

A HELPFUL PERSPECTIVE

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The current edition of *Arkansas Baptist News* (Volume 112, Number 7; April 4, 2013) gives a helpful perspective to those who are sincerely trying to win souls for Christ. The irony is that although the perspective given is wrong it is still helpful. Greg Addison, President of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and Pastor of First Baptist Church at Cabot, Arkansas, writes in his column called “President’s Perspective” about a concern he has that “most Baptists don’t share Jesus.” (p. 5).

President and Pastor Addison writes, “This is one of the most shocking statistics that I have read: nine out of 10 Southern Baptists have never led another person to trust in Jesus as Savior.” A summary of his article would be that he wants to change that statistic. In one of the points he makes trying to do that I think I see why the statistic exists in the first place. Let me give you verbatim his third point:

Third, every Christian is already equipped to be an evangelist. Paul shares his testimony and then says it is an “example to those who would believe.” Every person who trusts Jesus is equipped with a blood-bought, supernaturally victorious testimony of salvation. Paul shares his testimony and then explains it is there to be used to share the gospel. No amount of theological training will ever trump the power of a changed life. Share your miraculous testimony of eternal salvation by the work of the Almighty Creator God through Jesus. It is more than powerful (p. 5).

Although wrong, this perspective is helpful because, first, it comes from a recognized authority among the Baptists. Second, it shows why Baptists are so hard to convince of their need, like all who become Christians, to obey the gospel. And, third, it contains an admission that Paul’s conversion serves as “an example to those who would believe.” Let’s review each point.

First, although the Baptists teach that the Bible is inspired of God—and I am thankful that they do—they do not practice it in regard to the organization of their church. As you see here, they have State Conventions and State Presidents under the auspices of the national Southern Baptist Convention. In contrast, the New Testament church has its citizenship or headquarters in heaven. Philippians 3:20, “For our conversation [‘citizenship,’ ASV, NKJV] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” And, each local congregation is autonomous (self-governed) under Christ alone and looks exclusively to Him to head the church. Colossians 2:19 says, “And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” So, already we can see a perspective which points away from New Testament teaching.

Second, asking people to become Baptists involves giving them a personal testimony not teaching them the Bible. Now, obviously Baptists believe their teaching is biblical, but as you will see it, clearly, is not. Notice how this “personal testimony,” that is the tool for making people Baptists, was described. It was called “supernatural” and “miraculous.” A study of the distinction between the two words would be the subject for a separate session, but what they

have in common is a direct intervention and exercise of power immediately from God. Evidently, nine out of ten Baptists are not receiving that kind of experience and, as reported; if they are they are not sharing it. The mistake is made in thinking Paul was giving a “personal testimony.” While what occurred was personal and Paul was authorized to testify as an eyewitness, Paul received a revelation from Christ, and, friends, that makes all the difference. (See Galatians 1:11-12). Uninspired people today do not receive such communications from Jesus Christ but see Him only as revealed in the inspired Word of God (Colossians 3:16).

Third, the very opposite of the advice of the President and Pastor from Arkansas is that Christians are not to place weight on the experiences they have had and share those for in 2 Corinthians 10:12 we read, “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” However, Paul’s example emphasizes a biblical truth spurned by the Baptists. He learned what he *must do* and was instructed by Ananias, the preacher, to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). Baptists do not give Paul’s example, designed to be imitated, any credibility or attention (1 Timothy 1:12-16).

So, the President and Pastor whose comments have been reviewed serve to provide “a helpful perspective” in reaching out to Baptists everywhere to show them how to bring souls to Jesus by showing what *not* to do and by showing them the importance to teach people to obey the gospel as did Paul and the other inspired writers of the New Testament (Romans 1:5; 10:16; 16:25-27; Hebrews 5:8-9). Christianity is to be *taught* (Matthew 28:19-20). And, preachers and teachers are to *study* (2 Timothy 2:15). For then they will learn *to* and *how to* “preach the word” not their varied and sensational experiences (2 Timothy 4:2).