

# The Church Covenant

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AN IN-DEPTH STUDY

Written by John Teague, ThD      Edited by Joseph F. Roberts, ThD, PhD  
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*This eBook is in memory of John Teague, ThD*

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## CHURCH COVENANT

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

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

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

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

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

## **Introduction:**

The church covenant is important for several reasons. It spells out clearly the agreement made by the membership of the church to one another and to Jesus Christ. It sets forth a well-defined body of belief. It is an agreement of choice, binding the membership of the church to a policy and program which, when followed, will strengthen and build up the spiritual body of the church as well as set forth a system of doctrine which will benefit each believer in matters relating to both the flesh and the spirit. The Church Covenant is a compact document that reflects basic principles in the Word of God.

This study will be an in-depth analysis of the agreement to the church and the church member's responsibility to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It will be paragraph upon paragraph, sentence upon sentence; phrase upon phrase; and word upon word.

## Paragraph One

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

### **"Having"**

"Having" refers to an act of owning as in owning a commitment or as in "being under necessity or obligation to perform that which was promised." When a person becomes a member of the church, he or she obligates themselves to follow the church covenant and to live by the Word of God. The act of becoming a member of the church places a grave responsibility upon the person uniting with the assembly. It is a responsibility that cannot be taken lightly without seriously affecting the church as well as grieving the Spirit, sinning against the Father, and doing wrong to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### **"Having been"**

"Having been" emphasizes upon the time element of uniting or attaching oneself to the church. "Having been" began the instant of membership into the church. Each individual is responsible to be obedient to the covenant as well as to the Word of God.

Disobedience to the Word of God as well as the covenant by which we join together our lives as members of the same body, carries with it responsibility to live within the framework of the Scripture and the covenant we make with one another. Membership within the local body of Christ carries with it discipline for negligence and violation of the terms of the covenant and of the Holy Scriptures.

"Having been" means that at a point in the past, certain obligations become binding upon the newly born believer entering the local assembly. These obligations are not measured in the short run. They are designed to be binding as in a marriage "until death do us part."

The membership of the church has certain privileges attached to it as well as certain disciplinary actions to be taken when the principles by which we govern ourselves have fallen by the wayside. Disobedient members of the body are not to be overlooked. The church is responsible to exercise discipline when necessary.

### **"Having been led"**

"Having been led" speaks to the effect that the actions we obligate ourselves to are not merely words but is in fact a body of laws which every member of the church is required to safeguard.

The significance of the word "led" is that we did not obligate ourselves on our own merits, but we were led to this decision by an agent other than ourselves. We had a need, upon being born again, to place our lights upon the candlestick from which place it could glow and show our determination toward obedience.

We go from "having", "having been", and "having been led" to a crucial understanding of why this covenant is of such great importance.

### **"Having been led, as we"**

These two additional words "as we" lay out the scope of the covenant. This is an inclusive allusion to our relationship to the Lord and one to another. Inclusive in that every member of the local assembly share the same obligation and responsibility.

When one suffers, all suffer. When one is unfaithful then all who do not work diligently and with no regard of self, become unfaithful with the offender. When one is lying, cheating, stealing, drinking, fornicating---all who sit by and watch it happen become as guilty as the offender. The mandate of Scripture commands that sin be dealt with in the church.

The word "we" means that all are affected by the action or actions of the one. This fact along with the Lord's command to "judge yourselves" is as binding today as when he first spoke the command. If we do not judge ourselves then it becomes the responsibility and obligation of others to do the judging.

### **"Having been led as we believe"**

The basis of our belief as stated does not rest upon what we desire to believe but is founded upon the foundation of Jesus Christ as made known to us. There are certain things that we believe, not because we desire to believe; but because we were "led" to believe. Our need to believe came not from our knowledge but from another Source...our believing is related to Deity and not to the heart of man.

When we (plural) go about to establish our own system of belief, we automatically get into trouble. What we believe must come from God and not from man and it does matter what we believe!!! Failure to believe and to practice that which Christ Jesus has commanded will make us out of fellowship with the Lord, with His church, and with one another.

From whence did our "believing" come?

### **"Having been led as we believe... by the Spirit of God,"**



We as a people of God have been led to believe certain truths that the bulk of humanity scorns. These beliefs did not originate from our own being but came from Another. It was the Spirit of God who pressed upon our souls unto salvation and then taught us to accept these beliefs as recorded in the Church Covenant. These beliefs in the Church Covenant are consistent with the Word of God.

Knowing that we believe because we were led to believe by the Spirit of God, should instill within every soul in the Lord's Church determination to strive for the mark of the high calling of God. Because this leading came from the Spirit of God, we can have faith that the precepts contained in the Church Covenant are there for a purpose.

The word "we" is a plural word. Our congregations do not consist of one person but of a larger number. This is a matter of the whole working together as one body in Christ.

"We believe" because of the leadership of the Spirit of God. What we believe should be consistent to what the Spirit of God led the writers of the Scripture to pen. If we are led by the Spirit, we will believe what the Spirit teaches. All problems within the church stem from not believing and practicing what the Holy Spirit ultimately leads us to believe.

The Spirit of God leads us to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior. The Spirit of God...third Person of the Godhead leads us to receive. To receive means to accept and welcome the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Notice carefully the following words as they relate to salvation:

- a. Lord = lord, master, owner, possessor, sovereign
- b. Jesus = a Savior, Jesus
- c. Christ = The Christ, The Anointed One, The Messiah
- d. as our = A plural word meaning "of or belonging or relating to us."  
"Our" in the sense of belonging to all of us as a group.
- e. Savior = Savior, preserver, deliverer

The Spirit of God leads us to be "baptized" as a "profession of our faith. This baptism does not save one from sin. Baptism enters heavily upon the formula of profession. It is an outward expression of an inward reality. Without the outward profession the inward possession is left without the necessary confession of faith. Baptism is our public profession of faith in The Lord Jesus Christ.

The definition of profession is "Act of declaring, avowal, affirmation, statement." We confess Jesus as our Lord in salvation.

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

Our profession is a public act declaring one to be a child of God and a member of the assemble or church of the Lord Jesus Christ. By the act of baptism we declare ourselves publicly to be children of God and disciples of Christ. John preached baptism as a declaration of repentance and salvation.

Mark 1:4 ***John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.***

Luke 3:7-8 ***7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.***

Peter preached it the same at Pentecost.

Acts 2:38 ***Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.***

Peter, like John, makes the declaration that repentance precedes the act of baptism and that baptism is not the active cause which procures salvation. He lays emphasis upon baptism as an action that declares what has already taken place. When using the word "for" in the phrase "for the remission of sins", Peter is saying that one should "be baptized" for or because of the remission of sins.

Life came through repentance. (Repentance and faith are simultaneous.)

Acts 11:18 ***When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.***

Profession of faith or being ready to declare themselves followers of Christ are found in the following Scriptures.

Acts 2:42 ***And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.***

Acts 8:36 *And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?*

Acts 9:18 *And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.*

Every person that confesses Christ as his Savior must profess Him in baptism or that person will not be counted in the church. The Holy Spirit leads us to be baptized in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Holy Spirit.

### **We do now**

At the point of baptism and entrance into the local church, the believer enters a binding relationship with every other believer within that local body. The believer is not an isolated individual set apart from every other believer within the local church. He becomes a functioning part of the whole. His covenant relationship with the local church requires of him---faithfulness to the principles outlined in the Church Covenant, a determination to serve with the whole as a singular unit in carrying out the expressed will of God, a militant stance in protecting and safeguarding the covenant and a willingness to give of himself for the benefit of others.

Upon entering into agreement or covenant with the membership of the local church, the new member pledges his cooperation with the body he is joining. That cooperation will be seen in a dedicated and committed lifestyle.

Notice those three words again: “We do now” meaning “at the time of becoming a part of the whole.” We covenant together in the unity of the faith, and in the unity of the knowledge of Christ.

Ephesians 4:13 *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*

We covenant together to be of one mind and to live in peace.

2 Corinthians 13:11 *Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*

We covenant together to exemplify the mind of Christ.

Philippians 2:5 *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

We covenant together in one accord and agreement as did the early church.

Acts 2:46 *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,*

We covenant together in carrying out the great commission.

Matthew 28:18-20 *18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

We covenant together in singleness of heart, meaning our spirits.

Acts 2:46 *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,*

We covenant together in the present of witnesses, and in the presence of God Who knows the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

In the presence of God Who oversees all actions and reactions, and Who sees the end from before the beginning.

Isaiah 46:10 *Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:*

In the presence of God Who sees "All" we say, do, or think.

1 John 3:20 *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*

How do we know God is in our presence when we covenant together?

Psalms 139:7-12 *7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; 10 Even there shall thy hand*

*lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. 12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.*

Psalm 34:15 *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.*

### **In the presence of Angels**

Some say there are as many angels as there are humans. "The number of angels are equal to the number of humans who have lived, will live, or are living therefore God's creation is balanced." Chaffer

Angels are spectators in the church.

1 Peter 1:12 *Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*

Angels rejoice over the repenting of sinners.

Luke 15:10 *Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*

Angels shall separate the wheat from the tares.

Matthew 13:39 *The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.*

Angels watch over and protect us.

2 Kings 6:16 *And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.*

Psalms 34:7-8 *7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. 8 O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*

Angels minister to the believer. They minister even before an individual becomes a believer.

Hebrews 1:13-14 *13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? 14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

They deliver messages from God in the presence of this Assembly. When we unite with a church, we enter a relationship which brings the full assembly to note or witness our action. When becoming a member of a local body, we commit ourselves to the principles which identify that body of believers as a New Testament Church. As a result of becoming a member of a local church, we become accountable to the church for our actions.

1 Corinthians 5:12-13 *For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*

### **We do now**

We do now most solemnly and joyfully (Most solemnly = seriously, soberly, earnestly, steadfastly, formally), and joyfully (cheerfully, happily, and in an optimistic frame of heart and mind) enter, (come into, join, register with) into covenant (bond, oath, pledge, agreement, contract) with one another in association, in coalition, in brotherhood, in company, identified with, in alliance, in union with, in connection with, in adherence with, alongside, by the side of, neck and neck with, and shoulder to shoulder as one body.

As one unit, not acting separately from the whole, in such a relationship that one represents the whole and the whole represents the one. As one organism alive, thriving, functioning, growing, developing, maturing as a complete body.

As one in purpose and program, having the same ideas, beliefs, commitments, determinations, goals, purposes and plans to carry out that purpose.

In an intricate and internal part of the whole, the single, working in conjunction with the rest of the body having been made a part of that body, in Christ.

What does it mean to be in Christ? It means to be in obedience to the commands of Christ.

1 Peter 1:2 *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*

It means to operate within the boundaries He set in motion.

Job 14:5 *Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass;*

It means to be under His blood and to have made a life-time commitment to Him regardless of the cost.

Ephesians 2:13 *In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,*

It means to share in suffering with Christ.

2 Timothy 3:12 *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

It means to dedicate to be faithful.

Ephesians 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:*

It means we are a part of the whole being fused together so that we no longer stand alone.

Romans 12:5 *So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

It means our eternal existence is linked directly with Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:19 *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

It means our freedom is the result of what God has done through Christ.

Galatians 2:4 *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

It means life is associated with the Person of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,*

It means we have become partakers of the eternal purpose of God.

Ephesians 3:11 *According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:*

It means there is no more judgment to undergo regarding salvation in that Christ took all the judgment against the repentant sinner in giving Himself upon the cross of Calvary.

Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

It means that the triumph of Christ over sin, death and eternal punishment is appropriated to the repentant sinner.

2 Corinthians 2:14 *Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.*

It means to become a new creature.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

It means we have become a masterpiece in the hands of God.

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

It means the believer is given justification and redemption through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:24 *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

It means the act of being made holy and set apart to a holy work is summed up in Jesus

1 Corinthians 1:2 *Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.*

It means absolute equality in the unity offered through Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:28 *Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.*

It means the promise of God is to all peoples and is upon the same basis.

Ephesians 3:6 *For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:*

It means that the highest calling and most noble pursuit is to be found in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:14 *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

It means that spiritual maturity can be realized only in Christ.



Colossians 1:28 *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:*

It means that in the final analysis, the extension of the grace of God is made through Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:1 *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

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