

ARE YOU A PRIMITIVE BAPTIST OR A REFORMED BAPTIST?

By Elder Buddy Abernathy

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Primitive Baptists believe that God chose his people in Jesus Christ before the world began and predestinated them unto the adoption of children (*Eph. 1:3-6*). They believe that Jesus came into the world to save his people from death and eternal perdition which was a consequence of Adam's transgression (*Rom. 5:12, 19; Mat. 1:21; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 10:14*). They believe the Holy Ghost gives spiritual life to all His people. (*2 Cor. 5:1; Gal. 4:6, 6:15 Eph. 2:1; John 5:25; 2 Tim. 1:9*). They believe God's children **ought** to believe the gospel and persevere in faith (*Rom. 1:16-17, 10:4, 1 Cor. 15:1-4, Jude 1-3, Gal. 1:6-9, 3:1-3, 4:19-20, 5:1, 7-8*). In reference to what they call a "temporal" or "time" salvation, they believe God's people **ought** to live in obedience to God's commands (*Deut. 11:26-28, 24:14-15, 30:19-20, Psa. 51:1-12, Isa. 1:19-20, Jer. 6:16, Mat. 7:13-14, Rom. 12:1-2, Gal. 6:7-8, Eph. 2:10, Php. 2:12-13, 2 Tim. 2:16-19, Tit. 2:11-14, Heb. 10:26-31, 12:1-2, 1 John 2:15-17, Rev. 2:1-5*). They believe that Christ will return to resurrect the dead (*Acts 24:14-15*), banish the wicked to hell and everlasting fire (*Mat. 25:41-46, 2 Thes. 1:7-10, Rev. 20:7-10*), and present His redeemed children to His Father (*Heb. 2:10-13*); with whom they will abide forever, conformed to the image of Christ (*Mat. 25:34, 1 Thes. 4:16-17, Php. 3:20-21, Rom. 8:29, 1 Cor. 15:50-54*).

In general, Reformed Baptists* believe God's children **will** believe the gospel and persevere in faith. By "persevere in faith", they mean that they **will continue** in, "...*repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ...*" (*Acts 20:21*) Some of them believe there may be a season of disobedience or "falling away" in the lives of the children of God, but that they **will** repent and continue in faith. Sometimes this doctrine is presented by stating that being "brought to faith in Jesus" is the evidence of spiritual life. Primitive Baptists contend that believing the gospel is an evidence of spiritual life, but not the only credible evidence. Some of the other evidences, identified as "*the fruit of the Spirit*" (*Gal. 5:22*), include "...*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance...*" (*Gal 5:23*), all of which may be manifest in the absence of "gospel" faith. In other words, Primitive Baptists believe there are multitudes of God's people who have never heard the gospel and do not understand the meaning or implications of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, they believe that some of God's children, even when exposed to the gospel, may not embrace it or may only continue in faith for a season (*Mat. 13:18-23, 23:37-39; Rom. 11:28-32; 2 Cor. 4:4-5*).

Primitive Baptists and Reformed Baptists believe there is a cause and effect process in salvation. Primitive Baptists believe that the Holy Spirit is the cause (*John 5:25, 6:63; Eph. 2:1; 2 Tim. 1:9*) and that spiritual life is the effect. Reformed Baptists believe that the Holy Spirit is the cause and that spiritual life, accompanied by perseverance in faith, is the effect. Reformed Baptist theology is another form of what Paul identified as "*another gospel*" (*Gal. 1:6-7*). The churches in Galatia believed that man's actions affect salvation. Reformed Baptists believe that man's actions will be the effect of salvation. In either case, the efforts of man are required for salvation.

Primitive Baptists believe that once a child of God has been born of the Spirit, there is a conviction of sin because he is now a “*new creature*” and “*old things are passed away; behold all things are become new*” (2 Cor. 5:17, 1 Pet. 4:3-4). The child of God may have little or no understanding regarding what has transpired. He now possesses a new nature in which God begins to work in him “*both to will and to do of His good pleasure*” (Php. 2:13, Rom. 2:14-15). If exposed to a false religion, he may respond to these feelings according to that particular religion’s explanation of the origin, meaning, and purpose of the feelings. Having now assigned meaning to his feelings, the teachings of that religion are, in his mind, validated. Consequently, he now lives under the influence of that particular religion (Acts 15:1; Rom. 10:1-4, 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 12:2; 2 Cor. 11:1-4; Gal. 3:1, 4:9-10; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 2 Pet. 2:1-3).

The Apostle Paul understood that the purpose of the gospel is to give spiritual light to the living (John 1:11-13, 2 Tim. 1:8-10), not spiritual life to the dead (1 Cor. 1:18, 2:14; Eph. 2:1). He described the gospel as “*the power of God unto salvation*” (Rom. 1:16), thereby identifying God’s ordinary means of enlightening the minds of His children (Titus 1:1-3) and delivering them from the influence of false religion. (Acts 26:15-18; 2 Cor. 4:3-4, 10:5). The gospel enables the child of God to find resolution concerning his internal conflict (Rom. 7:15-23) by answering the question, “*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” (Rom 7:24-25). It informs him that Jesus saved him (Mat. 1:21, Heb. 10:14, 1 Cor. 15:1-4, 2 Cor. 5:21). If he believes the gospel, he finds rest for his soul (Isa. 40:1-2, Mat. 11:28, Acts 2:15:10-11, Rom. 10:4, Gal. 5:1).

Paul admonished the churches of Galatia, “*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*” (Gal 1:8-9) He understood that, “*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*” (Gal. 5:9). Therefore, he admonished them to, “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*” (Gal 5:1). Reformed Baptist theology is a “*yoke of bondage*” because it teaches that, “*where there is no holy pursuit, there is no holy position.*”**

Jude instructs us to, “*...earnestly contend for the faith (doctrine) which was once delivered unto the saints*” (Jude 3). False doctrine is by nature active, not stagnant. Like leaven, false doctrine has the tendency to spread and influence. Therefore, we should be as Paul who labored both to defend and confirm the gospel. (Php. 1:7, 17). It is only through a precise understanding of the true doctrine of salvation that we will have the ability to “*stand fast in the faith*” (1 Cor. 16:13. 2 Thes. 2:15).

*By “*Reformed Baptists*”, I’m referring to the Reformed Baptist doctrine I have encountered and not necessarily the beliefs of a church bearing the name.

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