

## 10.

### *The Church Covenant*



### *The Pledge Concerning One Another*

The fourth paragraph of the *Church Covenant* states;

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

This portion of the *Church Covenant* has to do with our relationship toward **“one another”** in the **“body of Christ”** that the *Lord* has placed us in. It is written in **Romans 12:5** concerning the members of a local **“body of Christ”** that they are **“every one members one of another”**. This means that each member is dependent upon each other, that each one is to be of service one to another, and that we exist in our place in the **“body”** to the usefulness of one another. This portion of the *Covenant* is a pledge to maintain that bond! This principle and responsibility is taught throughout the *New Testament* by the phrase **“one another”**

**“Be kindly affectioned one to another” [Romans 12:10; Ephesians 4:32].** This means that there ought to be endearment, attachment, and warm feelings between members of one of the Lord’s churches.

**“Preferring one another” [Romans 12:10].** This means that we prefer others in the church be recognized, esteemed rather than ourselves. It means that we prefer others in the church receive accolades, adoration, and tribute rather than ourselves!

**“Be of the same mind one toward another” [Romans 12:16].** This means that we be able to enter onto each other’s circumstances, putting ourselves in their place [I Corinthians 12:26].

**“Love one another” [Romans 13:8; John 13:34-35].**

**“Edify one another” [Romans 14:19; I Thessalonians 5:11].** This means that we instruct, cultivate and improve one another.

**“Admonish one another” [Romans 15:14].** This means that we rebuke, reprove, and advise one another, and that we receive such from one another.

*“Care one for another”* [I Corinthians 12:25]. This means that we aid, assist, support, and regard one another.

*“Serve one another”* [Galatians 5:13]. This means that each member is to work for each other, to be of service to one another, to be of use to one another, and to perform for one another.

*“Bear one another’s burdens”* [Galatians 6:2]. This means that we carry, absorb, and be willing to take on one another’s burdens.

*“Forbear one another in love”* [Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13]. This means that we endure, tolerate, and put up with one another.

*“Be tenderhearted one to another”* [Ephesians 4:32]. This means that we have a heart disposed to compassion for one another.

*“Forgive one another”* [Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13]. *“Forgiveness”* means that what we have forgiven, we do not bring up again.

*“Submit one to another”* [Ephesians 5:21]. This means that we yield to one another.

*“Esteem other better than self”* [Philippians 2:3]. This means that we believe that others are more worthy of respect and admiration than ourselves.

*“Lie not one to another”* [Colossians 3:9]. this speaks of sincerity and honesty.

*“Teach one another”* [Colossians 3:16]. This means that we enlighten one another spiritually, and that we demonstrate spirituality through our lives.

*“Comfort one another”* [I Thessalonians 4:18]. This has reference to consoling and sympathizing with one another.

*“Exhort one another”* [Hebrews 3:13; 10:25]. This means that we are to urge, and to encourage one another spiritually.

*“Consider one another”* [Hebrews 10:24]. This means that we are to think about one another, and be mindful of one another.

*“Speak not evil one of another”* [James 4:11].

*“Grudge not one against another”* [James 5:9]. This means that we are not to have resentment, bitterness, or ill-will toward one another.

*“Confess faults one to another”* [James 5:16].

“Pray one for another” [James 5:16].

“Having compassion one for another” [I Peter 3:8].

“Use hospitality one to another” [I Peter 4:9]. This has reference to being friendly, warm, receptive, courteous, and generous toward one another.

“Minister to one another” [I Peter 4:10]. This means that we are to use what God has given us, and tend to one another, take care of one another, and to look after one another.

### I. THE SPIRIT OF THIS PLEDGE

The spirit of this portion and the *Church Covenant* in its entirety is expressed by the phrase  
*“in brotherly love”*

Every aspect of the *Church Covenant* is to be carried out in the spirit of *“brotherly love”* or with *“love”* toward one another as brothers and sisters.

#### A. The Entire Church Covenant Is A Pledge To A Relationship:

All relationships entail responsibility. And it is no different when it comes to our spiritual and church relationships. There is first and foremost one’s relationship to the Lord, and then there is a relationship between one another as *“brothers”* and *“sisters”* in *Christ*. One’s relationship with the *Lord* determines the character of their relationship with their *“brothers”* and *“sisters”* in *Christ* [John 13:35; I John 2:10-11; 3:10, 14-15; 4:20]. A WRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD=A WRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN OF GOD! The words *“brother”* and *“sister”* convey the idea of unity in sentiment, and unity in affection! They also convey the idea of friendship, affection, understanding, support, comfort, encouragement, and helping! For the members that make up a local church there is a spiritual relationship with one another, and there is a relationship in truth (*faith and belief*) with one another [II John 1; III John 1, 3, 8], and there is a relationship as members of the same *body* [I Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:16].

#### B. The Entire Church Covenant Is A Manifestation Of Brotherly Love:

Faithfulness to the *Church Covenant*, is faithfulness to the principles of Scripture, and is a manifestation of *“love”* This *“brotherly love”* is a command, and therefore an act of obedience [John 13:34, 35; Romans 12:10; 13:8; Colossians 3:12-14; Hebrews 13:1; I Peter 2:17; 4:8; I John 4:7-8, 21]. The child of *God* is to pursue opportunity to manifest this love [I Corinthians 14:1], and this love is to be continual [Hebrews 13:1]. This *“love”* is to be provoked in one another [Hebrews 10:24]. This *“love”* should be fervent [I Peter 1:22; 4:8], and should manifest itself in deeds [I Thessalonians 1:3; Hebrews 6:10]. Every child of *God* is taught by *God* to love his *brothers* and *sisters* in *Christ* [I Thessalonians 4:9]. THE SPIRIT BEHIND THE ENTIRE CHURCH COVENANT SHOULD BE LOVE TO THE LORD, AND LOVE TO ONE ANOTHER!

## II. THE PLEDGE CONCERNING ONE ANOTHER

### A. A Pledge To Watch Over One Another

*“to watch over one another in brotherly love”*

Reciprocal **watchfulness** is another duty that church members owe to one another. In **Genesis 4:9**, after Cain killed his brother Abel, *“the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not (this was a deliberate lie), Am I my brother’s keeper?”* Cain suggests that his brother, whom he killed, is not his responsibility. He suggests that if something has happened to Abel, that he bears no responsibility. The suggestion is, *“it is every man for himself”* *“Am I my brother’s keeper?”* [**Genesis 4:9**] is a question which no church member should ever allow himself to ask: for **we are united in fellowship for the very purpose of endeavoring to watch and care for each other!** The phrase *“my brother’s keeper”* conveys the idea of **looking after** one another, to **guard, protect, shield, and defend** one another. The pledge *“to watch over one another in brotherly love”* is a pledge to be our *“brother’s keeper”* The duty of watching over one another, being our *“brother’s keeper”* ought to be a matter of constant **thought** and **prayer!** Being our *“brother’s keeper”* is our responsibility for the welfare of others, and opens opportunities to be **useful** and **helpful!** Included in this pledge is that we do not *“set at nought thy brother”* [**Romans 14:10**], and that we do not *“put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way”* [**Romans 14:13, 15, 21; I Corinthians 8:13**].

### B. A Pledge To Pray For One Another:

*“to remember one another in prayer”*

To remember one another in prayer is an expression of love, and this is part of, a branch of **watching** over one another. It is the **duty**, the **obligation**, and the **pledge** that church members pray for one another. It ought to also be the **desire** and **longing** of the heart to pray for one another! When Abraham heard that **God** would bring judgment against **Sodom** and **Gomorrah** [**Genesis 18:17-21**], *“Abraham stood before the Lord”* [**Genesis 18:22**], and began to **plead** with **God** for the sake of the righteous [**Genesis 18:23-33**]. It is recorded in **I Samuel 7** that Samuel gathered Israel together, saying unto them in **verse 5** *“I will pray for you unto the Lord”* Members of the same *“body of Christ”* ought to be able to look at one another and honestly say *“I will pray for you unto the Lord”* It is encouraging to let others know that you are praying for them. Paul let others know that he was praying for them [**Romans 1:9; Ephesians 1:16; Philippians 1:4**]. Not only are we to pray for one another, but it is a sin not to [**I Samuel 12:23**].

#### 1. There Are Examples Of People Making Requests For The Prayers Of Others:

After **Samuel** told **Israel** *“I will pray for you unto the Lord”* **Israel** then said to **Samuel** in **I Samuel 7:8** *“Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us”* **Jeroboam** said to the man of God in **I Kings 13:6** *“Intreat now the face of the Lord thy God and pray for me”* **Simon** the sorcerer said to **Peter** *“Pray ye to the Lord for me”* [**Acts 8:24**]. **Paul** often made request for prayer *“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me”* [**Romans 15:30**]. He said in **I Thessalonians 5:25** *“Brethren pray for us”* and in **II Thessalonians 3:1** *“Finally, brethren pray for us”* And in **Colossians 4:2-3**

*“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal (meanwhile) praying also for us”* IT OUGHT NOT ONLY BE OUR HABIT TO PRAY FOR OTHERS, BUT IT OUGHT TO BE OUR HABIT TO REQUEST THE PRAYER OF OTHERS! And to confidently believe that they will do so!

**2. There Are Innumerable Reasons To Pray For One Another:**

Again, it is said of Abraham in **Genesis 18:22** *“but Abraham stood before the Lord”* on behalf of God’s people! WE OUGHT TO ALWAYS BE READY TO STAND BEFORE THE LORD ON BEHALF OF ONE ANOTHER! There ought to be prayer for one another because **the devil is out to destroy each one!** There ought to be prayer for one another because **of sinful flesh dwelling within each one.** There ought to be prayer for one another because **the body of flesh is weak!** There ought to be prayer for one another because **of the world in which we live** (*temptations, trials, afflictions, difficulties, evil influence, countless dangers that every child of God is subject to*). There ought to be prayer for one another **for God’s protection, strength, wisdom, grace, and blessing.**

**3. The Pledge To Pray For One Another Is Inclusive Of Keeping Ourselves In A Condition To Pray For One Another:**

To pray for others requires a heart of **concern**, a heart of **love**, a heart of **compassion**, a heart of **unselfishness**, and a heart of **desire** [**Colossians 1:9**], and a desire to be of **help** [**II Corinthians 1:11**].

**C. A Pledge To Aid One Another In Sickness And Distress:**

*“to aid one another in sickness and distress”*

There will be times of **sickness**, in the lives of the members of the **Lord’s churches**. There will also be times of **distress** (*agony, heartache, heartbreak, sorrow, grief, and adversity*). The phrase *“sickness and distress”* speaks of **need!** In such times of **sickness** and **distress**, in times of **need** people need people in a meaningful way! In such times the members of the Lord’s churches have the privilege, the opportunity, and the responsibility *“to aid one another”* This is a pledge of **assistance, support, help, and relief.** This is a pledge to **show love to one another!** This is a pledge to **friendship!** THIS IS A PLEDGE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF ONE ANOTHER!

**1. What Is Required To Be Of Assistance To Others:**

First of all, one does not have to be endowed with spiritual gifts in order to be a help. One does not need to be in a position of leadership, or of certain financial status to be a help.

**(a). In Order To Be A Consistent Help To Others One Must Have Compassion:**

This is *“sympathetic concern”* and it is something that will move the individual to act on the behalf of others. **Jesus** was not only moved by the needs of people, but He moved in response to the needs that He saw [**Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 18:27; Mark 1:41**].

**(b).** *In Order To Be A Consistent Help To Others One Must Have An Awareness:*

One must be **observant** concerning the needs of others. This is a branch of being our “*brother’s keeper*” One must be **thoughtful** and **considerate** of one another! THIS REQUIRES ONE TO MOVE BEYOND THEMSELVES AND THEIR OWN LITTLE CIRCLE! **Jesus** was quick to discern the needs of others and to respond to such needs. ONE MUST LOOK FOR WAYS TO HELP!

**(c).** *In Order To Be A Consistent Help To Others One Must Be Willing To Put Themselves In A Position So That They Can Be Of Assistance:*

This is illustrated in the “*Parable Of The Good Samaritan*” [**Luke 10:30-35**]. The “*priest*” and the “*Levite*” were not willing to put themselves in a position to help the man who had fallen victim to thieves. They both “*passed by on the other side*” and many do the same for a variety of reasons, BUT THE REAL REASON IS A LACK OF COMPASSION! The “*Samaritan*” was willing to put himself in a position to be of help! He “*came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him*” HE WAS WILLING TO TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO BE OF HELP!

**(d).** *In Order To Be A Consistent Help To Others One Must Be Willing To Invest The Time Necessary To Do So:*

Again, in the “*Parable Of The Good Samaritan*” the “*priest*” and the “*Levite*” were not willing to invest the time necessary to help the man who had fallen victim to thieves. The “*Samaritan*” was willing to take the time to be of **assistance**, **support**, and **help** to the man who had fallen victim to thieves! IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF WHETHER ONE HAS TIME, BUT RATHER, IS ONE WILLING TO TAKE THE TIME!

**(e).** *In Order To Be A Consistent Help To Others One Must Be Willing To Use Their Resources To Do So:*

Again, in the “*Parable Of The Good Samaritan*” the “*priest*” and the “*Levite*” were not willing to use the resources that they had to help the one who had fallen victim to thieves. Their attitude was “*what is mine is mine*” But the “*Samaritan*” was willing to **share** his resources [**verses 34-35**]. There is a warning to those who are not willing to use what they have to be of help to others [**I John 3:17**]. IT IS NOT A MATTER OF WHAT WE HAVE, BUT OF A WILLINGNESS TO USE WHAT WE HAVE! The attitude of the “*Samaritan*” was “*what is mine is yours*” The “*Samaritan*” made a difference in this man’s life [**Jude 22**].

**(f).** *In Order To Be A Consistent Help To Others One Must Be Willing To Give Of Themselves: **Jesus ministered** and gave His life [**Matthew 20:28**], and He is our pattern [**Matthew 20:26-28; I John 3:16**]. It must be one’s objective not to be ministered to but to minister [**Hebrews 6:10**].*

**(g).** *In Order To Be A Consistent Help To Others One Must Have A Spirit Of Humility.*

**(h).** *In Order To Be A Help Our Help Must Truly Be A Help And Not A Hindrance.*

**2. To Be Of Assistance, Support, And Help To Others Is Taught Throughout The Scriptures:** [Job 29:15; Isaiah 58:7; Acts 20:35; Romans 14:1; 15:1; I Corinthians 16:15; Galatians 6:2; Hebrews 13:3]. And when done in the right spirit and for the right reasons, there is great reward [Matthew 25:34-40].

#### **D. A Pledge To Cultivate Sympathy And Courtesy:**

*“to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech”*

The word *“cultivate”* means that each member is *“to seek to improve, to be better, and to train themselves”* in the areas of *“sympathy”* and *“courtesy”* toward one another. It is a pledge to **grow**, to **increase**, and to **develop** in these areas of *“sympathy”* and *“courtesy”*. Growth in these areas requires a desire to do so, and a pursuing of God’s ways. The display of *“sympathy”* and *“courtesy”* are a part of the **aid** that church members pledge to one another [I Peter 3:8].

##### **1. Christian Sympathy In Feeling:**

*“Sympathy”* is *“compassion, caring, empathy, commiseration, and support”*. It is *“the ability to enter into the feelings of another and make them your own”* [Hebrews 13:3]. It is by *“sympathy”* that one is able to enter into the concerns of others, as his own, and feel for one another. *“Sympathy”* is the opposite of indifference toward others, [Proverbs 21:13]. It is the opposite of despising, thinking lightly of others [Proverbs 11:12; 14:21]. *“Sympathy”* requires **involvement** with one another. The biggest hindrances to *“sympathy”* are **selfishness** and **ignorance!** *“Sympathy”* must express itself in some manner!

##### **2. Christian Courtesy:**

*“Courtesy”* is *“the display of politeness in one’s attitude and behavior”*. It is *“good manners, civility, respect, and consideration”*. *“Courtesy”* in the Bible is described as **“kindness”** [Romans 12:10; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12; II Peter 1:5-7], and is *“affection, warmth, gentleness, concern, care, consideration, thoughtfulness, friendliness, hospitality, and generosity”*. God’s people should have a spirit of **“kindness”** due to the fact that they have been set free from sins because of the love and kindness of God [Titus 3:3-7]. The Lord is our example in showing **“kindness”** to all [Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 6:35]. Christ has given us the **rule** and **principle** of showing **“kindness”** [Matthew 7:12]. These words are more than words of guidance, in these words the Lord states a **principle** of action and a **mode** of life with regard to others. In these words the Lord gives one simple precept for the regulation of our conduct toward others; *“Put yourself in another’s place and then act toward them as you would desire they act toward you under the same circumstances”*. He is saying *“Treat others as you would want to be treated”*. He did not say *“treat people the way they treat you”* though this is what the sinful depraved nature of man will do. He plainly said *“whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them”*. IT IS A PRINCIPLE THAT IF OBEYED AND FOLLOWED IT WOULD MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE ENTIRE WORLD! It is a precept that teaches and reminds us that **we are not the only ones that matter!** It is a precept that teaches and reminds us that **life does not revolve around us!** It is a precept that teaches and reminds us that **there are others!** It is a precept that teaches and reminds us that

**we have a responsibility toward others!** It is a precept that teaches and reminds us that **there is a right way to treat others!**

**(a).** *The Extent Of The Precept:*

*“all things whatsoever”* THIS RULE IS AS BROAD AS YOUR LIFE! This goes beyond just meeting the needs of others! This precept has to do with day to day interaction with the people around us!

**(b).** *This Precept Is Personal:*

Notice the pronouns *“ye”* and *“you”*

**(c).** *This Precept Requires Thought:*

*“whatsoever ye would that men should do to you”*

**(d).** *This Precept Requires Action:*

The word *“do”* is the most important word in the verse. The word translated *“do”* is **present tense** *“keep on doing”* To truly follow what **Christ** says requires that the individual not only think about what they would like others to do but to *“do”* that very thing for other people! The *“doing”* of course must be within the realm of what would be pleasing and acceptable to **God!**

**3.** *Christian Courtesy In Speech:*

The pledge to *“courtesy in speech”* is a pledge to speak to one another with **kindness!** The Bible of course has much to say about our **speech** toward one another. Speech should be **pleasant** [**Proverbs 16:24**], **appropriate** [**Proverbs 25:11**], **gracious** [**Ecclesiastes 10:12**], **inspiring** [**Ecclesiastes 12:11**], and **comforting** [**Isaiah 50:4**]. *“Courtesy in speech”* is not to be used as a cover up for the real issues, in other words it is to be free of hypocrisy

**E. The Pledge To Be Slow To Take Offense And Always Be Ready For Reconciliation:**

*“to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay”*

This portion of the **Church Covenant** deals with interpersonal problems between members of the same local assembly, and how to deal with such problems. Because churches are made up of sinful individuals, with sinful natures, interpersonal problems do arise, even in the **churches of the Lord!** The **Corinthian church** had many such problems, and they were compounded by their carnality [**I Corinthians 1:11; 3:1-3**].

**1.** *The Spirit Of This Portion Of The Covenant:*

Many interpersonal problems would be avoided and would never exist if each member took seriously the pledge *“to be slow to take offense”* This is a pledge to be unhurried and disinclined to feel **anger, resentment, indignation,** and **animosity** in our hearts toward another. This is a pledge to be disinclined to having our feelings hurt. This means that **we do not look for reasons to be angry, resentful, disgruntled or hurt!** This means that **we do not seek to justify feelings of anger, resentment, and hurt!** TO DWELL ON THE JUSTIFICATION OF SUCH



FEELINGS IS TO NURTURE THEM! The pledge “*to be slow to take offense*” has its basis in **not thinking too highly of self and thinking more highly of others [Philippians 2:3-5]**. When it comes to interpersonal problems and dealing with them, what is stated here is paramount, and is the very mind of *Christ!*

**(a).** *There Must Be A Proper Motive To All Actions:*

“*Let nothing be done through strife (dissension, hostility) or vainglory*” (self praise and selfishness). In other words, “*Do not base your actions upon the feelings of dissension and hostility, or selfishness*” Even when one has truly been wronged, THE INJURED PARTY IS NOT TO ACT THROUGH STRIFE OR VAINGLORY! “*Vainglory*” and “*strife*” go together [Galatians 5:26], and are not to be the reason behind our actions! There is a great danger of compounding the problem, when actions are governed by self, and what others do or do not do. WHAT GOD SAYS AND HIS GLORY IS TO BE THE GOVERNING PRINCIPLE OF ACTIONS!

**(b).** *There Must Be A Proper Spirit Behind All Actions:*

“*but (rather than, or in the place of strife and vainglory) in lowliness of mind*” This “*lowliness of mind*” is inward **humility** and is opposed to **self-exaltation [Proverbs 17:19; Matthew 23:12; Luke 22:24; John 5:44; III John 9]**. This “*lowliness of mind*” is the same as “*poor in spirit*” [Matthew 5:3]. This “*lowliness of mind*” is not only opposed to “*strife*” and “*vainglory*” but IT IS A PREVENTATIVE AGAINST SUCH! In “*lowliness of mind*” there is **wisdom [Proverbs 11:2]**, concerning how to act! This “*lowliness of mind*” will create a willingness to do things, and to take upon themselves positions, that they otherwise would not be willing to do [Mark 1:7].

**(c).** *There Must Be A Proper Perception And Estimation:*

The phrase “*let each (everyone, the offending party, and the offended party) esteem (regard) other better (preferable) than themselves*” is the result of “*lowliness of mind*” When one has a wrong view or opinion of self, when one makes self preeminent, **their view of everything is skewed!** When one has a wrong estimation of self, they will have a wrong estimation of problems, and wrong feelings toward others! These two things, “*lowliness of mind*” and “*esteeming other better than themselves*” are necessary in overcoming “*strife*” and “*vainglory*” **This inward humility, and proper regard of others will stop and prevent most interpersonal problems within a church!** Paul is an example of such a spirit [I Corinthians 15:9; Ephesians 3:8; I Timothy 3:15].

Paul sums up these two; **inward humility**, and proper regard of others in **Philippians 2:4**. “*Look not every man on his own things (do not be absorbed with self), but every man also on the things of others*” This means “do not be so self-focused, and self-absorbed, that you cannot reach out in love to others” These two things; **inward humility**, and **proper regard for others** are opposed to **malice** which is “the desire to cause pain, injury, or distress to another” [**I Corinthians 5:8; Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8; I Peter 1:21**]. They are opposed to **bitterness** which is “to have intense animosity, harshness, cynicism, or coldness toward another” They are opposed to **wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking** against another [**Ephesians 4:31**]. **Malice, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking** will not solve or prevent interpersonal problems, but what Paul stated in **Philippians 2:3-4** will! The pledge “to be slow to take offense” is a pledge to have **inward humility, and a right spirit toward others!**

## 2. Interpersonal Problems Must Be Properly Dealt With:

The **Church Covenant** reads;

**“but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Saviour to secure it without delay”**

This portion of the paragraph deals with the situation where an offense has taken place, where there is an offended party. Most choose to try and ignore such problems, or to just stay away from the person with whom they have a problem, and not to speak to them. And though this may work on the job or in other areas of life, IT DOES NOT WORK IN A BODY OF CHRIST [**I Corinthians 12**]. THE BODY OF CHRIST WAS NOT DESIGNED FOR UNRESOLVED CONFLICT! Again, the way of many is to either pretend that a problem does not exist, or to snub the one that they perceive to be the “offending party” This way of dealing with interpersonal problems within a “**body of Christ**” is sure to **weaken** the body, and to cause one to be unable to carry out the spirit of the **Church Covenant**. This method of dealing with interpersonal problems creates inner feelings of **anger, hostility, bitterness, and resentment** all of which are detrimental to the well-being, and the spiritual health of the **Lord’s church!**

## 3. The Need Of Reconciliation:

**Jesus** spoke upon the subject of dealing with interpersonal problems and the need for “**reconciliation**” [**Matthew 5:21-25**]. **Jesus** expounds upon the **need** of “**reconciliation**” [**Matthew 5:23-25**]. The need of “**reconciliation**” arises from the fact that **problems** and **conflicts** occur between **brothers** and **sisters** in **Christ**. For **God’s** people there is absolutely no basis whatsoever for **hatred, bitterness, wrath, contempt, or unkindness** toward one another! SUCH ARE UNACCEPTABLE IN THE HEART OF A CHILD OF GOD! Therefore there is the need of “**reconciliation**”! To “**reconcile**” is to “**appease**” to “**pacify**” to “**settle**” and to “**resolve**” It is the restoration of **concord** and **fellowship**. “**Reconciliation**” presupposes a **broken** relationship, **separation, hostility, enmity, obstacles** and **barriers**, and “**reconciliation**” is “the re-establishing of Christian fellowship” “**Reconciliation**” is “a change of attitude toward an enemy, or toward one who has done wrong” “**Reconciliation**” means that “a relationship has been repaired, and a new relationship has been established”

(a). *Christ Gave Reconciliation A Place Of Priority And A Place Of Urgency:*

He said if you bring your gift to the altar, and there (at the altar) you remember that there is an interpersonal problem with your brother *“Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way (do not merely resolve to reconcile at some future date) first (this is priority) be reconciled to thy brother, and then (after an attempt to secure reconciliation) come offer thy gift”* [Matthew 5:24]. He went on to say in **verse 25** *“Agree (seek to secure good will by showing good will, this is in the imperative present tense) with thine adversary quickly”* What *Jesus* says in these verses is the basis and the principle stated in the *Covenant*. What *Jesus* teaches here goes beyond the act of *“reconciliation”* He deals with the spirit and attitude leading up to the act, and the *Church Covenant* addresses such; *“always ready for reconciliation.....to secure it without delay”* RECONCILIATION MATTERS, BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT RECONCILING CAN BE ENORMOUS!

(b). *The Importance Of Reconciliation Is Seen From The Importance Of Unity Within The Church Of The Lord Jesus Christ:*

Unity and peace are *“good” and “pleasant”* [Psalms 133:1]. In order to enjoy the goodness and pleasantness of unity and peace *“reconciliation”* is necessary. Unity and peace brings the enjoyment of *God’s* presence [II Corinthians 13:11], therefore in order to enjoy the presence of *God* *“reconciliation”* when needed is of absolute necessity. Unity and peace are to be sought after [Hebrews 12:14], so *“reconciliation”* when needed must be sought after. There is to be a diligence in guarding unity and peace [Ephesians 4:3], so there must be a diligence in seeking *“reconciliation”* when needed. Unity and peace are proper behavior of the gospel [Philippians 1:27], so the spirit of *“reconciliation”* is becoming of a child of *God*. Unity and peace require certain Christian graces such as *“compassion” “love” “pity” “courteousness”* [I Peter 3:8], so *“reconciliation”* requires the same and where there is a refusal to reconcile these graces are lacking. Where unity and peace are lacking there is much evil [Galatians 5:14-15] and to avoid such evil *“reconciliation”* must be sought when needed.

(c). *The Importance Of Reconciliation Is Seen From the Fact That A Refusal To Do So Prevents One From Worshipping God In An Acceptable Manner* [Matthew 5:23-24].

Those who harbor anger, bitterness, and resentfulness in their heart will either stay away from the worship service or they will attempt to go through the outward motions of worship. In either case the ability to worship has been damaged. *Jesus* teaches that to try and worship *God* while harboring anger, bitterness, and resentfulness is futile. To harbor anger, bitterness, and resentfulness is to give place to the devil [Ephesians 4:26-27], and is a grievance to the *Holy Spirit* [Ephesians 4:30-31]. A refusal to *“reconcile”* has a dire effect upon one’s relationship with *God*, and can have a dire effect upon one’s self, upon one’s family and upon the church of which they are a member. From what *Jesus* says in **Matthew 5:21-25** RECONCILIATION IS A PREREQUISITE TO WORSHIP!

3. *God’s People Should Be Anxious For Reconciliation:*

In the *Church Covenant* we pledge to be *“always ready for reconciliation”* and *“to secure it without delay”* There should be an eagerness for *“reconciliation”* because we have personally

received “*reconciliation*” from the Lord [**II Corinthians 5:18-19**]. When it comes to interpersonal problems and conflicts, **children of God are to have a higher standard than those of the world!** When it comes to interpersonal problems, and conflicts, as in everything else **God’s people must become dissatisfied with humanistic fleshly thinking and see what God expects and requires!** When it comes to interpersonal problems and conflicts, as in everything else **God expects and requires His people to surrender their lives to Him even when it goes against what they might think or feel!** The world’s way of solving “*irreconcilable differences*” is to go to court, but this is not **God’s** way for His people [**I Corinthians 6:1-7**]. Members of *New Testament Baptist Churches* should seek to settle their differences between themselves, and if that fails rather than going to court before unbelievers they should take the matter before the *church* [**Matthew 18:15-18**]. **BOTH THE OFFENDER AND THE OFFENDED MUST POSSESS A DESIRE FOR RECONCILIATION!** And both the **offender** and the **offended** have a responsibility to take some initiative in resolving the issue! In **Matthew 5:23-25** the **offender** is seen taking the initiative, and in **Matthew 18:15-17** the **offended** is seen taking the initiative. Both the **offender** and the **offended** must be willing to meet the requirements of “*reconciliation*” and both must be willing to lay aside their own feelings and follow the leading of the *Holy Spirit*. In salvation **GOD IS THE OFFENDED PARTY, AND HE TAKES THE INITIATIVE TO SECURE RECONCILIATION!**

The biggest obstacle to fulfilling this portion of the *Church Covenant* concerning the relationship between members is **SELF!** In order to fulfill this portion of the *Covenant* there must be the **denial of self!** There must be a willingness to lay aside **self-interest**. There must be a willingness to lay aside one’s own will and desires! **Self-esteem** and **self-importance** must be overcome. Included in this portion of the *Church Covenant* is the pledge to **deny self!** The spirit of this portion of the *Covenant* is stated in the words of *Paul* “*in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves*” [**Philippians 2:3**]. There cannot be the attitude that one is more of a member than another, or that the church belongs to one more than another member!