

# WHY I CHANGED CHURCHES (BAPTIST)

*Paul Murphy (deceased)*

*I left the Baptist Church to become a Christian only and a member of the Lord's church. The more I studied and learned, the more I became dissatisfied with the Baptist Church and convinced they were in error on many vital points.*

**I**n 1 Peter 3:16 it is written, “*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*”

Pursuant to the demands of this text and in compliance with the requests of my friends, I desire to set before you some scriptural, well-grounded, and well-founded reasons as to why I left the Baptist Church to become a Christian only and a member of the Lord's church.

I grew up in a community where there were only two churches, one a *Methodist* and the other a *Baptist*. As long as I can remember, I have always been interested in Bible subjects and Bible things. When just a small child, I used to come home from the Baptist or Methodist revivals and tell my good mother the preacher's text (that was about all the Bible they preached in those days) and much of the preacher's sermon. The preachers would tell us that we ought to get saved and join the church of our choice. They would tell us that we didn't have to be a member of the church to be saved, but just to accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour by “faith only” and then join the church of our choice. In my case that meant either the Baptist Church or the Methodist Church since there were only the two churches in our locality.

While I knew very little about the Bible, it always seemed to me that the Bible was a common sense book and that the preachers ought to be telling sinners what the Bible

said rather than telling death-bed, blood-curdling, hair-raising stories and plum-thicket experiences calculated to scare the sinner into coming to the mourners bench to pray through to victory. It just never did seem reasonable to me that one would have to go to the mourners bench (this was the common practice in those days) and make a fool of himself to be saved; consequently, I never went to the mourners bench in my life, nor asked anyone else to do so.

When I was sixteen years old, I became deeply concerned about my soul and began to pray and study diligently to learn what a sinner must do to be saved. At that time the Baptists were having their annual revival, and it just so happened that they had brought in a shrewd Baptist preacher to do the preaching. He preached more Bible than any man I had ever heard up to that time. Since I believed that that was what a preacher ought to preach, I became deeply interested in his preaching and listened with rapt attention to his sermons. After hearing him a few days and nights in the meeting, I went forward one evening and joined the Baptist Church along with twenty-five others. The night I went forward the pastor of the church asked me if I had a Christian experience to relate. I told him that I wasn't a Christian, had never been, and therefore could not possibly have had a Christian experience. I explained that my reason for coming forward was to become a Christian. He then asked me if I believed that God had for Christ's sake pardoned my sins. Even

though I had certain convictions in my heart about baptism and its connection with salvation, I knew what I was supposed to say and said, "yes". You see, I had read the Bible enough to know that baptism had something to do with the salvation of one's soul. I had listened carefully to a sermon the preacher had preached on baptism and instead of saying that baptism was not essential to salvation as the other preachers had always done, he would say, "now baptism is a command and ought to be obeyed, but it isn't compulsory." Well, it had always seemed to me that anything that was commanded was essential to one's salvation, but when this preacher said it was a command of God but wasn't compulsory, I thought he meant that God Almighty didn't compel one to be baptized: that we could accept it and be saved, or reject it and be lost just like faith or any other command that was given us. I later realized that he was saying the same thing that they had always said but just using a different word. He was just being subtle about it and didn't believe that baptism was, in any sense of the word, essential to salvation. Thus being deceived like many other honest people, I had believed a lie instead of the truth and was thus being damned instead of being saved (II Thess. 2:10-12). Anyway, I had now gone forward, had given the preacher my hand, and confessed that I believed that God for Christ's sake had forgiven my sins. Then the preacher stated that Paul Murphy had come forward desiring to be received as a candidate for baptism and after baptism as a member of the Baptist Church at that place. They took a vote and I was accepted as a candidate for baptism. Then they gave me the right hand of Christian fellowship, and one month later I was baptized into the Baptist Church.

I immediately became very active in the affairs of the Church for I resolved if I were going to be a Baptist, I would be the best Baptist in the community. The Sunday

following my baptism, I was given a Sunday school class. I wasn't even a good Sunday school scholar, but I resolved that if I were going to be a Sunday school teacher I would endeavor to be the best teacher in the church: therefore I studied my lessons diligently both day and night. A few weeks later, my grandfather, who had been the superintendent of the Sunday school for many years died, and I was elected to take his place. A few weeks later, I was called on to preach and I was given a license to preach regularly in the Baptist Church.

From the day I began to try to preach, I resolved in my heart that God being my helper I would always preach what, and only what, I believed the Bible taught on any subject without fear or favor. To that resolution I've always tried to be true. I remember one evening I was to preach on the question, "What Must I Do To Be Saved?" I told the pastor of the church, who was sitting on the rostrum beside me, that I was just going to tell the people what the Bible said on the subject even if it did contradict Baptist doctrine. A member of the Primitive Baptist Church was visiting in the community and was present that evening. The next day I met him on the street. He told me that he was really amused at those Missionary Baptists the night before when he heard many of them bragging on the wonderful sermon I had preached. He said that when one of them asked him what he thought of the sermon he had replied, "Why, that young fellow is preaching rank campbellism and you folks don't have sense enough to realize it."

Another young man in the community started preaching for the Methodist Church about the time I had begun to preach for the Baptist Church. I persuaded him to join the Baptist Church so we could preach and work together. This he did and we conducted a number of revivals together.

For two years I preached for the Baptist Church, but I always preached as best I

could what the Book said. I studied my Bible diligently by day and night. The more I studied and learned, the more I became dissatisfied with the Baptist Church and convinced that they were in error on many vital points. I had resolved that I would follow wherever the Bible lead me, that right was always right and wrong was always wrong, and that the very moment that I learned what was right, I'd do it regardless of friend or foe. Even though the Baptist Church had promised to educate me; and even though I could see no way of going to school to further my education at the time; and even though there was no New Testament church in our community, once I learned the truth I hesitated not. For above all things, I wanted to be saved and I knew I could not be saved and remain in error.

I learned of a Gospel preacher by the name of J. L. Rogers and wrote him to come and baptize me into Christ just as Philip had baptized the eunuch (Acts 8:26:40) and as Paul had baptized the twelve who had been baptized with John's baptism (Acts 19:1-6). That grand old man caught a bus immediately and came a distance of forty miles and baptized me into Christ. Since that hour I have been telling the old old story to the best of my ability and rejoice with exceeding great joy that I am affiliated with the greatest institution on earth, the Lord's church, and can fearlessly preach all the counsel of God (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47).

Many of my good friends and relatives were amazed and shocked when I left them and became a simple New Testament Christian and have repeatedly asked me why. I have always tried to answer this question plainly and kindly and give them scriptural reasons for my decision with the prayer and hope that many of them may be lead out of the darkness of religious error into the light and liberty of the children of God. This, many of them have done.

Why then did I leave? As you can see from the foregoing statements, it was not

because I fell out with any of them in a personal way. They were my dear friends and relatives whom I loved; and, I had right and reason to believe they loved me. It was not because I was not sincere when I joined them for I was just as sincere the day I became a Baptist as I was the day I became a Christian only, but just being sincere is not enough. We must be sincerely right (Acts 23:1; Prov. 14:12). I did not leave them because they do not believe in God Almighty, for they do. I did not leave them because they do not believe the world is lost and that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, for they do. I did not leave them because they do not believe in the inspiration of the word of the Lord, for they do. I did not leave them because they do not believe in morality, for they do. I did not leave them because they do not believe in mission work, for they do. I did not leave them because they do not believe in benevolent work, for they do. (Incidentally, I have never known of them to fuss and divide over how to do benevolent work as many of our brethren sometimes do.) I did not leave them for social prestige, neither for financial standing, nor because they would not help and encourage me, for this they always did; and I'll ever be grateful for the same. Why then did I leave?

Kindly, may I tell you this: I left because of **deep convictions** based on God's word. **As a Baptist I could not preach the Gospel that Paul preached, and I knew I'd be eternally doomed and damned if I did not** (Gal. 1:6-9). They wanted me to tell my friends that a sinner was saved by "faith only," but the Bible says it is "not by faith only" (James 2:24; Mark 16:16). They, therefore, wanted me to tell sinners, as the preacher had told me, that baptism was not compulsory even though the Bible says it is (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Peter 3:21). This I could not preach and be a loyal Baptist. As a Baptist, I could not ask a sinner to make the scriptural confession that he believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of

God, but rather that he believed that God had for Christ's sake forgiven his sins. Incidentally, how can any right thinking person believe that his baptism is scriptural when he confessed that he was already saved before his baptism? Read Matthew 10:32, Acts 8:36-38, Romans 10:9-10.

**As a Baptist I could not accept the Bible as my all sufficient and alone sufficient rule of faith and practice.** This was one of the first things that opened my eyes to the fact that I could not follow the Bible and be a loyal Baptist. For instance, one evening when the invitation was extended, a fine old man and his wife came forward desiring to transfer their letters from the Methodist Church to the Baptist Church. The pastor told them that that was contrary to the usage and practice of the Baptist Church. They stated that they had been immersed in the Methodist Church. He told them that they still couldn't take them for they could only accept baptism that was performed by a regularly ordained Missionary Baptist preacher. At first, they demurred but finally consented to be baptized into the Baptist Church. He then made this statement to the audience, "Brother and sister so and so have come forward desiring to unite with this church. I have known them for many years and believe they are two of the finest Christians I have ever known. When they came forward tonight they thought they could transfer their letters from the Methodist Church of which they have been faithful members for a good many years to the Baptist Church, but after I had explained to them that that was contrary to the usage and practice of the Baptist Church, they graciously consented to be baptized." Then he exploded a bomb that really shocked and stunned me. He said, "I personally believe that we have a great deal of red tape to some of our rules, but we want to be loyal Baptists and therefore do not wish to violate any of the rules." Well, I knew that the Lord didn't have any red tape

to any of his rules and according to the preacher's own admission, one could not be loyal to God's word and be a Baptist. The preacher had further stated that the old couple were two of the finest Christians he had ever known and that baptism was not essential to salvation, and yet he would not accept them unless they were baptized! How on earth can right thinking people support such a doctrine?

Not long after this incident, he took me aside one day and said, "Paul, I need to get you a Baptist Manual and want you to study it for I can see that you don't understand our doctrine." I said, "Isn't our doctrine in the Bible?" "Oh yes," he said, "but you just don't understand our doctrine." "Well," I said, "I am trying to read and study the Bible, and if I can understand it, then I can understand our doctrine if it is in the Bible for I certainly don't intend to preach or practice anything but that which is found in the Bible." He shook his head sadly and walked away. I am happy therefore that I can be a member of the church of our Lord where one is not tied to a human creed, but is free to believe and practice anything and everything that is found therein. I am happy that we can speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. This is the only course we may pursue and be pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God (II Tim. 3:16-17; II John 9; Rev. 22:18-19).

**Another thing that caused me to leave the Baptist Church was her unscriptural teaching on the subject of baptism.** The preacher I previously referred to said it was not compulsory, meaning, of course, that it was not essential to salvation right in the face of Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, I Peter 3:21, Galatians 3:26-27, etc.

And too, **although I was in the Baptist Church for two years, I never had the privilege of eating the Lord's Supper but twice, and then it was closed communion.** I could read in Acts 20:7 that

the early Christians ate the Lord's Supper each and every Lord's Day, and the act that brought them together was for the purpose of eating the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:33).

Also, **in the Baptist Church in addition to vocal music, we had mechanical instrumental music.** I took my Bible in hand and read and marked all the passages that authorized Christians to offer praise unto God and found in every single instance that it was to be done with our lips, and not by sawing it out of a fiddle, beating it out of a drum, blowing it out of a horn, or pecking it out of a piano (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25; Rom. 15:9; I Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12; Heb. 13:15; James 5:13). The person who does more than this does it at the peril of his never dying soul (Rev. 22:18-19).

**In the Baptist Church I could not plead for Christian unity on the basis of God's word,** but as a member of it I was upholding, aiding and abetting religious division contrary to our Lord's prayer and the earnest pleading of the apostle Paul (John 17:20-23; I Cor. 1:10-13; Eph. 4:1-6). In the Lord's church I can stand free and unfettered by the doctrines, names, and commandments of men, and tell honest people that if they find us doing anything not in the Bible to call our attention to it and we'll drop it immediately. On the other hand, if they see us leaving off anything that we ought to be practicing, please call our attention to it and we'll incorporate it into our practice immediately. I knew that if this were done in the Baptist Church it would destroy it immediately. You just can't follow the Bible only and be a member of the Baptist Church!

Furthermore, **I could see while a member of the Baptist Church that in order to be a Baptist one had to do more than the Bible said to do;** and that the "Bible only" made "Christians only;" and that it took the Bible plus the Baptist Manual to make Baptists even as it took the Bible plus

the Discipline to make Methodists. I could read in Acts 11:26 that the disciples were called Christians (just Christians) and not some peculiar brand of Christians. I've never seen the day wherein I wanted to be more than just a simple New Testament Christian. Shouldn't that be good enough for all of us?

Now, basically, these are the reasons I left the Baptist Church to become a Christian only, a member of the Lord's church only, without any denominational affiliation whatsoever. Even though it meant the giving up of some of the dearest friends I had ever known, the breaking of many fleshly ties, I did it joyfully for the truth of the Gospel. For I knew that there was but one person that I was to love more than father, mother, brother, sister, wife or children, or even my own life, and that person was the Christ who loved me and gave Himself for me on the old rugged cross (Luke 14:26-33; Matt. 10:37).

Thus I plead with you, my friend, to *believe* on the Lord with all your heart, to earnestly and sincerely *repent* of every sin, *confess* your faith in Jesus Christ as God's Son, allow some servant of God to bury you in beautiful *baptism* for the remission of your sins; thus to become a member of the Lord's church. Then stay in the Lord's church and stay out of everything else. Be a faithful, devoted, consecrated member; die in the triumphs of a living faith; and then go home to receive the Christian's reward in that land of eternal beauty where beyond these voices there is peace.

**THIS IS THE WAY THAT IS RIGHT AND CAN'T BE WRONG!**

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