

**Why I Am Southern Baptist**  
*by Dr. Donald McCall (Mac) Brunson*

There are many people today who are asking the question, "Who are Southern Baptists?" Many Southern Baptists are asking, "Why am I a Southern Baptist?" Southern Baptists are in the news, not just once in a while, but almost constantly these days. Let me pose a question to you today. Why are you in this church and **Why are you Southern Baptist?** In our day and time, that's a very good question to ask. We are watching denominations across the whole spectrum jettison their faith, their beliefs, their tenants and they are beginning to believe just about anything that comes down the pike that's politically correct or that is culturally popular.

Why are you Baptist? And beyond that, **Why are you Southern Baptist?**

Throughout human history, mankind has been plagued with different epidemics and diseases. In the fourteenth century, the "Black Plague" struck Europe and killed over a million people. There have been outbreaks of Cholera with the terrible destruction it is bringing on the continent of Africa. Diphtheria and Measles have killed towns and wiped out cities and wiped out nations of people. In our generation, we are seeing that same devastation with the Aids epidemic. Human disease, though it kills the body, is not nearly as tragic and terrible as spiritual disease and the plague of false teaching and false doctrine that will not just kill the body, but literally kill the soul.

Why do you believe what you believe? In many Baptist churches that I've been in, I don't know that people even know *what* they believe, so they have no concept of why they believe it.

Listen to what Peter says in **1Peter 3:15**.

*...always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you with gentleness and reverence.*

Listen, he says

...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.

Do you know *what* you believe and do you know *why* you believe it? I want to share with you why I am a *Southern Baptist*.

I . I want to share with you, first of all, that I am Southern Baptist because of who we are doctrinally. Turn to 3 John 1:3. John wrote three epistles and they were really in response to the heresies that had not only invaded, but also infiltrated and permeated through the early church. There was a man, tradition tells us, by the name of Cerinthus, who was John's great enemy and opponent in the city of Ephesus and in the church of Ephesus. Cerinthus believed that Jesus and Christ were two different people. He said

Jesus was human and Christ was divine and that heresy infiltrated and affected the early church. There was also the heresy of **Docetism** that denied the incarnation of God and there was the heresy of **Gnosticism**. These heresies had infiltrated and infected the early church. John writes in these three epistles in an attempt to combat and to answer these heresies and to call us back to doctrinal purity.

Now, if you've got your Bibles open to the 3rd Epistle of John, I want you to listen very carefully as he writes to the elder, to the beloved, Gaius. Gaius was evidently a church leader and elder in one of the house churches in the city of Ephesus. He was committed. John was writing to him personally, giving him some instruction to pass on to the church. Listen to what he says in **verse 2**:

*....beloved I pray that in all respects that you may prosper and be in good health just as your soul prospers.*

Now what I want you to see is in **verse 3**,

*.... for I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth, that is how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this to hear of my children walking in truth.*

Three times John uses the Greek word for truth, and whenever John uses that word he means doctrinal truth. He is calling the church to a pure doctrinal truth. That is so vitally important. Look back to **1Tim 6**. I want you to listen to what Paul, who is facing certain death, writes. In 1Timothy, Paul writes to this young preacher boy in chapter 6 verse 3.

*... if anyone advocates a different doctrine, a different doctrine that does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to Godliness, he is conceited,*

Now, listen to what Paul is saying in **1 Tim. 6:4**, speaking of those who advocate a different doctrine. They understand nothing ...

*. . . but have a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words out of which arise envy and strife and abusive language and evil suspicions and constant friction between men of depraved minds, now listen, and deprived of the truth.*

There it is again, that doctrinal truth, pure doctrine, and pure truth that the Word of God gives us. John calls us to that ... Paul calls us to that ... Peter calls us to that.

I'm a Southern Baptist, congregation, because of who we are *doctrinally*, and I want to just give you a few examples.

**1.** I'm Southern Baptist because of what we believe about the Word of God.

Look at **2 Timothy 4:3**. Listen to what Paul says in **verse 3**.

*...for the time will come when they will not endure (what?) sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled....*

Now whom is he talking about? I think he's talking about those in the church. The people outside the church have never endured it.... they don't like it ... they're not interested in it. *For the time will come they will not endure it ...* evidently there was a time they listened to sound doctrine, but they are not going to endure it for long.

*... but wanting to have their ears tickled they will accumulate to themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires.*

That is, they want a preacher that will preach what they want to hear. They want somebody to affirm and confirm them in their sin. Let me live the lifestyle I want to live and don't ever bring to bear on it the Word of God. He says:

*... there's going to come a time, when they're not going to endure it, they're not going to stay under sound doctrine, but they are going to accumulate for themselves the teachers that will teach what they want to hear.*

I am Baptist because Baptists have always been lashed, tied, chained, inseperatedly to the Word of God. That has never been disputed except within recent years. That's never been questioned, and for many people, they say there has never really been an issue over scripture itself. If you go back to 1960-1961, with the Broadman publication of Ralph Elliot's *The Message of Genesis*, you will find the first eleven chapters of Genesis are essentially called a myth and the rest of Genesis is constantly called into question. Look from that publication to the present time where the new divinity school for the CBF at Wake Forest University has admitted a lesbian for a divinity degree, and you will see a constant attack on the Word. Let me tell you something, congregation ... homosexuals are not candidates for ordination to ministry, but they are candidates for conversion. What you are seeing now on this landscape is not political in nature. You are seeing that this is actually a theological issue not a political issue, as some want to claim it to be.

In the late 1960's, there was one single lone voice that was calling Baptists back to Biblical heritage and that lone voice filled this pulpit here at First Dallas. It was W. A. Criswell. In his book in 1968-1969, "Why Preach the Bible as Literally True", Dr. Criswell stated,

"Frequently we hear discussions centering on whether the Bible is the Word of God or only contains the Word of God. If, by the former, it is meant that God spoke every word in the Bible, the answer is, of course, no, but if it is meant that God caused every word in the Bible, true or false, to be recorded, the answer is yes. In the Bible, there are words of Satan. In the Bible, there are words of false profits, there are words of the enemies of Christ, yet, they are as inspired as

being in the Bible. Not in the sense God uttered them, in a sense God calls them to be recorded infallible, inherently and for our profit. In this sense, the Bible does not merely contain the Word of God; it is the Word of God. "

He made that statement – I say, "prophetically" back in 1968-1969 ,and just a few weeks ago in Orlando that was clearly seen as the crux of the whole issue with Baptists there.

Now, you say, we know Dr. Criswell said that. Well, let me go beyond his statement. Let me back up to a man who stands as tall in Baptist life as anybody in the whole history of Baptists, not just Southern Baptists, but all Baptists, and that was B.H. Carroll. I want you to listen to what B.H. Carroll says,

"What is the object of inspiration? It is to put accurately in human words ideas from God. If the words are not inspired, how am I to know how much to reject and how to find out whether anything is from God? When you hear the silly talk that the Bible contains the Word of God, it is not the Word of God. You hear a fools talk.

That's B.H. Carroll, long before our day. By the way, the first Pastor of First Baptist Church Dallas baptized B.H. Carroll. From the days of Spurgeon Harris, through the ministry of George Truett, through the ministry of W.A. Criswell and O.S Hawkins, and as long as God gives me breath, we are going to preach and teach nothing, but the Word of God.

**2. I am a Southern Baptist** not only because of what we believe about the Word, but because of what we believe about Jesus Christ.

Every year, we have to hear from a symposium called the Jesus Seminar who want to tell us that practically everything in the New Testament was never said anyway. And every few months on the cover of *Newsweek* or *Time* magazine, or some other magazine, you'll see the headlines with the picture of Christ and the headlines written, "Who was Jesus Christ?"

Let me tell you what the Bible says in **John 1:1**:

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father.*

If you look in verse 18, John uses a little verb there, exogema, and says that Jesus literally exegeted out the Father before mankind. I believe he was born of a virgin, that He was tempted just as we are and yet He remained absolutely sinless, perfectly sinless. He was born very God of very God and very man of very man. He was the God/man. He was crucified. He literally died on the cross for your sins and my sins. He was placed in a tomb and He was raised bodily out of the grave and ascended to the

Father in heaven and one bright day when the trumpets play and the dead in Christ arise, the chosen few will gather and proclaiming Him Lord on High. That's who He is. I don't believe like those who say the forces of good will one day triumph over the forces of evil. Let me tell you something, it has already happened. Jesus Christ has already conquered sin, death, Hell and the grave.

3. I'm Southern Baptist because we believe in the blood. This gets quite old fashioned ... but I believe in the power of the blood of Jesus.

- Jehovah Witnesses say the blood of Christ has only partial cleansing power. They believe that salvation comes through surviving Armageddon and coming to Jehovah through good works.
- Christian Scientists say that the blood of Jesus was no more able to cleanse from sins when it was shed upon the tree than when it was flowing in His veins.
- The Mormons say it is ridiculous to think that the blood of Christ can cleanse sin.
- There are some of the old World Wide Church of God churches that still believe that the blood of Christ does not fully save any man.

But the writer of **Hebrews 9, verse 22** says, *"that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins.*

Listen to what Peter says in **1Peter 1:18** , a great passage where he begins with these words;

*"...Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life that you inherited from you forefathers, but with precious blood as of the Lamb unblemished spotless the blood of Christ for He was foreknown before the foundations of the World, but has appeared in these last times, for the sake of you.*

There are some of you here this morning that have never trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. All you know is that there is sin in your life, there's guilt, you're haunted by it, and you don't know how to deal with it. You don't understand it. There are times when not only do you dislike yourself, but you hate yourself and what you do and you wonder why. Is there anything you can do about that? The only thing you can do is call out to Jesus Christ. *"There is no other name given among men whereby we may be saved except the name of Jesus Christ."* Listen, He died for you, personally, He shed His blood so He could take away your sins, was resurrected so He could give you eternal life with Him. That's God's gift to you, if you'll receive it today. *"There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains."*

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

4. I'm Southern Baptist because we believe in believer's baptism. You never see infant baptism in the scripture. We believe that a person should come of age where they understand they are sinners and where they understand and they are able on their own to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. That's what we believe about Baptism. It is a picture of the death, burial, and then the resurrection of Christ. That is a perfect picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it is a picture of the "old man" dying when you come to Christ. I'm telling you, I'm thankful I'm not the man I used to be. The "old man" is dead and buried and I am a new creature in Jesus Christ. That day when Jesus Christ stepped into that line down at the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist, he had no need of Baptism. He stood in line with liars, and thieves and deadbeat dads, and cheats and prostitutes, to identify with all of us. Are you too proud to step into a baptistry and identify with Him?

5. I'm Southern Baptist because of what we believe about the priesthood of the believer.

In **Matt. 27**, we are told that when Jesus was crucified, the veil of the temple ripped from the top to the bottom. It was as if God took His holy hands and tore that veil like a piece of cloth, as if to say, now you can come before me! The priesthood of the believer was lost in the dark ages in the Roman church. It was retrieved and revived by Martin Luther. You can't say that it is a distinctive Baptist Doctrine. Luther recovered the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer. We Baptists have always believed in the priesthood of the believer. It has never been a major doctrine for us. It was not in the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, it was not in the 1925 Confession of Faith or Baptist Faith and Message, nor is it in the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message. It was in the preamble of the Baptist Faith and Message. It is in the preamble of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message and, in fact, the committee went back and picked up the term that Luther used, who recovered the doctrine from the dark ages. It is plural . . . priesthood of *believers*. That's why we have articles of faith in this church that all of us have voted on, and that's why we have an ordination committee when someone goes into the ministry. It has never been a major Baptist doctrine, although I believe it. If you go back to the five great systematic theologians, Dagg, Boyce, Mullins, Conner, and Moody, they all gave it passing reference. If you want to recover the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer, let me tell you what the reformers said that it meant. The priesthood of the believer meant that you were responsible to be a priest to those who are your neighbors and family and to minister to those around you. It has never meant that I can pick up this book and I can make it say anything I want it to say and I've got a doctrinal right to do it. That's not right. That's a lie.

6. I'm Southern Baptist because we believe in the autonomy of the local church. There's no Pope, no Bishop in Nashville, Atlanta or Richmond that tells us what to do. Fifty-one percent of this congregation vote and decide what this church is going to do.

We don't have anybody that tells you whom to call as Pastor; we don't have anybody who tells us what to preach. When I came to this church, the pulpit committee shared with me that I had an unfettered pulpit. That's the way it has been at this church. That meant that I stood up here and I preached without any coercion what anybody required but I would preach what God laid on my heart. Nobody tells us what to believe, nobody tells us what to preach. This is a free and autonomous church.

Vance Havner, the great old Baptist preacher from North Carolina, was asked why he was a Baptist and he said:

I believe that anybody who gets hold of a New Testament, reads it, and obeys it is very likely to come out of that experience a Baptist.

We as Baptists have always sought to follow doctrinal, Biblical truth. We fall short, we are not perfect. Unfortunately, there are many among us who believe because there is a name on a Baptist church roll that we are going to heaven, but are headed for a Christless eternity. They are mistaking being Baptist with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I am Southern Baptist because of who we are doctrinally.

**II. I am Southern Baptist because of who we are missiologically. 3 John 1:7-8**

I want you to look back to the **3rd Epistle of John** and I want you to listen to what he said beginning in **verse 7**. This is so important, congregation. I don't want this to be a tag on, but I want you to clearly hear what John is saying:

*...for they went out for the sake of the Name.*

John is writing to Gaius, talking about those who have gone out of the church. He said they *went out*. Why did they go out? For the sake of the Name. Do you see that capitalization? In other words, they go out for the name of Jesus Christ. They went out as missionaries. They went out as evangelists. They went out as preachers and teachers, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. That is, they refused to be paid for going out to share the gospel. Look at **verse 8**:

*"...therefore we ought to support such men that we may be fellow workers with the truth."*

That word *support* literally means to get under and give, get under and support. It means to get under and underpin it with whatever you have. This is the clearest statement, congregation, you can find in the New Testament for giving to missions around the world. John writes and says, "*because they went out in the name of Jesus and accepted nothing from the Gentiles*". He says we are obligated to underpin their ministry.

The IMB shared with us just a few weeks ago that they have over 4800 missionaries in 154 different countries. This past year, Southern Baptist missionaries baptized over

363,700 people. That is over a thousand people a day! Do you realize that because of the mission effort of Southern Baptists, we are seeing a Pentecost every three days? That is amazing to me. Sadly, the average Southern Baptist only gave approximately \$5.31 to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. That's what we averaged. This church gives about \$400,000 a year to the Cooperative Program. I've already shared this with the Deacons, I've shared this on Wed. night, and I share it with you now. We are going to increase that by \$100,000 this year. And not only that, but we are *going*. This church, has a moral, ethical, biblical mandate. We should give at least a million dollars a year to the Cooperative Mission Program! I'm Southern Baptist because of what we are doing in missions.

In the late 1890's there was a pastor in this town by the name of Samuel Hayden, who began to attack the state convention. He attacked their mission program. He attacked everything that was going on in the convention. He went around consistently and persistently and incessantly attacking the convention. The missions work in Texas began to suffer. There were two men who stood up, wrote a report and sent it in to the executive committee that stated, "For several years past, an agent has been at work in our state undermining the mission work, drying up the mission spirits, sowing down our once fertile fields with salt. That agent has persistently, ruthlessly and openly, in public print, attacked this board, its methods and work. With this agent nothing pertaining to this work is sacred or ever settled. His actions add to the general distrust discord and divisions he himself has gendered." The two men who made this report were W. H. Jenkins, a judge here in Texas, a Baptist, and George W. Truett, pastor of this church. Truett said he would not stand by and watch anybody attack the mission program of this state or of the convention, and neither will I! We are going to support missions. There are going to be days when decisions will have to be made. But we put our hand to the plow and we are going to be people that are doctrinally right as much as we can be doctrinally right. We are going to be a church that not only gives, but also we are going to be a church that goes, as well.

### III. I'm Southern Baptist because of who we are evangelistically.

This church has a great track record in evangelism. Do you know that there will be one million teenagers this year that will become pregnant out of wedlock? Four out of five of those teenagers will be unmarried. Over 30,000 of those teenagers will be under the age of 15. 40% of today's 14 year old females will be pregnant once before the age of 20 out of wedlock. How in the world could we ever stand around and grumble or murmur about the money we spend in ministry for teenagers in the youth department or resent sending them on mission trips? You explain that to me. Let me tell you something congregation, if you are not willing to send them, the world is ready to take them. There are 5 million latchkey children in this country. That is, children who come home at the end of the day and mom and dad are still at work and they go inside or they roam the streets or they do whatever until 6 or 7 o'clock or whenever mom and dad get home. Don't you think those children deserve to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ? That's why we are committed to doing Mission Dallas all over Dallas this coming week. There are many of you here who have volunteered. You can give, you can pray, you

can go. Debbie and I plan to visit as many of those sites this coming week as we can possibly get to. Places like Little Mexico right down from the church. As Southern Baptists we best not get so uppity that we forget that Jesus died for the down and out. Jesus loves that Hispanic child, that Black child, that Indian child, that Asian child just as much as He loves your child.

I'm Southern Baptist because Baptists have always championed evangelism. We are under scrutiny and under attack in our day because we have essentially said as Baptists we're going to do what Jesus told us to do in the Great Commission and that is to go and make disciples of all nations.

Several years ago, in Philadelphia, they built what they considered to be the premier post office in the country. It was technologically sophisticated. It was the most up to date. It was to be a prototype model of all the other post offices built in this country. They had the governor there to speak. They had bands that were playing, they cut the ribbons and they let the first man walk through the door to mail his letter. The whole crowd watched him standing there, watching him mail that letter. He looked and he looked and he looked, and they discovered in their haste to build the post office, they forgot to build the post drop. There was no place to put the letter. Now that's ridiculous! And as ridiculous as that is, it's just as ridiculous for a church or a denomination to set aside Biblical doctrine, missions, and evangelism.