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# **Why Primitive Baptists Stand Alone**

by Elder Walter Cash

**"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever."**

**Hebrews 13: 8**

**A sermon delivered on the occasion of the One Hundredth annual meeting of the Salem association of Primitive Baptists, held with Goshen church, Boone CO, Mo., September 2,3 and 4, 1927.**

**During the third century there were many departures from the simplicity of the first churches. The pastors assumed powers they did not possess, and ambition stirred in the breasts of the officers of the churches. Novation, an elder in the church at Rome stood against all innovations, and taught that the church should be separate from the world, and be a communion of saints. But Cornelius, also an elder in the church at Rome, was very lax in discipline and had a great ambition for members, without regard to character. The majority elected Cornelius pastor in the year 251, and Novatian, and those who stood with him withdrew from the majority. Here is manifested the principle that has marked the Primitive Baptists church in all the past and up to the present time. Great desire for members and power has brought in the heresies in doctrine and practice that the church has had to stand against, and this has resulted in its always being in the minority. Cornelius turned away from the teaching of Jesus, "Ye must be born again," and the true church stood for that teaching; and still stands for it, for Jesus changes not**

**Following Novatian was Donatus, who stood for pure doctrine and practice, which led to more and more persecution. Jesus said, "Blessed are ye when men shall persecute you, shall revile you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." Donatus believed in regeneration and spirituality of life. He was chosen pastor at Carthage on 315. The more they stood for the truth the more were they persecuted. They were treated as rebels, and as resisting the authority of the Emperor.**

**By this time the church and state were being united, which was another departure from the teaching of Jesus, who said that his kingdom was not of this world. In 313 Constantine established Christianity by law. He was made Emperor of Rome in 325, and stood with the Cornelius party. The church of Christ never**

persecutes, nor seeks to rule by power and from this principle it is easy to see where the true church was. It was with the minority, for the worldly side was gaining in numbers and power all the time. From this time on all the churches founded prior to the 18th century adopted the course of Constantine, that the church should legislate for and support the church. This included the Greek church, the Lutheran, the Presbyterian, the Episcopalian, all but the Baptist. Baptists have ever stood against union of church and state.

During the reign of Constantine the Arian doctrine was introduced, a doctrine which is manifested in our day in denying the virgin birth of Christ. In fact all departures in the present day which the Primitive Baptists have to separate from, have been appearing in different forms since the days of the apostles, and there has always been a body of believers to stand against them.

Popery embodies a great many of these departures. The first pope was Leo I who assumed the position in 440. The church of Christ was a distinct body, however, and has ever been, and never came out from the Roman Catholic church, having always kept aloof from heretical departures.

Pelagianism arose in the 5th century. It represents the race of man as not condemned by the sin of Adam. Many at this time really hold to Pelagianism. The belief that infants are pure and holy is a form of Pelagianism. Arminianism differs from Pelagianism in asserting that all men are born in sin. But these two ideas agree in that they represent that salvation depends upon the will of the creature.

James Arminius was born in 1560. Nearly all denominations today are Arminians in belief, except that but few of them believe as much in the work of the Holy Spirit as did Arminius. All denominations which accept either Pelagianism or Arminianism reject the special atonement of Christ, and this is one of the reasons why they cannot be recognized by Primitive Baptists as churches of Jesus Christ. It is not necessary to call attention to all the departures from the truth from which the church had to keep separated. They may be summed up in those doctrines which reject the divinity of Christ, thus rejecting his power; rejecting the effectuality of the atonement for those for whom Christ died, rejecting the necessity of regeneration, and the certainty of it, for all who are embraced in the atonement of Christ. These are the fundamentals for which the church has stood, as they are the work of Jesus who is the unchanging Savior.

From 476 to 1453 is called the Dark Ages, during which time awful persecutions drove the followers of Christ into seclusion. But all that could be done against them failed to extinguish the churches. They were the offspring of the Novatianists which were driven from Rome. They existed for hundreds of years before the Reformation, and never did acknowledge the supremacy of the popes of Rome. They rejected infant baptism as the Novatianists had done. Infant baptism is not noticed in history until Tertulian spoke against it in the third century. The doctrine of baptismal regeneration had crept in during the time of Constantine, and from this heresy came infant baptism. But the baptisms were by immersion until the 13th century. The Roman Catholic can say that there is authority for sprinkling because he believes in the authority of his church to make changes; which authorized sprinkling in the council of Ravenna in the year 1311. Those who do not claim to recognize the right of the Roman Catholic church to make changes have no authority for sprinkling and pouring. But, in fact, practicing these forms for baptism does recognize the authority of the Roman Catholic church, for there is where they originated. Primitive Baptists recognize no form of baptism except that which was administered to Christ by John the Baptist. Matthew and Mark both testify that after Jesus was baptized he came up out of the water.

The Protestant Reformation, which began in the 16th century, was heralded with joy by those who held to the doctrines now held by Primitive Baptists, as they thought it meant breaking the power of their persecutors, and throwing off the iron yoke of Catholicism. But it soon developed that those who were moving in the reformation, although they stood for many truths of the Bible, yet they showed the same spirit as had been manifested by the Man of Sin. They thought to force subjection of others, which has always been contrary to the teaching of Baptists. Primitive Baptists allow to others what they themselves desire, freedom to worship God. Baptists could not go with the Protestants at the time of the reformation, and as they have gone farther and farther from Bible teaching cannot go with them now. They are continually enlarging on those points which show that they do not have a scriptural understanding of the atonement. Nor do they teach the Bible doctrine of regeneration, and do not require proof of it in their membership.

It is thought strange that we do not adopt Sunday schools. The first Sunday school was opened by Robert Raikes, of England, in 1781. This school was for the instruction of the children of poor people and with this none can find fault. But as a religious movement, with the announced purpose had in view, Primitive Baptists can have nothing to do with it for two reasons. First, scripture teaching and practice

laid the obligation of teaching and training children in regard to the Bible upon the parents; second, it is the avowed purpose of the Sunday schools to train up the children for entrance into the church, and so they use it. This would leave out of sight the teaching of Jesus that being born again is an indispensable requirement, and that it is not brought about by the teaching of men. We have the same objection to the training of the modern Sunday school that we have to the teaching of Arminian preachers, who disregard the effectuality of the atonement and regeneration.

We stand apart from modern missions because it teaches that the spiritual kingdom of God is dependent upon men for its extent among men, and not upon God's grace and the atonement of Jesus. The first Baptist missionary society was started in England October 2, 1792. As this was the first effort of the kind it is proof that it was not taught by Jesus, nor practiced by his apostles. We cannot recognize an institution so far removed from any scriptural foundation. It is close kin to the movement under Cornelius who increased the membership of the church without regard to God's work in the soul. The practice of offering the inducements that are given to the heathen to become Christians, is like the practice of Constantine who offered gold to such persons as would become Christians in profession.

The separation between the Mission Baptists and the Primitives covered the period of 1827-40. The reason Baptists do not join in the modern mission movement is because it is founded and carried on with the idea that the atonement is not effectual without the consent and obedience of sinners. It is the age-long struggle to make salvation depend on the act of the creature, denying the effectuality of the choice of God before the foundation of the world as laid down by the Apostle Paul : "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. \* \* \* \* In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."--Eph. i. 4, 5. The Mission Baptists now occupy the same position on election and the atonement that other Arminian organizations hold. One of their editors recently put forth a different statement to that generally held by them on the atonement. He said that it was absurd to hold that the atonement did not atone. So he took the position that Christ died for all the race of man, and made a complete atonement for sins. Now none were lost for lack of atonement, but all who rejected Christ would be damned for not believing in Christ. From his standpoint, even the atonement can be nullified by not believing on the Son of God. Of course this new idea

of theirs leaves out of consideration regeneration and its effects. According to this idea all the heathen would be saved if they never heard the gospel and so had no opportunity to reject it.

The first Baptist church in the bounds of the United States was founded by Dr. John Clark in Newport, Rhode Island in 1838 with eleven others. The church was in faith what the Primitive Baptists are today, and what the Salem Association now believes.

There have been many offshoots from the Primitive Baptists in America. Alexander Campbell and his followers were withdrawn from in 1827. So that denomination is about the same age as the Salem Association, but it does not have a record in faith and practice reaching back to the apostles as does the Salem Association.

The Means Baptists went out in 1887. Like so many others they wanted to go in partnership with the Lord in his work of regeneration, and contended that the preaching of the gospel was used in the work of regeneration of sinners. They have been trying to hold on to the doctrines of election, the atonement, and the necessity of regeneration, and it is so hard to connect these up with human means that they have not got very far. There is not room between the Arminian Baptists and the Primitives for them, so they have not made much progress. I say "Arminian Baptists" for the Primitives alone are not Arminian. When the Mission Baptists first left the Primitives they said they just wanted to preach the gospel in a wider field. But there was the idea of conditional salvation behind the movement, and the tenets they hold today show that. Where are they today? They preach a conditional election, a conditional atonement, a conditional regeneration. These are the doctrines that the true church has rejected from the time of the apostles, and so we cannot now recognize them as the church, nor receive their work. This explains why the Salem Association is standing aloof from all denominations.

Later we had the "Progressives" to drop out. One of the first of these in the field wrote me that he wanted the privilege of using the columns of the MESSENGER OF PEACE. I wrote him he would have to explain. He wrote in reply: "Our church is not prosperous; it never can be prosperous until it is popular; it never can be popular with the people while we emphasize the doctrines of election and predestination. We should preach as other people do, the universal obligation of all men to believe the gospel and accept Christ." Said he, " This will not affect the result of election and regeneration, but all men are under obligation to believe the truth and accept Christ whether they are able to do so or not, and it will build up our congregations to preach it that way." I replied that all men are under

obligation to believe the truth, but the truth says that men are dead in sins and must be born again before they can see the kingdom of God or enter therein. And if they believe on Jesus it is proof that they are born again. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born again."--1 John v. 1. I replied that the MESSENGER could not be used to hide the truth nor teach an untruth to popularize the church. So the Progressives went away because we could not with them for popularity.

We are not going to the left or the right. We are starting for another hundred years along the same lines as in the past, believing in the work of Jesus, who is the same yesterday and forever. Until he announces a change, we cannot change our doctrines for everything depends upon him. We have confidence in him, for he is the sovereign God, the God of all grace, the Savior of sinners. We believe in his atonement, and that the Father has put all things into his hands. We accept the words he addressed to his Father: "The hour is come; glorify thy Son, That thy Son also may glorify thee; as thou hast given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."--John xvii 1, 2.

Here is the explanation why we stand alone. We will not favor anything that contradicts full and complete confidence in the electing grace of God: a full and complete atonement, and a work of regeneration in harmony with these, accomplished by the power of God, and fully completed in the resurrection of the bodies of the saints. We wish to live in peace with all men, "as much as within us lies," and have no enmity toward any. We will not judge others, to God they stand or fall but we must judge the doctrines that they teach, for we receive only the doctrine of God our Savior, and reject as the church has ever rejected, all the "improvements" to the plan of salvation as revealed in God's holy word. The old pioneers of the Salem Association lived the simple life of pilgrims through a world of strife, and doctrines of devils, clinging to Jesus as the only Savior, and died in faith, leaving to their posterity the old church for comfort and protection. We exhort the generation upon whose shoulders the cause now rests, to set their faces toward the Zion of our God, keeping themselves unspotted from the world, and treasuring up in their hearts the precious gospel of him who is the same today, and yesterday and forever. Teach your children to hold these things sacred, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

We teach and exhort all men to live righteously in this present evil world, and that righteousness always has its reward here. We exhort all who bring forth fruits meet for repentance to follow Jesus

**in baptism, thus becoming members of the militant church, and under this influence to bear spiritual fruit to the glory of God.**

**As we have learned from the historical sketch which has been read, the Salem Association of Primitive Baptists has been in existence one hundred years. What wonderful changes have come about during that time! Many things with which we are familiar today were unknown at the time of its organization. The people and the country were primitive indeed. There were few railroads, no telephones, and thought of radio broadcasting, if it had been mentioned, would have been thought to be a vain dream. The simple life of those who gathered in the assemblies of the pioneers was in strong contrast to the customs and habits of today. The automobile could not have made its way over the roads that the pious members followed regularly to their meeting places. Planting, cultivating and reaping had none of the improved helps of today.**

**But the faith and forms of Baptists worshippers were more primitive than the customs which surround them--they reached back to the days of Jesus and his apostles. They preached the same truths, and followed the same simple forms, and strange as it may seem to the modern world, the Salem Association still holds to the same doctrines and mode of worship. They have the same kind of preaching, the same character of hymns, the same articles of faith, and the preachers still emphasize the same truths.**

**The religious world has changed much. Within the observation and memory of many of us who are now living there has been a marked change. The sermons are different, the topics often being only current events instead of Bible themes. The means of attracting congregations is different, and the manner of adding members to churches has undergone a great change. But one hundred years has brought no change to the Salem Association in its faith or service. The members keep up with the progress of the world in daily affairs. They use the improved machinery, their children stand in the front ranks in the schools, and they are represented in the scientific professions, but in religion they follow nothing that is new.**

**This "no change" course is not only true of the Salem Association, but it has been true of the organization now represented by Primitive Baptists, reaching back to the Apostles, adhering strictly to the fundamental truths upon which the first churches were formed. Why do they not "improve" as others do? Because there can be no improvement, in the sense of making change, in what God does. No better lighting and heating system for the earth can be devised than that which was made in the beginning. "In the beginning God created**

the heaven and the earth." He has not had to change it in all the ages past, for it is perfect. No suggestions of change be made that would be an improvement.

Primitive Baptists have ever declared that changes in church fundamentals are not improvements, nor can improvements be made. Why not? Because the Bible, and the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ, has to do with the saving of sinners by the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The standing of man before God has not changed since the first man sinned, and in whom all men came under the condemnation of God. By one man came sin and death, and sin and death have passed upon all, for all have sinned. There is no reason for thinking there will be a change in the plan for the redemption of man, seeing it is God's own plan, and to be carried out by means which he himself devised. Jesus Christ is the only Savior, and there is no name given under heaven or among men by which sinners can be saved. "Jesus is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." All who have been saved from the beginning of the world to the present time have been saved by the efficacy of the atonement of Jesus; none can be saved today, nor ever will be saved, but in the same way. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. What Jesus is, what he has done, and is doing, is the only foundation of a good hope of salvation. It all hangs upon him.

The church was gathered by preaching Jesus. The Apostle Paul, the most influential of the apostles, said that he was determined to know nothing but Jesus and him crucified. The church has been identified through all ages by what it thought of Jesus and his work. What an organization thinks of Jesus and the result of his work, decides whether it is the church of Christ. Jesus put this important matter before the Pharisees in this question: "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?" Those who differ from the Primitive Baptists hold different doctrines in regard to Christ, and this difference in doctrine brings about differences in practice. Primitive Baptists believe it to be so important to think rightly of Christ that they separate from all who depart from the teaching of the Bible in regard to Christ. This is the foundation principle upon which Primitive Baptists are determined to stand, though all the world were against them.

Jesus put the question, Whose son is he?" The divinity of Christ has ever been an essential doctrine of the church, which includes the manner of his birth. If his conception was the same as that of other men, then he only has a life like other men, for every one has the life of his father. Isaiah prophesied, "Behold a virgin shall

conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."--Isaiah vii. 14. The angel of the Lord told Joseph (Matt. i. 20,) "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." The virgin birth of Jesus is a fundamental tenet with the church, for the sacrifice which he came to offer must be without sin. The church believes the testimony of the angel of God who said to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."--Luke i. 35. When John baptized Jesus a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."-- Matt. iii. 17. Jesus confessed before the high priest that he was the Son of God and showed by wondrous miracles that the power of God was with him. He could not have been the anti-type of the sacrifices in the typical age had he been born in sin. He was the Son of God, having in him the very life of God. The articles of faith of the Primitive church agrees with John who said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God, \* \* \* and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."--John i. 14. Being God manifest in the flesh he will not fail in his work.

Another mark of the true church is to contend that Jesus made an atonement, and that this atonement was accepted of God, and is effectual. From the offering by Able, and on through the offerings under the Levitical dispensation, it was shown that only by a sacrifice could man's sin be atoned for, and the sentence of death be set aside. Especially was this shown in the offering by the high priest. He went into the holy of holies with the blood. He bore the names on his bosom for whom he made atonement. His robe typified the righteousness of Jesus. He made the atonement over the mercy seat which is God's grace. There was no one with him. Christ alone bore our sins in his own body on the cross, and put them away by the offering of himself, nailing them to the cross.

The church has ever held that the only way of reconciliation between God and men is the atonement made by Jesus. This satisfied divine justice, and released those for whom it was made from the sentence of the law which condemned them. The atonement was a matter of covenant between the Father and the Son, whereby Jesus stood in the place sinners, and freed them by his suffering and death so that they are thereby reconciled. They receive the benefit of the atonement in the pardon of sins. "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life.--Rom. v. 10.

Those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world "have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." All that are chosen in Christ are redeemed, and all who are redeemed are forgiven and saved by his life. This is all of the grace of God and the work of Jesus, and is entirely unconditional as to the act of the sinner. This has always been true, is true now, and will always be true, for "Jesus is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." The receiving of the atonement, or reconciliation, is in regeneration, or being born of God. Jesus said, "Ye must be born again." This is the work of Jesus, sending the Holy Spirit to those for whom he died. Jesus said, "I give unto them eternal life." This is his work, and "he shall never fail," (Isaiah xlii. 4.)

Particular attention is called to the work of the regeneration, for without it all the other work would fail. This is the work of Jesus, and it is not transferred to others, or entrusted to their hands. Without this work no one can ever enter heaven. It is the giving of the life that transforms the sinner, fitting him for heaven.

Primitive Baptists have full confidence in the words of Jesus as recorded by John (xvii. 2), "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee; as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." As certain as the statement of Paul in the Ephesians letter has foundation in fact, that there is an election before the foundation of the world, (Eph. i. 4,) and that Jesus has made an atonement, so sure the same subjects shall be regenerated. Here is the stand of the church since the days of the apostles, and the stand of the Primitive Baptists today. It is upon this point that there have been so many departures from the church, and is the reason principally that the Primitive Baptists stand separated from nearly all the organizations called churches in the world today.

The final work of the great salvation of a sinner is the resurrection of the body. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, and Jesus must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. The Apostle Paul endured a great fight of affliction for contending for the resurrection of the dead. The Primitive Baptists are still preaching it, believing that Jesus was raised from death. If there be no resurrection, certainly then is Jesus not risen. But his apostles aver that he did rise. If they testified falsely on this point then they are not true witnesses. If it is impossible to resurrect the body, the lack of power is on the part of God. If he had power to create, without question he has power to resurrect. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead to demonstrate that there is power to raise the dead body.

**What has separated the Primitive Baptists from other people is because others have taken positions inconsistent with the Bible teaching of how Jesus saves sinners. As Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever we cannot believe that there has been, or ever will, be any change in the cause or manner of saving the lost. The main thread of the whole Bible is showing why and how Jesus saves, and Primitive Baptists cannot accept any theory as being the truth which differs from the Bible record on either of these points--the why and the how or in what manner. We cannot concede the idea that sinners need less done for them now than in former years, nor that Jesus is doing his work differently. A glance over past history will show that the tendency of man is to offer different explanations as to why God saves and how the work is accomplished.**

**Many have been very much surprised when we have told them about the beginning of the Primitive Baptist church. They have thought we, like other denominations, or many of them, had our origin in recent years, or at most only a few hundred years in the past. As before stated, the church is to be known by its doctrine and practice, and not by the name that it may bear, which may change with the surrounding conditions. We do not hesitate to take the position that the doctrines as set forth in regard to the divinity of Jesus, the atonement that he made, the necessity of regeneration, and the certainty that all atoned for will be saved, are the principal marks of the church. We claim that there has been through all the centuries an organization holding these things just as we do now, and so our origin is the apostolic church. The organization of the Salem Association was one hundred years ago; but the church holding the fundamentals upon which it was organized, has been in the world since the days of Christ. Able set the first line when he by faith offered a lamb and looked forward to the Lamb of Calvary as a foundation for his hope. We are now clinging to that same hop of heaven.**

**Departures from faith in the blood of Jesus alone soon crept into the church. False teachers bewitched the Galatians and led them into conditionalism. Here the struggle commenced against the fundamental principles of the church and the church is still resisting it. There are two classes today. The church is still contending for salvation by grace and grace alone, and the other teaching that salvation depends on the act of the sinner.**