

The Church Covenant Part 3

A sermon by Pastor Byron Chesney August 3, 2016, 2016 during the PM service.

Our Church Covenant

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 our 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, backbiting 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 Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another with brotherly love, to remember each other 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 offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior 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.

=====

This is part 3 of our examination of our Church covenant and how it lines up with Scripture. We pick up tonight with the next part in paragraph 3 with the words; **to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage**

If there is one thing that you hear very little preached about these days it is the sin of drinking intoxicating drinks (wine, liquor, alcohol, beer, wine coolers, vodka, bourbon, whiskey, etc.). Back the 1920's **Billy Sunday** preached hard on the sin of drinking alcohol. When I was a Seminary student at Crown College, I had to study one of Billy Sunday's most famous sermons titled "**Booze.**" In that sermon he said that alcohol and the saloon was **God's worst enemy**. Let me read you a portion of it:

"The saloon is a liar. It promises good cheer and sends sorrow. It promises health and causes disease. It promises prosperity and sends adversity. It promises happiness and sends misery. Yes, it sends the husband home with a lie on his lips to his wife; and the boy home with a lie on his lips to his mother; and it causes the employee to lie to his employer. It degrades. It is God's worst enemy and the devil's best friend. . It spares neither youth nor old age. It is waiting with a dirty blanket for the baby to crawl into the world. It lies in wait for the unborn.

It cocks the highwayman's pistol. It puts the rope in the hands of the mob. It is the anarchist of the world and its dirty red flag is dyed with the blood of women and children. It sent the bullet through the body of Lincoln; it nerved the arm that sent the bullets through Garfield and William McKinley. Yes, it is a murderer. Every plot that was ever hatched against the government and law, was born and bred, and

crawled out of the grog-shop to damn this country. I tell you that the curse of God Almighty is on the saloon."

Another great preacher that preached hard against alcohol was Bro. Lester Roloff. Starting back in the 40's all the way until he died in 1982 he preached hundreds of sermons about the evils of alcohol. He had several homes and outreach programs that ministered to alcoholics. In one of his famous sermons, "**The Book That Makes A Difference,**" Bro. Roloff said that "**the great scourge of drunkards and dope addicts across this nation by the millions is because somebody didn't preach the Gospel to them which is the power of God to save. The only answer to an alcoholic or a dope addict is a miracle.**"

Another great preacher that preached hard against alcohol was Bro. Billy Kelly. He was born in Oliver Springs and lived right here in Knoxville, TN. I watched a video of him giving his testimony and he said that he was a drunk walking down Gay Street and stumbled into a pool hall when some men that were passing out gospel tracts went in and pulled him out got him sobered up and took him to a revival service at the University of Tennessee where he sat on the back seat intending to leave when the invitation was given. He said he went to sleep during the sermon and woke up during the invitation when the choir started singing and through the words of the songs he started falling under conviction. After one of his friends asked him where he would go if he died and he told him he would be going to hell, a bunch of people started praying for him and while they were praying he stuck one foot out and the other followed and he ran forward and slid into the altar like a baseball player sliding into home plate, and he got saved. He preached against alcohol until the day he died in 1997.

But nowadays there are pastors and preachers across this country who are too scared to lose their jobs or too scared of preaching against drinking because they are either soft on it or they know someone in their Church that drinks and don't want to upset them.

Well, let me tell you what the Bible says about drinking intoxicating drinks:

Proverbs 20:1: Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

That right there ought to be enough for any Christian to realize that Christians don't drink alcohol, but apparently there are those that don't think so. Well, there is plenty more in the Bible about it:

Proverbs 23:29-35: 29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? 30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. 31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. 32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. 33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. 34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. 35 They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

Do you see the example of the drunkard in those verses? It is describing a man that drinks strong drink. In other words he is a drunk. It said that the man that tarrys long

at the wine is a man that babbles. He gets wounded and doesn't even know how he got that way. His eyes are red. His eyes behold strange women and his heart is full of perverse things. He passes out and gets beat up and don't even remember what happened. But he wakes up and goes right back at it again. What a miserable life. A life that is not a Christian life.

Still not enough to convince you? How about this: **Proverbs 23:19-21:** Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. 20 Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: 21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.

Not only are we not to drink intoxicating drinks as a beverage but we are not supposed to sell it. I was so disappointed to go into the Food City this past Saturday for the first time since they began selling wine. It looks like they took out a ¼ of the store to make room for all the wine they plan on selling. Are there really that many drinkers in Knoxville? I mean, they've got as much wine as they do soft drinks. And that's not counting all of the beer they sell.

As a Church member you agree that you will not sell or drink intoxicating beverages. I'm not going to go into details of everything there is to know about drinking alcohol or try and defend what the Bible already says or answer all of the people that want to use the Bible to excuse their drinking, we will do that in another sermon sometime let's just say that Christians are not to drink intoxicating beverages.

and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior.

We could spend hours discussing this part. The word zealous means to show zeal, to be dedicated, to be fanatical about something. Mark 16:15 alone is enough for us to know that we are to advance the Kingdom of our Savior. **Mark 16:15:** And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

As much as people don't want to admit it, the great commission is given to all Christians, not just pastors, preachers, evangelists, and missionaries. You may not be able to go to a foreign country and share the Gospel but you can help advance the efforts by giving towards missions. You may not be able to go around door to door but everyone can write a letter or send a piece of mail or give toward the cost of mailing.

Our covenant says that we as members agree that we will be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior. That is simply telling the world about Jesus.

We further engage to watch over one another with brotherly love,

Romans 12:10: Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

1 Thessalonians 4:9: But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

Hebrews 13:1: Let brotherly love continue.

It doesn't take a Bible scholar to understand how the Lord expects Church members to treat each other. We are a family and we are to treat each other like family. We should have that family love about us toward each other as we would members of our own family if they were in need. If one of our members is in need or hurting then we as a Church family and we as individual members are to see that they get the

help they need. I am all for helping folks that are not members here but our members are to be taken care of first. I would hate to think that we would take up a collection to help someone outside of this Church when there is someone inside of it in the same need.

to remember each other in prayer: James 5:13-16: Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. 14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

There is no question that we are to pray for one another. Our bulletin is filled with folks that are going through all kinds of problems. I fear sometimes of that list being overlooked or becoming mundane and routine. We need to be fervently praying for each other and not just when we are sick but in the struggles of life.

Some folks were praying for me this past Sunday. I was getting kicked around by the devil all morning and all through Sunday school. It was one of the worst Sunday school lessons I have ever taught. By the time it was over I just wanted to go home and crawl in the bed and cry. Even through the choir singing I was struggling. I was wondering if I would even be able to preach. But somebody was praying because when I stepped up to the pulpit to preach there came a peace over me like I've never had. The Holy Spirit grabbed ahold of me on the first word that I read from the Bible. If it had not been for those prayers I don't think I could have made it.

to aid each other in sickness and distress: 2 Corinthians 7:4-7: Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation. 5 For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. 6 Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; 7 And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

Paul often wrote to the Churches describing how their prayers and love for him helped him in times of trials and distress. It gave him great joy and comfort knowing that the Church as praying for him and sending aid when they could.

to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech,

That word "*cultivate*" means "*to prepare, to develop*," such as you would cultivate a field to plant crops. We as Church members are to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech.

Sympathy in feeling: The word "*Sympathy*," means *to have pity or sorrow of someone's misfortune*. We are to sympathize with those that are downtrodden and less fortunate than we are. We are to cultivate a culture in the Church that has sympathy for those folks and have feelings for them and concerned for their welfare. There are numerous examples from the Bible concerning the proper treatment of the poor:

James 1:27: Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Psalms 82:3: Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.

Proverbs 17:5: Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

and courtesy in speech: We are also to speak with courtesy to the poor and each other. Churches are made up of people of all different kinds. Some are more well off than others but that doesn't mean we should only treat the ones that are well off with more respect than those that are less fortunate. We are warned in the Bible about this kind of behavior:

James 2:1-9: 1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? 5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? 6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? 7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? 8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: 9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

Perhaps you have heard this story: There was a Pastor named Jeremiah Stepek who transformed himself into a homeless person and went to the 10,000 member church that he was to be introduced as the new head pastor at that morning. He walked around his soon to be church for 30 minutes while it was filling with people for service....only 3 people out of the 7-10,000 people said hello to him. He asked people for change to buy food... NO ONE in the church gave him change. He went into the sanctuary to sit down in the front of the church and was asked by the ushers if he would please sit in the back. He greeted people to be greeted back with stares and dirty looks, with people looking down on him and judging him.

As he sat in the back of the church, he listened to the church announcements and such. When all that was done, the elders went up and were excited to introduce the new pastor of the church to the congregation...."We would like to introduce to you Pastor Jeremiah Stepek"... The congregation looked around clapping with joy and anticipation....The homeless man sitting in the back stood up... and started walking down the aisle... the clapping stopped with ALL eyes on him.... he walked up the altar and took the microphone from the elders (who were in on this) and paused for a moment.... then he recited

Matthew 25:33-46

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.
34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:
35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:
36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

After he recited this, he looked towards the congregation and told them all what he had experienced that morning... many began to cry and many heads were bowed in shame... he then said... Today I see a gathering of people... not a church of Jesus Christ. The world has enough people, but not enough disciples... when will YOU decide to become disciples? He then dismissed service until next week... Being a Christian is more than something you claim. It's something you live by and share with others.

to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay: If there is one thing that has been lost over the years is the ability for people to not be offended. Nowadays everybody is offended over everything. If a preacher preaches against sin there will be somebody in the congregation that will take offense to it because it stepped on their toes. I'm always amazed at what some people get from a sermon or remember from a sermon. They will hear one little thing that they take offense to and that is all they can think about. I could stand up here and preach against drugs and alcohol and sodomy and fornication but if I preach against abortion there will be somebody that will take offense to it because they know someone, have a family member, or they themselves were involved in abortion. Hey, sin is sin and all sin can be forgiven except for blaspheming against the Holy Ghost. So instead of getting offended, be convicted and take it to the Lord in prayer.

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. If you are a Christian then this shouldn't be a problem at all because Christians attend Church. Therefore, it should be expected that anyone that is a member of this Church, if they left for whatever reason, should find another Church to worship in and exercise their God given gifts and talents.