

# History of Baptists and Their Distinctives

## Lesson #8 The Ideal Baptist

As we've gone through this course, we saw that the early goal of Baptist Churches was to model the New Testament "ideal" of the local Church. This New Testament ideal is that the Church is a gathering of born again believers who are:

1. **Believers in the "Essentials" of the Faith** See the 12 Points of Orthodoxy – Handout attached

2. **Hold to the Baptist Distinctives** (Lesson from week 2)

There are a number of distinctives that define what a Baptist Church is and who is a real Baptist. I am not interested in here defining all the different types of Baptists and what separates them from one another.

These "Baptist" distinctives are:

1<sup>st</sup> The inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Spirit as the sole guide for Christian faith and life.

2<sup>nd</sup> Priesthood of all believers before God – In Christ we have direct access to the God-head through prayer and must make ourselves available to the guidance and direction of the God-head.

3<sup>rd</sup> Believer's Baptism by immersion as a symbol of death and burial of the old self (going down into the water) and resurrection to a new self in Christ (coming up out of the water).

4<sup>th</sup> Regenerate Church Membership - Members consist only of those who are born again as new creations in Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God.

5<sup>th</sup> Autonomy of the Local Church – The Church is governed by the membership under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and under the authority of the Christ Jesus/Word of God. No other entity (Church or State) has authority over the Local Church and its members in spiritual matters.

3. **Grounded in the Word of God:**

**Heb 4:12** – *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

**2 Tim 3:16-17** – *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

**Col 3:16** – *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

4. **Headed by and obedient to the living Christ:**

**Phil 2:12-13** – *So then my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup>for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*

**Col 1:9-12** – *For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup>so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; <sup>11</sup>strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously <sup>12</sup>giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.*

**Col 3:1-4** – *Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that*

are on earth. <sup>3</sup>For **you have died** and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When **Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.**

## 5. Empowered by the Holy Spirit:

**Rom 8:14-17** – For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup>The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.**

**Eph 4:11-16** – And He gave some to be apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; <sup>13</sup>until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and to the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup>As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness of deceitful scheming; <sup>15</sup>but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, <sup>16</sup>**from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.**

**1 Pet 4:8-11** – Above all, **keep fervent in your love for one another,** because love covers a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup>Be hospitable to one another without complaint. <sup>10</sup>As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. <sup>11</sup>**Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God;** whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen

## 6. Promoting the Kingdom of God on earth:

**2 Tim 4:1-2** – I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: **preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.**

**Gal 5:16-24** – But I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.** <sup>17</sup>For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. <sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. <sup>19</sup>Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup>envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup>**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** <sup>23</sup>**gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.** <sup>24</sup>**Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

**1 Pet 2:9-10** – But you are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession,” **so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;** <sup>10</sup>for you once were “not a people,” but now you are “the people of God;” you had “not received mercy,” but now you have “received mercy.”

## 7. Inoculated against the undue influence of the lost culture:

We minister in and to the world, but we are not of the world. We are to be salt and light to the world, meaning that we are left here in this world to act as a preservative against the corrupting decay of the evil in the world and we are to be light to this world which reveals truth and disinfects the corruption of this world. We are never to be adding to the corruption and the decay of the world!

**1 Pet 1:13-16** – *Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup>As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, <sup>15</sup>but like the Holy One who called you, **be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;** <sup>16</sup>because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*

**1 Jn 1:6-7** – *If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; <sup>7</sup>but **if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another,** and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (The 1<sup>st</sup> diagnostic)*

**1 Jn 2:15-17** – *Do not love the world nor the things in the world. **If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.** <sup>16</sup>For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. <sup>17</sup>The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. (The 5<sup>th</sup> diagnostic)*

**Caution:** There is a widespread **error** within much of the Baptists that is considered a Baptist Distinctive, but which is really not. This is a doctrine currently identified as “Soul Competency”.

(See *By His Grace and For His Glory* by Tom Nettles, p. 197-208; article on E. Y. Mullins.)

- 1. Definition** – Each person stands before God as an individual and cannot be coerced to believe unto faith by outside agencies such as the church, the government, the family, etc.
- 2.** This is used as a foundation of the Baptist concept of religious liberty.
  - With the early Calvinistic Baptists, this was based on a belief that only through God’s effectual call to individuals and the regeneration of their hearts by the Holy Spirit could any fallen man be converted. External forces were to no avail.
  - With the Arminian Baptist, this was based on a belief that only through an individual’s soul liberty could a man’s mind come to accept the conversion that God has offered. This is referred to also as “Soul Liberty”. External forces were to no avail.
- 3.** This doctrine of Soul Competency has been carried to extremes and has become a basis for arguments by the Southern Baptist liberals (self-identified as moderates) to denounce any attempt to hold churches and seminaries to account for denying the essentials of the Christian faith.

Here is an extreme example: “The concept of the soul’s competency is more than a single doctrine; actually it undergirds all the other doctrines of the faith.” H. Leon McBeth; Baptist educator/historian. This concept was developed by E. Y. Mullins in the early 1900s.

“It was the opinion of the SBC moderates that the conservatives had departed from Baptist distinctives. The core values maintained by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship begin with four items the CBF considers Baptist principles of faith and practice. - -

1. Soul freedom is the ability of all people to relate directly with God. The belief in the priesthood of all believers is an important basis of this principle.”
2. Bible freedom is the principle of recognizing the authority of Scripture and the right of every Christian to interpret it as the Holy Spirit directs.
3. Church freedom is the idea that every local church is autonomous and empowered to choose its own leaders and direct its own affairs.
4. Religious freedom is the principle of separation of church and state. CBF supports this principle through affiliation with the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.”

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) – Wikipedia

4. What's wrong with this argument?
  - a. The priesthood of the believer refers to the born again Christian having direct access to God without the need for an intermediate priest to atone for his sins.
  - b. Soul Competency has to do with outside agencies not coercing salvation/faith, this being antithetical to the very nature of conversion which is a spiritual matter between God and man. (both the Calvinist and Arminian views)
  - c. Soul Competency has nothing to do with the life of the church that utilizes teachers and preachers and mentors and the body as a whole to create accountability to assure that believers remain faithful to the essentials of the faith.

No born again Christian should stand in judgment of the Word of God nor of the Essentials of the Faith. To do so is not Christian! Those who do judge God's Word and the full divinity of Christ are **NOT** Christians at all!

### **Important Quotes**

Charles Spurgeon stated it plainly: "We have come to a turning-point in the road. If we turn to the right, mayhap our children and our children's children will go that way; but if we turn to the left, generations yet unborn will curse our names for having been unfaithful to God and to His Word." Those words ring with prophetic urgency more than a century after they were written. Evangelicals must regain theological courage and conviction, or we must face the tragic reality that this may be evangelicalism's terminal generation.

. **Albert Mohler;** from article - *Is This Evangelicalism's Terminal Generation?*

Before the Lord, we don't simply tolerate each other; we actually love each other. The gospel that has reconciled us as individuals to God has also reconciled us to each other. And the gospel is not about mere toleration but a grace that is "lavish" (Eph 1:8). This is not an overindulgent intimacy that crosses barriers of modesty but simply a reference to genuine, heartfelt, others-oriented love.

**Jared C. Wilson;** *TableTalk* of 4/19; p. 67

The point is that wise teachers learn not only from their preparation and not only from other teachers, but also from their students. The insightful questions of my best students have made it possible for me to become a better and more biblical theologian. These questions have forced me to reconsider things from different angles and have opened up new avenues of study that I never considered before. I confess that at times this has been a painful process, forcing me to deal with my own pride. It can be humbling to learn from students, but it's necessary and helpful.

**R.C. Sproul;** from *10/15 TableTalk*; p. 5