

9.

The Church Covenant



The Pledge Of Godly Living Before The World

The third paragraph of the **Church Covenant** states:

“We also engage 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 of, and use of, destructive drugs of intoxicating drinks as a beverage; to shun pornography; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior”

The responsibility of each child of God is to have a testimony of **godliness** before the world is a huge responsibility, and a very serious matter. Each member of one of the **Lord’s churches** pledges to have such before the world, and the **testimony** and **influence** of the **church** is dependent upon such. The **testimony** and **influence** of a **church** is of course intertwined with the **testimony** and **influence** of its members. This part of the **Church Covenant** has to do with our overall **attitude** and **conduct** before the world.

I. THE PLEDGE OF A CAREFUL WALK

A. This Is A Pledge To Walk Wisely And Not Foolishly:

The pledge is

“to walk circumspectly in the world”

Paul spoke of such in **Ephesians 5:15** when he wrote ***“See that ye walk circumspectly”*** The word ***“see”*** conveys the idea of ***“make certain, to see to it, and to be mindful of”*** The word ***“ye”*** expresses individual **responsibility** and **duty**. The word ***“walk”*** has reference to the whole tenor and conduct of life, and the word ***“circumspectly”*** means ***“cautious, careful, on guard, watchful, alert, attentive, heedful, with vigilance, accuracy, and diligence”*** It is implied that not to do so is **foolish** and **unwise**, which is the result of not ***“understanding what the will of the Lord is”*** [**Ephesians 5:15, 17**].

B. The Necessity For Such A Walk:

The reason that those saved by the grace of God should ***“walk circumspectly”*** is ***“because (since) the days are evil”*** [**Ephesians 5:16**]. Because of the character of the **world God’s** people are to ***“walk circumspectly”***

1. The World As A Society, A System, And As A Way Of Life Is Condemned Throughout The Word Of God:

The *world* is a system of **ideas**, of **activities**, and **people**, who are in active rebellion against **God!** THEREFORE GOD'S PEOPLE MUST BE CIRCUMSPECT! As a system the *world* is under the **dominion** of **Satan**; he is its "*prince*", regulating its policies! The *world* as a system is the embodiment of his spirit, bearing his image [**Ephesians 2:2**]. Considered morally the *world* is synonymous with the "*kingdom of Satan*" and is the sphere of rebellion against God! THEREFORE GOD'S PEOPLE MUST BE CIRCUMSPECT! It is the place where **Satan** "*walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*" THEREFORE GOD'S PEOPLE MUST BE CIRCUMSPECT!

2. Christ Warned Against The World As A System:

When the **Son of God** became incarnate, we read in **John 1:10** "*the world knew Him not*" And the *world* is still **ignorant** of Him! **Jesus** declared in **John 7:7** concerning the *world* "*Me it hateth*" And the *world* still **hates Jesus Christ!** In **Matthew 13:22** **Jesus** said that the "*cares*" of the *world* and the "*deceitfulness of its riches*" **choked** the Word and made the hearer unfruitful! The *world* still seeks to get a **strangle-hold** on the things of **God!** He said in **Matthew 18:7** "*Woe unto the world because of offences*" And the *world* is still a place that is filled with that which is **offensive** to **God!** THEREFORE GOD'S PEOPLE MUST BE CIRCUMSPECT!

3. New Testament Writers Warned Against The World:

Paul said in **Galatians 1:4** that Christ "*gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world*" and in **I Corinthians 3:19** he said that the "*wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*" and in **Titus 2:12** he linked together "*ungodliness*" and "*worldly lusts*" Peter mentions the "*pollutions of the world*" [**II Peter 2:20**], while John informs us in **I John 4:3** that the "*spirit of antichrist...even now is it already in the world*" and **I John 5:19** he says "*the whole world lieth in wickedness*" The *world* is still a place of **evil**, a place of **foolishness**, a place of **ungodliness**, a place spiritually and morally **polluted**, a place that is **antichrist**, and a place of **wickedness!** THEREFORE GOD'S PEOPLE MUST BE CIRCUMSPECT!

C. A Circumspect Walk Is Taught Throughout Scripture:

1. A Circumspect Walk By The Use Of The Word "Beware"

The word "**beware**" conveys the idea of "*be on guard, watch out, be alert, be on the lookout, be careful, be cautious*" The use of the word "**beware**" is just another way of reemphasizing "*walk circumspectly*" We are told to "**beware**" of **self-righteousness** [**Luke 12:1**]. To "**beware of covetousness**" [**Luke 12:15**]. To "**beware of evil workers**" [**Philippians 3:2**]. To "**beware**" of being **spoiled** or **ruined** by the "*tradition of men*" [**Colossians 2:8**], and to "**beware**" of being "*led by the error of the wicked*" [**II Peter 3:17**].

2. A Circumspect Walk Is Taught By The Use Of The Word "Watch"

The word "**watch**" conveys the idea of "*being observant, on guard, aware, and careful*" [**I Corinthians 16:13**; **I Thessalonians 5:6**; **II Timothy 4:5**; **I Peter 4:7**].

3. A Circumspect Walk Is Taught By The Exhortation To Be "Awake" And "Sober"

The word “*awake*” conveys the idea of “*awareness, alertness, and attentiveness*” [Romans 13:11; I Corinthians 15:34; Ephesians 5:14]. The word “*sober*” conveys the idea of being “*clearheaded, serious, sensible, and levelheaded*” [I Thessalonians 5:6, 8; I Timothy 3:2; Titus 2:2, 4, 6; I Peter 1:13; 5:8].

4. A Circumspect Walk Is Taught By The Exhortation To Give “*Heed*”

The word “*heed*” means to “*pay attention, to take notice of, to bear in mind, and to be mindful of*” [Hebrews 2:1].

D. The Psalmist Prayed For A Circumspect Walk:

The *Psalmist* prayed “*Order my steps in Thy word*” [Psalm 119:133]. This is a prayer for **accuracy** in the things of the *Lord*. The word “*order*” means “*dispose, incline, and fix my steps in Thy Word*” He is praying “*Anchor my steps in Thy word*” This is a prayer of **conformity** to a prescribed rule. It is a prayer for **consistency** of life, a prayer to be **governed** according to God’s ways! EACH MEMBER COVENANTS TO DO THIS!

II. THE PLEDGE TO BE ABOVE REPROACH

The pledge is

“*to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment*”

This is part of a “*circumspect*” walk.

A. There Is A Pledge To Honesty:

Our pledge;

“*to be just in our dealings*”

is a pledge of **honesty** and **integrity**. This is a pledge to good **character**, a pledge to be **ethical**, and a pledge to **trustworthiness**. In a world characterized by **dishonesty, fraud, corruption, swindling, cheating, craftiness, treachery, deceit, and crookedness** GOD’S PEOPLE OUGHT TO STAND OUT AS A PEOPLE OF GREAT INTEGRITY! They are not to be governed in their thinking by the world’s ways, and are not to be conformed to the world [Romans 12:2]. The members of the *Corinthian church* were sternly rebuked for defrauding one another, cheating one another, then going to law before the world [I Corinthians 6:6-8].

1. All Through The Scriptures Dishonesty Is Condemned And Honesty Is Condemned:

[Leviticus 19:35-36; Deuteronomy 25:13, 15; Jeremiah 17:11; 22:13]. Solomon in his wisdom had some things to say upon the subject of **dishonesty** and **honesty**. He spoke of dishonesty and honesty in **selling** [Proverbs 11:1; 16:8]. He spoke of dishonesty in **buying** [Proverbs 20:14], and he warned against **partnership** with dishonest persons [Proverbs 29:24]. He also mentioned some principles that will prevent a “*false balance*” [Proverbs 11:2-6]. **Humility** [verse 2]. **Integrity Of Purpose** [verse 3]. **A Right Estimate Of Wealth** [verse 4]. **Righteousness In Heart** [verses 5-6].

2. Honesty And Integrity Are Exhorted:

Honesty is to be a characteristic of the child of God's daily walk [**Romans 13:13; Ephesians 4:28; I Thessalonians 4:6, 12**].

B. There Is A Pledge To Faithfulness In All Dealings:

Our pledge is to be;

“faithful in our engagements”

This part of the *Covenant* concerns **faithfulness** to our word and agreements. It has to do with **constancy, truthfulness, commitment, trustworthiness, and reliability**, and covers debts, and appointments. It has to do with being a people of our word [**James 5:12**].

C. There Is A Pledge To Be Exemplary In Behavior:

Our pledge is to be

“exemplary in our deportment”

To be **“exemplary”** means *“to be an example”* An **“example”** conveys the idea of *“being a model to be followed”* It is to be of *“excellent, outstanding, admirable, and commendable behavior”* Paul set forth his life as an **example** [**Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 4:9; II Thessalonians 3:7**], and Paul exhorted Timothy to be an **example** to the believers [**I Timothy 4:12**]. THE LIVES OF GOD'S PEOPLE OUGHT TO SERVE AS A GOOD EXAMPLE TO ALL, AS A PATTERN OF GOOD TO ALL!

D. There Is A Pledge To Avoid Three Things:

Our pledge is

“to avoid all tattling, backbiting and excessive anger”.

To **“avoid”** is *“to keep away from, to stay away from, and to steer clear of”* To avoid the things mentioned is a branch of **“exemplary deportment”**

1. Tattling Is To Be Avoided:

One who **“tattles”** is what the Bible calls a **“talebearer”**. A **“talebearer”** is *“one who communicates secrets maliciously”* and from what is written in **I Timothy 5:13** the **“tattler”** is closely related to the **“busybody”** A **“busybody”** is *“one who deals in matters which do not concern them”* [**I Peter 4:15**], and is an act of foolishness [**Proverbs 20:3**]. From **I Timothy 5:13** and **II Thessalonians 3:11** the **“busybody”** is an **idle** person. Not only an **idle** person, but a **disorderly** (*unruly, disruptive, troublesome*) person. There is a difference between **“informing”** (*the giving of information*) and **“tattling”** Often, it needs to be known when a person has committed wrong, for the person's own welfare, and for the welfare of others, and in such times, it is not wrong to tell, in fact it is wrong not to tell. But **“tattling”** is with **malice** (*spite, ill-will, vindictiveness, and evil intentions. The desire to cause pain, injury, or distress to another*). **Malice** is a **“leaven”** [**I Corinthians 5:8**], and is to be put off [**Colossians 3:8; I Peter 2:1**]. **“Talebearing”** and **“tattling”** were forbidden by the law of **God** [**Leviticus 19:16-18**]. From this law of **God** it is seen that **“talebearing”** is associated with **hate** [**verse 17**] and **vengeance** [**verse 18**]. A **“talebearer”** communicates secrets and does so with **hate**,

vengeance, and malice [Proverbs 11:13]. The “*talebearer*” causes much harm and hurt [Proverbs 18:8]. A “*talebearer’s*” evil intentions are seen from the fact that they use flattery to gather information [Proverbs 20:19]. A “*talebearer*” spreads strife and discord [Proverbs 26:20-22]. Notice that the “*talebearer*” and a “*contentious man*” are one and the same. FOR ALL OF THESE REASONS TATTLING IS TO BE AVOIDED!

2. *Backbiting Is To Be Avoided:*

“*Backbiting*” is “*malicious talk about one who is not present*” It means “*to secretly defame one’s name or reputation*” A “*backbiter*” knowingly or maliciously makes accusations to put down another person and hurt their reputation in the eyes of the listener. The seriousness, and despicableness of “*backbiting*” is seen from the sins that it is mentioned with [Romans 1:29-32; II Corinthians 12:20]. “*Backbiting*” like “*tattling*” is a product of malice, hatred, and a desire to cause harm [Psalm 41:7]. “*Backbiting*” is contrary to humility [James 4:10-11]. “*Backbiting*” is contrary to love [Galatians 5:14-15]. One of the characteristics of love is that it “*thinketh no evil*” [I Corinthians 13:5]. This spirit of love is **not quick to think the worst of others**. The spirit of love is **not prone to overlook the good qualities of others and to focus only on the bad**. The spirit of love is **not quick to judge evil of the actions of others, to put the worst construction on their actions**. “*Backbiting*” is destructive to the *body of Christ*, and is a form of spiritual cannibalism [Galatians 5:15]. “*Backbiting*” is of a destructive nature, because it spreads and travels fast [Ecclesiastes 10:20]. “*Backbiting*” is a hindrance to spiritual advancement and closeness to the Lord [Psalm 15:1-3]. FOR ALL OF THESE REASONS BACKBITING IS TO BE AVOIDED!

Both “*tattling*” and “*backbiting*” are sins of the tongue, and an individual’s speech is a direct manifestation of the condition of the heart [Matthew 12:34; 15:10-11, 18-20]. Both “*tattling*” and “*backbiting*” are avoided by **esteeming others better and more worthy than ourselves** [Philippians 2:3], and by **forbearance of others** [Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13], and by **forgiving others** [Ephesians 4:32], and by **seeking the restoration of others** [Galatians 6:1].

3. *Excessive Anger Is To Be Avoided:*

“*Anger*” is “*a strong feeling of displeasure, or hostility, an emotion, or passion aroused by a sense of injury or wrong*” “*Anger*” is a normal reaction when we feel something unjust has happened. “*Anger*” is permitted, Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:26 “*Be ye angry*” but in the context of that, he also wrote in the same verse “*and sin not*” (*there may be “anger” without sin*), but there is a danger, that where there is “*anger*” there will be sin. To avoid such, *Paul* wrote in the same verse “*let not the sun go down upon your wrath*” DO NOT LET ANGER REMAIN IN YOUR HEART! Because of the danger, *Christ* warned against “*anger*” [Matthew 5:22]. HE WARNS THAT ANGER CAN PUT ONE IN DANGER OF THE JUDGMENT OF GOD! So from these two verses, we learn that there is danger in “*anger*” whether it is justified or not. There is the danger of sin and there is the danger of the judgment of God! “*Anger*” becomes a problem when it has no constructive outlet.

(a). The Bible Speaks Of Both The Inward And Outward Aspect Of Anger:

There are two main **Greek** words used to describe “**anger**” One “**orge**” meaning “*passion, or energy*” referring to the **inward** aspect of “**anger**” It is translated “**anger**” [**Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8**]. The other “**thumos**” meaning “*agitated, or, boiling over*” and has reference to the **outward** emotional response of “**anger**” It is translated “**wrath**” [**Luke 4:28; Acts 19:28; Galatians 5:20; Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8**]. **THOUGH ALL ANGER IS NOT SINFUL, ALL ANGER NEEDS TO BE MANAGED AND CONTROLLED!** “**Anger**” can be a quiet, seething resentment or indignation at some large or small offense, and the offense may be real, exaggerated or imagined. When such “**anger**” is **nursed** and **fed** inwardly it is sinful! Such “**anger**” keeps a record of wrongs and is contrary to love [**I Corinthians 13:4-5**]. At other times “**anger**” may explode into a rage! But in either case, whether **inward** or **outward** the “**anger**” is not properly **managed** or **controlled**, and is sinful! “**Anger**” becomes sin when it is allowed to boil over without restraint. “**Anger**” also becomes sin when one clams up and keeps it all inside. In both instances the “**anger**” is in control of the person! When “**anger**” is in control, it consumes, and it is sinful. Paul wrote “*Be not overcome of evil*” [**Romans 12:21**].

(b). Anger Allowed To Dwell Within Turns To Bitterness:

To allow “**anger**” to dwell within is to give place to the devil [**Ephesians 4:26-27**], and such “**anger**” can very easily turn to “**bitterness**” which is a **root** sin [**Hebrews 12:15**]. A **root** grows! The **root** left in the soil will keep its hold, and send up another stem, and spread out other branches. A **root** can zap the soil of nutrients and become a threat to other plant life. “**Bitterness**” being a **root** sin **leads to** and **feeds** other sins such as **hatred, self-pity, vindictiveness, and unteachableness**. “**Bitterness**” is a source of **trouble-**“*Beware lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble (disturb, annoy) you*” BITTERNESS IS ONE OF THE MOST CRUSHING PROBLEMS IN A PERSON’S LIFE! “**Bitterness**” will also **defile** others-“*and many thereby be defiled*” The word “*defiled*” means to “*make unclean, or impure, to corrupt, to violate the chastity of, to desecrate, to contaminate*” BITTERNESS DEFILES BECAUSE IT IS SHARED! A BITTER PERSON NEVER CONTAINS THEIR BITTERNESS, THEY FIND A WAY TO SPREAD IT! Sinful “**anger**” is related to **foolishness** [**Proverbs 12:16; 14:29; 27:3; Ecclesiastes 7:9**]. It is associated with **grieving** the **Holy Spirit** [**Ephesians 4:30-31**]. It is always accompanied by other sins. From all of this, it is clearly seen that “**anger**” unmanaged, whether **inward** or **outward** can be a **destructive** force, both to self and to others.

The pledge is to “**avoid excessive anger**” and ANY ANGER THAT IS SINFUL IS EXCESSIVE! “**Excessive anger**” is “*anger that does not have a sufficient cause*”, or “*anger that transcends the cause*”, or any “*anger that is accompanied by revenge or ill-will*”, or any “*anger that is reflected upon and fed*”, or any “*anger that clouds our judgment*”, or any “*anger that is accompanied by an unforgiving spirit*”. “**Anger**” must be dealt with, for the sake of the individual, and for the sake of the church of which one is a member! The tenets of “**anger**” management involve **love, patience, and forgiveness!**

III. THE PLEDGE OF ABSTINENCE

The pledge is

“to abstain from the sale of and use of destructive drugs or intoxicating drinks as a beverage”

Without a doubt, this is the most controversial part of the *Church Covenant*. In the pledge **“to abstain from the sale and use of destructive drugs or intoxicating drinks as a beverage”** a definite action is singled out and it is forbidden! Today, the widespread abuse of drugs, narcotics, and alcohol is a cancer that has devastated society. Drugs and alcohol are linked to virtually every evil and criminal activity within our society. While it should be obvious that the use of mind-bending, mind-altering substances is inappropriate for serious followers of *Christ*, yet there are professing **“Christians”** who attempt to justify their continued use of drugs and alcohol. Although the Bible does not address directly the drugs of today, it does make mention of drugs. In **Galatians 5:19-21** the deeds of sinful flesh are mentioned, and one of the things mentioned is **“witchcraft”** which is the Greek word *“pharmakeia”* from which we get our word *“pharmacy”*. The same word is translated **“sorceries”** [**Revelation 9:21; 22:15**]. Being intoxicated is clearly condemned in Scripture. **Intoxication** is *“the process of physiological change which occurs upon the consumption of drugs and alcohol”*. The use of drugs or anything else for the purpose of escaping and getting high, or the addiction to these substances, is against the commands of Scripture and inappropriate for Christian participation. One cannot argue against this part of the *Covenant* from the side of spirituality.

A. What The Bible Says About Alcohol And Intoxication:

1. The Bible Uses The Word “Wine” Generically:

The Hebrew word **“yayin”** is the most common word for **“wine”** in the *Old Testament*. It usually refers to **“fermented wine”** but can refer to **“wine”** newly made and before fermentation [**Isaiah 16:10; Jeremiah 48:33**]. The Hebrew word **“tiyrosheh”** refers to newly made **“wine”** (juice) from grapes. It is used in reference to prosperity under the term **“corn and wine”** [**Genesis 27:28, 37; Deuteronomy 7:13**]. It is translated with the word **“new”** [**Nehemiah 10:39; Proverbs 3:10**]. **“Tiyrosheh”** was the **“wine”** to be tithed [**Deuteronomy 12:17**]. The Hebrew word **“enab”** [**Hosea 3:1**] is translated **“flagons of wine”** and refers to the leaves and skins, and seeds of the grape that remain after pressing, and sink down into the bottom of the vessel. It is used here to show how tasteless and degrading idolatrous worship is compared to the worship of God.

2. The Bible Gives Warning About The Dangers Of Wine That Is Intoxicating:

The Bible has much to say about **“intoxicating drink”** and what is said of such also applies to **“destructive drugs”**. THE BIBLE CERTAINLY GIVES SOME WARNING CONCERNING THAT WHICH IS INTOXICATING! The Bible accents the dangers and does not minimize the pitfalls of that which is intoxicating. The *Lord’s* anger is pictured as **“mixed wine”** poured out and drunk by the wicked [**Psalms 75:8**]. In **Proverbs 20:1** it is written **“Wine is a mocker (it deceives, and can overcome an individual before he is aware, promises pleasure it does not give, and exposes one to reproach and disgrace) and strong drink is raging”** (It can cause disturbance of mind). In **Proverbs 23:29-30** there is a list of six possible consequences or dangers of **“wine”** use. They are **“woe”** (grief or despair), **“sorrow”** (pain, uneasiness), **“contentions”** (brawling,

not a harmony producer), *“babbling”* (excessive and senseless talking), *“wounds”* (bruises, injuries), and *“redness of eyes”* (dullness). In **Proverbs 23:32** another danger is presented *“it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder”* (This speaks of that which is concealed and fatal). This thought is also mentioned in **Deuteronomy 32:33**. The danger of **adulterous thoughts**, and **sexual improprieties**, and **loud senseless talking** are mentioned in **Proverbs 23:33** (the use of that which is intoxicating lowers one’s inhibitions). This is seen from what is said in **Habakkuk 2:15**. In **Proverbs 23: 34** there is the danger of a **loss of sense**, and a **loss of direction**. Another danger of alcohol is that it **desensitizes** [**Proverbs 23:35**]. In **Proverbs 31:4-5** there is the danger of **judgment being perverted**. Alcohol goes directly to the brain (the communication center of the body) and interferes with good judgment and sense [**Isaiah 28:7-8**]. In **Ecclesiastes 2:3** Solomon tried everything, including intoxicating drink, to see if it would bring satisfaction, and it did not [**Ecclesiastes 2:11**].

3. The Bible Always Condemns Drunkenness:

“Drunkenness” is a product of the flesh [**Galatians 5:21**]. And it is important to realize that drunkenness does not begin with the last drink, IT ALWAYS BEGINS WITH THE FIRST! Drunkenness cannot happen unless given the opportunity! There is no doubt that the Scripture condemns drunkenness in the plainest possible terms. Drunkenness is the mark of those who are in the darkness of spiritual night, the mark of those who have not put on the **Lord Jesus Christ**, and who fulfill the lusts of the flesh, and we are commanded not to walk in **drunkenness** and **immorality** [**Romans 13:13-14**]. **Drunkenness** or **intoxication** is often referred to as *“getting wasted”* Think about that word *“wasted”* it means *“to squander, to mispend, to misuse, that which is pointless, useless, needless, unnecessary, vain, and fruitless”* FOR AN INDIVIDUAL TO TRY AND DEFEND DRUNKENNESS OR THE PROCESS OF BECOMING DRUNK IS SHEER IGNORANCE AND STUPIDITY! God pronounces *“woe”* upon them that get drunk [**Isaiah 5:11-12; 28:1**], and *“woe”* upon *“champion drinkers”* and *“experts”* at mixing drinks [**Isaiah 5:22**], and *“woe”* upon those who give others drink, causing them to get drunk [**Habakkuk 2:15**]. The Bible mentions several tragedies as the result of drunkenness: **Noah** became drunk, the result was immorality and family trouble [**Genesis 9:20-26**]. **Lot** was so drunk that he did not know what he was doing; the result immorality [**Genesis 19:30-38**]. **Nabal** died after a drunken spree [**I Samuel 25:32-38**]. **Amnon** was drunk when he was killed [**II Samuel 13:28-29**]. **Benhadad** and 32 other kings were drinking when they were attacked and defeated by the Israelites [**I Kings 20:12-21**]. Drunkards are to be separated from and are referred to as *“that wicked person”* [**I Corinthians 5:11-13**]. Drunkenness is a mark of apostasy and of moral and spiritual decline [**Isaiah 28:7**]. Drunkenness leads to **excess** [**Ephesians 5:18**]. *“Be not drunk (filled) with wine, wherein (in which) is excess”* (waste, disorder, disarray, and destruction).

B. The Teaching Of Abstinence:

Again, DRUNKENNESS DOES NOT BEGIN WITH THE LAST DRINK, BUT WITH THE FIRST!

1. The Bible And Abstinence:

God commanded that **priests** not drink alcohol so that they could tell the difference between the holy and the unholy [**Leviticus 10:9-11**]. The **Nazarites** were not to drink “**wine**” or “**liquor**” [**Numbers 6:3**]. **Samson** was to be a **Nazarite** for life and his mother was told not to drink “**wine**” or “**strong drink**” [**Judges 13:4, 7, 14**]. The **Rechabites** drank no intoxicating “**wine**” even when the temptation was put before them, and they were blessed for not doing so [**Jeremiah 35:2-14**]. The greatness of **John the Baptist** is linked to abstinence [**Luke 1:15**]. In **I Timothy** Paul details the requirements for godliness in God’s people, and in **I Timothy 5:23** he gives instruction to **Timothy** “*Drink no longer water (no longer drink only water) but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities*” This was medicinal, and the implication is that Timothy practiced abstinence, which made Paul’s instruction necessary. The use of “**wine**” for medicinal purposes is also stated in **Proverbs 31:6-7**. It is important to realize that **the use of wine, even for medicinal purposes is not necessary in today’s world!** The past life of drinking and carousing has no place in the Christian’s life [**I Peter 4:3-4**]. Solomon said in **Proverbs 23:31** “*Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright*” Solomon is saying “*Avoid the allurements of wine, deny thyself*”

2. Reasons For Abstinence:

(a). *The Drinking Of Alcohol Or The Use Of Destructive Drugs Is Not Consistent With The Biblical Principles Of Separation* [**Matthew 5:16; 6:33; Mark 9:42; Romans 6:13; 12:1-2; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:1-11, 15, 18; James 1:27; I Peter 1:16**].

(b). *The Drinking Of Alcohol As A Beverage, Or The Use Of Destructive Drugs Is Not Consistent With Keeping The Mind And Spirit Clear, Focused, And Sober* [**Luke 21:34; II Corinthians 10:5; I Thessalonians 5:6; I Peter 5:8**].

(c). *The Drinking Of Alcohol As A Beverage Or The Use Of Destructive Drugs Is Not Consistent With Possessing Our Vessel With Sanctification And Honor* [**I Thessalonians 4:4**].

(d). *The Drinking Of Alcohol As A Beverage Or The Use Of Destructive Drugs Is Not Consistent With The Principles Of Edification* [**Romans 14:21; I Timothy 1:4**].

(e). *The Drinking Of Alcohol As A Beverage Or The Use Of Destructive Drugs Is Not Consistent With Christian Love* [**Romans 14:21**].

(f). *The Drinking Of Alcohol As A Beverage Or The Use Of Destructive Drugs Is Not Consistent With That Which Is Necessary* [**I Corinthians 6:12**].

Some will say that the issue is not abstinence but moderation, arguing that the equivalent is gluttony, yet we do not demand that one abstain from eating. But there is a significant difference! We must eat to live, but alcohol is not a necessity for life or good living. This in no way is a defense of gluttony!

(g). *Abstinence Removes A Hindrance To Effective Witness:*

In **Acts 2:13** the religious leaders of the day tried to thwart the preaching of the gospel by accusing the *apostles* of drunkenness.

(h). *The Drinking Of Alcohol As A Beverage Or The Use Of Destructive Drugs Violates The Biblical Principles Of Wisdom:*

WHAT IS THE WISDOM IN DRINKING EVEN IN MODERATION? Does it help one in knowing the will of God? Does it help one in doing the will of God? Does it help in making one more Christ-like? Does it draw one closer to God? Does it help one run the race to the end? Does it help one to persevere in the faith? Does it encourage prayer and Bible reading? Does it feed the spiritual nature? In an age when that which is intoxicating is one of the Devil's foremost means of ensnaring souls and bringing them to ruin, THERE IS NO WISDOM IN THE USE OF SUCH [**Proverbs 6:27-28**]. The use of that which is intoxicating is far more in line with the wisdom of the world [**James 3:15**] rather than heavenly wisdom [**James 3:17**].

IV. THE PLEDGE TO ZEAL

The pledge is

“to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior”

The *“Kingdom of our Savior”* consists of loyal subjects and the government of *Jesus Christ*. This part of the *Church Covenant* is a pledge to make effort and to be zealous in that effort to live the kind of life that *God* would have us to live, to live a **God-governed** life! IT IS A PLEDGE TO KINGDOM LIVING!

A. There Is To Be A Personal Effort To Advance Kingdom Living:

The best overall description of *“kingdom living”* is found in the *Sermon On The Mount* [**Matthew 5-7**]. The *Church Covenant* is also a summary of Biblical principles that coincide with *“kingdom living”* The members of a local *New Testament Baptist Church* pledge to make a **personal effort** to advance *“kingdom living”* An *“effort”* is *“a determined attempt that requires physical and, or mental exertion”* The pledge is to make effort *“to advance the kingdom of our Saviour”* To *“advance”* is *“to move forward, to promote, or help the progress and cause of”* The pledge *“to advance the kingdom of our Savior”* is a pledge to help and to promote the cause of *Christ!* Anything that advances holiness and spirituality in our personal lives and in the lives of others, advances the *“kingdom”* Anything that advances truth, advances the *“kingdom”* Anything that advances the *church* in spirituality and truth is an advancement of the *“kingdom”* The pledge *“to advance the Kingdom of our Savior”* is a pledge to submission to *Christ* as King! The pledge *“to advance the Kingdom of our Savior”* is a pledge to avoid anything that would be a hindrance to such! It is a pledge not to hinder in any way the advancement of holiness and spirituality! It is a pledge not to hinder the progress of truth in any way! The *“kingdom of Christ”* is in direct opposition to the world [**John 18:36; Romans 14:17**], to the world's ways, reasonings, philosophies, and goals [**I John 2:15-17**]. And this is a pledge to help in the advancement of the *“kingdom of Christ”* in opposition to the world's way of living!

B. There Is To Be Zealous Effort:

The effort that is made to “*advance the kingdom of our Savior*” is to be with **zeal**, which is “*energy, enthusiasm, passion, love, fervor, devotion, eagerness, vigor, and intensity*” It is the very opposite of **indifference** and **apathy!** It is the opposite of the “*lukewarm*” spirit that **Christ** so ardently warned against and rebuked [**Revelation 3:16**]. This “*lukewarmness*” is a lack of **interest**, a lack of **enthusiasm**, a lack of **concern**, and a lack of **passion!** It is a state of **lethargy** and **ease** [**Numbers 32:6; Amos 6:1**]. It is a state of spiritual **slackness** [**Joshua 18:3**]. It is a state of **lingering** and **hesitating** [**Genesis 19:16; II Chronicles 24:5; I Kings 18:21**]. It is **making light** the things of **God** [**Matthew 22:5**]. It is a state of **neglect** [**Hebrews 2:1-3**]. **Christ** went on to say to the church of **Laodecia** “*be zealous*” [**Revelation 3:19**]. **Christ** is an example of the “*zeal*” that God’s people should seek [**John 2:17**]. **Jesus Christ** was **consumed** with the work of **God**, so much so that He said “*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work*” [**John 4:34**], and “*I must work the works of Him that sent me*” [**John 9:4**]. THIS WAS THE LIFE OF CHRIST! HE HAD A LIFE OF PURPOSE, AND HE WAS ZEALOUS IN THAT PURPOSE! This is what Paul meant when he said “*for me to live is Christ*” [**Philippians 1:21**]. This “*zeal*” should be manifested in: **spirit** [**Romans 12:11**], in **well-doing** [**Galatians 4:18; Titus 2:14**], in **desiring the salvation of others** [**Romans 10:1**], in **contending for faith** [**Jude 3**], and **for the saints of God** [**Colossians 4:12-13**]. “*Zeal*” provokes others [**II Corinthians 9:2**]. ZEAL REQUIRES THE **HEART** AND THE **LIFE!** Paul wrote in **Galatians 4:18** “*But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing*” CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IS NOT SOMETHING THAT REQUIRES WHAT IS LEFT OVER, IT IS A WAY OF LIFE!

We pledge;

“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 of, and use of, destructive drugs of intoxicating drinks as a beverage; to shun pornography; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior”

This portion of the **Church Covenant** is all about keeping oneself unspotted from the world [**James 1:27**], and living a **godly** and **separated** life [**Exodus 34:12; Deuteronomy 7:2-4; Psalm 1:1; Proverbs 4:14; 24:1; Isaiah 52:11; Romans 12:1-2; II Corinthians 6:14-17; Ephesians 5:11; II Thessalonians 3:6**]. **God’s** people are to live above the world’s ways, and this portion of the **Church Covenant** is a pledge to do just that!