



“Now we have received, not in 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

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

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

Text: I Corinthians 2:9-18; I John 2:10-17.

INTRODUCTION—Today, the lesson is directed to a fourth study of the Church Covenant. Perhaps it is well to be reminded of some pertinent facts about that Covenant. The Church Covenant is not a doctrinal statement of what Baptists believe. It is not held as a set of rules with which to threaten wayward members. It is rather an expression of the ethical standards which a consecrated Christian, who is a member of a Baptist church, may rightly be expected to emulate. In other words, the statements of the Church Covenant describe the “ideal church member.” The person who unites with a Baptist church may be expected to live up to the terms of that Covenant. It is simply the summary of Bible teaching concerning the proper conduct of the Lord's people.

Today's lesson deals with the walk of the believer with his brethren in the church. Two great statements are made concerning this walk: (1) It is a walk aided by the Holy Spirit; (2) It is a walk which is marked by Christian love. Both of these things are essential if there is harmony and progress in the Lord's church. This lesson should be studied with an eye turned inward that each may determine whether his actions are directed and motivated by these holy promptings. Since the Covenant describes the “ideal member” this will give one a basis for evaluating his stewardship as a church member.

EXPOSITION

I. The Solemn Obligation of Membership.

1. Church membership is an engagement. Read your church covenant and observe the repetition of the expression, "We engage . . ." To engage means "to bind, to make liable, to promise, to assume an obligation." Each of these expressions illustrates that the person who unites with a Baptist church is entering into covenant with other members to conduct himself as becomes his profession of Christ. It means the principles of God's Word as set out in the Covenant become a challenge to him to observe. There is, therefore, an abiding obligation resting upon the church member.

2. The holy nature of the church involves obligation. The church is not an ethical club or a fraternal order. It is the body of Christ! With Christ as its head the church becomes a holy thing. To neglect its worship, ordinances, or discipline is to involve serious error. One may join a fraternal organization and then do as he pleases with the privileges of membership without it making much real difference. When one unites with a church it is entirely different. Loyalty to Christ demands loyalty to His body of believers in the local community.

3. The high purpose of the church involves obligation. Whereas all fraternal orders exist largely for the temporal and physical welfare of men, the church exists for their spiritual welfare. It is a "society of heaven" set in the earth to point men to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This is the most important business on earth. Thank God we have a part in it. It must not be neglected.

4. The fact of individual responsibility in judgment urges loyalty to the church. "*So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God,*" Romans 14:12. This day of judgment will call to account every deed of good and evil. How would it fare with you if today you were called to account your stewardship to God through the church? "*Unto him (God) be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen,*" Ephesians 3:21.

II. The Aid of the Holy Spirit, I Corinthians 2:9-13.

1. He reveals the unseen things, verses 9-10. That which eye did not see and which ear did not hear is now made manifest. That which had never entered into the heart of man is now a basis for his hope. That which has

been prepared of God is now made manifest to men that they may rejoice the more in their love for Him. The unseen, unheard, and unimagined things are now clear and distinct because “God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit,” verse 10. It is through the Spirit that God makes His revelation known. He is fitted for this work by His universal knowledge and everything pertaining to God is clearly known by Him. No wonder the Bible encourages men to seek the help of the Spirit as their teacher, guide, companion, and counselor. The natural man cannot receive the things of God. This revelation is possible only by the Holy Spirit who makes it available to spiritual men, II Corinthians 4:18.

2. He alone illuminates the things of God, verses 11-12. Now Paul states that a man's purposes, thoughts, character, motives, etc., are unknown to all except the individual man himself. Just so, the Spirit of God alone is qualified to teach men the things of God. Natural man (carnal man) thinks according to the way of the world and could never discover the truth about God if left alone. They who know Jesus as Saviour are not alone, however. The redeemed do not have the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God, and they can know the things which the Spirit of God reveals. The Spirit is given to men as a Teacher so they may truly know the things that pertain to God. These things are “freely given to us of God,” verse 12. If one desires to know of God he must seek the information from the Word of God with the Holy Spirit as his helper. This is the only safe course.

3. He performs varied functions in aiding the believer. The work of the Spirit is not to be limited to one function or area of work. His ministry is presented under many symbols, some of which are listed below.

(1) The Spirit is a Teacher of God's children, I Corinthians 2:13. Paul insists that his knowledge of God did not rest in human wisdom but in divine instruction imparted by the Spirit. Even the ancient writer of the book of Job understood that, “*There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding,*” Job 32:8. Jesus also promised the Spirit would teach the believers all things and even bring former teachings back to mind again, John 14:26. The Spirit still is the teacher (by means of illumination) of the one who prayerfully approaches the Word of God.

(2) The Spirit is a Guide in Christian service. He guides individuals. Jesus promised the first disciples that the Spirit would come to guide them into all truth, John 16:13. Paul and his companions found the Spirit an effective Guide in their missionary labors. He also guides churches. It was the guidance of the Spirit that initiated the first real missionary movement to the Gentiles, Acts 13:2-4. Churches have never gone astray when they have followed this heavenly Guide.

(3) The Spirit is a Sanctifier of the believers. Paul found that by walking in the Spirit one could conquer the lusts of the flesh. The warfare going on between the flesh and the Spirit can be victoriously resolved only when the Spirit has control. God's Spirit does not approve nor encourage any believer to submit to the lower elements of his nature. His rule for living is: *“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh,”* Galatians 5:16.

(4) The Spirit is a Companion of the redeemed. When Jesus promised the disciples a “Comforter” to abide with them He referred to much more than a help in times of sorrow, John 14:16. The word translated “Comforter” may be translated “One Called Alongside to Help.” It promises that the Spirit is our constant Companion.

(5) The Spirit is an intercessor in the believer's behalf. New hope for answered prayer comes because, *“the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities . . . the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered,”* Romans 8:26. He represents the believer before the Throne of Grace whenever the believer prays!

(6) The Spirit is a Convictor in the sinner's heart. A sense of sin and a call from God are the work of the Spirit within men. He will continue to convict men of sin, righteousness, and judgment, John 16:8-11. The man who is “pricked in the heart” should recognize that the Spirit deals with him. Surely this should hasten the sinner to find forgiveness in the grace of God.

4. The work of the Spirit should prompt men to ready response. The Bible warns men to “resist not” His work, Acts 7:51; II Corinthians 13:5. It warns the children of God to “grieve not” Him who has sealed them unto redemption, Ephesians 4:30. It urges the saved to “quench not” His leadings into service, I Thessalonians 5:19, but to go all the way He directs, Acts 13:2. A sin against the Spirit of God is a most serious sin. Men should consider the dire consequences involved before they rebel against Him. He aids brethren to serve in love through the church.

III. The Walk in Christian Love, 1 John 2:10-17.

1. To walk in love is to walk without stumbling, verses 10-11. Because love works no ill to his neighbour (Romans 13:10), he who walks in love will give no occasion for his brother to stumble. He will be careful to refrain from inducing his brother to sin. Even if one professes to be “in the light” an attitude of hatred toward a brother is evidence that abides in darkness. Matthew Henry has wisely written, “The darkness of unregeneracy, evidenced by a malignant spirit, is contrary to the light of life; where that

darkness dwells, the mind, the judgment, and the conscience will be darkened.” (See verse 11.) Spiritual light is given by the Spirit of grace, and one of the very first fruits of the Spirit is love, Galatians 5:22. Christians love because of the love of God which is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, Romans 5:5. He who does not love is testifying that he does not have the Spirit! Church members should think of the dreadful meaning of broken fellowship, envy, malice, and hatred in the Lord's church. They have covenanted to walk in love and to fail to do so is to break their promise and to witness that they are following Satan rather than God. The solution for every “church fuss” is for brethren to walk in love as God intended His children to do. Love that is never manifest in deeds is not Christian love. Therefore, to “walk together in love” means that all relationships between brethren in the church will be marked by respect and concern for the other's welfare!

2. To walk in love is to walk in fellowship with God, verses 12-14. (1) This fellowship is based upon forgiveness of sins, verse 12. God can have no fellowship with the works of evil, Habakkuk 1:13. Those who fellowship with Him must walk in the light of righteousness through forgiven sins, I John 1:5-7. There is such a thing as full forgiveness of sin and blessed is the man who has received it! John clearly states that forgiveness comes through the name of Jesus, I John 1:7; 2:1-2. It is only through Him that forgiveness comes, Acts 4:12. Those who have fellowship with God and walk in Christian love with their brethren in the church are of necessity those who have been forgiven through Jesus Christ.

(2) This fellowship enjoys a personal knowledge of God, verse 13a. *“You have known him that is from the beginning.”* Fellowship with the Father and partaking of eternal life is possible only to those who have had a personal experience of grace. Religion which does not include a personal knowledge of God is a false religion. The Lord knows His sheep and they know Him, John 10:14. To “know” God is to have had a personal contact with Him. Blessed is he who can say, *“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,”* II Timothy 1:12.

(3) This fellowship permits victory over Satan. *“Ye are strong . . . and ye have overcome the wicked one,”* verse 13b. Spiritual strength is the consequence of fellowship with God. Those thus strengthened are able to resist Satanic allurements. Just as sinners come to know God through the entrance of His Word into their hearts (Psalm 119:130), so the saints find that Word an effective tool against Satan. Observe that in the temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11) each thrust of Satan was turned away by the use of

the Word of God. This Word is still the “sword of the Spirit” by which the enemy is to be routed, Ephesians 6:17. A victorious Christian can never afford to neglect study and obedience to the Word of God.

3. To walk in love is to walk separate from the world, verses 15-16. Worldliness is foreign to the new life in which the believer abides. Yet, so long as he abides in the world he must face the temptation to indulge in things of earth. It is God's purpose to leave the believers in the world that they may serve, yet to also keep them free from entanglements in it, John 17:11-16. Those things which are divorced from God have no place in the affections of Christians. To be born again is to experience a new sort of Love which has the Father for its object, Romans 5:5. If one loves the world or the things of the world it is evidence that he does not have the love which is received at redemption. John is simply saying, “If one loves the world supremely, if worldliness is his life, his governing principle, he is not a Christian.”

The love of God and the love of the world are completely incompatible. Verse 16 illustrates this truth. The inordinate desires of bodily appetites (“the lust of the flesh”) are not inspired of God. The excessive satisfaction of one's aesthetic tastes (“the lust of the eyes”) is not of God's leading. The pride which is based in one's worldly state (“the pride of life”) is contrary to the will of God. These three areas of temptation are common to men. These were the basis of Eve's temptation (Genesis 3:6) and are to be found in the temptation of Jesus (Luke 4:3-11). He who walks in love must love God above all else. He cannot submit to the love of the world and be a worthy member of the church. He cannot submit to worldly lusts and expect to be honored as a child of God.

4. To walk in love is to walk toward a bright future, verse 17. Worldliness is not only totally outside of God (verse 16) but is, as to both its objects and its desire, transient and perishing. (See I Corinthians 7:31; James 4:14; I Peter 1:24.) Opposed to this is the abiding character of the hope of those who love Him. Love for God is manifest in doing the will of God, John 14:15, 23. This means that he who loves God has already entered into that “kingdom which cannot be moved” — that abiding order which passes not away, Hebrews 12:26-28. On this point the American Commentary suggests of the Christian, “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.” Truly, *“the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day,”* Proverbs 4:18.

CONCLUSION—In uniting with a Baptist church one agrees, “by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love.” This reminds him of the obligations of church membership, the help of the Spirit to perform these obligations, and of the blessed unity of the church which is motivated by pure Christian love. Each member should take inventory of himself to determine how well he fulfills his obligations. He should learn to depend increasingly upon the Holy Spirit for aid in all areas of religious life. He should learn to love his brethren as himself. Only thus can he be a good and profitable member. The Spirit is constantly available to aid in this type of service. This truth is stressed in next Sunday's lesson.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the three basic sections of today's lesson?
2. Discuss the obligation involved in church membership.
3. Discuss the opportunity involved in church membership.
4. Discuss the Holy Spirit's ministry of revelation, I Corinthians 2:1-10.
5. Let different members describe the Holy Spirit as: Teacher, Guide, Sanctifier, Companion, Intercessor, and Convictor.