spiritual words. This is the way the Holy Spirit teaches.

This teaching ministry should prompt ready response in the hearts of all believers. The Bible warns men to “resist not” the Spirit's work (Acts 7:51; II Corinthians 13:5), to “grieve not” Him who sealed them unto redemption (Ephesians 4:30), and to “quench not” His leadings into service (I Thessalonians 5:19). Be sure your heart is open to the instruction of the Spirit.

It is not difficult for those who are taught by the same Holy Spirit “to walk together in Christian love.” An axiom of mathematics is, “Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other.” This is true in the realm of the Spirit. Two persons in fellowship with the Spirit of God are in fellowship with each other. Since Christians share a common heritage, they live in a common love for one another and devotion to God. **“... the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us,”** Romans 5:5.

### **III. WALKING WITH BRETHREN, I John 2:10-17.**

1. Walk with the brethren in love, verse 10. The Bible says a great deal about Christian love. Jesus gave it as a commandment, **“... That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another, By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another,”** John 13:34-35. Furthermore, Jesus said our obedience to this and other commands reflected the sincerity of our love to Him. **“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you,”** John 15:14.

The Apostle John wrote that love for God will manifest itself in love for man. **“If any 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? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also,”** I John 4:20-21.

2. Walk with the brethren without stumbling, verses 10-11. Absence of brotherly love will produce a pitfall for those who walk together. The term “stumbling” in verse 10 means “a. stumbling-block or trap.” How different a brother looks when viewed through eyes of Christian affection. How easy to condemn and censure and misinterpret his actions when love is absent. The brother who lives without love is like a man who walks with blinded eyes. Not knowing where he is going he bumps against people and things and causes a great commotion. This is a striking explanation of many a “church fuss.”

The love of God, shed abroad in the hearts of believers by the Holy Spirit, can revolutionize a congregation when permitted to have its perfect work. Is God loving others through you?

3. Walk with the brethren in all stages of maturity, verses 12-14. There is a place in the church for all believers: children, fathers, young men, older adults, and all others. God has opened the privileges of church membership to all believers who are obedient in doctrine and conduct. In almost every congregation there are children who have been saved and baptized, energetic young adults, and older adults as well. The church needs them all. There is no conflict just because of age.

Each has a contribution to make to the congregation. Each one was saved and added to the church by the Lord because He knew the church needed that one. Some the church must minister to that they might be strengthened and grow to spiritual maturity. Some are already mature and are a strength to the spiritual life of the church. Thank God there is a place in the church for all these various ones. That means there is a place for you and me.

4. Walk with the brethren of all areas of spiritual experiences, verses 12-14. Of those different areas and stages of maturity, John recognizes these differences in spiritual experience: “You know God; the word of God abides in you; you have overcome the wicked one; you are strong.” What a wide scope of spiritual experiences is covered here.

To “know” God means to have Him in salvation: **“I know whom I have believed . . .”** II Timothy 1:12. For the “word of God to abide in you” speaks of spiritual maturity and knowledge of the word which qualifies one for Christian service, II Timothy 3:16-17. To have “overcome the wicked one” suggests that the prince of darkness, the devil, has been met and defeated in the power of the Spirit, Revelation 12:11. To be “strong” means to have on the armour of God and to be ready to fight a good fight in the spiritual conflict, Ephesians 6:10-18.

The church is a training ground for soldiers of the cross, a nursery to develop babes in Christ, a command post from which a concerted advance against the kingdom of darkness is launched, and a rest station where the soul is renewed for continued conflict with Satan. Praise God, He has given us the church for our good and His glory. How good that there is a place therein for you and for me.

5. Walk with the brethren in separation from the world, verses 15-16. The problem for the believer is always how to be in the world and yet not of it, John 17:11, 14ff. Worldliness is foreign to the new life in which the believer abides. John writes, **“Therefore the world knoweth us not,**

**because it knew him not,”** I John 3:1c.

So long as the believer lives in the world he will be tempted to partake of its affairs. He must seek to serve men of the world in spiritual things without being involved in their carnal things, John 17:11-16. To keep a proper balance in these relationships, the believer must love God above all else. John suggests that if a man love the world more than he loves God, it is an indication that God's love is not in him, i.e., he is not truly a Christian.

The love of God and the love of the world are incompatible. Verse 16 illustrates this with three statements. (1) Inordinate bodily desires — “lusts of the flesh” — are not inspired of God. (2) Excessive desire to satisfy aesthetic tastes — “the lust of the eyes” — is not of God's doing. (3) Pride based on one's worldly estate — “the pride of life” — is opposed to the will of God. It is in these areas that Eve was tempted in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:6), that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), and in which you will be commonly tempted.

6. Walk with the brethren toward a bright future, verse 17. The conflict with the world may now seem strong but there is consolation in the fact that the world and its conflict is transitory. Even the lust which belongs to the world passes away. On the other hand, he who keeps on doing the will of God “abides forever” amid the change of transitory things. Blessed truth!

The believer has entered into a “kingdom which cannot be moved” — an abiding order that passes not away, Hebrews 12:26-28. “He is united to Him who passes not away. He is delivered from a perishable system. He carries with him through death and every possible shock the unchanging Object of his love. The Christian will have his present God, but the sinner will not have his present world.” —American Commentary.

**"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day,”** Proverbs 4:18. Yes, those who walk with the Lord are walking toward a bright future.

CONCLUSION — Blessed is the church whose unity is based upon the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. “We engage therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love.” Surely, this is the way God intended it to be. Each member, therefore, should take inventory of himself. He should love God the more that he may love his brethren the more, He should seek the Spirit's aid that the love of God might fully possess him. Only in this manner can he be the kind of member God needs in each of his churches. Are you this kind of a member? Next week's study will point out the contributions this kind of a member makes in the life and work of his church.

## QUESTIONS

1. What part of the Church Covenant is considered today?
2. What three things are suggested therein?
3. What obligations rest on the church member?
4. How does a believer learn of God?
5. How does the Spirit teach a believer?
6. Why should we love the brethren?
7. Is the church for the spiritually mature only? Why?
8. What is “separation from the world”? How does one attain it?
9. What is the future of the believer?
10. How does this study relate to next week's lesson?