

NURSERY MINISTRY WORKERS FOR THIS WEEK

10:50 a.m. Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Bertha Segebarrr
 Cradle Roll 2: Janet Bridges
 6:30 p.m. Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Shirley White
 Cradle Roll 2: Charity Crawford
 Wed. Evening Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Kristi Hooper
 Cradle Roll 2: Kelsey Moreno

AND THE PEOPLE CAME...

Week of July 7, 2013

Sunday School ----- 19
 Sunday Morning Service ----- 38
 Sunday Evening Service ----- 24
 Wed. Eve. Service, 07/10/13 ----- 18

AND THE PEOPLE GAVE...

Week of July 7, 2013

Undesignated Tithes & Offerings ----- \$ 942.00
 Insurance Fund ----- \$ 150.00
Total Received for Week of 07/10/13: \$ 1,092.00

Average amount of Undesignated Offerings needed to operate the church EACH WEEK, as a minimum = \$ 1,400.00

LISTEN TO -



ABIDINGRADIO.COM

INSURANCE FUND REPORT FOR JULY, 2013:

Monthly Requirement ----- \$ 329.66
 Amount Received thusfar for July, 2013 ----- \$ 150.00
Amount STILL NEEDED by 08/05/13 = \$ 179.66

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED

1. *Admit that you are a sinner.*
2. *Admit that God says all sins must be paid for.*
3. *Accept the fact that Christ took upon Himself the suffering necessary to pay for all your sins.*
4. *You must change your mind about sin and sinning (God calls this repentance).*
5. *By an act of your will, accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, who can save you from the penalty of sin. Then, tell God about this in a simple prayer. Believe that God keeps His promise to save you, and thank Him for His salvation.*



Please Remember To Be Faithful To Give!

As with everything else, the costs of keeping a church going never go down - they always go **up**. Bills wait for no one, and churches are no exception to this. An extra, sacrificial gift today by everyone present would go a long way...

We encourage all of our membership to practice obedience to God by being faithful every payday to give back to Him His tithes (10%). *If every family in our church would practice this one simple discipline, we would never have weeks where we have to put off paying some bills until the following week!*

Everything is expensive, especially for a small church like ours, but ours is a BIG God, and He LOVES to bless His children when they are obedient to Him!

If you are already a tither, we thank you, and encourage you to also give offerings as well. If you're currently not tithing, won't you please start **today - OK?** Thank you.

Church Directory

Todd W. White ----- Pastor
 Mickie Shatwell ----- Pianist
 Dickie Eberle ----- Greeter, Custodian
 Shayne Hooper, Caryn Quinnelly, Todd W. White ----- S.S. Teachers
 Larry & Mary Byars, Brian & Charity Crawford,
 Dwayne English, Shayne Hooper ----- Outreach
 Flowers ----- Shirley White

SOUTH HEIGHTS BAPTIST'S WEEKLY
REMINDER

Volume XVIII

July 14, 2013

Number 24



The Real Reason Why Baptists Are Losing Ground And What Can Be Done About It

by Pastor Todd W. White

Baptist are losing ground in the struggle for the souls of men in America. All types of Baptists, not just one or two versions, all of them - no matter what "type" they are.

I want to focus in this article, though, on the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention, which is the largest non-Catholic denomination in the United States. I do this, partly, because I grew up in SBC churches - I was saved in one, baptized in one, licensed and ordained in one. I also currently pastor a church that is still affiliated with the SBC, though it's getting harder and harder for me to find reasons to do so. I say that because the SBC's most famous pastors, churches, and schools are becoming more and more liberal in every area. This is very evident in the way in which they've allowed the secular culture to affect every area of their churches - including their operating methods, standards (I doubt very seriously if any of the larger SBC congregations has heard a message on separation in a LONG time), and methodology. They've also allowed the secular culture to seriously drag down their music and worship (a topic I've been warning people about for over 35 years). In other words, there's not much left of the SBC that looks like it did when I was a boy and my grandfather was pastoring country Southern Baptist churches.

The reason for this, I am convinced, is not what the pundits would have us to believe. If you listen to the "experts" on the matter, they all say pretty much the same thing: Southern Baptists, if they're going to thrive (read: increase their numbers), simply **must** throw off all of the baggage from the past that is "holding them back." Things like using old-fashioned music, adherence to antiquated viewpoints (such as forbidding women to be pastors, labeling homosexuality and lesbianism as "sin", preaching modesty, abstinence from alcohol, etc.), emphasizing what we used to call "Baptist distinctives", being dogmatic in our theology, and so on - you get the idea. In other words, these so-called experts are trying to tell us that, if we're going to reach the modern culture, WE are going to have to become like THEM.

Well, that's a lot of what my daddy used to call "hogwash". The **REAL** problem is we're listening to the **wrong people** - we need to look at what **THE** expert on such matters has said about these things, then **APPLY** what **HE** has said are **THE ONLY ANSWERS** to our problems! We'll get to that in a minute, but first, let's look at the problem, as it shows up in the statistics:

Recently, it was reported that the number of Southern Baptists is on the decline. While the number of SBC-affiliated **congregations** has grown, the reported **membership** of their churches has gone down by more than 100,000 from last year, which is a decline of 0.7%. Attendance on Sunday mornings has reportedly also dropped by 3.1 percent to 5.97 million per Sunday. In addition, baptisms in SBC churches have gone down by 5.5% over last year, which is the lowest number on record since 1948. According to projections by the denomination, if these trends continue, membership in Southern Baptist churches will go down to 1960 levels by the year 2050.

Recently, the son of a famous pastor of a large Baptist church in the South wrote an article explaining why he thought that the Southern Baptist Convention was declining, and what it must do to slow it (he didn't give ideas on how to reverse it, which I found interesting). While I applaud him on his ability to see that there's a problem, he really doesn't understand what the problem actually is, and his self-styled solutions to them were so wrong-headed that I won't waste the space here to repeat them.

So, with that bit of groundwork out of the way, let's look at what's **REALLY** wrong with Southern Baptist Church (and probably most of the other types of Baptist churches, as well), and see what **THE** expert on all matters spiritual has to say about what to do about it.

(continued inside)

WE'VE LOST OUR "FIRST LOVE"

Now, while it IS true that there ARE exceptions to what I am about to say, by and large, the problem with the SBC is that we have succumbed to the problem faced by the Church in Ephesus:

Southern Baptists Have Lost Their "First Love"!

The SBC has placed it's emphasis on programs, politics, methodology, and money (and I'm not talking about the "conservatives", here, although many of them fall into this description – I'm talking about the people who ran the Convention going way back into the 60's).

I've been involved in Southern Baptist churches for, quite literally, all of my life, and I can tell you beyond a shadow of a doubt that our problem is that *we don't love Christ like we did during the 1930's, 40's, & 50's!* I'm sorry, but we just **DON'T**.

Now - this wasn't an overnight change: it happened slowly.

As reflectors of the Light of the World, Southern Baptists and their churches once burned for Christ, and incredibly so. But, that brightness began to dim somewhere around the early-to-middle 60's, and has been getting dimmer and dimmer ever since. Yes, there was a slight increase in the output of our reflection of Him in the late 70's and into the 80's, but that was temporary – we're back on the downgrade, and the chances of our recovery almost don't exist.

The Church in Ephesus is our prime example of this: Our Lord Himself tells them (and us) what was wrong with them (and us). He said, in Revelation Chapter 2:

"I know thy works, and thy labour," – they were a working church! They didn't sit around – they were **BUSY!** Today, SBC churches and people are, indeed **busy**, but busy for busy's sake is not good, and that what's happening – there must be spiritual, biblical substance behind it! The failure to operate from a Spirit-filled position killed the Church in Ephesus, and it's killing us.

Then He says he knows their ***"...patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars"*** - the Church in Ephesus, like so many in the SBC today (conservative AND liberal) was quick to examine and point out the errors, as they saw them, in the teachings, methods, and beliefs of others. Some today have even turned themselves over to the "political" side of the SBC, which has become monstrous and out of control. However, like the Church in Ephesus, this has become just another thing that Southern Baptists "do" – it's not done because we are attempting to keep our churches and seminaries and schools true to the Word of God – far from it!

Christ then commends them, saying, ***"And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted."*** – They hadn't quit, they were busy, but they hadn't quit.

That sounds good, ***but is it?*** It truly pictures the SBC today:

so busy, so determined to move "forward", yet, all the while, we, like the Church in Ephesus, have to face the FACT that we're in trouble, and Christ tells them (and us) exactly WHY:

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, BECAUSE THOU HAST LEFT THY FIRST LOVE".

We have on our church rolls 1000's and 1000's, and hundreds of 1000's - perhaps even millions - of people who have never been truly saved. The estimates of the number of lost people in SBC churches by those who should know are staggering.

And, when you have a largely unregenerate church membership, it follows that you have to resort to unscriptural and unspiritual methods to KEEP them!

☛ ***THAT*** is why our church music ministries and worship services have become so compromisingly worldly and sensual, turning our church services into performances singing music that isn't music, full of repetitious, empty lyrics!

☛ ***THAT*** is why many are taking the name "baptist" off of their churches!

☛ ***THAT*** is why there is precious little of the true Gospel heard or preached in so many of our churches! The leaders-desperate to keep the bodies in the buildings, even if those people are LOST-are using every tactic they can find to try to coddle them, not offend them, and not make them feel "different". The result is these churches and leaders are sending those souls to hell, ***but they sure feel good about themselves while they're on the way there!***

In the old days in SBC churches, you could sometimes smell the smoke and feel the fire when our preachers preached about folks being lost. Sometimes, it was though you could even hear the screams of those already there. But not today – ***modern SBC congregations won't tolerate that kind of dogmatic preaching and teaching.***

Modern SBC congregations want to hear music that speaks to their **FLESH** – not their **SPIRIT** – the reason is because most of the people (including a LOT of the music leaders in churches) are **lost**, and have **NO DESIRE** to hear spiritual truth in any form, **especially** in the music they listen to.

Modern SBC congregations want to **FEEL** good.

Modern SBC congregations don't want a public appeal to their souls to be saved or repent of their backsliding.

Modern SBC congregations want to go home after what they erroneously call "worship" believing that they're just fine, all the while, as Paul said of the lost (but oh so religious) crowd of his day, ***"Their throat is an open sepulchre" (Rom. 3:13).***

I learned a long time ago that, if the Devil can't get you to do a **WRONG** thing, he'll try to get you to do a **RIGHT** thing the wrong **WAY**, and that's **EXACTLY** what's happened in the SBC, and it's happening at every level!

In other words, most of the members of SBC churches are lost, the vast majority of the rest of the membership of those churches

are backslidden, and the number of truly saved, Spirit-filled Christians who honor the Lord with their lives and works can be counted on almost one hand.

CHRIST GIVES THE CURE, IF WE'LL ONLY USE IT!

Well, at least Christ gives the Church in Ephesus (and us) the remedy:

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Like the Church in Ephesus, the SBC and it's churches **COULD** get right with God, but some things are going to have to happen for that to come about:

1. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE A LONG, HARD LOOK AT OURSELVES AND SEE WHAT IT WAS LIKE WHEN GOD WAS IN OUR MIDST. We're going to have to go back and first **SEE** that we were so on fire "way back when". If saved Southern Baptists would truly look at and understand how God singularly blessed us – how He was in our midst – in those days, then turn and look at what we are NOW, that realization alone should drive us to our knees in tears of repentance. If we would allow ourselves to see ourselves as God does, then there **MIGHT** be a chance that we'd get right with Him.

Cynthia Clawson used to sing a song entitled, "Bring Back The New Again", which captures exactly what's happened, and what we need to do about it (cry out to God):

***"I can still remember, the wonderful feeling,
back when I first got to know You.***

It seemed the world was mine, I had joy, I had springtime.

But that's all just a memory anymore -

I guess I took my eyes off You Lord,

***But I don't want this callous feeling anymore -
Oh, please bring back the way it was before...***

***It wasn't long ago when, my heart was glowing,
and every new day was a challenge.***

***But indifference turned me cold,
made things stale, made them old,***

Now I've lost the happy song I used to sing

***It seems that I forgot the most important thing,
but I don't want this callous feeling anymore -***

Oh, please bring back the way it was before...

Bring back the new again, I want to see You again!

Bring back the way it was, when we began.

How did I miss the road? When did I lose the glow?

And where did the wonder go? Bring back the new again!"

***WE NEED, MORE THAN EVER, TO SEE OUR
CONDITION BEFORE GOD, AND CRY OUT TO HIM FOR
MERCY!***

2. WE NEED TO GET BACK TO THE BASICS. But, this would require **regaining** something that has been cunningly taken away from most of us – the Word of God. I'm not primarily speaking of a **belief** that the Bible is the Word of God – most Southern Baptists, I hope, would say they believe that it is – I am talking specifically about the **PURITY** of the Bible.

Most of the books called bibles that people today are using in our churches are corrupted – including the Holman Christian Standard Bible – and, therefore, cannot be trusted. They are **not** THE Word of God. They are **not** HIS infallible, inerrant, living WORD, preserved for us up to this very hour. Southern Baptists have totally sidestepped the issue of Bible translation and preservation, and, I am convinced, it was done on purpose.

Whether or not some believe this is a real issue, think about this: ***When the SBC was at it's height in baptisms, what Bible were they using?*** When the SBC was growing numerically more than any other time in it's history, what Bible were they using? When the SBC was making the greatest inroads into the lost world, what Bible were they using? Some might say, ***"Well, it doesn't matter what Bible they were using – it was the Spirit of God that did those things"***, and to a degree, they'd be right. **BUT**– don't you think for one minute that the singular thing that underlay all of our greatest days and efforts for Christ was anything other than the Word of God!

The **WORD OF GOD** is what brings life to the lost, and when Southern Baptists believed it **AND PRACTICED** it, we had our greatest days. Sadly, we have preachers and pastors and church members who **SAY** they believe every word of the Bible, but, when you look at how they live their lives, and how they lead their churches, and how far from the Holy Spirit of God we've fallen, it's a small wonder why the SBC is on the decline: we have lost our first love, and, like it or not, a **BIG** part of that loss has come because most of our people don't have a pure copy of the **LIVING** Word of God in their hands!

SO - IF the SBC and it's churches are to survive and flourish again, we **MUST**:

1. See ourselves as God sees us, as individual Christians first, then as individual churches second, then finally as a denomination, then

2. Let the Holy Spirit break our hearts over our sinfulness, then

3. Repent of the things that we allowed to cause our backsliding, then

4. Get back to the pure Word of God, and let it be restored in our lives and churches.

The result will be the greatest period in the history of the SBC.

Can it happen? Yes. Will it? Probably **not**.

Why do I say that? Because the Church in Ephesus didn't, and they're nowhere to be found. ■