

Causes for Rejoicing in the Rise of Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention p2

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Gonna continue this morning with the message I began last Sunday talking about the, ah, subject I was assigned at the Building Bridges Conference in North Carolina, um, which was an effort to appease, amend, ah, help Southern Baptists to know that people that believe like us are not a danger, not a problem, that we're not gonna ruin anything, we're not gonna tear anything up and what they asked me to speak on was the rise of Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention and why I am encouraged about it.

Now I only want to do a couple of quick things in review and get right on to new material. Now if you don't have last Sunday morning's message, you might need that if you're picking up fresh and new to understand the context of everything but I begin with three questions that I want to pose and then, Lord willing, if we complete the thing this morning, we will return to those and that is, number 1, what causes the angels of glory to stare in amazement? Question 2: what is the sole support of truth in the earth? And question 3: what is the primary source of God's glory for time and for eternity? Alright, leave that aside and last week we talked about, I., the reason I was encouraged as I understand fellowship with the brothers who are more Calvinistic in their doctrine or theology than Arminian, why that encourages me is, first of all, I am convinced this rise will help us overcome inerrancy, idolatry and reclaim the sufficiency of Scripture, and I held out to you that we had indeed that among us, that in our Southern Baptist churches starting about 30 years ago, we fought what we call the battle for inerrancy, that is that all of our professors and all of our graduate schools of theology should hold to the absolute inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures. That was a wonderful thing that happened. It was a glorious and good thing God did, but unfortunately our seminaries have been reformed, they are solid, now our state colleges are not, most of our state colleges are very liberal and don't even deserve our support. Yes, I said it publicly. Put it on the internet. Put it on the airwaves. They are liberal and don't deserve our support. But our seminaries, our graduate schools of theology have been wonderfully reformed to have wonderful, good, God-fearing, Bible-believing men leading them, but my point was the churches are not changed. The seminaries have been reformed but the churches have not and we function in our churches very weakly concerning sound doctrine. We are very spiritually anemic, doctrinally deficient in our churches, we function in our churches as if we do not believe the Bible is really sufficient, we chase seemingly every fad and every gimmick, every sociological and psychology, psychological rather, ah, twist that comes down the pike to "draw people in or meet people's needs or grow the numbers." We go, if

you will, a whoring after those things to "build Christ's church." And so we don't at all really in our churches for the most part hold to the inerrancy of Scripture. We do not and, ah, that troubles me and I see that the rise of Calvinism, at least the brothers that I know who believe in the old biblically sound doctrines of grace, call it Calvinism, call it doctrines of grace, called it reform theology, that they have a passion for truth and a passion for strapping themselves to the sufficiency of Scripture and reforming our churches to more biblically healthy churches. That encourages me and I believe it's much needed. Now I'm not saying every single person, of course, who claims to be reformed or a Calvinist is sound, but generally speaking I believe they will have that influence to get us away from just holding to inerrancy as some idolatrous position and actually working and functioning and practicing and developing policies in the churches that look like we really do believe in the inerrancy of Scripture.

Now let's go to new material. II. I'm encouraged about the rise of Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention because I'm convinced it will produce better church splits. You see, church splits are not necessarily bad and it seems to be something that Southern Baptists are very good at. We've had a few ourselves. We just seem to be able to split but they're not necessarily bad. You see, Jesus is the greatest divider of all time. In Matthew 10:34 the Lord Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." He goes on to say that because of me not all but many families will be divided. Father against daughter and mother against son and brother against brother as one embraces Christ and one rejects Christ. Jesus is a very divisive person. You see, the blazing light of truth is incompatible with the darkness of error. One must depart, either the light of truth or the darkness of error must prevail.

In 2 Corinthians 6:17 the Bible says, "'Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,' says the Lord. 'And do not touch what is unclean: And I will welcome you.'" It's the idea of separation. The moment a person in pagan darkness or Gentile darkness came to Christ, they were to separate from the darkness and unite with the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible puts a heavy emphasis on Christians separating from false professors and false professors were known by their glaringly, blatant, habitual lifestyles of immorality. In 1 Corinthians 5:9-11 the Bible says, "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; and I did not at all mean with the immoral people of the world." You have to be around immoral people if you're gonna live in this world. He said, "or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother," and then he lists those things again, if she should be a covetous or swindler or immoral or idolater. Then he, he reiterates by saying not even to eat with such a one.

So the idea of separating off or splitting apart is very biblical. Our Lord when he died split the veil in two, opening the way for man to have fellowship with God. In his death, burial and resurrection, he split death and hell and the grave in two and now they are hopelessly and helplessly destroyed. Our Savior is quite a splitter. These are good splits but what we see in our churches today are usually not good splits. Far too often it's one

worldly carnal crowd really a power play who didn't like another worldly power, ah, carnal crowd who wanted their power and control in the church, and so you have most churches splitting over power and worldly desires.

John MacArthur is one of the men that I've looked to often as I tried to lead this church and John MacArthur said, "Every church split is over power." He said, "I don't care what is being said, when you get down to the bottom line, every church split and division is over power." He says the senior adult lady who comes in after the custodian has cleaned her class and aligned her chairs a certain way, she re-aligns those chairs the way she wants them because that's her class. It's a power issues and, by the way, that doesn't bother me. It shouldn't bother you but he's just making a point that everything in the church is over power and that's usually what we see.

But let me give you an example of what I think is a good church split. A brother that you all know and I'll not use his name, but he went to pastor a church in a nearby state. It was one of the oldest churches in that state and he rejoiced to find out that the statement of faith that the church had been founded on was the New Hampshire Confession of Faith which was the first written statement of faith by a Baptist in America and it's a very Calvinistic statement of faith, as most all of them are in Baptist history. And so he said, "I'm gonna take your statement of faith and as your new pastor, I'm gonna to begin preaching to you and teaching you what your forefathers said this church is founded upon." And this dear brother began to go line upon line, precept upon precept through the New Hampshire Confession of Faith which, by the way, that's our confession of faith that we all voted in as expressing what we believe the Bible teaches.

He came to the part on salvation and particularly he came to the part on repentance and the New Hampshire Confession of Faith being an old confession of faith had quite a lengthy and biblically sound statement on repentance, and I know this brother very well, he was not forceful, he was not demeaning, certainly was not ugly-spirited at all but he just laid out what repentance was and what biblical repentance looks like and how you must have biblical repentance if you're truly conversion, converted. And a lady in the church, the matriarch of the church, came to him and said, "I've never done that. I don't think I agree with that." He very kindly tried to explain to her that that was an essential part of the new birth and biblical salvation and if that was not a part of your life, you've never experienced true conversion.

She became very upset. She quit attending church but she started using the telephone and she began to call and call and work and work and all of it led to a big division within the church. They brought in a mediator from the state convention to try to mediate the two sides and bring peace. The mediator side-tracked the issue of repentance which was the real issue and found out that this brother was connected to me and to our church. Therefore he labeled this brother a Calvinist, told the church that the church was not Calvinistic and this fellow was, and since that was true, they were totally incompatible and the church voted him out and a group left with him and the other group left behind just because he stood on the doctrine of biblical repentance.

That's a good split. When you stand on essential doctrine and it means getting fired or splitting a church, that's a good split. Now here's where we have to be careful. You've got to watch your attitude, watch your demeanor and watch your spirit, be kind and compassionate but you must stand on truth. When essential doctrine is at stake, the pastor must stand. Peace at all cost is the banner of the coward. The pastor must be long-suffering, humble and compassionate but so many of our professing churches are so doctrinally deficient and so spiritually dark that they cannot stand the light of truth and the result of a doctrinally sound, Spirit-filled pastor and a, a doctrinally anemic and spiritually weak church coming together is a collision, and the collision of those two will either be a God-sent revival and unity or a split and a division which may also bring revival but splitting over essential doctrine is not only inevitable, it's commanded and it's commendable. And I believe as I look at the brothers I know who are more Calvinistic, they are very committed to historic Bible doctrine in their preaching and teaching, and that's gonna cause some church splits but they'll be better church splits than what we've been having.

Titus 1:9-11 says the pastor is to hold "fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict." Did you know that's my job and that's the elders' job to refute those who contradict sound Bible doctrine? Now he doesn't tell us to refute people who contradict sound doctrine, Bible doctrine because there's never gonna be anybody, he tells us to be ready to refute them because there will be some in all churches. He says, "For there will be many," he didn't say a few, "many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision," that'd be the Jews in this day, "who must be silenced." Now you've gotta understand something, the old Jewish religion was the established respected religion of the day. It was the old established doctrine everybody helped cherish, or was held as precious and cherished in their hearts. It's what their fathers and their forefathers and their forefathers and their forefathers held to, but yet the pastor of the New Testament church in that context was to stand up and silence those who brought those doctrines into the church. He said, "because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain." My point being if a pastor stands that way, there will be some splits.

Dr. Al Mohler, the President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary who I really appreciate and respect said this, "We are reaping the harvest of doctrinal neglect. The urgency of this task cannot be ignored. Baptists will either recover our denominational heritage and rebuild our doctrinal foundations," and that's what this church stands for, by the way. We are a church that by the grace of God has substantially rebuilt the doctrinal foundations our forefathers used to stand on. He said, "really to reclaim our doctrinal heritage and rebuild our doctrinal foundations or in the next generation there will be no authentic Baptist witness."

So I'm convinced as these younger pastors rise up and hold to what sometimes is called Calvinism, reformed doctrine, the doctrines of grace, they are much more prone to be Bible-based and doctrinally thorough than the Arminian leaning camp, and I believe they will bring those old sound Bible doctrines back to bear in the life and in the practice of

the church but the church at large is far too weak spiritually to receive it and it'll cause some divisions but they'll be good divisions.

III. A third reason why the rise of Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention encourages me is because I think it will help expose and remove the covert liberalism that has crept in among us. To me, our church is at least for the most part, are more liberal than ever before. Yes, than ever before. But there's an insidious twist to the whole thing and perhaps a blatant dishonesty to the whole thing. One thing is for certain, any denomination that claims to hold to the inerrancy of the Scripture without an equally passionate commitment to the sufficiency of the Scripture will soon find itself right back in the cesspool of liberalism it claimed to come out of. Did you hear me? You can't just with a loud voice hold this up as inerrant if you aren't with perspiration and perseverance purposing to practice it in the body of the church. Satan doesn't matter how loudly you say something if you actually function as a liberal in your doctrine and your theology. But the liberalism of today is worse because it's so covert, it's so deceptive, it's so hidden.

Today we have the name conservative attached to a lot of churches and a lot of denominations and sometimes the phrase conservative evangelical is attached to our churches, Southern Baptist and others, but much of the actual practice of church life and I mean the willful, known, open practices of the church, not a failure and a slip here or there, the open, know, habitual practice of the church looks just like old liberalism, but the old liberalism, it seems, has put on some new outer clothing. There's some new things floating around under the banner of conservative evangelicalism. It's new clothing. Much of what I see that's called the Purpose Driven Church model or the Seeker Friendly Church model and then there's a new one that's come out in recent years called the Emerging Church model, and then you've got this psycho church pastored by Joel Osteen that's just off the charts, so far off, so unbiblical, so unsound. I want to say it again because I want this congregation to know it: Joel Osteen is a false teacher. He is not a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and it's very very easy to prove that and I will in just a moment.

Now I'm not an authority on any of these, the Seeker Sensitive or Purpose Driven, that's one of them, the Emerging Church, that's the other one, and then the new Joel Osteen thing. I'm not an authority on any of those but I don't think you need to be an authority to see the error. Brothers, only a casual glance at an elephant is all that is needed to figure out that that would not be a good choice for a family pet. And you know, if you're not practicing in the church, the conservative theology that you claim to hold with your lips, then don't talk to us about being conservative because you're known by your fruit. And by the way, the apostles did not have to study in the seminaries of Jerusalem to discern the error of the Pharisees. You don't have to spend 100 hours studying the Purpose Drive Church model or the Emerging Church model or Joel Osteen to figure out that's not sound doctrine. I mean, if you just basically are grounded in truth, it starts jumping out at you. But when I do some reading about the Purpose Driven model or the Emerging Church model or the Joel Osteen model, it's glaringly clear to me that this is not an ingenious new way to present Christ, it's an old false way of doing church. It's an old

false way that actually denies the biblical Christ, it denies the biblical Gospel, and it does not build a biblical church. It's just old liberalism in some new clothes.

Now what do I find glaringly missing in these ministries among other things? The thing that you'll find glaringly missing is the doctrine of the total depravity of man, that man is fully wicked to the core and every part of man's being is hopelessly and helplessly polluted by sin and he cannot in any way, shape or fashion save himself or be involved in the salvation of his own soul. A very weak anemic or totally vacant understanding of the biblical truth of the doctrine of the depravity of man. Romans 3 is a good chapter if you want to look at that. Instead you hear quite the opposite, you hear all these good and positive and warm and wonderful things about man, do you not when you hear these guys? A weak and deficient view of the doctrine of sin. Matter of fact, folks like Joel Osteen and even Rick Warren to a degree openly as a purpose of their ministries try to avoid even mentioning the word "sin." A total negation of the doctrine of biblical repentance. And brothers, if you leave out repentance and you leave out the doctrine of sin and you leave out the doctrine of the depravity of man, you are not preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Can't do it. It's not there. I don't care if you have 150,000 on Sunday morning, it's not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus did not die on the cross and suffer the shame, the humiliation and the wrath of God because we were pretty good and just needed a little help. The Son of God, the second person of the Godhead endured the brutal blow of the vengeance of a holy God because we are so wretchedly depraved and sinful and needy. That's the Gospel.

But there's this covert liberalism now. If you, if you see them on the outside and if you hear them briefly, sometimes they look like the old Charles Haddon Spurgeon on the outside, or on the outside they look like a W. A. Criswell, a little closer inspection you'll find out that the man on the inside is more like Robert Schuller or even Oprah Winfrey. How could it be that 25+ years after the conservative take-back of the Southern Baptist Convention's theological schools that our churches today are more liberal than ever?

I, um, usually take two week study break every year and, ah, usually I visit churches that I feel like can edify me and help me grow as a pastor, and a couple of years ago I said I'm gonna do right the opposite, I'm gonna visit churches that are totally opposite of me and only made it to one, couldn't go to another one. But I went to one. Spurgeon one time said this and I believe this is true of myself, he said, "I would not walk across the street to hear myself preach, but there are many preachers I would walk across the street the other way to avoid having to hear them preach." Now there's some truth to that.

I went to this church, it was considered a megachurch, had about 15,000 in attendance and you just wouldn't believe the, the, lewdness of the dress, the spirit in the place was so, it was like a carnival or Atlanta Braves baseball game or something. And the pastor got up to preach and he went to the woman at the well and had these screens going, multimedia stuff tying into his sermon. I mean, it was a fantastic production. Hollywood would've been proud. But when he dealt with the woman at the well, he didn't deal with the fact that Jesus when he confronted that woman at the well said, "You've had five husbands and the man you're living with now is not your husband." He dealt with her sin

issue. He left that totally out of the story. That was never mentioned. Sin was never mentioned. Her adultery was never mentioned. Here's what the pastor said over and over, "Look what the world has done to this woman and she needs Jesus to help her." That was the whole message. I'm telling you, I was very careful I didn't miss a syllable of his message. And then his invitation at the end was, "Has the world done you about also and you're hurting and you need Jesus?" And about 1,500 people stood up. Never dealt with sin. Never dealt with depravity. Never dealt with repentance. Never even really dealt with trusting Christ as your Savior from your sin problem. It was all that you're hurting and Jesus can heal your hurt.

Friends, I'm sorry, that's not the Gospel. The Gospel is you are a sinner, a holy God justly is venting his wrath toward you and only Christ can rescue you if you will go to Christ to flee the wrath of God. Those 1,500 people stood and I guess he would count them as salvations and the Gospel was never preached. Now here's the problem: that church today is considered a conservative Bible-believing church. It's a covert liberalism. It's the old stuff that the old liberals of 50 and 75 years ago was taught and preached but today it's sneaked in and got a name that it's conservative but it's got a life that it's liberal.

I got a call from a church planter out West and I get two or three of these a week it seems like, and this young man is doing a good job. I say young man, he's about my age, he's not so young, is he? And he was telling me how he embraced the doctrines of grace or Calvinism, he's a soul winner, he goes door to door knocking on doors witnessing. He's a very missions minded, got a missions heart. But he said the director of missions of his association found out that he held to the doctrines of grace and the director of missions began to meet with the men of his church trying to get him fired because he was a "Calvinist." Didn't matter that he was a soul winner and a witness for Christ. Just the label, just get the label on you and you're tarnished for life evidently. And he was talking to me over the phone and he was very heart-broken and he said, "Pastor, here's what troubles me the most. My director of missions is pushing one of these new Emerging Church model things on all of us that we ought to change our churches like this newfangled stuff," and he said, "it's the most radical liberal stuff in the world."

I was talking with Brother Paul in the office the other day about this and, you know, Spurgeon was a great Calvinist, great Baptist Calvinist pastor and a great evangelist and we thought isn't it an interesting day when leaders in our Convention will throw out the guy who looks like Charles Haddon Spurgeon but they'll embrace a ministry method that looks like more like Oprah Winfrey. That's where we're getting today.

Far too much in these modern movements is contrary to the historic doctrines of our forefathers. You see, one thing we need to remember as Jono Sims pointed out to us when he preached for us, that our God is a purpose driven God. Three times in Ephesians 1 the Bible tells us that the Gospel and the ministry of Christ is "to the praise of the glory of His grace." In other words, God is saving sinners through the Gospel of Jesus Christ and he's saving them so that in the end result all will be to the praise of the glory of the grace that could save such wretches like you and I.

That's the Gospel but, you know, as I study these new models and these new things coming down the pike, I don't see things that seem to be to the praise of the glory of his grace, these models seem to be to the praise of the cleverness of men. The Emerging Church flaunts itself as some brand new insight on how to do church. Well, it's not. Too much of it is just old liberalism crawling out from under a slimy rock and, brothers and sisters, this stuff is legion among us but I believe a surge in what's sometimes called Calvinism or preaching the old doctrines of grace or preaching reformed theology, I believe a resurge in that preaching will be a key to stemming the tide of this liberalism because that kind of preaching exalts God. It preaches the sinful depravity of man including that man is God's enemy and that man is ungodly, that he is depraved, and that he is hopeless and helpless, and that Christ in love what the, was the substitutionary sacrifice for his children's sin and that the power of the Spirit must be evident and must be working to regenerate the heart, and the regenerate heart always will produce repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This preaching, this kind of preaching will both expose the liberalism for what it is, a counterfeit and a fraud, and produce true converts that have not just the form of godliness but the power thereof. This new Gospel, friends, is filling churches with people who don't look, act anything like Christians. Oh, it's filling buildings but it's not making disciples. As preachers we are called to be prophets. We do not go to man to see what man wants from God, we go to God to see what God has to say to man.

IV. The fourth reason I'm encouraged about the rise of Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention is because I'm convinced it will help us restore true evangelism. It will help us restore true evangelism. Now this is a shocking statement to many because the cry of the hour is, "Oh no, this Calvinism is gonna kill evangelism!" It'll kill false evangelism. It'll kill man-centered easy-believism hoop-jump stuff but it won't kill true evangelism. It is true evangelism.

Many have already declared that Calvinism's gonna kill all of our missions efforts. Now when you ask these people, "Explain what do you mean by that. Who are these Calvinists that are gonna kill evangelism and missions?" And when they get to explaining to you what they mean, they're talking about the guy who's a hyper-Calvinist, which I abhor hyper-Calvinism. Hyper-Calvinism is that biblically out of balance view that God is sovereign, he has his elect so there's no reason to send missionaries, there's no reason to have a visitation program, there's no reason to preach evangelistically, God's just gonna take care of all of it. Now we are totally opposed to that. That's not true Calvinism. That's a hyper-Calvinism that we've always, ah, rejected. But when you ask them, "Now who are these hyper-Calvinists now that are gonna ruin the Southern Baptist Convention?" They can't name one. They can't name one. They cannot give you an example. It's a, it's a paper tiger. It's a straw man.

Spurgeon, the great Baptist evangelistic pastor of London of about the 1830s to 1860s, he said this and I quote, "Calvinism is the Gospel and nothing else." And he was quite an evangelist. You can't talk about the five greatest missionaries of all time of any denomination without mentioning the names Adoniram Judson and William Carey, both

Five Point Calvinists. Seems to me if Calvinism would kill missions, those guys would've never gone.

In Southern Baptist, at least those who have 35 years or, or rather are 35 years of age and older are without excuse and without warrant to believe that Calvinism will kill evangelism. Why would I say that? Well, probably the most used and copied evangelistic tool Southern Baptists have ever been a part of is an evangelistic program called Evangelism Explosion. Have you heard of it? Evangelism Explosion was written and developed by D. James Kennedy, a Five Point Calvinist Presbyterian and we used it for years in our churches as our evangelistic method. Now how can we embrace things like this and then say, "Oh, but that's gonna hurt our evangelism"?

You hear the statistic almost every year if you're a Baptist pastor that 7,000 or 11,000 or so Southern Baptist churches baptize no one, zero, in a whole year. Nobody's converted in their churches over a year so I think the thing to do would be to find out what do those brothers believe? We don't, we need to make sure that doesn't spread. I guarantee you if you called the pastors of those 7-11,000 churches that baptize no one, I think the statistic may include one, zero or one person in a whole year, I guarantee you 98% of them would say, "No, I'm not a Calvinist." Well, it seems like something other than Calvinism's killing us in our evangelism.

God lets us see quite a few baptisms here. Lets us see souls saved. God let us be a part of reaching the Hakaru people in the Andes Mountains of Peru with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. ?? Missionary Society, our missions arm of our church, I believe is a true model of aggressive evangelistic church planting mission work literally around the world. I don't think Calvinism hurts missions at all but I do think the prominent evangelistic methods – listen to my words – the prominent evangelistic methods we've adopted over the past 100 years have produced some troubling results in our churches. Southern Baptists boasts of about 16.4 million members yet on this Sunday 9-10 million of those will not be in church. About a third of our members go to church.

Dr. Paige Patterson, the President of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, a man that I respect and admire, have been in his home, I've preached for him, he says that he would estimate in the average Southern Baptist Sunday morning congregation, 40% of the people present are unsaved. They're on the church roll but they're not converted and I think that could be optimistic. Now if these assumptions are true, about 7 million out of 16.4 million even come to church, out of the 7 million that come, 40-50% of those are not converted. You get down to about 3 million converted Southern Baptists in church every Sunday. I would say we've got a problem. I would say it's time to open the old book and say are our methods of winning souls and baptizing people consistent with the old book and see if we can't do better than 3 million out of 16.4 million in church that look converted on a Sunday.

Barna, the most respected, um, pollster among Christians says the divorce rate among Baptists in America is higher than the divorce rate among the unchurched culture. We

have more Baptists getting divorces than we have unbelievers out there in the world getting divorces.

Now when you think about these things, oh, and also the estimates are from 70-88% of our high school students when they graduate from high school stop going to church at least for a season. So we're not keeping our young people. Man, if we were a business and we had those kind of dismal results, you'd shut the whole business down. You'd lock the doors, you'd shut down the, ah, the lines and you'd say, "We gotta fix this thing." And that's all that I'm saying and that's all that other brothers are saying is can we not do better? But what you have to realize is all of these millions and millions and millions and millions of Baptists who give no evidence of a truly changed life, no evidence of real, true, biblical conversion, they all walk down somebody's aisle, they all prayed some kind of prayer and they all were baptized in somebody's baptistery but something's glaringly missing in most of their hearts and it's called the presence of the Holy Spirit. It's called the new life which is what conversion really is.

Dr. Paige Patterson recently said at the, ah, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary that Southern Baptists have now become, these are his words, we've now become the worst of the infant baptizers. You know, Baptists exist because we refused to baptize our babies or infants. The state churches of Europe required you to baptize your children after they were born into the state church. Our Baptist forefathers refused to do that saying that's unbiblical, you're only baptized after you give evidence that you have experienced the new birth and become a true disciple. That's what Baptists are. And Baptists were martyred by the thousands for refusing that infant baptism. Yet Dr. Patterson says if you look at our statistics, we're baptizing so many children under the age of five, we are worse now than those pedo-baptizers our forefathers broke out of. We're the worst of the infant baptizers. We're baptizing children that have no idea what's going on.

I'm so glad that you have fully supported our efforts here to take our time with our children knowing their precious eternal souls are more important than a five or six minute meeting and running them through waters of baptism to see if God really has wrought that work of genuine conversion in their lives. That makes you quite unique but don't get the big head, it just makes you barely normal.

Well, how would you define true evangelism? A couple of simple thoughts. You have to forgive my throat. I've had this flu thing and I took an antihistamine and I'm dry as a desert. It's that too much information? That's just what I'm struggling with this morning, I'm just dry, but it's better than the alternative, I trust you, or trust me on that.

How would I define true evangelism? Couple of quick thoughts and we'll go on. First of all, when sound Gospel doctrine is preached in the power of the Spirit, that's true evangelism. Did you hear me? When sound Gospel doctrine is preached in the power of the Spirit. You can't leave out either one, either one of those. We don't need Spirit power without the light of truth and we don't need the light of truth without the heat of the Spirit on it. Both are essential and, boy, that's where a lot of brothers are missing it today. We got churches that, "Woo! Woo! Woo!" They're whooping it up, buddy, and it's about all

heat and no light. Then we got other churches, they're as dry and dusty and cold and dead. Great doctrine, great light but no heat. Why can't you have both, great light and great heat? That's my passion and that's my commitment. That's why I got a charismatic to do my music. I help him with the doctrine and he brings a little heat and it works out good. And by the way, that's his heart fully. Tom Clay is not here trying to be something that's not what he is. He's totally committed to the rich doctrines of the faith and to sing them with passion and conviction.

A second thing about true evangelism is this: true evangelism are when genuine conversions are evident based on biblical criteria. When true conversions are evident based on biblical criteria. I do not care less how many people walk to a place in a building. If that were important, you'd have it in every book of the New Testament. I don't even care how many people prayed a prayer. I want to know how many were Spirit converted. That may include that you walk somewhere, that's wonderful. That may include that you prayed a prayer, that's wonderful. But those things by themselves are not biblical criteria for what conversion is.

Let me give you good biblical criteria for what conversion is. I take this from our Confession of Faith that we hold to that was originally the New Hampshire Confession of Faith of 1833. Here's what it says, "We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties and also inseparable graces wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God." Here's what that means: we should command, encourage, plead with all men to repent and trust Christ but that can only be wrought in the soul by the regenerating Spirit of God. We believe that it takes more than us and our methods and our persuasion and our arm-twisting to get a soul saved. We believe it takes God working in the heart. If this is just about us, I'd quit the whole thing but God's promised to send the wind of his Spirit to accompany the preaching of the Gospel and the Spirit comes and works with that Gospel message and brings about, it's wrought out in the heart repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ.

Alright, what must that look like if you begin to talk to a person? Here's what our forefathers said in the New Hampshire Confession of 1833. "Whereby being deeply convinced," something deeply affects you. What is that? "Convinced of our guilt, danger and helplessness and the way of salvation by Christ, we turn with unfeigned," which means genuine, "contrition, confession and supplication for mercy, at the same time hardly receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our prophet, our priest and our king and relying on Him and Him alone as our only sufficient Savior." Now that's what we do when we counsel with someone before we baptize them. Very compassionately and very lovingly we try to discern are these things evident because these are biblical marks of true conversion, and essential parts therefore of true evangelism.

I remember after my conversion, as you know, I was not in a church, I was not in a youth meeting, I was not at a youth camp, I was in my car and I didn't know anything about Baptists. I really didn't. I didn't know anything about Methodists. I didn't know anything about anybody. I was just a pagan and I heard a Presbyterian preacher, of all people, on the radio share the Gospel and my life was transformed. And I remember so

overwhelmingly two things happening. In the next few weeks I remember so heavily feeling the weight of my sin, how wicked and sinful I was before God. But I remember the wonderful peace and assurance that Christ was my Savior. Both were true. The peace of Christ but the weight of sin both being true. That's the work of the Spirit.

Well, I began to attend some churches and there were some dear people who loved me and helped me and I will always be grateful to God for those people, but many of them had an untrue view of evangelism and they began saying this to me, "Did you pray that prayer?" I'd say, "What prayer?" It's kinda like those disciples when they said, "Have you received the Holy Spirit?" and they said, "We didn't know there was one." Well, that's where I was, I didn't know there was a prayer. There is a, a prayer? And they said, "Yes, you've gotta pray that prayer," and they'd tell me that prayer. And so literally for seven or eight years I prayed that prayer, the "sinner's prayer," probably 300 times a day every day in case I didn't say it right the time before. No, listen, those were loving and good people and I thank God for them again but nobody sat down and opened the Bible and said, "Jeff, here's what the converted heart looks like. Here's the things you should be sensing. Here's the things that should be changing," and show me that sinfulness of man, that repentance you feel about your sin, that new joy you have in Jesus Christ, that new confidence you have that he took your sins on the cross, that new love you have for Christian people which was so evident in my life. I went from one group to a totally different group after that night in my car. That new love I had for, I feel asleep every night holding my Bible. It was all I had and loved it and never read the Bible before.

Those are what the Bible says are evidences of the true converted life and nobody showed me that, and once I figured it all out, I decided that's what I'm gonna do for my children and that's what I'm gonna do for your children. We're gonna return to true evangelism based on biblical criteria and get away from all these things that are going on to count the numbers when all these numbers have been proven not to show up to count for much when you have 16.4 millions Baptists, Southern Baptist, and at best about 3 million of them even look like they might be converted.

I'll finish this point and we'll close. But it seems like instead of being more biblically sound in conversion we're getting more bizarre. I opened a paper the other day, a Baptist state paper and in this state they were applauding a church because they were using dog evangelism. They had trained some Labrador retrievers to share the Gospel and they could probably share the Gospel better than a lot of evangelists I've heard. You've got to be kidding me. In our own association and I know the brothers meant well, it's not a personal attack, but we have horse evangelism. They had a horse whisperer. I don't know what that means. I don't know if the guy whispered to the horse or the horse whispers to him. I do not know but the horse was helping share the Gospel, the dogs helped share the Gospel, whatever happened to the foolishness of preaching? Whatever happened to God-called, biblically sound, Spirit-empowered, bold, courageous men who preach the Gospel? And if God's method didn't work, they were not gonna go to circus, Six Flags over Jesus gimmicks. They were gonna stay with God's way. I'm not making this up, folks, these are prominent things. We've got muscle man evangelism. They tell us now if you bring these guys in, they'll, they'll crush blocks of ice with their head. They'll tear

phonebooks and God saves people. Whatever happened to not by might and not by power but by my Spirit says the Lord? Whatever happened to I have chosen the weak of the world to confound the wise? God don't need our strength, he needs our brokenness. He needs our yieldedness.

Well, those who espouse these approaches say, "Well, it gets results." We were never called to get results, friends, we were called to be faithful and the measure of our success are biblically defined true disciples not numbers and not just results. And then once they are true disciples in the Baptist tradition of baptizing disciples only, then we baptize them. What we have today is a dumbed-down Gospel which is no Gospel. We have a dumbed-down view of conversion which is no conversion at all. We have a dumbed-down view of revival which is not true God-wrought revival but revivalism made by man. And now we have to have a dumbed-down church to keep these dumbed-down converts happy and coming and attending, and church sometimes looks more like a circus than the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, we'll finish later. Let's stand together in prayer. Before you pray I want you to know that I was not seeking for this position to share this message, I was asked to do it but I do believe I shared the truth of God as it applies in our situation today. And I know for the overwhelming majority of you, you don't live, eat and drink and die on whether or not the Southern Baptist Convention does well. After all, every Southern Baptist church is an independent autonomous church that voluntarily cooperates with other churches and that's called the Convention and that's been one of the strengths of this church. From the very very early founding days of our first pastor, we've never been an idol worshiper of the denomination, but when asked to be an influence and be salt and light, we ought to be that and do it for God's glory.

Let's pray together.