

*For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.*  
1 Thess. 4:3

## **Regarding Sanctification**

Council of the Evangelical Christian  
Baptist Congregations

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*Dear Friends in Christ!*

This brochure was first published in 1964 by responsible ministers of the Evangelical Baptist Brotherhood. It was meant to be a spiritual help to believers. It brought them abundant blessings and achieved positive results in their growth pertaining to holiness.

In the past years the number of suitable brochures in circulation has greatly decreased, yet the need has increased. Because of the spiritual condition of the churches the need arises again and again to examine one's own walk before God in order to do away with every sin which hinders fellowship with the Lord and fruitful service for Him.

This brochure will also be helpful as a call to sanctification for churches which are not in our brotherhood, because they are close to us in spirit and in the marvellous doctrine of Jesus Christ.

The true disciples of Jesus understand that the return of our Lord is ever nearer. Therefore the condition of the Christian world becomes even more dangerous. That is why Jesus Christ Himself warned, *"When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"* (Luke 18:8). The day of the Lord, *"shall not come, except there come a falling away first"* (2 Thess. 2:3).

The instructions to the true church remain: to attain to the fullness of the Holy Spirit through benevolent, effective sanctification, with prayer in which the whole congregation participates, and that each congregation experience the presence of

our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, *"in Whom we have redemption through His Blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"* (Eph. 1:7).

Without sanctification there can be neither answers to prayer nor revival, neither successful missionary work nor evangelistic work nor a godly building up of the church.

May the Lord bless this somewhat supplemented spiritual material for the benefit of His people and to the glorification of His Name!

*"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thess. 5:23).

With Love and Prayers, your brothers in Christ –  
The Council of the Evangelical Christian Baptists

January 1990

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## **An Appeal**

To all brothers and sisters who constitute the Church of Jesus Christ:

*"This is the will of God, even your sanctification".*

1 Thess. 4:3

*"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without  
which no man shall see the Lord. "*

Heb.12:14

Beloved co-laborers in the Church of Jesus Christ! Beloved brothers and sisters!

*"Grace be unto you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."*

Gal. 1:3-5

In July, 1964 a Conference of elders, evangelists, and ministers of the ECB Churches convened. The question of the spiritual condition of the Church in our whole country was discussed. During the Conference it was mentioned that in August 1961, the Lord, through His ministers, had called the churches of the ECB to purification and sanctification, because a significant part of God's people had wandered away from the truth and had entered the path of deliberate violation of the Lord's basic commandments both in personal life as well as in church life. This appeal was answered gladly by many children of God and by whole congregations. Those who purified themselves are experiencing rich spiritual blessings from the Lord today. They are being strengthened and continue to grow in the Lord.

However, many believers, and not a few congregations, have not accepted the call to holiness. Therefore, because the work of sanctification is being neglected among them, they remain in the condition of self-deception, in that, although they accept the teaching that sanctification is desirable, they believe that it is, nevertheless, not absolutely necessary.

Some believers have accepted the call to sanctification, yet, for various reasons, have not taken any action toward it.

Christ loves His church and gave Himself for her, so that He may purify her. He wants to see His bride holy and without blemish and without any sinful spot (Eph. 5:25-27).

The church of Christ has received an undeviating command to holiness from the Lord, and He warns that the salvation of those who do not follow the way of sanctification is in danger, for without holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12: 14).

The Conference also dealt with the question regarding what more the children of God must do in order to undertake practical steps, with God's blessing, that will lead to the origination of a pure and – holy condition in the church and, so

purified, to acceptance of the boundless grace of God for life and service to His glory.

As a result of these discussions the brothers reached a unanimous decision: to encourage all those who love the Lord, all those who hold the salvation of God as precious, to commit themselves to self-examination and soul-searching and also to begin to inspect their ranks (Lam. 3:40).

Everyone who, in the light of God's Word,' discovers any sin and whose conscience, through the Holy Spirit, is convicted, is commanded by the Lord to forsake the sin and to cleanse themselves (2.Cor. 7:1).

We may talk a lot about sanctification. However, if we postpone it until tomorrow, if we do not begin immediately today to judge ourselves regarding every sin and every deviation from the truth and do not repent and as long as we are not able to say, "From now on I will strive to walk in the way of absolute fulfillment of the Word of God" - so long purification and sanctification will not begin and will not come about.

The conference of the ordained brothers has made those explanations and given advice based on the Word of God and has unanimously accepted those resolutions which will lead to the sanctification and purification of the congregation. It was recommended that we make several supplements to the material presented and then to distribute the completed brochure among God's children, which we are now doing. Dear brothers and sisters, we are not presenting this material to you as a regulation, but rather as brotherly assistance, as practical information. This material on sanctification is directed solely to born again souls for whom God's Word is Truth and His laws are commands.

In the Conference, the hope was expressed, that all responsible brothers and all of God's children whose salvation is dear to them and who sincerely desire to follow Christ, would accept our advice, accept our brotherly assistance, and answer the call of God to sanctification. If they will do that they will certainly 'experience the riches of godly blessings.

We will accompany this appeal with our prayers that the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, will move your hearts so that you will fulfill His will in everything.

In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the sake of your salvation, we beseech you with full earnestness and feeling of responsibility, that you accept this appeal, and that you conduct yourselves toward the laws of God with fear and awe.

May the Lord, by His grace, bless these undertakings to the spiritual benefit of His Church and to the glory of His glorious Name.

To Him be honour and worship! Amen.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

## **Regarding Holiness And Sanctification**

### **General Definitions**

The word "holiness" means spiritual and .moral purity, being undefiled in soul and in body, not involved in evil.

Holy means undefiled, not being involved in evil (Heb. 7:26).

Only the Triune God is holy in the absolute sense, i.e. in the highest meaning of the word. *"Who is like unto Thee, O Lord ... glorious in holiness?"* (Ex. 15:11) *"There is none holy as the Lord"* (1 Sam. 2:2). *"Thou only art holy"* (Rev. 15:4).

All those who separate themselves and who surrender themselves as God's possession, become holy. God makes them saints, i.e. pure, unblemished in spirit, soul and body - and He Himself performs this (1 Thess. 5:23).

This .process of separation and surrender to God, this process of acquiring the characteristics of holiness is called sanctification.

The word "sanctification" means separation, selection, and consecration as a possession of God. Apart from, God there can be no holiness. As a holy God He is an enemy of all evil. For wickedness, for sin, He is a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24). *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (Heb. 10:31). When Isaiah: saw the Lord<sup>1</sup>heard the words, *"Holy, holy, holy is' the Lord of hosts"* he exclaimed, *"Woe is me! For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips"* (Isa. 6:3-5).

Not only Isaiah must pronounce such a: judgment upon himself, for the Word of God says that everyone who is born of a woman is unclean (Job 15: 14).

*"There is none righteous, no, not one ...they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one"* (Rom. 3:10-12). Yet God showed people such great mercy that He freely gave them purity, holiness and salvation (1 Cor. 1:30).

### **The Purpose of Sanctification**

How does God perform sanctification, and how does He make holy what was unclean?

In the Word of God we see that in the Old Testament, sanctification began with separation. That which God had chosen for purification He separated out from the rest. For purification, it was necessary for the people of Israel to separate themselves from the people of Egypt, to be the Lord's possession (Lev. 20:24; Deut. 7:6; Psa. 114: 1, 2). The Levites were required to separate themselves from the people of Israel as a possession of the Lord (Num. 8:14). During purification, the sons of Aaron were required to separate themselves from out of

the midst of the people of Israel as a possession to the Lord, in order to fulfill their priestly duties (Ex. 28:1).

But separation is only the first part of sanctification. After separation the Israelites were required to wash themselves in order to cleanse themselves from any defilement and sin. For that purpose they washed themselves with water, then they brought a dean and unblemished animal, placed their hands on the head of the sacrificial animal and so identified with it, that is, they became one with the sacrifice, consequently their sin was transferred to the sacrifice and the holiness, purity and blamelessness of the sacrifice was imputed to the one who offered the sacrifice. Then the sacrificial animal, which now had the sin upon it, had to undergo fire, that is, it had to be burned by the consuming fire. However, the heart of the one who had received holiness and purity was filled with the awareness of complete peace with God, complete innocence, purity and holiness (Num. 8:6, 7, 12).

In the New Testament the Lord has 'abolished all human mediators and animal sacrifices as a means of purification and has made every believer a priest unto Himself (1 Peter 2:9): Therefore we, the priests of the New Covenant, must learn both from the model of the Old Testament as well as from the pattern of Old Testament al sanctification which was performed at the consecration of the priests. It began with:

1. *Separation* (Ex. 28: 1), this was followed by
2. *Purification* (Ex. 29:4, 10-14) and finally
3. *Anointing with holy oil* (Ex. 40: 13-15).

This pattern is full of simplicity and wisdom. If there was even the slightest violation of this God-ordained order, purification could not be attained; for it is impossible to purify the one who has not been separated from an unclean environment. How much less can one, who has not purified himself, be anointed with oil? The Old Testament pattern of sanctification is, for us today, only significant as an example and an instructional type. Jesus Christ has never violated any of the regulations (for they are established by God) but has given us higher expectations regarding sanctification. Christ has replaced the ritual holiness, which focused on the outer purity, with an infinitely higher inner holiness which is based on the purification and renewal of the mind and the heart.

In order to perform this most blessed sanctification, the Lord gave incomparably precious means. God Himself approached mankind in order to sanctify them. In place of the blood of animal sacrifices He gave His Son, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and His precious, holy blood (John 1:29; Heb. 9: 12). Instead of the holy oil He gave us, the believers, the anointing of His Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20) and made our bodies the Temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us (1 Cor. 6: 19). However, God did not change the order of sanctification.

The precious truths regarding separation, purity and the filling of the Holy Spirit permeate the whole teaching of the New Testament.

Regarding separation we read: *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you"* (2 Cor. 6: 17). *"Let him deny himself"* (Matt. 16:24). *"Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple"* (Luke 14:33). *"Ye ...have been taught by him ...that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man"* (Eph. 4:21, 22).

God's desire is, through separation from all sins, to free us from everything to which our heart is in bondage and from ourselves as well, for only then is purification possible. What does the Word say regarding purification?

After the sin has been forsaken, even after separation, we are still unclean; sin still clings to us. The apostle Paul says: *"Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit"* (2 Cor. 7: 1). But when we have separated ourselves from sin, then purification is possible: *"Come now, and let us reason together,"* saith the Lord, *"though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow"* (Isa. 1:18). *"The Blood of Jesus Christ... cleanseth us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7).

Only after purification is the filling of the Holy Spirit possible, for it is written: *"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work"* (2 Tim. 2:21).

When our heart is pure, then we are required to, and can be, filled with the Holy Spirit more and more (Eph. 5: 18).

When the temple is free from the idols of sin, the Lord fills us more and more with the Holy Spirit, as it is written: *"I will dwell in them, and walk in them"* (2 Cor. 6:16). By living in us and walking in us He also makes our walk holy.

The great truths regarding sanctification are also explained in many other places in the Holy Scriptures. However, the essence is the same: the one who is being sanctified must increasingly remove himself from every sin and purify himself and continually be filled with the grace of God for his walk in holiness.

The words "lay aside," "mortify," "unclothe," occur throughout Scripture. They exhort us to separation, to the removal of every sin and summon us to sanctification.

The words "risen with Him," "be filled," "be clothed," exhort us to be filled with the Holy Spirit and with the grace of God (Eph. 4:22-24).

## **The Purpose of Sanctification**

God pursues very definite goals in the process of sanctification.

First, He wants to free His people from the law of sin (Rom. 8:2), to lead them in the way of ever increasing holiness - *"He that is holy, let him be holy still"* (Rev. 22: 11) - and to keep them in constant readiness for the Rapture.



Second, He wants to take full possession of His people to use them for holy works and for His glory. *"For the Lord's portion is His people..."* (Deut. 32:9). *"Ye are not your own"* (1 Cor. 6: 19). *"Yes hall be a peculiar treasure unto me..."* (Ex. 19:5).

On the day of our conversion to the Lord we merely stepped over the threshold of God's house. In spite of taking the most important step, nevertheless, we only took the first step on the way of a holy life before God which lies before us. When a child of God, which has taken this step, remains satisfied with this step and does not continue walking in the way of further sanctification, he will inevitably fall into sin and move toward destruction.

Israel escaped out of Egypt and was baptized in the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:2). Although they had escaped from the Egyptians, they were not released from their sins, for one cannot flee from oneself. This resulted in the situation that, even though Egypt no longer threatened her with anything, the vice and sin which revealed itself on the way to Canaan dashed many into destruction (1 Cor. 10).

We, who on the day of our conversion stepped out of the world and were baptized in Christ Jesus but did not separate from our natural character, from our sins and vices, are like that too. If we do not free ourselves more and more from our sins and vices, we will not have the victory over them, but they will have the victory over us and bring us down to destruction. The Lord has not chosen us just so we could be called saints but rather, so that we should be holy (Eph. 1:4).

One cannot call such a person holy who, on the day of his conversion, has abandoned such big, conspicuous sins as drunkenness, filthy talk, smoking and similar things and yet, at the same time, has retained greed, envy or hatred. That is not holiness. Even though you do not commit adultery, yet you look on a woman with lust; or you do not kill, yet you are full of hatred (Matt. 5:28; 1 John 3: 15). That is not holiness but sin which has resettled from the outside and hidden itself on the inside. That is a dangerous, inner sickness that will burst out whenever an opportunity arises. That is a hidden uncleanness which will, in due time, lead to open sin. Instead of sanctification and purification, such people add another sin to themselves: a hypocritical godliness (if they only have the appearance of godliness but inwardly are full of sin, Matt. 5:20). We must remember that the hypocritical "righteous" will not inherit the Kingdom (Matt. 24:51).

The Lord, who has granted us everything which is necessary for true godliness (2 Peter 1:3), did not command us to sanctify ourselves just so we could varnish ourselves on the outside and allow uncleanness free reign on the inside. He did not give us the great riches of grace in His Son so that sin could be covered over and whitewashed without exterminating it; but rather, for the purpose of the inner transformation of mankind, to work in us an imperishable inner beauty, to make us into people who, constantly beholding the glory of the Lord, will be transformed into that same likeness from glory to glory, even as through the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor. 3: 18), and gradually we acquire the mind which was also in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5).

Then the greed which proceeds from our hearts will give way to increasing generosity, pride to humility, hatred will be replaced with love. Then the one who went his own way, will joyfully place himself totally at the disposal of the Almighty, *"as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service"* (Rom. 12:1).

### **What Has God Prepared for our Sanctification?**

For our sanctification, God has given:

1. **The Word of God** (John 17:17)
2. **The Lord Jesus Christ** (John 17:19; 1 Cor. 1:30)
3. **The Holy Spirit** (1 Peter 1:2)

### **The Word of God**

In order to become sanctified and to walk before the Lord in holiness, one must, first of all, have an understanding of holiness. One must know what is holy and what is not holy. We learn this only from Him Who is Himself holy in the highest sense.

The Word of our Holy God is, therefore, the unsurpassed doctrine which is the only true and satisfying source of holiness. The Word of Truth reveals with absolute accuracy and clarity what we are, and how through obedience we must act in relation to the Word of God.

The command of the Lord is, *"holy and just and good"* (Rom. 7: 12). In order to be holy, just and good, one must live according to the commands of the Lord, according to His Word. The Lord has said: *"This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein ... "* (Josh. 1:8).

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine, continue in them ..." (1 Tim. 4:16). A constant striving to abide in the Word of God and an ever more blameless fulfilling of the Word of God in life and in service-precisely this is the path of sanctification. No Christian and no congregation can be holy if they do not pattern their life and their service according to the Word of God.

Yet, just to have knowledge of what God's Word says about holiness is not any kind of sanctification. It is one thing to know something, and a totally different thing to fulfil what one knows.

One must bear in mind that the command to purification was given from the Lord and was given in consideration of the specific conditions in which God's people lived. These conditions are extremely difficult and make the fulfilling of the commands of God totally impossible without His personal assistance. What is the source of these difficulties for the people of God?

*"I have given them Thy Word, and the world hath hated them"* (John 17:14). The true children of God have lived as the minority in all ages. The majority of mankind, however, goes against the Truth (Matt. 13:14).

The way which the people of God tread is narrow and thorny. Jesus Christ said, *"If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you"* (John 15:20). *"And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death . . . and ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake"* (Matt. 10:21, 22). *"They shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten; and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake"* (Mark 13:9).

One who fought this fight on the path of holiness and service said: *"Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off scouring of all things unto this day"* (I Cor. 4: 11-13).

These are the conditions in which we not only protect the standards which we have attained, but also those in which we must sanctify ourselves more and more. These difficult conditions will not be experienced only by those who have degraded themselves to the standard of the world. Those who desire to live godly lives, who desire to walk in the path of sanctification, must also be prepared to endure these hardships (2 Tim. 3: 12).

In such circumstances when, in addition to the harsh outward conditions, constant inner temptations present themselves, powers for sanctification must be readily available which are immeasurably greater than those other powers which attack us. For it is precisely in these difficult conditions we must *"have a fervent love for one another," "bear one another's burdens," "be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another."* In these conditions one must show holy fruit and in every place be the sweet savour of Christ. Therefore, we need the powers of Him Who is stronger than the world, Who has overcome the world (John 16:33). *"For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power"* (1 Cor. 4:20), and without power from on high we cannot begin to address holiness.

Every attempt to live a holy life without power from above is futile and only leads to the humiliation of those who undertake it. Nothing produces more anguish, than when one has the knowledge regarding holiness; when one must act and has no power to fulfil what one knows. And that happens with everyone who tries to fulfil the Word without the power of God. Life, for them, becomes a difficult ordeal, their conscience constantly judges them, they are plagued by a guilty conscience, for the good which they desire and for which they possess all power that they cannot do, but the evil, which they do not want, that they do. In despair they cry out, *"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* (Rom. 7:19, 24).

It is sad that many, after these groanings and many years of fruitless efforts, come to the conclusion that the power is with God (Psa. 62: 11) and that, without His power, it is impossible to fulfil His Word.

## **The Lord Jesus Christ**

Because of His great love, God gave us, not only His Holy Word, but also His power in order that we could fulfil His Word. It was for that purpose that He sent His only begotten Son into the world-our Saviour Jesus Christ.

In Christ we have, not only the power from above, but also complete wisdom, all knowledge, all heavenly treasures. Everything that is necessary for our sanctification is found only in our Lord Jesus Christ. That is why the Apostle Paul tells us that Christ, *"is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"* (1 Cor. 1:30). *"I and the Father are one"* says Christ (John 10:30). *"All things are delivered to Me of My Father"* (Luke 10:22). *"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"* (Matt. 28: 18). Sanctification is impossible without Christ. He said, *"For without me ye can do nothing"* (John 15:5). Not without His permission, yet without His personal participation.

That is the reason why Christ came-to sanctify us (John 17: 19). Without Christ mankind has no access to the heavenly treasures, for everyone who is born of a woman is unclean. *"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me"* (John 13: 8). Therefore, the first gift of God's grace is the precious, holy blood of Christ with which He cleans and sanctifies us. Only then does everything heavenly become ours in Christ Jesus.

*"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered"* (Heb. 13: 12). He *"gave himself for us"* (Titus 2:14). *"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"* (Heb. 10: 10).

After our conversion and adoption as His sons, Christ moves into our lives and dwells in us. He performs His blessed work of furthering our sanctification, so that, more and more, we become *"partakers of the divine nature"* (2 Peter 1:4).

*"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God"* (1 John 3:1). Not merely called, but we are to be. If it should happen that we fall and become unclean (consequently we lose fellowship with the Lord), when we then come to Him in repentance, we again receive His treasures, for the holy blood cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

In Jesus Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead, and in Him we are complete (Col. 2:9, 10). In order to be filled with this completeness of God, one must have an inner fellowship with Christ; not with that part of His prophecies and with His power but with Himself. For only in Him is everything granted to us which we require for life and godliness. When Christ lives in our hearts, He works in

us *"both to will and to do of His good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:13). He will transform our entire being.

He Himself will be formed in us and sanctify us more and more, guiding our lives. And then our old nature will increasingly decline and die away, and the life of Jesus Christ will be revealed in all its power, holiness and beauty. Then we will be able to say as did the Apostle Paul, *"I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"*, (Gal. 2:20). *"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness"* (Rom. 8: 10).

A Christian is holy and beautiful when Christ is in his heart, for he is *"fairer than the children of men"* (Psalm 45:2).

## **The Holy Spirit**

We know that everything that God has prepared for us is hidden in Christ. Christ came so *"that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"* (John 10: 10).

How then, can we receive Christ, all His riches and all the total fullness of God? Everything that we have in Christ does not truly become our possession other than through the working of the Holy Spirit. You see, when the Holy Spirit fills our hearts, then He makes Christ our own, and that is the only way to win Christ. Christ said, *"I go my way to him that sent me"* (John 16:5). *"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away"* (John 16:7). *"I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth"* (John 15:26).

*"The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things"* (John 14:26), *"For he shall not speak of himself..."* (John 16:13), *"He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you"* (John 16:14). So we see that Christ, through the Holy Spirit, takes up residence in our hearts. Being filled with the Holy Spirit means to gain Christ more and more. We read, *"Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you?"* (2 Cor. 13:5). And in another place, *"Know ye not that ... the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"* (1 Cor. 3: 16). The purpose and goal of the Holy Spirit who lives in us is for the working of good in our total being.

We know from the Word of God, that the evil comes forth *"from within, out of the heart of men"* (Mark 7:21), and this evil defiles men, makes them unclean.

And even if a man, under the strict prohibition of the law, restrains all this evil and does not allow it a place, so that it does not come to fruition, however, in his inner being, that man does not become any cleaner by this effort.

Therefore we require cleansing and sanctification which takes place in the inner man. God sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts to accomplish this. And in order for this sanctification to be truly performed in us, the communion of the Holy Spirit with our spirit is necessary.

The Holy Spirit is the anointing of the Holy One; He teaches us all things; He *"is truth and is no lie"* (1 John 2:27). The more we are filled with the Holy Spirit, in

that we are doing the will of God, the more we receive the realization of, and the power for, holy living; and the more Christ is formed in us, the less room remains for our "I", for the expression of our character. For where the Lord enters, everything becomes holy; everything is sanctified by His Presence.

Through the Holy Spirit we have, *"the mind of Christ"* (1 Cor. 2: 16). Through the working of the Holy Spirit we must *"let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 2:5). Through the Holy Spirit *"God ...worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:13).

In this way, when the Holy Spirit works sanctification in our spirit, He produces fruit: *"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"* (Gal. 5:22, 23).

It is the main purpose of the Holy Spirit to renew in us the image of the true Man-Jesus Christ, into which we are constantly being changed *"into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (2 Cor. 3:18), *"until Christ be formed in you"* (Gal. 4:19). That is why the Word of God gives us all the commands of the Lord regarding how sanctification must be achieved. It also tells us how, what method, and which power we must use to fulfil our sanctification.

In Christ Jesus we have sanctification through His blood and with it His power and all heavenly treasures which are necessary for further sanctification and for a holy walk.

In the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ and all the treasures hidden in Him actually become our possession through the infilling of the Spirit of Christ, Who, as one is filled with Him, transforms us into the image of Christ, for *"God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts"* (Gal. 4:6). Therefore, may God grant you *"according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith"* (Eph. 3: 16, 17).

### **What Must be Done in Order to Use the Blessed Gifts for our Sanctification?**

In striving after sanctification many may ponder on how one may receive the gifts of God and neglect to think about what the Lord requires of them or how they may please the Lord. They can have desires which are offensive to God: to govern the word of God, to overrule Jesus Christ, to rule over the Holy Spirit. This, however, is a blasphemy that offends the Holy Spirit. Simon the sorcerer coveted the power over the Holy Spirit, so the Spirit would serve him, and not for the service of God. This led to his destruction. The one who desires to rule over the Word of God does not please God, but whoever places himself under the power of the Word in order to be obedient to Him, pleases Him. *"But to this man I will look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word"* (Isa. 66:2).

God is pleased' with those, who, like the Apostle Paul, considered all things as loss in order to win Christ (Phil. 3:8); but not to reign over Christ, but rather, to give oneself fully over to His might. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). This was the most important question' for the Apostle Paul and it was pleasing to the Lord.

The Holy Spirit is given only to those who present themselves to His power, for the Lord gives the Holy Spirit "to them that obey him" (Acts, 5:32)

The Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, that is, namely, the living God Himself. He desires our obedience toward Him, to see us, giving ourselves to Him.

Giving oneself to the power of the Word of God means to explore, to make an effort to fulfil blamelessly what it commands us to do.

To put oneself under the power of Christ means to take His yoke upon you, not to be in an unequal yoke with unbelievers, but rather to acknowledge Him and to follow unwaveringly in His footsteps.

To give oneself to the power of the Holy Spirit means, not to grieve Him and not to offend Him by our actions, but rather, to be filled with Him and to develop a sensitive ear for His holy voice, in order to fulfil everything which H~ dictates to our conscience. In order to give oneself to the power of God, one must, first of all, relinquish the dependence on his own strength, even in the most difficult circumstances of life, and submitting to the heavenly Father, humbly say, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). For that purpose we are to, "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God ..." (Rom. 12: 1). "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, " (Psa. 51: 17) not a renewed old man!

Crushing means crumbling. Crushing means to dethrone and to crush the ego, to leave nothing of self, nothing of one's own will, to fully humble oneself and prayerfully listen to the voice of God, to do only that which He wants, not to humble oneself under a strange yoke but rather, under the powerful hand of God. God gives grace to the humble. He looks on the humble and He exalts them (Isa. 66:2; James 4:6, 10).

The first steps in devoting ourselves to the Lord result in rich blessings. The Spirit of the Lord will fill us more and more. He will sanctify us and employ us for holy works.

Sanctification is, before all else, devotion. To fully devote oneself, that is the foundation for success in sanctification. Many who know and preach the theory of sanctification, nevertheless, remain unsanctified and unclean because they refuse to devote themselves to God as His possession.. However, He desires, not to hear our words regarding sanctification, but rather to see our works and our love toward Him. Are we truly prepared to put ourselves at His disposal?

What manner of blessed devotion we see in the Apostle Paul! He says, "I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ"

(Phil. 3:8). When the Lord sent him into dangerous places, he did not consult with flesh and blood. He went into these dangerous places without consideration of the danger, although he often realized that he might not stay alive. He had the sentence of death within himself (2 Cor. 1:8,9). This is what "denying oneself" means!

The Apostle Paul was devoted to the Lord and the Spirit of Christ filled him and transformed him into His image. The life of this Apostle is a bright torch for the Lord. He became this because he could consciously say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). The Apostle Paul was a man just as we are. Yet what a tremendous distance away (from a spiritual perspective) most of us find ourselves compared with him! Someone will say, "He is the chosen vessel of God." But are we not also chosen of God?

Paul recognized himself as the greatest of sinners, as one born out of due time; yet the grace of God did its work in him and exalted him to blessed heights. "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. 4:8). Paul did not accomplish that by himself. It was the Spirit of God who dwelt in him. Through Paul, the overwhelming power of wisdom and sanctification accomplished their purpose because, although an earthen vessel, he carried the treasure of the Lord within him and was filled with it (2 Cor. 4:7).

The other apostles, who had previously been fishermen and sinners, lived in this same way. With the Lord they themselves became exalted in sanctification to a level of holiness and wisdom that is unreachable by mankind.

The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, which filled them, performed this through their devotion, their self-denial. Through the Spirit of God they shine as lights in the world. Many, and once again, many myriads of believers have walked this same way of self-denial and have reached this blessed perfection; but beside them there were also others, who knew the Lord as well. He had accepted them but they did not dedicate themselves to Him as is appropriate and they went into the abyss.

Diotrephes, Ananias and Sapphira, Alexander the copper smith, Hymenaeus and Philetus and others were close to the saints. And what was their end? Was it only thus in that time? It is the same now. Some devote themselves to the Lord daily and grow in their sanctification; the others-next to them-only carry the Name as though they live. In reality, however, they go into destruction. Yet, the love of the Lord constantly calls all of us. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8).

Devote yourself totally to Him, keep yourself from all uncleanness; go forward in surrendering yourselves, even though with small steps, and He will bless your sanctification. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench" (Matt. 12:20). Just move forward, become filled with the Spirit and Christ's image will be formed in you!

On our side, sanctification consists of a constant turning away from everything which is not pleasing to God and in being totally devoted to Him; and on His side,



He actively fills us with the Holy Spirit so that we receive the fullness of Christ, grace upon grace (1 John 1: 16).

We see also, that the whole teaching on sanctification can be simplified into one commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" (Matt. 22:37).

The genuine children of God who are insignificant and know no complicated theories, but who remain under the power of the Word, under the power of Christ, under the power of the Holy Spirit, these receive all the treasures hidden in Christ through their love for Him, when Christ enters into their heart.

It may seem to us that we love the Lord; however, this must be verified by the Word of God. The Lord says that only the one who keeps His commandments really loves Him. Read the following words of Christ thoughtfully: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him ... and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:21, 23).

He will live in us through the Holy Spirit and bring about our sanctification, for it is written, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess.5:23).

Therefore, without self-sacrifice, without self-denial, the Lord will not fill our hearts; and without Him, sanctification is impossible.

One may be called a Christian for many years and know the Holy Scriptures; but whoever has not given himself over to Christ regarding sanctification as it should be and which must follow conversion, has not even taken the very first step in this direction.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12: 1).

## **The Necessity for Sanctification**

God has chosen us in Christ, "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). On the day of our conversion, we were sanctified by the Lord through separation from the world and from sin, through the cleansing in the blood of Christ, and through the anointing, that is, the sealing by the Holy Spirit. Thereafter, some obtained holiness in Christ and fellowship with God and began on the blessed way of further sanctification, while they were being filled with the grace of God. Others, however, although unconsciously, actually deceived the Holy Spirit.

On the day of their dedication they promised, with a good conscience, to serve God and to place themselves at His disposal. Yet, after their conversion, they did not apply their zeal to a holy walk but rather to fleshly living. They have robbed

God in that they have used their powers and means for their own purposes. They have allowed the earthly to tear them away and live to fulfil the lusts of the flesh. One may encounter this in whole families of the people of God, who, like Ananias and Sapphira, had promised to give everything, yet they gave God a miserable portion and had hidden the remainder.

Are you actually serving the Lord as you promised you would? Have you actually devoted as much zeal, power and means in blamelessness and sanctification as you promised?

Today one may ask the question of many, "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own ... was it not in thine own power?" (Acts 5:4).

They were called and sanctified on the day that they became believers, yet that did not save them, because afterward, they did not walk in the way of sanctification, but instead, turned to sin.

What awaits the contemporary Christians who do not walk in the way of sanctification?

We are surrounded by many believers. There are not a few congregations, which call themselves Christian, where one may hear the never-ending, "Lord! Lord!" in various languages and dialects. But should not the true children of God and true congregations distinguish themselves through holiness? What does the Lord say? "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). And what is the will of the heavenly Father? "This is the will of God, even your sanctification, " (1 Thess. 4:3) "that we should be holy" (Eph. 1:4).

Therefore, the necessity for sanctification grows out of the commandments of God. Not to follow these commandments results in most serious consequences, for without holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12: 14). Why will no one see the Lord without holiness?

The one who does not keep on being sanctified does not have a close relationship with the Lord and consequently will certainly bow to sin and fall deeper and deeper into sin. The sins make him unclean and if such a one does not repent and start on the way of sanctification, he will never see the Lord. For "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15).

But someone could reply, "I do not sanctify myself, but I do not sin either." This is self deception. Christ has eliminated the false affirmation of "the golden mean," "he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matt. 12:30).

The mean is the most dreadful sinful state. The one who is neither cold nor hot but is lukewarm is in the most dangerous situation. "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm ... I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15,16). The one who stands in the middle is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." That is precisely "the golden mean."

To all who practice untruth, He declares that the time is coming in which they will stand outside, knocking and asking, "Lord! Lord! Open up for us!" But He will answer them, "I know you not whence ye are" (Luke 13:25).

The same will be said to the foolish virgins who did not sanctify themselves, who were not continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

Why will the foolish virgins remain outside? How will their foolishness be revealed? Through conversion they were once espoused to one husband, Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). They travelled together with the wise virgins and in no way distinguished themselves from them. They held lamps in their hands and initially, possessed oil, therefore their lamps burned. Then, however, in the most important moment, their lamps began to go out and in the end, they inherited a tragic destiny.

What is a light? "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord" (Pro. 20:27). Be "fervent in spirit" says the Lord in Romans 12: 11. But how can one be fervent in spirit when he is not set on fire by the One who came for the purpose "to send fire on the earth?"

David says, "For thou wilt light my candle" (Psa. 18:28). The Lord lights the lamp and it burns, filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit. The lamp, which was lit on the day of our conversion, must burn and must not be allowed to go out. "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out" (Lev. 6: 13). That requires a continuous filling with oil, "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). This infilling with the Spirit is accomplished by the sanctification of the righteous. "The light of the righteous rejoiceth but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out" (Pro. 13:9).

Therefore, "he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be ... Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches" (Rev. 22: 11, 12, 14-16).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Regarding Purification**

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ!

We, your brothers and servants of the Lord, request and beseech you in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to begin immediately with the fulfilling of His will concerning sanctification. Do not postpone it! Do everything possible which you can do, so that all hindrances along the way of further sanctification may be removed.

The need for sanctification is perceivable everywhere. And if this is true, can we, who have heard the command of the Lord, still remain indifferent to the question of sanctification?

May it never be! What pleases God must also please us. His commandments must be the obligation of all the children of God.

Dear friends!

Because purification is the very focal point of sanctification and usually involves practical efforts and actions of the whole people of God, and because turning away from the commandments of God and sin are not only hindrances on the path of further sanctification but also present a deadly danger within themselves for the salvation of a great number of God's children, we exhort you all, to pay special attention and to do everything necessary for purification, so that we may lay aside every burden and every entangling sin, cleanse ourselves and remove every hindrance and obstacle in order to follow the Lord (Reb. 12: 1).

In the context of the above discussion we consider it necessary to discuss the matter of purification in greater detail.

Therefore, we turn our attention to all the children of God, not because all are living in a sinful state (thank God, there are many who have not bowed the knee to sin), but rather because, even if there are only a few who are unclean and the congregation knows about this and does not free themselves of them, in such a case the congregation will experience neither blessing nor success. Even one sinner is a root of bitterness that makes many unclean (Reb. 12:15). Therefore we direct our call to all and to every individual and we appeal to you to examine your standing before God and before the people of God. "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens" (Lam. 3:40, 41).

Everyone must realize and understand that each one who commits a conscious sin will perish unless he repents. Many believers, when they commit a sin, disregard the Word of God and avoid the part of Scripture in which the Lord speaks about death for sin. This is a most dangerous condition and forces us to exhort you to purification from all conscious sin.

Perhaps some think that when we speak about sins, we mean drunkenness, theft, fornication, etc. But do you comprehend which sins the Lord means? Do you know that whoever commits sins such as envy, wrath, debauchery, hatred and strife will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21)?

Some who have turned away from the truth intentionally maintain an indifferent and careless attitude toward the warnings of the Lord regarding the punishment for sin, and teach that the grace toward and for themselves will cover over all sins. With that they turn the grace of our God into an occasion for debauchery (Jude 4).

But the Apostle Paul teaches, "Be not deceived" (1 Cor. 6:9) and "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6).

### **How Did Purification Manifest Itself in the Old Testament?**

In the Old Testament, purification needed to be performed every time a member of Israelite society had committed a sin or had touched anything unclean (Lev. 5:1-6; 11:44; Num. 19:11,12; 2 Chron. 29:5).

Having performed the requirements of purification, the Israelite received forgiveness for that sin. He became cleansed from his uncleanness and was restored as an equally legitimate member of the people of God.

However, if the one who had become unclean or who had committed a sin disregarded the commands of the Law and did not cleanse himself, he was regarded as one who had rejected the Law of Moses and was punished with the death penalty without mercy (Heb. 10:28; Num. 19:20).

Thus, for the Israelite, being clean or unclean meant life or death. However, if the whole people of Israel sinned and violated the commands of the Lord, then the Lord brought them into distress and abandoned them, and they, having lost the blessing, were defeated by their enemies.

We read in the Word of God, "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant ... Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies ... neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you" (Josh. 7:11,12).

If, however, in their need and defeat, they remembered God, that He is their refuge and strength, if they turned back to Him again, then the first thing the Lord said to them was "Sanctify yourselves" (Josh. 7: 13).

Out of this we see that purity and holiness determined even success in war. Israel's power was not in the number of its armies and not in its weapons but in their purity and holiness.

For Israel there was not the slightest significance in the amount of armies the enemy moved against them; they had no necessity to count the enemy's army, but it was necessary for them to examine the holiness of their own number. Therefore, Israel's power was measured by its holiness and its relationship to God.

Purity or impurity, therefore, for each individual Israelite, as also for the whole of Israel, meant being or not being in the Promised Land; entering into the Promised Land or falling in the waterless desert; to have a blessing or to receive a curse; living or dying (Deut. 28)!

The history of Israel is full of blessing and the greatest miracles; yet, at the same time, it is full of examples of massive, tragic defeats, captivities and affliction because of their uncleanness. Open up any page of the Old Testament at random

and if it deals with affliction, read the preceding verses and you will find that the cause of this affliction is uncleanness.

If you open at a passage where it speaks about blessing and victory, read the preceding verses and you will find the key to discovering the cause of success-purity, holiness.

We see the tragic result of sin when we read about Israel in 1 Cor. 10:5. It says, "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." The entire society, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, remained in the desert and did not enter the Promised Land.

The example of transgressions against the holiness of God in our personal walk before God serve as an even more serious warning for us. The most blessed Israelite, the great man of faith and the leader of the people of Israel, Moses, who had a long history of serving the Lord, brought the people of Israel to the Jordan, repeated all the commandments of the Lord to them, and on that same day heard the words of the Lord, "Get thee up into this mountain ... behold the land of Canaan ... and die in the mount whither thou goest up because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel because ye sanctified me not ... Yet thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel" (Deut. 32:49-52).

### **How Does Purification Manifest Itself in the New Testament?**

Some might say, "The question of purity was a question of life and death for those who were under the Law, but we live under Grace."

Actually, for uncleanness, for sins, no immediate stoning awaits us as it was with the people of Israel, where for sins such as idolatry, violation of the Sabbath, adultery, etc. there was no purification at all, but rather, only death.

We are in a much happier position than the Israelites. But if we live as Christians under grace and do not purify ourselves from sin, but rather, above that, even commit conscious sin and wander away from the truth, then something more than merely death awaits us in eternity.

The Word of God says, "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:28, 29).

The Word of God states very clearly that without "holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12: 14), that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5), that "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth" (Rev. 21:27), and that "the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21 :8). That is incomparably more than mere physical death. That is why it has been said, "For it had been better for them not to have known

the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Peter 2:21).

So it is with the one who calls himself a Christian and yet sins consciously. And if such a person, who commits sin and strays from the truth, is not disturbed by such warnings of the Lord, this goes to show that he simply does not believe the Word of God and prefers to remain in self-deception because he has his own false concept on the matter. However, one must consider that the one who has sinned, as long as he does not repent, he will have no blessing and no success in his spiritual life and in his service. For he can have no fellowship with the Lord and that means he can have neither holiness nor power. For him there is only one promise that is forgiveness when he repents (1 John 1:9).

If we live in sin, God hears no other prayer but the prayer of repentance, "when ye make many prayers, I will not hear ... wash you, make you clean ... Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord" (Isa. 1:15-18). "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59: 1, 2). "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Peter 3: 12; 1 John 3:20). That is why David says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa. 66:18). David knew this from experience. Every born again Christian must also know this both on the basis of the Word of God as well as from personal experience. Each one who reads these passages of the Holy Scripture and hears what it says, even if he has already sinned consciously, he can confirm the truth of these Bible quotations because he has personally experienced this.

Beloved, you yourselves can respond to how purification manifested itself in an Israelite and how it manifests itself in a Christian.

Surely, you know this yourselves, brothers and sisters; but we want to awaken you with tears and with grief, in the Name of our Lord, through reminders for the sake of those who sin, and for the work of the Lord. For with the Lord, no word remains powerless but it will all be fulfilled in each one of us, as God warns us, just as it was fulfilled in Israel.

Therefore, dearly beloved, all must think about it, all must examine themselves and walk soberly for "let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

"When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live" (Eze. 33:13-16).

So then, beloved, today is the acceptable time, and we have a fountain of cleansing. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (2 Cor. 7: 1).

"Purge out . . . the old leaven" (1 Cor. 5:7) "lest I bewail many, " says the Apostle Paul, "which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness" (2 Cor. 12:21).

### **Whom the Lord Calls Unclean**

The Word of God calls each one unclean who sins consciously, who does unrighteousness consciously. In the first letter of the Apostle John, chapter 1 verse 9, we read, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

If one must cleanse himself from "all unrighteousness," then all unrighteousness and all uncleanness likewise is also sin (1 John 5: 17).

The unrighteousness of which the Word of God speaks is not only deceit and untruth, as is usually thought. Unrighteousness is, first of all, an unrighteous action, an unrighteous deed. Everything which does not conform to the righteousness of God and is not according to the Word of God is sin, is unrighteousness, and defiles that person. From this we get the terms "righteous" and "unrighteous." The Apostle John says, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous" (1 John 3:7) and further, "he that is righteous, let him be righteous still" (Rev. 22:11) and again, "depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity " (Luke 13:27).

Sin is every individual act which we perform for which our conscience reproves us, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart" (1 John 3:20).

### **Who Cleanses Us From all Sin**

Every Christian can come into a situation which overwhelms him and so he falls into sin-although he ought not to have done it. In the first letter of John we read, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1, 2). "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

### **Can the Lord Cleanse Us Without Our Participation?**

The Lord cleanses us only through our own direct participation that is based in our repentance. Whatever the sin may be, God commands repentance (Acts 17:30). "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness" (Acts 8:22). "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen" (Rev. 2:5).



Our repentance is the only condition by which God cleanses us. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

The number of our sins is so great and diverse that one could never count them all. Sin proceeds out of the heart of man, therefore, the number is just as endlessly great as the number of evil thoughts is endless!

Perhaps you have never yet investigated such a sin that may be equal to your own and no one outside yourself may know about your own sin for, "what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit ... which is in him?" (1 Cor. 2: 11). However, we must know one thing, each and every sin, whether it is big or small in our mind, be it secret or open, it is a sin that defiles and dishonours a person. Therefore, one must cleanse the conscience of all sin through repentance.

It is not necessary to repeatedly repent of sins which have been committed before conversion, or after, if repentance for them has already been done. One must not allow any doubt, but rather thank the Lord for their forgiveness. However, if you have repented but have not relinquished that sin, then you are required to abandon that sin and repent of it. If, however, someone has relinquished the sin (it does not matter from what motivation: whether there was no opportunity to sin or one voluntarily stopped sinning), yet did not repent properly, then the sin remains exactly the same no matter how much time has passed. For the sin is not forgiven by the passage of time but only through the blood of Jesus Christ when we have proper remorse for it and repent of it.

### **Whether Every Sin Will be Forgiven**

Thanks be to the Lord, there are no such heavy sins which can surpass the mercy of God and the blood of Jesus Christ. We have already referred to those passages in the Word of God which are rich with blessings. In these it is said that "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son cleanseth us from all sin" and "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Only those sins will not be forgiven for which the sinner does not repent; or even if he does repent, he does not do so sincerely, not as it ought to be done, without forsaking the sin. No rivers of purifying water and blood are able to wash clean the Israelite if he is not prepared to give up his uncleanness; so also exactly, neither can a Christian become clean if he does not separate himself from his sin and repent of it even though he knows that he is sinning (Heb. 10:26). Any and every conscious sin is a sin unto death, because "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15). We read however, "Have I any pleasure that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" (Eze. 18:23). Therefore, when a person repents as he should and forsakes his sin, however terrible the sin may be-the blood of Jesus Christ is

powerful to wash it away. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa. 1: 18).

Concerning those situations where the sinner repeatedly repents and sins again, we must remember that He Who taught to forgive until "seventy times seven" has an incomparable, boundless mercy, and we are required to fulfil that which Jesus taught. Sometimes, however, it is necessary, until the person's full recovery has taken place, not to receive such a person into the congregation.

There is only one sin that will not be forgiven, neither in this age nor in the age to come; that is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This sin consists in that, when a believer sees the working of the Holy Spirit he credits it to Satan, therewith blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:22, 29). An unbeliever, however, cannot blaspheme the Holy Spirit because he does not believe on Him.

The congregation cannot form a judgement regarding this sin. The Lord Himself grants blasphemers no forgiveness and no mercy and they cannot repent. God alone knows who has blasphemed the Holy Spirit. As far as the congregation is concerned, they receive the sinner who has repented. If God has given anyone the Spirit of true repentance, that person has not blasphemed the Holy Spirit.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Regarding Repentance**

Repentance is a conscious turning away from sin and a whole hearted turning back to God. God requires repentance of all who have sinned and distanced themselves from Him. Repentance must be accompanied by:

1. The acknowledgement of one's guilt and forsaking the sin (Psa. 51:5; Jer. 2:19)
2. Confessing the sin (Psa. 32:5)
3. Praying to God to forgive past sins and asking forgiveness from those against whom one has sinned (Psa. 51 :3,4, 11-13)

Repentance is not a superficial weeping under a flood of emotions, as some understand it, but a conscious action which is directed at reconciliation with God and our neighbour. Much time and energy must be applied toward this understanding. Sometimes restitution will also be required, toward however many the sin affected, in order to rectify the damage which the sin brought with it and to fulfil all that the Lord has commanded (Ex. 22).

Zacchaeus said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (Luke 19:8).

We will study the question of repentance in more detail.

## **1. Acknowledgement and forsaking of one's sin**

True repentance cannot be present if there is no deep inner acknowledgement of one's own guilt and if no forsaking of sins is evident. David says, "I will declare mine iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin" (Psa. 38: 18). In order to understand our behaviour better, we must separate ourselves from activity and from noise, allow the light of God's Word to invade us through fasting and prayer so that the Holy Spirit may convict us, in order to bring us to our senses the same way as the prodigal son (Luke 15:17-19). We must examine ourselves (1 Cor. 11:28). The prodigal son acknowledged his sin, forsook it and separated himself from it. After that he "arose, and came to his father" (Luke 15: 18-20). Without separation from sin, purification is impossible.

## **2. Confession-uncovering one's sin**

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper" (Pro. 28: 13). David says, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me ... I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psa. 32:3-5). "Confess your faults one to another" (James 5: 16).

Repentance without confession is not valid. For it is written, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Therefore confession is necessary. With respect to this, however, before whom must we confess? Must we hold ourselves strictly to the system of the rules and regulations of the New Testament?

### **Before Whom Must We Repent?**

We must repent before those against whom we have sinned (Luke 17:4), before those who know about our sin-that is, before those whom we may have offended (Luke 17: 1, 2)-and before God. Only God in Christ Jesus can remove and forgive our sin (Luke 5:24), because "without the shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

### **The Sequence of Repentance**

If we have sinned against our neighbour, as far as we have acknowledged our sin, we must not wait until he, our neighbour, confronts us; we must go to him, confess our guilt and repent before him; and if damage occurred as a result of the sin, we must be prepared, as far as possible, to do everything to make restitution for the damage and to be reconciled (Luke 19:8). Then we must go to those who know about the sin and repent over it because we have been a stumbling block to them (Luke 17: 1, 2), and only then make confession and repentance before God.

If, however, no one knows anything about the sin except the one against whom the sin was committed, then we must first repent before him and only then before God (I Cor. 8:8-13).

God does not accept our gifts, prayers and repentance as long we have not been reconciled with the one against whom we have sinned (Matt. 5:23, 24; Isa. 1:15-18).

If we have sinned against the congregation we must first repent before the congregation and then before God.

### **The Rules for Admonishing a Sinner**

If a Christian has become an eye-witness to sin he may not say about the sinner, "God will be his judge," but he must reprimand him in love. The one against whom sin has been committed must first of all reprimand the sinner and if he repents, must forgive him; if he does not repent, then, according to the rules of the New Testament, he must be reprimanded with witnesses, and if he does not repent reprimand him through the congregation (Matt. 18: 15-17).

In the case that the sin was not committed against you directly but you were a witness to it, then, if you are capable of doing so, admonish him yourself; however, if not, tell it to the responsible brothers of the congregation or to other such spiritual children of God, who are capable of reproving and correcting (Gal. 6: 1,2). If the sinner truly repents, then you must keep it in confidence and not reveal the sin. If the one reproving the sinner transgresses the order which has been given by Christ and speaks about the sin, then you must also reprove him for his sin against the Word of God, for he is a talebearer. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people" (Lev. 19: 16).

If the sin has been committed against the congregation, then the witness must report it to the responsible brethren and they must reprove the sinner and advise him to repent before the congregation.

### **Consequences of False Repentance and Refusal to Repent of Sin**

The Word of God testifies that swift retribution follows because of a persistent refusal to repent of sin. "I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick . . . repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight ..." (Rev. 2:5, 16).

However, if the sinner hardens his heart during the reproof, this will lead to sudden destruction.

Every false repentance leads to retribution. False repentance is the kind of repentance that, even though realization of guilt is present, no confession follows; or even when the confession occurs, there is no remorse over the sin which has been committed.

## **Consequences of Unwillingness to Confess Sins**

Cain had committed a grave sin, yet he answered the question, "Where is Abel thy brother?" with, "I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?" He did not confess, did not acknowledge his sin, and was cursed (Gen. 4:9-11).

Ananias and Sapphira set aside a part of the selling price of their property and with that committed a sin, but they did not want to acknowledge it. As the Apostle Peter asked, "Tell me, whether ye sold the land for so much?" Sapphira spoke a lie. The refusal to confess the sin led them into destruction.

## **Consequences of Not Showing Remorse for Sin Even if it is Confessed**

King Saul admitted his sin. He said it directly, "I have sinned;" yet at the same time he was not willing to confess that he had committed a crime against Him on Whom everyone depends for his steps and his breath. Instead of falling on his face and repenting in the dust, to pray for mercy and forgiveness, instead of debasing and humbling himself, he thought of a still greater exaltation. "I have sinned!" confessed Saul, "yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel ..." (1 Sam. 15:30). His sin was confessed, but only with the mouth; however, in his heart it was different. That is not repentance. The Lord had rejected Saul and he lost his life because of his unrepented sin.

A false repentance is also of that kind, when the sins are justified with various reasons and circumstances. No reason or excuse removes the guilt from the sinner in any way. On the contrary, if the sinner justifies himself with any kind of reasons, his guilt becomes greater, because he is dissatisfied with the circumstances and so blames the One Who creates them.

Here are some such excuses. Adam said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me" (Gen. 3:12). Achan stated, "I coveted them, and took them" (Josh. 7:21). Saul declared, "I feared the people" (1 Sam. 15:24). We find many similar examples of excuses in the Bible yet these explanations have never helped anyone, and each person received the retribution for his sins.

All of this speaks of the fact that, if we expect our repentance to be accepted, we must not try to justify ourselves with the difficult circumstances of our personal life, with the injustice which others do toward us, nor with the temptations which we face. We are not permitted to sin and to wander away from the truth under any circumstances.

Uzzah also had a reason to sin and to disobey the Law of God, but God struck him. Uzzah had no right to touch the ark of the Lord under any circumstances. But he thought that when it began to slip he could disregard the Law, and could disobey the Law of God, in order to hold the ark. Otherwise it would have fallen. As soon Uzzah touched the ark with his hand, the Lord struck him and he died beside the ark of God (2 Sam. 6:6, 7).

Today we see how present day "Uzzahs" strive to uphold the work of God. Afterward they go astray from the truth, they enter into sin so that they will not

lose their registration. Many have upright thoughts like Uzzah, that they uphold the work of God; that, however is no support, but rather, a pernicious corruption and destruction of God's work. If all of these "Uzzahs" do not repent they will receive the deserving punishment for their sin from God. Consequently, no reasons justify our falling away and our sin; therefore all that have a sin must truly repent for there is still time.

When the Prodigal Son had sinned he did not seek exaltation like Saul, but he humbled himself deeply and said, "Father, I have sinned ... and am no more worthy to be called thy son" (Luke 15:21).

When David sinned he realized that he stood before imminent punishment, and he felt remorse that he had sinned against Him Who had shown him so much love and grace. Therefore, he prayed for forgiveness and cleansing of his heart. He was asking that his life would be restored again.

He experienced deep remorse and confessed his guilt and did not try to justify himself with any excuses, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgression . . . Create in me a clean heart, o God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me" (Psa. 51:1, 10, 11).

May the Lord grant us all understanding regarding why we need true repentance.

### **Correction and Excommunication in the Congregation**

With the goal in mind of keeping the believers in moral and spiritual purity, the congregation is advised to pay attention if anyone lacks the grace of God. "Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Heb. 12: 15).

In order to remove sin from your midst, the congregation must allow itself to be led strictly by the Word of God and follow these guidelines:

1. Each one who has been caught in sin must be corrected through conversation with him by the spiritual brothers (Gal. 6: 1, 2), who are able to judge all things (1 Cor. 2: 15), who have the spirit of gentleness, and are capable of looking at themselves.
2. Regulate personal misunderstandings and lawsuits among the church members when the believers cannot come to peace among themselves (1 Cor. 6: 1-8).
3. Judge affairs if a church member has committed a sin against the congregation or has been disobedient to the congregation (Matt. 18: 17).
4. Judge matters if the church member who has sinned does not repent but rather continues in sin (1 Cor. 5: 11, 12).

### **Regarding Discipline**

All discipline is imposed only by the membership meeting of the local church. In the application of the discipline the congregation should use direction only from spiritual influences; they must be guided strictly by the Word of God. According to 2 Thess. 3: 11-15 the one who has not improved under instruction, who walks disorderly, must be "noted" and you must not associate with him (v. 14). He may not participate in the Communion and in the membership meetings. However, do not treat him as an enemy but instruct and admonish him as a brother (v. 15) so that he will become ashamed (v. 14).

Usually such a person will improve and the discipline will be removed. Yet sometimes he will continue in his undisciplined lifestyle and sin further. Then, if he does not repent after the instruction, we must refer to the question of excommunication.

### **Regulations on Excommunication**

Excommunication should occur only because of exceptional circumstances of consciously committed sin which the offender has not forsaken (1 Cor. 5:11-13; 16:22; Titus 3:10, 11; 2 John 1:9, 10 and particularly Gal. 1:9) and with the purpose of the betterment of the guilty party as well as the purification of the congregation from him so that the congregation will not be guilty of his sin before God on his account and lose the blessings. Excommunication is only used because of open, conscious sin and because of failure to improve. Excommunication is performed in a membership meeting and definitely with the person being excommunicated present (except in the case where his presence is not possible).

The person being excommunicated must be given full liberty to express before the meeting whatever he thinks is necessary to justify himself and may support his statements through testimony from other church members. He may not, however, receive support from those who are excommunicated. "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" (John 7:51).

After the matter has been investigated the question of his excommunication is presented to be dealt with by the whole congregation. The sinner is considered excommunicated only after general agreement in the congregation.

### **Our Behaviour Toward One Who Has Been Excommunicated**

Those who have been excommunicated from the congregation because of one sin, because of straying from the truth, will not be restored into the congregation except through sincere repentance.

As a general rule, the leading brothers must notify neighbouring congregations regarding the excommunication from the congregation for a sin, so that they will also know, although not which specific sin was committed, but rather, only that he has been excommunicated.

It is not permitted to greet in a brotherly way or to have fellowship with those who have been excommunicated. Conversation will be permitted only for the

purpose of instruction. Those excommunicated are not permitted to attend membership meetings-except if their case is being considered.

If the one who has been excommunicated for a sin repents sincerely and improves himself, then others must forgive him and show him mercy (2 Cor. 2:6-8).

To the one who has sinned and has repented, only those may remove the punishment and restore him to the fellowship who have the authority to impose or to remove punishment-that is, the membership meeting of the congregation.

### **Warning to Those Who Fellowship With the Excommunicated**

According to the Word of God we never have the right even to greet those who have been "noted" (2 Thess. 3: 14); much less to greet them and try to maintain fellowship with those who have been excommunicated for erring from the truth, and for sin. The Word of God calls members who have fellowship with those who have been excommunicated "partakers of their evil." "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God ... If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 9-11).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **A Reminder**

Brothers and sisters! In your purification, do not bypass and leave even a single sin in your heart, however large or small they may be according to your measurement. The most dangerous sin is exactly that one which is considered insignificant and which, in our mind, does not count as sin. Exactly these little sins cause the people of God the greatest defeat.

Fornication, for example, is a terrible sin. Everyone is wary of it. Yet envy seems unimportant, no one is frightened by it, people are indifferent toward it. Yet the results are the same. With the Lord there are no large or small sins. Each and every lawlessness as well as each and every unrighteousness is sin, and the result is the same. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15).

Since most believers consider the "little sins" to be of little significance, these "little sins" are the most dangerous because they separate us from God; and not merely a few souls, but they lead many people of God into defeat.

Congregations exist whose believers commit no "big" sins but they have envy, pride, discord and quarrelling. And those are the most unhealthy congregations. They will receive no blessing as long as they do not cleanse themselves. In these congregations often things are so confused that neither the congregation nor even visiting ministers know what to make of it from the reports, for the net of



sin has tangled everything so that it is impossible to find either beginning or end- everything is seized up with these "little sins." And whoever of the ministers is sent there- no one will be able to help: their sin has separated them from Christ and no minister can substitute for Christ with them. They need Christ, who cleanses them from their sins and after their purification promises them inner fellowship.

How many congregations are there in which the words of the Apostle Paul can describe the believers, "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:21). Although Christ gave His life for our salvation, many seek and defend their own but will not give in to their brother even one iota. Therefore they themselves sin and cast others into destruction. They will have to give account for these. Believers belong to Christ, they have been bought with a costly price.

The Apostle Paul warns, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." (Gal. 5: 15). About what kind of consuming does the Apostle Paul speak? Of this kind: if we enter into a quarrel and commit sin, we will perish if we do not cleanse ourselves.

In a number of congregations of the ECB, in addition to these inconspicuous sins, open transgression of the commands of God and erring from the truth has become almost a common occurrence.

In some congregations believers are being married to unbelievers. As many marriages of this kind that there are, that is how many unhappy families and unhappy children there are as well. Almost all of these kind of marriages end with a break-up of the family and in the loss of salvation. In such marriages, no blessing of the Lord is available.

And how many Christians are imprisoned by greed these days! They are often friendly and tactful in relationships. One cannot reproach them for anything. The problem with these people is that they do not want to think about the fact that no greedy person has an inheritance in the kingdom of God (Eph. 5:5).

In some places the use of wine has become common. However, if the members of the congregation use wine, what shall the world do? We tell those who drink wine, You obviously do not see, brothers and sisters, the thousands of ruined families, the thousands who are sunk in sin and immorality because of wine, you probably do not see this social evil. But instead of reaching out a hand to these who are going lost, you, who are in the church, commit this same sin! No one of those who get drunk with wine, can be filled with the Spirit, and those who occupy themselves with intemperance have no inheritance in the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

Another common occurrence in the congregation has begun. The dreadful sin of betrayal. Those who call themselves brothers and sisters, for their own personal well being, give information about God's work, the children of God and what the ministers are doing, to outsiders. They are fully aware that this disturbs the work

of Christ and leads to tribulation and suffering for thousands of God's children, as well as for servants of the Lord and their families.

A lesser sin rests upon Pilate, who delivered Christ over to death, than upon the traitor. "Therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin" Jesus said to Pilate (John 19: 11). "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. 26:24).

And if they do not repent, all those who betray God's children and His work will perish. This is a conscious sin, and the traitors know that they are betraying innocent blood.

It is no wonder, brothers, that many hearts are filled with fear. With such a multitude of sins one cannot have fellowship with the Almighty, and without fellowship with God, nothing but fear remains. Fear is almost always the result of other sins that weaken our hope and rob us of our openness toward God. (1 John 3:21, 22).

The righteous do not flee but "the wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion" (Pro. 28: 1). Because the righteous person knows that God is with him he can say "The Lord is my helper" and "I will not be afraid what man can do unto me" (Psa. 56: 11). "The fearful, and unbelieving ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21 :8). Yet who can enumerate all the conscious transgressions of, and all deviations from, the commands of God?!

I would like to remind you once more about the destructive work which the false teachers carry out on purpose. We see only the tragic results of their sin; ruined congregations, a dying brotherhood which has lost not thousands but ten thousands of God's children. And that, not because they have ceased believing in God. There are very few of those, but because of destructive sin and deviation they have become mired in sorrow and sin, they have ceased attending the services; and almost no one is seeking them, no one asks about them. And even those who still attend the services, one cannot be without concern for them for one more often meets those of whom it may be said, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Rev. 3: 1). Many, when they sin, think nothing of it, that they, if they are called Christians, dishonour the Name of the great, holy God and that, because of them, the Name of God is blasphemed among the nations. The sinner is frequently not the least bit concerned about the fact that he not only fails in the building up of the work of Christ, for which Christ gave His life, but actually destroys it.

Many today cannot bring the message of Christ to others because they crucify Him to themselves again (Heb. 6:6). They desecrate His body for the sake of their own pleasures, their own disgraceful passions, for their sins.

So then, everyone should think about their relationship to the Lord, examine his life, because "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Pro. 14: 12). Therefore, we want to examine ourselves in the light of God's Word and consider that whatever our sin and

wherever it has occurred, whether between husband and wife, whether between brothers and sisters or in other situations, every conscious sin results in defeat and leads to destruction.

Take any Scripture passage which warns about our responsibility for sins and you will see that both large as well as small lead to the same outcome. An example; the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Galatia, "Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:20-21).

Also, think about the fact that our fellowship with those who consciously stray from the truth, those who sin consciously, is also sin. Purification begins with separation, "Be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Cor. 6: 17).

But do not avoid those who stray from the truth out of ignorance, be merciful to them and explain the will of God to them, for it is written, "Of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 22, 23).

So then, what is to be done when the guilt for sin is so great and the mercy of God is so near? What must we do when the Lord desires our purification and He calls us to it? We must thank the Lord for it and accept His mercy and "Cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (2 Cor. 7:1).

### **What We Must Do So That the Lord May Accomplish Purification Among His People**

Beloved brothers and sisters! It is our prayer to God and our plea to you that all of you, after you have read this material, separate yourselves from every sin and all lawlessness, that is, forsake every sin and truly repent as is properly required. If you have sinned one against the other, then call on each other and be reconciled fully through repentance. Then go before the membership meeting of the congregation, one after another, and testify before all whether your conscience is free from sin.

This is necessary so that everyone experiences, not only your condition but also so that everyone may take note of you in reference to the evidence of your conduct, so that every sin may be removed and that your relationships with the believers may remain pure and above any suspicion. It is written, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another ..." (James 5:16).

If you have a debt toward the congregation, you must repent. If you have strayed from the truth, they may ask you, "How do you intend to behave in the future?" The Apostle Paul says, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3: 15).

Today this is demanded by the body of Christ, i.e. the Church, this is required for the work of saving many thousands of souls. This is also necessary for the good of your own soul. Whoever loves the Lord will also gladly testify of his hope for the hundredth, yes, even for the thousandth time. It is only difficult for the one who trusts in the Lord merely with words to testify of his hope if, in deed, he makes the flesh his strength.

The Psalmist said, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people" (Psa. 116: 14).

Come therefore, speak with one another, build up close relationships, do not turn aside to darkness, rather walk as the children of Light; with simplicity of conduct be what you are; do not be distressed by your weaknesses; do not spare sin; do all things in love.

Many live as though they are strangers to each other, even though they form one body. That is sin. We are children of one God; therefore purify yourselves, establish close relationships, close your ranks, for the time is evil.

Encourage one another in the Lord, and He will fill your hearts with the Holy Spirit! Also, give reminders about purification to those who have no fellowship, who do not attend the services, for this is sin (Heb. 10:25). Moreover, purification without fellowship is impossible, and whoever has no fellowship is in darkness (1 John 1:7). You must make every effort, that in every region, where the members of your congregation are living, all believers be members of the congregation, that they attend services and that they participate in the life of the congregation. It is necessary, in the process of purification, to examine and renew the membership.

In the days of purification it is necessary to pray continually, together with fasting, if possible. Pray for the purification, not only of one's own heart and the believers of one's own congregation, but also for the whole brotherhood.

May all those who have distanced themselves from the Lord through sin forsake these and turn back to the Lord through repentance, about which we all, like a big family of brothers and sisters in the faith, His old and young children, will pray to our Lord.

If it is possible, gather the disinterested, invite them also to purification. The angels in heaven rejoice over every sinner who repents!

In our brotherhood there are thousands of congregations. If, in every congregation, one would return, then thousands of lost sons and daughters would find the Father again. We want to pray for this, purify ourselves, and the Lord will attend to us abundantly.

Thanks be to the Most High God that He, out of love for us, warns us, admonishes us and calls us to purification. We are no exception, God is not a respecter of persons. If we do not confirm our calling and do not sanctify ourselves, then we also, the Evangelical Christian Baptists, when we sin, will, step by step, go astray from the truth and, in time, will ourselves change into a religious-worldly

organization, as many organizations, which have nothing of Christ except the name, have already been changed. Therefore, may the will of God regarding sanctification be fulfilled by all His people.

Beloved, we know and are convinced in the Lord, that the call to practical deeds with regard to purification and sanctification will call forth joy and praise to the Lord in all true children of God. Satan, however, will react with rage. Do not allow yourselves to be discouraged by this! Stand firm in the truth, fight against sin, and you will see the salvation of God. Move forward and do not be afraid; for because many are still afraid to confront sin openly, it parades around and boasts of itself, that it hits the camp of God's people at its' most sensitive point. Yet, as soon as we take up the battle against sin, Satan hurries to intimidate us and we stop. We must, however, resist to the point of shedding of blood in our struggle against sin (Heb. 12:4). Then our victory is assured. Beloved friends! Believe and do not be afraid, "resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). The devil has only one instrument against us-sin. Do not sin and you will be invulnerable!

Let us look to Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith, and let us work. Even if Satan has bruised someone in the heel, we still need to cleanse ourselves in the blood of Christ, remove the sting of sin and crush the old serpent's head, and oppose the whole power of the enemy.

Arise! Rouse the whole people of God for the battle against sin! Look around you: How many children of God groan because they are affected by sin! Thousands! Yet, are we able to help them if we ourselves are mortally wounded by sin?

Call on the Lord in faith and gain the first victory in the battle against your own sin. Remove the sting of death. Receive strength in the renewing of fellowship with the Almighty and go to save others! "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his works? (Pro. 24:11,12)

Beloved! Today is the accepted time, and the Lord calls us all to purification and to sanctification. Today we may rejoice and thank God that we have a fountain for purification-Christ and His precious blood.

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ draws ever nearer, and if the first appearing of the Lord brought joy for sinners, so his second coming will be an overwhelming disaster for those who continue in sin and do not repent; because the second time, Christ will appear, not for purification from sin, but rather as unto salvation for those who wait for Him (Heb. 9:28).

Let us quickly forsake every sin and return to the Cross at Calvary so that we may be washed in the blood of Jesus Christ and be cleansed from all unrighteousness, in order to be filled with His power, so that abundant blessings may fall on the entire people of God!

From now on we want to walk with our lamps burning, pursue that which is holy in order to be always ready for the Rapture. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:20, 21).

### **A Letter From the Servants of the Congregations of the Evangelical Christian Baptists**

Dear Brothers, dear Sisters! We greet you in the Love of our Lord Jesus Christ!

We do not know you personally, nevertheless, we know you through the blood of Jesus Christ, who, for His Name's sake, redeemed us and made us into brothers and sisters! To Him be glory and honour!

The Lord has laid it on my heart to ask you several questions: Are you being sanctified? Are you walking on the path of blamelessly fulfilling the Word of God? No doubt you remember well how your deeds were a month ago, a year ago, or even several years ago. Were your later deeds greater than the previous ones? Do you deal with life better today than yesterday? Have you grown more humble, more faithful; do you have more love, are you more dedicated to the Lord? Are your perceptions and desires growing holier each day? Does every day see you spending more time in prayer, with more of the power of the Holy Spirit, progressing in your knowledge of the Lord and in your service for Him? Does your fruit increase?

If you are not growing in all of these spiritual qualities, then you will not be able to advance on the road toward sanctification. You cannot stand still, even for a moment, otherwise you go backward. You backslide.

Jesus Christ said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matt. 12:30).

Remember this: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have" (Luke 8:18).

Dear Friend! Whoever you are, a fellow worker in the harvest field of God or just a simple layman, we appeal to you in the Name of our Lord, examine your spiritual standing before Him. The Word of God calls upon us: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor. 13:5).

Even David turned to the Lord and prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psa. 139:23, 24).

When your way of life and your service take place in purity and holiness and in a constant spiritual growth pattern, then thank the Lord that He has helped you and protected you in your purity. However, so that you can truly see your real spiritual

standing, the Lord calls you to self examination. For this purpose the Lord gave us His Word that is " sharper than any two edged 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" (Heb. 4: 12). He has given to us the Holy Ghost, who guides our conscience correctly, if we have become guilty before God or before our fellow man.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord has challenged us to call on you and not only on you, but on all the people of God, for the purpose of purity and for holiness, so that His beloved church will be prepared for His glorious return.

In the days of purification, free yourselves as much as possible from all peripheral activities and spend time alone with the Lord in prayer and in meditation on the Word of God. In these days it is of much greater importance than ever before to humble yourselves before God and to continue from this day onward for the rest of your life, as you have promised Him, to serve Him and until now, to examine your life. Remember that day on which you made your promise to the Lord! How your heart beat with joy in the knowledge that Christ is yours and that you are His. You gave over your whole life for His service. You witnessed before heaven and before the congregation, that from this day forward, Christ would be your life and that your whole character was founded on this, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Phil. 3: 10).

You said that you have no other goal in life than to believe Christ, love Christ, know Christ and to acknowledge Christ before the world, whatever this may cost you!

Dear friend, are you fulfilling your promise? If not, what is hindering you? Pray to the Lord that He will help you to understand yourself and your spiritual condition in the present and to see the causes that are holding back the abundant flow of God's grace in your life.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will remove all impurity out of the very depths of your heart, and that what is hidden from human view will be revealed to you so that you purpose to cleanse yourself of your secret sins. David turned toward the Lord with the prayer, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins" (Psa. 19: 13).

Think about it! Only the Holy Spirit can answer our righteous desire to show us our actual spiritual position before God! You will not try to deny that, to the Christian, all spiritual unhappiness and backsliding reflect his personal condition and hinge on his personal relationship with God (Rev. 3:17-20).

Every Christian is unhappy, wretched, poor, and blind when the Lord stands before the door of his heart, if he does not live his life in holiness. However, if our heart is guarded in purity and holiness, Christ is with us-and with Him we find victory, joy, blessedness and abide in the Holy Spirit. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

If you are a youth, test how your spiritual life looks; what is it that interests and motivates you? The Apostle Paul wrote to the youthful Timothy: "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace ..." (2 Tim. 2:22). "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them." (1 Tim. 4:16).

Dear brother, dear sister! When you are bound by marriage vows, where then is your blessed inheritance? Are all your children, which the Lord has pre-determined for you, with you? Or have you, like the unbelievers-who have no one whom they can confide in and so, in difficult situations become afraid-set aside this blessing? But if your children are with you, do they know the Lord? Do they love people? Do they continue in the discipline and in the admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4)? Perhaps you have kept the knowledge of the Lord hidden from them. The Word of God calls believing parents to witness to their children.

"[That] which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psa. 78:3-7).

The most important possession which we can build up and which we must give over to our children, is our precious faith. "For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children" (2 Cor. 12:14).

If your faith is a precious treasure for you yourself, then you will want to bestow it on your children and not withhold this saving faith from them, but rather give all your energy and pray to the Lord that He will grant them salvation. For everyone always desires the very best for his children. However, if your faith has become a heavy burden for you, then you will scarcely want to offer it to your children! Dear parents! Will your children, on that new day, be forced to stand outside and testify against you with tears? Is your salvation sure?

And if all in your family are believers, can others call your family a house church and name Christ as the Head of your family? Do you speak with each other on spiritual matters? Do you read Scripture together? Do you pray together?

Does peace reign in your family, alongside love, kindly affection for one another, compassion and respect? Perhaps, "bitterness, and wrath and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking ... with all malice" (Eph. 4:31, 32) still reigns among the members of your family? Or is your unity in any way based only on the pursuit after material things, which is idolatry (Col. 3:5), that is, the desire for more material possessions?

Does your house compare with that of the hospitable Gaius? Does it serve others? Is the Lord able to use it for His congregation?



Do you have peace with your neighbours? "Ye are our epistle ... known and read of all men" (2 Cor. 3:2,3). According to your lifestyle and according to your way of dealing with your neighbours, people will develop a picture about Christ. What kind of picture are you for them? Do you bring them the Light of Christ in a positive way?

Perhaps you have long since discontinued attending prayer meetings and have no fellowship with the children of God? Perhaps you have grown spiritually cold and have fallen asleep? Yet even to you, the call of God comes, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Eph. 5:14).

Dear friend! If the Lord is correcting your conscience and reveals a sin in your heart or any straying from the truth, then acknowledge this and repent before God. If you have offended any person, then you must also acknowledge your sin before them. Pray to the Lord that He will remove your false shame and fear. You must realize that the evil one always works to hinder our sanctification; however, God desires that we who are dead to sin live in righteousness (1 Peter 2:24).

While you are making a confession of your spiritual condition before others, perhaps also before the congregation, they will be able to ask you concrete questions and will be able to correct you on any of your actions. You should not simply accept everything which they may tell you, but rather, sincerely desire that they would draw to your attention anything that is unsatisfactory in your life.

You must repent and ask forgiveness of all whom you have offended in everything in which you are guilty. You must make a great effort and ask God to give you strength, to move forward and not sin any more. Do not try to hide your sin and do not harden your heart, rather, humble yourself before God, for, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6).

We need to judge ourselves severely. Do not look at the fact that others sin and try to justify yourself with this; for your sin will not be washed away by the fact that others sin. We would remind you that everyone who sins deliberately or intentionally will be lost if he does not repent.

While many believers do sin, they do so because they do not pay attention to the Word of God and they avoid every part of Scripture in which the Lord speaks about the death penalty for sin. This is an extremely dangerous practice and constrains us to call you to cleansing from all known sin. Possibly some of you think that when we speak about sin we are talking about drunkenness, stealing, sexual immorality and other severe sins. But do you know which sins the Lord means? Do you not understand that those who commit sins like jealousy, anger, debauchery, hatred and quarrelling, will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Gal. 5:20-21)? Some of those who have departed from the Truth strongly support the indifference and carelessness regarding the warnings of the Lord and the punishment for sins and teach that grace toward and for them will cover all their sins, and they change the "grace of our God into lasciviousness" (Jude 1:4).

The Apostle Paul says, "Be not deceived" (1 Cor. 6:9-10). "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6).

Therefore, when the Lord admonishes you regarding your sin, then repent! Because your sin will be washed away by the blood of Christ only through repentance, for He pardons gladly and willingly! May these days of remorse and repentance be days of forgiveness and joy, for the Lord works all these things for sanctification, for fruitfulness and for joy. God will be with us and we will experience His rich blessings. We want to glorify Him and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Rev. 1:5-6).

Dear brother, dear sister, if you know brothers and sisters who no longer attend services and perhaps have forsaken their Lord, then be concerned about them as well regarding their salvation (James 5: 19-20).

Encourage them to read this letter so that they will understand that the Lord is calling them as well: whether or not they would return to the Lord and abandon the way to destruction. May they recollect the warnings of the Lord (Jer. 2: 19; Gal. 6:7-8).

***In Love to you and with prayers for you  
Your Brothers in Christ***

## **Regarding the Directions for the Fulfilment of Sanctification**

Dearly beloved brothers, fellow workers in the great work of the Kingdom of God on Earth!

We would like to give you instructions with which to begin and how you will be able to carry out a ministry of sanctification. We call on you to make every possible effort so that you yourselves, as well as those children of God whom the Lord has entrusted to you, will be able to be cleansed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. We would advise you:

- 1) Assemble the Council of the ministers of your congregation and consult with each other regarding the foundations of holiness and sanctification so that you may accomplish them. This is where the decision must be made to fulfil the ministry of purification. Then a meeting of the whole congregation needs to be scheduled. Invite all those to this meeting who have become lukewarm and have forsaken the assembly. For this purpose the ministers should visit them before the meeting, counsel with them and pray with them.

2) In the membership meeting one should explain the necessity of sanctification and purification. Read the "Appeal" and the "Letter from the Ministers of a Church of the ECB" to all the brothers and sisters. Then, together with the whole congregation, make a resolution regarding sanctification and purification. Then the next membership meeting can be scheduled and a time of prayer for purification can be arranged. It is recommended to combine prayer with fasting, but this must be done in the spirit of freedom.

3) In the second membership meeting, hold a discussion on both chapters, "Regarding Holiness and Sanctification" and "Regarding Purification." Then the children of God, who, either through action or offence, have sinned against someone, should be encouraged to repentance. On the days that are free from meetings, the brothers and sisters should visit each other and be reconciled with each other and with God through repentance (2 Cor. 5:20).

Schedule and announce the next membership meeting.

4) At the next membership meeting, hold a discussion on the next chapter, "The Explanation of Sins." In the section, "The Sins against the Commandment to Chastity," do not read points 8, 9 and 10 so that no one's conscience will be defiled and no one will become unclean through this. It would be beneficial to re-read the section, "Regarding Repentance," to them in order to challenge everyone to repentance, to cleansing from all defilement of the flesh and the spirit (2 Cor. 7: 1); so that, during the next membership meeting, the guilty parties may be given an opportunity for open repentance and reconciliation.

5) Conduct a membership meeting regarding purification, confession, reconciliation; offer every member of your congregation, as well as anyone who desires to become a member, for example, someone from another congregation, someone who comes from another locality, an opportunity to stand and give an answer to questions in the hearing of all members: whether he is free of any conscience pangs regarding any unconfessed sin or backsliding or transgression of the Word of God, if he has any feelings of guilt to a neighbour, that is, is his conscience free before God and regarding his walk before Him?

If his conscience is not free, then such a one must repent before those toward whom he has sinned. He must repent, and ask forgiveness of those whom he has offended, as well as of the Lord. If anyone testifies that his conscience does not accuse him, but someone has noticed something unworthy in this brother or in this sister, then this must be pointed out to them. It is desirable for the whole congregation to participate in this. Sometimes it is helpful to send the brother or the sister out of the meeting for a few minutes, so that, in their absence, the congregation may discuss freely about him or her and then give advice to him or her regarding their shortcomings and sometimes even make a preliminary decision on the matter.

If, however, someone truly has a clear conscience, he should thank the Lord and make every effort to walk even more closely with Him. If someone has a hidden shameful sin, about which it is not fitting to speak in front of everyone, two or

three of the Ministers who have themselves experienced purification should be selected so that the sinner may acknowledge his sin in their presence.

Do not require repentance for those sins which were committed before conversion or for those which have already been confessed and have been forsaken by the sinner.

Beloved brothers-ministers! You must give an open testimony before the people of God and present yourselves for the judgement of the congregation. The apostle Peter says that the elders of the people of God must govern well, not as those who lord it over God's heritage but as ensamples to the flock (1 Peter 5:2, 3). Furthermore, it is therefore necessary for you to be purer in order to understand the others better and to have more encouragement in the work. Samuel said to the whole people of Israel, "Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD" (1 Sam. 12:3-7), and only then did he begin to testify against Israel.

The most essential thing which the Minister of God must remember is that only the Lord can do the work of purification. In order that the Lord can work through us and through our prayers in the hearts of His people, one must purify himself wholly. Then our prayers will be pleasing to Him and will be heard. Therefore, pray that the Holy Spirit will convict of sin and lead the whole people of God to repentance. The purity of the Ministers is essential for successful communication with souls. If a Minister is not in a proper condition, not everyone will open up their heart to him. "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out" (Pro. 20:5).

If, during your conversation with one who has sinned, his heart opens totally and his soul overflows, you must know that without the Holy Spirit no one can do anything. When the soul is in sin, it is closed, not sincere, not trusting. However, the Holy Spirit can begin His work in their hearts through your prayers. But your prayer will be heard only if you yourself are becoming pure.

Also, so that your work will bring results, you must be the first to stand before the congregation and confess all your faults or unrepented sins and ask that the members of the congregation will speak openly about every improper conduct and action which they have noticed. Ask them to forgive you and not hold anything against you. Then ask sincerely that the church will pray for you. In this way every spot will be removed and the conscience will be freed so that you may call on the Lord with a clean heart and be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Your good pastoral example will be followed by all the others. May the Lord bless you in this!

6) To schedule another membership meeting. After purification, sins may be revealed over which those who have sinned have not repented. In this case, the whole congregation must make a decision to "note" such and to make a decision regarding reprimand and perhaps even excommunication. The purification of the congregation can not be considered complete if unrepentant members remain and commit further sins. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (1 Cor. 5:6-13).

7) The whole ministry of purification must be celebrated with a Thanksgiving service, with their renewed dedication to the Lord, with prayers for the bestowal of new power to make decisions to follow the Lord without wavering.

And to close the service, it is desirable that the Last Supper of the Lord be celebrated in order to remember the suffering and death of Christ for our sins, to thank Him for his forgiveness and mercy because we have our whole lives for which to thank Him.

So that the purification is not prolonged, it is desirable to schedule the membership meetings as often as possible, even 2-3 meetings per week. All meetings must begin with a Word of devotion which is appropriate to the theme of purification and holiness and with prayers.

It is necessary, after the message, the acknowledgement, and testimony, that each person has the opportunity to pray, to repent before God, to thank Him and to pray for strength. It is also desirable that the congregation pray for the brothers and sisters as well. However, allow yourselves to be lead directly by the Holy Spirit according to each person's need and circumstances.

Congregations with a great number of believers should divide into several groups for cleansing; but the same order must be followed. The ministers and brothers, whom the congregation will appoint to carry out the ministry of purification, must begin the purification with themselves. The number of membership meetings will be more or less, according to the number of members in your congregation.

Dear brothers! After you have read our suggestions, you may find something unacceptable for the circumstances in which your congregation finds itself. In that case, proceed as you find it acceptable; however, in any circumstance, do not depart from the Word of God, and be sure to make every effort to keep your conscience free of any known sins, a full inner freedom and to attain complete purity of every member of your congregation. We are only making suggestions, in the rest we commend you "to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

Dear elders! As much as possible, gather all the scattered, all the weary, all the wounded sheep of the flock of Christ, take the most difficult road, search for all and make every effort to bring them back and to heal them so that, in the whole area, no sheep remains outside the fold. Pray, weep, work, and gather in, so that the Lord will not punish us for the souls which He committed to us. Read Ezekiel 34:4-10.

We will be free of the blood of all others only when, in spite of everything else, the whole will of the Lord is declared to the people of God (Acts 20:26-29).

Think of your responsibility before the Lord! Put forth every effort to lead your spiritual life and your ministry for the Lord in such a way that there will be no known sin in the congregation and so that, when the sins become apparent, those who have sinned will purify themselves-thus the Lord has commanded-and you will witness renewed blessing in the congregation and in your ministry.

The Lord establish the work of your hands, beloved (Psa. 90: 16, 17).

## **EXPLANATION OF SINS**

### **SINS OF UNFAITHFULNESS TO THE LORD**

**1. Unfaithfulness** is against the Lord and His doctrine (Psa. 78:57). Unfaithfulness reveals itself in falling away (Heb. 3:12) and in erring from the truth (James 5:19, 20).

**2. Falling away** consists in the deliberate turning away from the Lord in action and in doctrine (2 Tim. 2: 18). The punishment for unfaithfulness-Isaiah 1:28.

**3. Erring** is also unfaithfulness, although not abrupt but rather a gradual erring on the wrong way which leads to death (James 5: 19, 20).

**4. False teaching is unfaithfulness** or erring from the Truth which manifests itself in the adulteration and perversion of the Lord's doctrine. Heresy is always destructive (2 Pet. 2: 1).

Examples:

a. The heresy of the Sadducees consisted of a doctrine which actually denied the fact of the resurrection and also the existence of the angels and the spirit (Acts 5:17; 23:8).

b. The heretics Hymenaeus and Philetus taught that the resurrection was already past and by this destroyed the faith (2Tim. 2: 17, 18).

c. The heretical teaching of Balaam was meant to take away the blessing of the Lord from the people of God and to corrupt them by joining with the world (Rev. 2:14,15; Num. 31:16).

d. The leaven of Herod against which Christ warned, "take heed, beware of the leaven . . . of Herod" (Mark 8: 15), is a politicalization of the teaching of Christ, of church ministry and of the spiritual life, as is also the violation of the doctrine of separation of church and state. "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21).

e. Following the modern theological directions, which, in essence, are set against the Gospel-for example, the rejection of the deity of Christ or the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, while Christ Himself testified regarding Himself: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30) and the Apostles verify: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God ... " (2 Tim. 3: 16), "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

Whatever the individual false doctrines may be, the Holy Scripture gives them all the same verdict: "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of Antichrist" (I John 4:3). "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject" (Titus 3: 10, 11). "Let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:9). "But the fearful and unbelieving ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8). "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2: 10).

**5. Friendship with the world.** When unfaithfulness expresses itself outwardly in deeds, it manifests itself as spiritual adultery (James 4:4), which has its foundation in the striving of a Christian to live by the law of this world, i.e. the law of the flesh, the law of sin and death (Rom. 7:23). The old man strives after this law unceasingly, to do that which his sinful nature desires. The inner sinful desires are called:

**6. Lust** (I Peter 4:2, 3)-the desire for something sinful and fleshly. The urge to satisfy the sinful, fleshly desires, the Word of God calls "evil concupiscence" (Col. 3:5), and "lust of uncleanness " (2 Peter 2: 10).

**7. The lust of the flesh** (Gal. 5:16) is a powerful fleshly desire, a passion, a powerful driving force. Lust, in this instance, means a powerful desire to have and to do that which one lusts after. We must distinguish between a good longing and fleshly lust or a sinful lust when the driving force is the flesh. Whoever looks at a woman with lust commits a sin. But the one who incites lust by wearing indecent clothing or acting in an improper manner, also commits sin by these actions (Luke 17: 1).

**8. Fleshly passion** (Col. 3:5) is an unrestrained, unthinking, sinful outburst of emotion, a strong, thoughtless, tormenting drawing toward something sinful (Rom. 7:5). The Word of God declares, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24).

**9. Evil or fleshly thoughts** (Eph. 2:3) are thoughts which are spurred on and directed by the lust of the flesh; fleshly thinking, that means reasoning how one can accomplish fleshly, sinful acts. There are also thoughts which are good (Col. 3:2; Phil. 4:8). Lusts and sinful thoughts are sin in the bud, which, if they are not destroyed, will definitely lead to committing a sinful act, which will lead to death. The Apostle James writes: "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15).

Jesus Christ describes evil thoughts as sin: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21, 22). The Apostle Paul says, "For to be carnally minded is death" (Rom. 8:6).

Fleshly thoughts, lusts and the desires of the flesh are inner forces which drive toward the committing of sinful acts. According to the Word of God, there are three main sinful directions in which the sinful nature of man is striving and yearns to go and through which the whole multitude of sins is aroused:

a. The lust of the flesh: man's yearning to satisfy the desires and longings of the flesh; accumulating riches, gluttony, drunkenness, having fleshly sinful pleasures.

b. The lust of the eyes: a yearning for that which is outwardly beautiful, enticing and pleasing for the eyes to see and plan how to fulfil these lusts (Eze. 23:14, 15). It can also be a heated yearning for indecent shows and for reading indecent literature.

c. The pride of life: a striving after being exalted over others in wealth, through outward beauty, in natural abilities, knowledge and other advantages. This abundance of temptations led to the Fall of our ancestors [Adam and Eve], and it still effects us the same way now. The woman saw that the tree was:

a. Good for food - (the lust of the flesh)

b. Pleasant to the eyes - (lust of the eyes)

c. To be desired in order to give knowledge - (pride of life) (Gen. 3:6)

These three basic desires of the flesh bring forth all other sins.

The Apostle James shows the reasons for the source of a multitude of sins and writes: "From whence come wars and fighting's among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4: 1-3). A little further on, he warns believers about their unfaithfulness, their turning away from God and about their love and striving not for God, but for the life according to the worldly law of the flesh: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). For after they have given their hearts to God they display betrayal and unfaithfulness toward God who loves us with great zeal (James 4:5).

By whatever means this unfaithfulness may manifest itself, as an erring or a falling away, and in whatever way it reveals itself, through heresy or through another conscious sin, Scripture records, "But ... the unbelieving ... shall have their part in the lake which bumeth with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8).

## **Fleshly Sins**

**1. Wickedness** (Mark 7:22) - an evil disposition of the spirit, a seeking to do something wicked to another (Col. 3:8).

**2. Malice** (Rom. 1:29) - an evil character, a wicked disposition with predominantly wicked qualities and lacking love, humility, mercy and other good qualities (Rom. 1:32).

**3. Enmity** (Gal. 5:20) - a hostile attitude, almost a lasting attitude, in which feelings, thoughts, words and actions toward another are antagonistic, hostile and malicious (Lev. 19: 17, 18).



**4. Hatred** (Gal. 5:20) - the inner feeling of enmity and a strong loathing toward another when one cannot see another without feeling fury and enmity toward him. Hatred is equal to murder (1 John 3: 15).

**5. Implacable** (Rom. 1:31) - the attitude of continuing hostility without any desire to make peace.

**6. Unmerciful** (Rom. 1:31) - the failure of readiness to give grace and to forgive. An example of an unmerciful attitude and its consequences is found in Matt. 18:24-28.

**7. Cruelty** (2 Tim. 3:3) - an unmerciful, extremely strict, severe dealing with people without any sympathy or compassion.

**8. Wrath** (Gal. 5:20) - a feeling of strong indignation and rebellion against anyone. The feeling of anger may come but one must extinguish it within himself by the power of God. One can do nothing good or just in anger. In anger one acts with prejudice and injustice. "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:20; Eph. 4:26, 27; Col. 3:8). Anger belongs to the works of the flesh (Gal. 5: 19, 20).

**9. Clamour** (Eph. 4:31) - an agitated utterance of words in bitterness, rage and anger. Our manner of speech must always be quiet and gentle (2 Tim. 2:25).

**10. Bitterness** (Eph. 4:31) - a feeling of indignation against another person or against a situation which embitters others. We must not drive others to anger and we must not become embittered ourselves (Isa. 41:11; Eph. 6:4).

**11. Malice** (Eph. 4:31) - a strong anger which can easily turn into hatred and lead to rage (Col. 3:8).

**12. Envy** (Jam, : 14) - a person's condition in which he is unhappy when he sees the success or happiness of another and is wretched that he is missing what others have (Gal. 5:20). "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6).

**13. Murmurin** (Jude 16) - a condition of ongoing discontentment and grumbling. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings" (Phil. 2:14).

**14. Pride** (Mark 7:22) - an attitude of the human spirit in which a person considers himself of higher value than others. This self-exaltation can be based on greater physical or spiritual benefits, gifts, knowledge or physical strength and beauty. "God resisteth the proud" (James 4:6).

**15. Haughtiness** (2 Tim. 3:2) - the highest degree of pride. It is typical for a haughty person that he puffs himself up, behaves in a self-important manner and is full of self praise (Pro. 16: 18). Haughtiness is the pride of the mind. "Vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Col. 2: 18).

**16. Highmindedness** (2 Tim. 3:4) - a special kind of pride which parades itself in a deceiving manner. A high-minded person is given to opulence, pompousness, ornaments, and is fond of putting his supposed advantages on display. They make themselves visible by their conversation, behaviour, clothing, etc.

**17. Love of self** (2 Tim. 3:2) - a special love for oneself which expresses itself in the desire for honour, fame and prominence. Such a person is easily offended when others do not give him high enough esteem or have honoured him too little. One variety of love of self is self-love. Self-love is a love only of oneself, a caring only for oneself and an indifference toward the life and well-being of others.

**18. Presumptuousness** (2 Peter 2: 10) - audaciousness and determination for rude and improper acts and the use of rude and improper words.

**19. Insolence** (2 Tim. 3:4) - presumptuousness which is combined with shamelessness (2 Peter 3:3).

**20. Foolishness** (1 Cor. 15:36) - the failure to give consideration to actions or words. Doing or saying something without thinking about the effect of the act or word. Hearing the Word of God but not making it the rule of life-this is the highest foolishness which brings one to fall (Matt. 7:26, 27).

**21. Self-willed** (2 Peter 2: 10) - judges itself only by its own will (my will is the highest law) without regard to the opinion of others or the Word of God.

### **Sins of Hypocrisy, Deceit**

The sins of hypocrisy and deceit are committed with particular skill.

**1. Flattery** (Job 32:21) is a calculated submissiveness, a pretended approval, praise with a self-centred goal for personal gain (1 Thess. 2:5). Enticement is misleading with cunning praise. Praising in order to please the other, saying something acceptable in order to gain some advantage and to attain a personal goal (Rom. 16: 18).

**2. Hypocrisy** (Mark 7:6) is duplicity or imitation piety, when evil is hidden under the appearance of good and vice under the appearance of virtue. One can pray, fast and give his tithe hypocritically in order to gain the approval of men or to become honoured (Matt. 6:1-5; 16).

**3. Respect to Persons** (James 2:9) is eye-service or premeditated preference of one person over another not on the basis of worth but rather on a personal and sometimes also on a selfish basis.

**4. Cunning** (Mark 7:22) is a striving to do evil while he pretends goodwill and love. "He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; When he speaketh fair, believe him not" (Pro. 26:24, 25).

**5. Craftiness** (2 Cor. 4:2) is the ability to cleverly control and apply deceit, hypocrisy, lying and so on in order to reach his goal. "And cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14).

**6. Deceit** (Jer. 17:9) is cunning, craftiness, deception. A deceiver is one who goes in crooked ways, who does not deal straightforwardly in his words or deeds but rather conceals his true intentions and attitude. He acts out a spectacle, he pretends and employs double-dealing in order to achieve his evil goal. All these

characteristics come from the devil who is also called the evil one (Matt. 6: 13). Deceit leads to falling away from God (Heb. 3: 12; 2 Sam. 22:26, 27). We must guard ourselves against evil (1 John 5: 18; 1 Peter 3: 10; Psalms 32:2).

## **Verbal Sins**

**1. Empty talk, foolish chatter** (Eph. 5:4) These are useless words which are absolutely unnecessary. The words of a Christian must be useful, "that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph. 4:29). "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36).

**2. Corrupt communication** (Eph. 4:29) This is every indecent, foul word that can defile another person.

**3. Filthy communication** (Col. 3:8) is an evil, filthy, indecent speech, swearing, scolding, even those who call each other "Raca" (senseless, empty-headed) or "Fool" will be in danger of hell fire (Matt. 5:22).

**4. Blasphemy** (Matt. 5:22) is a slander, a defamation through which one tries to present another as bad, evil, worthless and stupid (Isa. 29:20). In this way one can slander another directly. On the other hand, one may slander the name of God before the pagans by his unchristian conduct (Rom. 2:24).

**5. Mockery** (Pro. 24:9) is scorning of something holy. Mocking means to speak irreverently of that which is holy, to carry on empty chatter. It manifests itself in vulgar talk and contempt for the holy Truths, for the Word of God, for the church and the Lord (V.29).

**6. Jest** (Eph. 5:4) that is: deliberately provoking laughter in others through indecent jokes and stories. "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms" (James 5: 13). If it is true that jesting is not appropriate, then mockery or jesting with the intention to mock, ridicule, or humiliate someone is a serious sin (2 Chr. 30: 10; Neh. 2: 19; 2 Kings 2:23, 24).

**7. Slander** (2 Cor. 12:20) is a conscious spreading of evil, vicious and false information about anyone. As a rule, slander is used for an evil purpose. The slanderer himself and also those who accept the slander are not allowed to dwell in the house of the Lord (Ps. 15: 14).

**8. Lying** (Eph. 4:25) These are statements which are contrary to the truth. Lying is saying what is not truthful and factual. Some lies have the appearance of a good purpose. Such a lie is then called a holy lie. "A holy lie," is nothing less than contempt for the truth. Lying is sin, and just as there is no holy fornication, so also, there is no holy lie. Satan "is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). The end of all liars is the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8).

**9. Deception** (Lev. 19:11) is in its essence very similar to lying. But deception may be brought about by actions as well. Deception means misleading another

through cunning words or actions in order to attain a personal goal. A person may also deceive oneself (1 John 1:8).

**10. False witness** (Matt. 15:19) means saying something untrue about another. Jesus Christ was sentenced to death with the help of false witnesses (Mark 14:56-59). The end of all false witnesses is death (Pro. 19:5; 21:28).

**11. Talebearing** (Lev. 19: 16) is the spreading of information which should be kept secret. Someone who oversteps the Biblical rules of reproof is also a talebearer, who circulates the judgements against those who have sinned among others. However, when the classified information of the church is given to those outside, who will abuse this information to persecute the believers, this deals with betrayal. (See the chapter, "Thefts, Murders and Betrayal").

"He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips" (Pro. 20:19; 13:3).

**12. Slander and evil speaking** (Eph. 4:31) are any evil speech, whether direct or indirect, whether defamation, backbiting or blasphemy, etc. Slanderers will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6: 10). It is forbidden to have fellowship with such a one (1 Cor. 5: 11).

### **Thefts, Murders, Betrayals**

**1. Theft, pilfering** (Mark 7:22) this is all manner of unlawful and secret appropriation of that which belongs to another (1 Peter 4: 15; 1 Cor. 6: 10).

**2. Robbery** (1 Cor. 5: 11) is an insolent, lawless grabbing for oneself, a theft, a robbery using force, craftiness and deceit. The robbers steal not only possessions and property, but also life, in that they enjoy life at the expense of the health and well-being of others.

**3. Murder** (Gal. 5: 19-21) is to do away with the life of another or refusal to help someone who is in mortal danger. The intentional cause of conditions and circumstances that cause death also belong in this category. The Word of God says that even the one who hates his brother is a murderer (1 John 3: 15).

**4. Betrayal** (2 Tim. 3:4) betrayal means to hand over someone or something. The betrayal may consist of the giving of information regarding the life of the congregation and her members into the hands of unbelievers and false brethren. The enemies of the work of God will use this information in the pursuit, persecution and destruction of the work of God. As a rule the betrayers commit this sin for their own well-being. Being a traitor is the greatest misery. "Good were it for that man if he had never been born" (Mark 14:21).

### **Sins of Indecency**

**1. Lasciviousness** (Gal. 5:21) is transgressing the order, an uncivil, disorderly conduct in the congregation, in the fellowship and at home (2 Thess. 3: 11). This revelling comes from a loveless attitude toward those around us. All actions of a

Christian must be permeated with love, respect and attentiveness toward the others (1 Tim. 4: 12). Love "doth not behave itself unseemly" (1 Cor. 13:4, 5).

**2. Unruliness** (Titus 1: 10) is the refusal to fulfil our responsibilities in following the Lord and His Word, but also, any refusal to follow the instructions and decisions which are based on the Word of God. "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God" (1 Thess. 4:8).

**3. Strife** (Rom. 13: 13) is discord accompanied with hostility, anger, quarrelling and animosity (Pro. 30:33). Dissension must be eliminated right from the beginning. "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with" (Pro. 17: 14).

**4. Quarrelling** (Rom. 1:29) is dissension with a feeling of animosity against each other. All these sins are the work of the flesh. Whoever does not free himself and sins consciously will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21). The Holy Scriptures command that we correct those who are disorderly (1 Thess. 5: 14) and to withdraw from those who continue in this behaviour (2 Thess. 3:6).

### **Sins of Idolatry**

**1. Covetousness** (Eph. 5:5) is the love of accumulating earthly riches, to be greedy for gain. This is idolatry. A covetous person serves mammon.

**2. Seeking after gain** (1 Thess. 4:6) is the love of winning, i.e. profit, gaining advantage, a striving to gain earthly riches from every endeavour.

**3. Love of money** (2 Tim. 3:2) is the love for money. It is the greed to accumulate money. "For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10).

**4. Usury** (Mark 7:22) is requiring excessive value from your neighbour; as a rule, taking advantage of the need of a neighbour. Things which belong in this category are: requiring interest on borrowed money, unjustified profits from buying and selling, speculation and bribery (Exo. 22:25; Eze. 18:13; 22:12). "For this ye know, that no ... covetous man ... hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5:5).

### **Sins of Impropriety**

**1. Impropriety** (Mark 7:22) is using something which is not necessary, not a necessity of life. Impropriety also includes disgraceful and vulgar actions (Rom. 1:28-31).

**2. Drunkenness** (Rom. 13: 13) is the use of alcoholic beverages (alcohol, hard liquor, wine, beer, etc.) that is a harmful impropriety, by which the flesh is excited and strengthened and the spirit becomes enslaved. As a result, actions become extremely fleshly and foolish and often lead to obscenity, disaster and destruction (Pro. 23:29-35). Only those become intoxicated who have no joy in the Lord or in the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5: 18). The Scriptures forbid drunkenness (Luke 21:34;

Rom. 13: 13). We must avoid association with drunkards (I Cor. 5:11; Pro. 23:20). "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:10).

**3. Gluttony and drinking** "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries" (1 Peter 4:3).

Impropriety (2 Peter 2: 13; James 5:5) consists of: luxury, an unprofitable use of time, entertainment with fruitless shows (Eze. 23: 14), smoking, etc. The Word of God calls us, instead of excess and impropriety, to participate in fulfilling the needs of the saints and to "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7, 8).

### **Sins Against the Commandment of Chastity**

Chastity means being wise and whole; that is, to remain in innocence, undamaged and unblemished with regard to sexual life. "That everyone of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God" (I Thess. 4:4,5). Chastity is commanded both for those who are married as well as for unmarried young men and women (1 Tim. 2:15; Titus 2:2-5,11,12).

**1. Adultery** (Lev. 20: 10) is a sexual union with a married person.

**2. Fornication** (Hos. 4: 13, 14) is an unlawful sexual relationship with an unmarried person.

**3. Immorality** (Gal. 5: 19) "Immoral" is the general term for all kinds of sexual sins. Those who are sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God (Eph. 5:5). Having fellowship with them is forbidden (1 Cor. 5:9).

**4. Revelling** (Rom. 13: 13) is an inclination toward sensual enjoyment, the passion of the flesh.

**5. Thirst for pleasure** (1 Tim. 5:5, 6; 2 Tim. 3:4) is the same as sensuality.

**6. Eyes full of adultery** (2 Peter 2: 14) means giving oneself over to the power of fleshly lusts and sensuality. It is the longing for continual sin.

**7. Birth control** (Gen. 1:28; 1 Tim. 2: 15; 5: 14) and abortion (Psa. 139:16).

### **Detestable Perversions**

**8. Homosexuality** (I Cor. 6:9) see the explanation of: Rom. 1:27; Lev. 18:22.

**9. Sodomy** i.e., sexual relations with beasts (1 Peter 4:3) see explanation of: Lev. 18:23.

**10. Effeminate** (1 Cor. 6:9) These are homosexuals who play the feminine role. Masturbation and Onanism, which derives from Onan (Gen. 38:8-10), belong to this category. This includes the whole spectrum of unnatural self-satisfaction of fleshly appetites. Whoever commits these sins is defiled (Rom. 1:24) and unclean (Jude 7, 8). He is a spot and a blemish (2 Peter 2: 13) and will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9, 10).

### **Sins of Witchcraft and Sorcery**

1. Sorcery and fortune telling (Gal. 5:20) false wonders, whose purpose is to lead people away from the truth and from God, are forbidden (Lev. 19: 31).

Examples:

- a. The Egyptian sorcerers (Ex. 8:7)
- b. Simon, the sorcerer (Acts 8:9)

**2. Consulting with familiar spirits** (Deut. 18: 11) is forbidden and is an abomination before God (Deut. 18: 12). Example: the woman of Endor (1 Sam. 28:7, 11, 12).

**3. Fortune telling and sorcery** (Lev. 19:26) are forbidden. Example: Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6).

**4. A conscious participation in either mass or private seance**, likewise the use of various objects and "medicines", amulets, talismans, etc. for similar purposes. All those things give the enemy of men's souls the opportunity to take possession of the hearts of those who participate. "They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:20, 21). The sinners shall have their place in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8).

### **Sins Committed by Believers**

**1. Cowardice is fear before men** (Rev. 21:8). Fear is a sign of sin in the heart and separation from God. Fear binds, lays a snare, is accompanied by torment, is the result of unbelief in the power, the might and the assistance of God and on the truthfulness of His prophecies (Josh. 1: 9; Psa. 118: 6-9; Luke 18:7) and leads to further transgressions of God's commandments. The place of cowards is in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). Those who are faithful to the Lord say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear" (Heb. 13:6).

**2. Marriages which violate the Holy Scripture.** The marriage of a church member is only possible with a Christian (1 Cor. 7:39). If, when a wife is freed from her marriage covenant through the death of her husband she may marry only one who is in the Lord; how much more does this apply to those who are entering into marriage for the first time. This also applies regarding the brothers

(2 Cor. 6:14). A marriage may not be terminated before the death of a spouse (Matt. 19:6; Rom. 7:2, 3; 1 Cor. 7: 10, 11).

All the complicated circumstances of a divorce and the judgement of their sinfulness must be decided from the Word of God, while they are discussed together with the congregation and are approached in a spiritual manner.

**3. The sin of neglecting to bring up children in the admonition of the Lord** (Psa. 78:3-7). The Holy Scripture obligates parents that they bring up their children in the instruction and admonition of the Lord. Even Christ admonished His disciples when they prevented the children from coming to Him (Matt. 19:13,14).

**4. Turning aside from the fellowship** (Heb. 10:25-29) with the saints and forsaking the assembling together leads to wayward, conscious sinning and to eternal destruction (1 John 1:7).

**5. Not doing good** is turning away from helping others (James 4: 17). A conscious avoidance of doing good is sin (Pro. 24: 11, 12; Matt. 25:41-46; James 2:14).

**6. Lovelessness** (Rom. 1:31) is the failure to love God and the consequent failure to love your neighbour. Love is a commandment (Matt. 22:39). Without love, life and service have no meaning (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

**7. Offences** (Rom. 6: 17).

a. To give offence to someone means to lead someone, through behaviour or with words, to sin or to err from the truth. It has to do with giving someone an occasion or a reason to do something which is forbidden. "Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" (Matt. 18:7). It is necessary to observe 1 Cor. 8:9-13 10:32,33. Examples: Balaam (Num. 31:16; Rev. 2:14), the sons of Eli (1 Sam. 2:12-17).

b. To be offended means to be tempted, to allow oneself to be enticed to sin through privileges, through freedom from persecution for the sake of the Word of God (Mark 4: 16, 17).

An offence is sin both for the one who is offended and also for the one who causes the offence. Every sin-out of the total multitude of sins-has destructive consequences. The Holy Scripture says of only a few sins-for example, jesting, foolish talking and some others-that they are unbecoming. However, even for these we will have to give account on the Day of Judgement.

But with regard to conscious sins, falling away and unfaithfulness to the Lord in general, we find numerous statements in the Word of God that those who conduct themselves in this way will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Gal. 5:21).

Therefore, while there is still time, let each one cleanse himself from every known sin; because every sin first of all grieves and then quenches the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5: 19).



Consequently, let us cleanse ourselves and allow ourselves to be filled with the Spirit of God's Grace while we thank the Lord for His Patience and Grace.

## **CHURCH CONSTITUTION**

In the sixties, as new congregations were founded and were concerned to follow the way of blameless service to the Lord, many believers fulfilled sanctification and had the desire to put into writing the foundational truths of their service. They did this in the form of a constitution. This is the constitution of one congregation of our brotherhood.

### **OF ONE CONGREGATION OF THE EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN BAPTISTS**

*"One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5).*

"And Joshua said unto all the people . . . Choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. And the people answered and said, Godforbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods ... The LORD our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey" (Josh. 24:2, 15, 16, 24). "To observe and to do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and His judgements and His statutes" (Neh. 9:38; 10:29).

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

It is observable that there are cases of wandering away from the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ in our brotherhood of Evangelical Christian Baptists, in that many of our believers have gone onto the path of conscious, known sinning and lose their salvation. We, the believers, express our desire for sanctification in that we ourselves re-examine our lives and renew our covenant with the Lord and with each other. As a foundation for our mutual understanding we accept the following:

1. Our congregation is a voluntary association of evangelical Christian Baptists who confess Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4: 12).

2. The only Head of our association is Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. "And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body" (Col. 1:17, 18).

Our unchanging leader is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, Who teaches, reminds, admonishes and comforts us. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

The unvarying foundation of our teaching is the Word of God, which was written by holy men of God, moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21), Who is the only one Who can prepare each one for every good work (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17).

3. Our main objectives are:

a. Sanctification: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (I Thess. 4:3).

b. Evangelism: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28: 19, 20).

4. As a foundation for our relationships with each other as members of the unified body of Jesus Christ we affirm:

a. Brotherly love, mercy, patience. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

b. Self-sacrifice: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends " (John 15:13).

c. Mutual support and responsibility for the welfare of another: in joy and in sorrow to hasten to the aid of the people of God, especially there, where deprivation and persecution arise; to enter into all the needs of the congregation and to bear all the hardships of the work and the cross of their sufferings. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

5. We acknowledge that the congregation itself elects ministers out of its own midst, those whom God has chosen, in that He has given them appropriate gifts and the zeal for the ministry from above (Eph. 4: 11, 12; Acts 1:20-26) and who deny their own personal gain for the furtherance of the Word of God (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1).

Only the congregation, and no one else from within or without, has the right to elect its' ministers, and the congregation is not allowed to extend this right to anyone else. The ministers must account for their work to the general assembly of the whole congregation which supervises the ministers and of necessity reelects, sets aside and recalls them. "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (I Peter 5:3).

6. Regarding the question of relationships with other congregations, we will strive to have brotherly fellowship with all congregations which support the Truth and which are of one mind with us regarding the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will extend full support to all those who love the Lord.

7. Regarding the question of relationships with the State we acknowledge, that "there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1) and that in all civic matters we are obligated to submit ourselves on the basis of Romans 13:7; "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." In matters of faith, however, we must follow the instructions of Jesus Christ: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21).

However, giving that which is God's to Caesar-that is, allowing the godless to decide questions of faith-is a very serious sin, because it is nothing less than robbing Christ of the right to lead His Church and to be its Head. This is also a violation of the existing law: the Decree on Separation of Church and State and of the Constitution of the USSR.

In the context of what has been discussed above, the questions regarding the inner life of the congregation are a congregational private matter and may not be revealed to those who are outside (1 Tim. 3:9).

Matters of registration and similar things which have to do with the outside agencies, must be decided on a legal basis without the interference of outsiders in the inner life of the congregation. The election and the ordination of the ministers, baptism, worship services, etc., according to the Word of God and also according to the existing laws, are internal church, personal matters of the believers. Based on 1 Cor. 12:28 these matters are not to be discussed with outsiders. We consider all of the foregoing as necessary to fulfil our lives-first of all, because we love the Lord, and also because we know that everyone who wanders away and does not remain in the teaching of Christ, does not have God (2 John 9). Erring from the truth is a sin which leads to death (James 5:19-20).

Therefore, as we renew our covenant with the Lord and with each other, in that we do not trust in ourselves but in the Lord, we will make every effort so that we do not err from the truth and commit no known sin, rather, constantly walk in the way of holiness.

While we are trusting in the Lord we will seek to place our whole life, without reservation at His disposal, to trust His guidance totally and to follow Him wherever He may lead-into suffering, into persecution, into prison and into exile and to receive reproach for the sake of the Name of Christ, the disgrace, the dishonour and the theft of our property with joyful acceptance. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

As we trust in the Lord, we will strive diligently to love every brother and every sister as we love ourselves and not have an attitude of resentment, jealousy, anger, or bitterness against anyone; to love the brotherhood and the beloved church of Christ and to be prepared to lay down our life for the brethren and, following the example of the church in Macedonia with deed and in truth, to participate in the service of the congregation. "This is my commandment, that ye

love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15: 12). "They ... gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God" (2 Cor. 8:5).

As we trust in the Lord, we will strive diligently to allow our lives to witness to the grace of the love of God in the example of our personal life as well as in the preaching of Christ as the Saviour of sinners.

"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32,33).

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every that who believeth" (Rom. 1: 16).

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24: 15).

"That, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28).

**To Him be the honour! Amen.**