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# Keystone BAPTIST

Official Paper of the Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches

## Baptists Distinctly UnReformed

by Charles Dear, Crescentville Baptist Church



Over recent years there have been some among us, particularly younger men in ministry, who have gravitated towards Reformed Theology, primarily as a result of several Reformed authors that have become popular among them. While I have a great respect for the scholarship of those men, there is no good reason why we should be drawn away from our rich Baptist heritage to pursue and lead our people into those things that are not just different but also militate in numerous ways against our precious Baptist distinctives, so as to draw into something that is not a true part of our Baptist heritage.

Let's state for the record: Baptists are not the stepchildren of either the Reformation, or Protestantism, or the Catholic Church. There was never a time in history when there was only the Catholic Church. Neither was there a time when there were only the Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches as the sole representatives of Christianity on earth. Yes, we acknowledge the Dark Ages of spiritual ignorance, but we must also take God at His Word. God has never left Himself without a witness. We are not speaking of a necessity of Apostolic succession because the Apostolic Age ended with the death of the Apostle John. Neither are we trying to stake a claim for Baptist Successionism, as popularly defined. What we are describing here is our confidence that there has always been a witness for the Word of God by those who faithfully preached and taught the full measure of Light they possessed. In other words, not a papal-like succession of people but a perpetual dissemination of biblical truth which God has promised would never return to Him void or be unfruitful (Isaiah 55:11).

For those who have chosen to sit on the fence between Baptist and Reformed teaching and practices, perhaps we need to review our Baptist Distinctives, so that we may more clearly see that we cannot honestly straddle the fence and hold both Baptist doctrines and Reformed doctrines simultaneously as though they were merely two columns on the theological menu from which to choose. We rejoice with anyone who has been saved by God's grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ apart from any merit before God by good works. Hopefully, that still cuts across denominational lines today. Even as I rejoice with all who are born again by the Spirit of God, I am a Baptist by conviction because I agree with Baptist distinctives as true and correct conclusions drawn from the whole counsel of God's Word. Those conclusions, based upon the rightly divided word of truth, separate me significantly from Romanism absolutely and from Protestantism in general.

Biblical Authority: This must surely be the common ground we can share with our Protestant friends, if not Catholicism; but we should not be too hasty nor presumptuous as to the measure of our agreement. We are familiar with the cliché, "That which is in the Old Testament concealed is in the New Testament revealed." That is we, as Baptists, have always looked at the Old Testament through the eyeglasses of the New Testament to find a clearer understanding. Covenant Theology, however,

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# Are You Dinosaur?

You could be, ya know. No I don't mean an actual Tyrannosaurus or the Behemoth and Leviathan mentioned in Job. These creatures were definitely distinctive and unavoidable in their day. But a dinosaur is something of the past – old

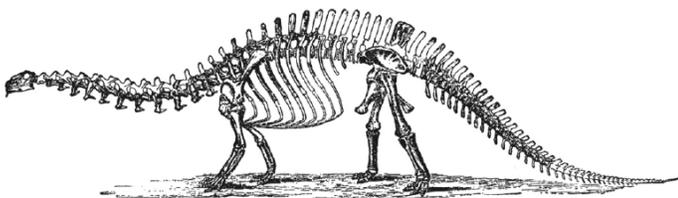
history – not vital, not valid for today's life and culture.

Because we firmly hold to "old-time" fundamentals of the faith and of practice, some would call or label us as dinosaurs. The reference implies to be "older" in thinking and practices that are outdated and becoming extinct. Apparently, those that have embraced newer thinking claim that it is "better", therefore, more appropriate and acceptable in today's world.

New thinking has been beneficial in the advancement of medicine, energy, communications and, oh yes, diets. But I find it puzzling and almost bewildering how new thinking is beneficial in theology and philosophy with the inspired Word of God declaring and establishing unchangeable truth. After all it does say, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." (Heb. 13:8).

When I was saved out of Roman Catholicism I was introduced to a life of faith (not works). "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17) When we came together to worship in the Baptist church there was a sense of reverence, respect and spiritual value that was demonstrated by how we dressed and how we sang. We sang the old hymns of the faith: Faith of Our Fathers, Amazing Grace, O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing, I Love to Tell the Story, etc.

You see, when I was a little boy there was a park across the street from our home and every summer there was a large tent put up in the ball field. There were many wooden folding chairs set up in row after row. I remember a platform with a pulpit in the middle. How did I know all this, you ask? Well, we as curious little boys (my brother and neighborhood friends) would slip under the canvas walls during the daytime and look with amazement at all that was there.



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# From the Parsonage Window



## GOD BEGAN, GOD WILL FINISH

by Grace Roofner

*Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.*

1 Thess 5:24

Was there ever a family with such overwhelming problems that you finally give up? You could not imagine that the children would even have a chance of spiritual success! I knew such a family once. But then there was God...

Crusted dishes were half-filled with greasy water. Dried sauce ran over the counter and down the cupboards. The floor and walls were black with filth. I looked around the dingy apartment where the Cooper\* family, with its now five children, had moved, and I knew I had lost them. They used to come to our little rural church; but now they were living in town, and I knew I would never see them again. The family had turned their tiny shack in the country into a place for raising pigs, so there was no going back.

In 1971, Paul had accepted a call to a "Little Brown Church" in Maine. We would drive our church's old rattletrap van around the countryside picking up children for church. One Friday, two young teens from the Cooper family rode to Sunday School with us. I'll never forget the joy on the faces of Jack and his younger sister Kelly as they received Christ. It was all so new and wonderful to them!

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: (Phil 1:6)

After that, whenever Paul would be teaching a Bible lesson and mention "heaven," both teens would exclaim in delight, "I'm going there!" Soon, their younger siblings, John, Debbie, Susie, and Carla began riding to church on our van too. Such beautiful children they were!

Life was hard for the Cooper children. Their father was an alcoholic, and one day he was killed in a drunken car accident. Paul had his funeral. Kelly got pregnant and married at age 14 to get out of the house. It was soon after that, that Mrs. Cooper and the rest of the children moved into the apartment in town with her boyfriend. But I was wrong when I thought there was no going back. The Coopers put the pigs out of their old home, cleaned it up a bit, and moved back in. By then the kids were wild. Jack, age 18, was drinking with his friends. One day, one of his friends stumbled into the house so drunk he had to hang onto the table to stand up. Jack's mom later said, "I shouldn't have let Jack go with him!"

Continued page 3

But she did. The two boys crashed the car, and Jack died in the ER as a broken beer bottle had pierced his body. Paul had his funeral. Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book? (Ps 56:8) After the funeral, Paul and I were visiting the family. I was trying to encourage Debbie, now a lovely teenager with long red hair, to live for Christ. I urged her to live in purity. “Why?” she said. “Why should I respect my body? No one else does!” And she turned away. (All names have been changed.)

I thought Kelly was the only one who might make it. She was so sweet, and was trying so hard. “I’m only 21,” she asserted, “and most girls my age are just getting started in marriage. I already have three kids, but I’m working so hard to give them a good home. I want them to have what I didn’t!” But I knew the odds were against her. After 11 years in Maine, Paul was called to a church under Fellowship of Baptists for Home Missions in Pennsylvania. It was 1982. That year we learned that young John Cooper, age 17, had put a gun in his mouth and shot himself, and his two youngest sisters were in the next room! It was horrifying to see the despair and hopelessness in that family! Was God done with the Coopers?

Thirty years went by, and we heard very little news from Maine, and none from the Cooper family. Our former church in Maine had moved out of the “Little Brown Church” to a new location. The original church, being very old, eventually became a historical site. Then something both unexpected and extraordinary happened! We received a report that it had burned down. But from the ashes arose something beautiful. Former members and people who were once part of our youth group formed a group on Facebook. We were able to reconnect and find out what happened to each other—something that was so unusual, and so uplifting! God’s faithfulness became very evident!

It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. (Lam 3:22-23) Kelly posted this on Facebook: “We all have a story to tell. We all have our testimony. I am often asked where my walk started with Christ. I was a blank slate. I had never heard of salvation. I had never heard of a God that loved me so much that He sent His only Son to die and to rise on the third day for my sins. So my story begins... The first Sunday School teacher I ever had told me of this Man, this perfect Man that loved me so much He died for me. I knew in my heart I had waited my whole life to hear this...the whole 12 years I had lived. We bowed our heads and prayed together. When I looked up from that prayer, my heart and mind would never be the same. I felt clean. I felt new. I have stumbled in my life; it was always Him Who would pick me up. He is my Father, my Friend, my Savior, my God...” Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. (Rom 8:37)

I called Kelly to learn more about her life and the lives of her family members. What a blessing it was to talk with her for over an hour, and then to pray with her! I was in tears by the time we said goodbye. Kelly told me that right after she was saved at age 12, she wanted to tell her little 5 year old brother John about Christ. “He was the first child I led to the Lord,” she explained in her familiar Maine accent. “He was sitting in Grandpa’s chair. I wanted to make sure he would be with me in heaven. So I said, ‘John, I want to tell you something.’ I told him about Jesus, and then I asked, ‘Do you want to pray?’ He said, ‘Yes.’ and he did. Right after that, he spotted Mom and yelled, ‘Mom! Kelly just saved me from the devil!’”

Hearing this testimony was a comfort, knowing that later, as a troubled teen, John took his own life. Kelly told me more of what happened. She related that he had begun taking drugs, and one day he told one of his best friends he wanted to kill himself. His friend gave him a bullet, and he went home and grabbed a gun. His sisters, Susie and Carla, then ages 10 and 8, raced down the street to the store, desperate to call their mom on the pay phone for help! They couldn’t find a dime for the call, so they found a bottle for a 10-cent rebate that Maine has for returning glass bottles. After receiving the call, their mother tried to reach home in time, but it was too late. “You get to the point where you throw your hands up in the air! You realize you must let go and let God take over!” Kelly exclaimed.

Kelly sadly told me that she was married for over 20 years to an abusive husband. She bounced from church to church, but finally found one in which she could be comfortable. She raised her three daughters in church, taught Sunday School, and led children to Christ. Her own children are saved, and all three graduated from high school. She got her GED and has a successful cleaning business now. She delightedly told me how she led her little grandson Jacob to Christ. After he prayed and invited Jesus into his heart, he exclaimed in wonder, “Grammy, I don’t know what’s wrong with me, but I can’t stop smiling!”

I asked if her sisters were saved. She explained that her sister Debbie, the next oldest girl, was saved in VBS. “Debbie had a hard life,” Kelly lamented. “She and her husband were taking drugs. She blew a hole in her head, but survived. However, she had seizures and memory loss.

She never gave up on God, though. In the hospital, she found her way to the chapel and was crying and praying for healing. Although she still has seizures, God healed her of even the desire for drugs. She has



## NEXT ON THE CALENDAR!

**Fall Conference – Sept. 11-13, 2017  
1st Baptist of Elimsport, Allenwood PA**

**SEE PAGE 10 FOR DETAILS**

## 2018 Activities for Our Fellowship

Spring Conference at Union Baptist Church, Kittanning  
**April 9 & 10, 2018**

Youth Retreat and Talents for Christ at  
Calvary Baptist Church, Bloomsburg  
**April 20-21, 2018**

Fall Conference at Marsh Creek Fellowship Church, Wellsboro  
**September 17-19, 2018**

## Churches Searching for Pastor

As of August 11, 2017



First Baptist Church – Corry

Springside Baptist Church – Distant

First Baptist Church – Ebensburg

Garden Heights Baptist Church – Erie

Tidioute Baptist - Tidioute

Calvary Baptist Church – Union City

would seem to reverse that perspective, perpetuating the Covenants of the Old Testament that support infant baptism into the New Testament church, despite the clear teaching in Hebrews 10 :9b “..He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second (i.e., the New Covenant in Jesus Christ).” There is also a problem with replacement theology, where the question is raised whether or not God will yet fulfill His promises to a nation Israel or are they now being fulfilled, figuratively, in the Church?

These are the problems that arise when we do not use a consistent homiletic in biblical interpretation. When we address Biblical Authority as the first and most basic of our distinctives, it is necessary that we must rely upon proper rules of interpretation. Otherwise, we might conveniently resort to figurative interpretations that better suit preconceived notions and even perpetuate errors from those church systems from which we retreated. For example, just how different is Cosubstantiation from Transsubstantiation, and where is the biblical authority for either one? That is why in the list of hermeneutical principles literal interpretation is always the first priority, followed by grammatical, historical and I always include contextual interpretation, to come to the correct understanding of Scripture. Figurative interpretations always require a figurative context to justify such interpretations.

**Autonomy of the Local Church:** This presents a problem for most other church systems, whether Protestant or Catholic. Romanism can be described as the adoption of three powerful influences present in the first century: the Roman government; the priesthood of Judaism and early Christianity. Paganism might be included, such as the Mother-Child cult, but the formal structure was built upon the others. Romanism has always been a “top-down” authoritarianism from its very beginning. Autonomy of local churches was also threatened by the unholy union between church and state, whether the head of the church was Pope, Archbishop or King. The fact is that any form of hierarchical church government cannot be honestly substantiated from Scripture. Local church autonomy acknowledges the absolute headship of Jesus Christ that no vicar can claim.

So then what is the present state of church autonomy? The honest answer is that, as Baptists, many are limiting the authority of members, who are in good standing with the local church. While we may not have formally owned any form of hierarchical government, the members of some Baptist churches have functionally yielded authority above and beyond the membership to the Pastor and/or a Board of Ruling Elders. Autonomy of the local church rests upon the principle of one member, one vote by its people. To abdicate from such biblical responsibility is to retreat from the great principle of autonomy, unknown in Romanism and limited at best in Protestantism.

**The Priesthood of the Believer:** Every believer enjoys access to God directly through the only Mediator, Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul tells us that we have the ministry of the Holy Spirit within who helps us to pray, and we must always pray in the light of what God has revealed to us in His Word. While we all rely upon the intercessory prayers of our brethren in Christ, we are not limited as to when, where, how, or through whom we must pray to be heard and answered by our Heavenly Father. That means there are no formal prayers we must recite (even the Lord’s Prayer), no need for prayer books, but we can simply pray from our hearts in our own words and be heard, understood and answered according to the will of God. Read the prayers of King Solomon at the dedication of the temple and consider the humble words that pleased God.

**The Two Ordinances of the Local Church—Believer’s Baptism and the Lord’s Table:** Our very name was born out of an epithet of hatred against us because we refused to have our children baptized, whether for presumed salvation or for bringing them under an Old Testament Covenant. The original title of “Anabaptist” underscored our conviction that Believer’s Baptism is the only Scripturally approved practice of baptism, by those who had already received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, who were giving public testimony of their faith in Christ and their identification with Him. More Baptists were put to death, imprisoned, whipped, banished, driven out of their homes by both Protestants and Catholics, on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, because of their unshakeable biblical conviction about baptism. The severity of the persecution of Baptists came as a result of the collusion of both Church and State against them. In western Europe, armies were raised to massacre Baptist communities, resulting in thousands of deaths of men, women and children. In the early colonial days in America, similar abuses were inflicted upon Baptists.

As noted above, the significance of the Lord’s Table changed little from Transsubstantiation of Catholicism to Cosubstantiation popularized by the Lutheran Church. The most important issue here is the significance and purpose of the Lord’s Table. Jesus said, “This do in remembrance of me (Luke 22;19).” There is nothing in those words that even hints of any saving efficacy in partaking of the bread and the cup. In fact, The Apostle Paul warns against partaking “unworthily,” i.e., as an unbeliever or unrepentant believer in I Corinthians 11:29. Without any saving efficacy, the presence of Jesus Christ in or with the elements is unnecessary, and insisting upon it implies a salvation by works.

**Individual Soul Liberty:** Everyone is accountable to God, whether for salvation and obedience to the Word of God or for condemnation because we rejected God’s provision for salvation. A pastor or a priest does not possess the authority to

condemn a soul to Hell. If we are Hell bound, it is because we are “condemned already” for not believing what the Bible says about salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as a personal Savior. If I am trusting in Christ, no one can take away my salvation. Church discipline is clear in the Bible, in Matthew 18 and spells out the process but the objective of church discipline is repentance and restoration. The church may vote to remove someone from church membership, but it is always with hope of reconciliation.

Another aspect of Individual Soul Liberty not often addressed is the responsibility of the believer to “rightly divide the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15).” As a believer, I must be a sincere student of God’s Word to the end that I understand it correctly, so that I may obey it completely. This was also addressed above under Biblical Authority. Using the homiletic principles above, I need to understand what God said and what He intends me to do in response to His Word, lest I bring in other influences that would taint or change what is plainly stated in God’s Word.

**Regenerate Church Membership:** To be part of the family of a local church, one must first become part of the family of God by trusting Christ as his own personal Savior. Back in 1662, the Puritans in New England were declining in church membership. Their solution was to institute the Halfway Covenant, which offered church membership to the younger generation but limited their participation in Communion or voting in the absence of their conversion testimony. The risk of an unregenerate church membership lies in their privilege to vote which, in sufficient numbers, has changed the leadership, the doctrinal position and practices of the church, resulting in a ministry more preoccupied with pleasing people than obeying the Word of God. In similar fashion today, requirements for church membership have been compromised for the sake of the appearance of church growth and financial support and, in fact, produced a spiritual decline that has undermined obedience to the whole counsel of God’s Word. Likewise, church statistics can be deceiving when church rolls are never purged, something Protestant churches are wont to do today.

**Two Church Offices of Pastor and Deacon:** So long as their scriptural roles are preserved, these offices, occupied by men who meet the biblical qualifications, have served local churches well. However, ordination of women has become more widely accepted among both Baptist and Reformed churches. Variations of Elder Rule have usurped congregational polity. Another trend away from members voting has been the appointment of committees drawn from a wide range of church members to oversee a variety of church matters, from calling a new pastor to contemporizing worship services.

**Separation of Church and State:** Like the doctrine of Individual Soul Liberty, Baptists have always been the champions of keeping any level of government out of the principles and practices of Baptist churches. Contrariwise, since the Jews pressed Rome to crucify Jesus Christ, there have always been the efforts of religion to use the power of the state and the state to use the power of religion as a means of controlling the people. Oddly enough, those who had fled England and Holland and had come to America because of religious persecution became, in turn, the persecutors of others upon their arrival here. Both Puritans and Pilgrims persecuted the Baptists and Quakers, denying them the religious freedom they sought here for themselves.

Part of the story of the Reformation is the political interest and support from the king of England who established the Episcopal/Anglican Church (the Church of England or English Catholic Church) to stem the flow of money out of England to Rome. Move ahead to the days of the colonies in the New Land and you will find that even after the Constitution and the Bill of Rights were ratified (1791), state churches persisted until the last one changed in 1833, in Massachusetts. In New England there were fields known as Glebes, a tradition of the Catholic Church brought to America by the Church of England. The proceeds from whatever was grown and harvested from all those fields provided the support for its own pastors and churches.

While it is not found in the list of Baptist Distinctives, there is one other principle that should be included here—**the Fulfilment of the Great Commission**. Among Protestants, the impact of hyper Calvinism was the dismissal of the Great Commission after the Apostolic Age. While there were those who disagreed with that position, they had to form Missionary Societies outside of their churches to reach out to the world with the Gospel. Reading the life and work of William Carey will provide insight, as Carey became a Baptist by conviction from the Scriptures. A major change came among Presbyterians through J. Gresham Machen, who formed the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions in 1933.

Our Baptist heritage is rich, if imperfect. Some of our spiritual forefathers, under other names, struggled with some doctrinal issues, like which day to worship. It would not be until the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century invention of the printing press that the Bible would be produced in numbers, in the language of the people, Even then, few could read sufficiently to study the Scriptures, and the established churches discouraged people from reading the Bible for themselves without the guidance of a priest or pastor. Despite all the struggles, all the lives lost in pursuit of spiritual liberty, all the deprivations of ordinary decency, Individual Soul Liberty emerged, never to be silenced again. May the Lord help us to never trade away our inheritance for a mess of pottage.

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In the evening at my bedtime I would hear beautiful sounds of music and many voices singing inside the tent. Then there was someone speaking (preaching). Perhaps it was Evangelist Bob Jones, Sr. or Evangelist Oliver B. Greene.

Years passed by and then at the age of twenty one I was saved. I had been as religious as anyone could possibly be training for the priesthood, but I was on my way to Hell. Having now accepted Christ as my personal Savior I began attending a Baptist church. It was like swinging from one end of the pendulum to the other. The hymns we sang were the very same hymns I had heard as a little boy listening to the music coming from that tent. The point is there was now a totally different perspective in regards to value placed on the hymns and the Word of God. Everyone came together understanding where they were and WHO they had come to worship. The Bible was the inspired Word of God.

Now there seems to be a new approach in some churches. It is deeper than that – it is a theology and philosophy that are changing the goals and functions of churches. The approach is more social concerns and very, very casual. The Gospel and doctrines of the faith are being played down. The old hymns are being replaced with new songs and styles promoting a more worldly type of music.

As this is being gradually introduced and implemented in ministries those still holding fast to the “old ways” are looked upon as dinosaurs. If the subject of separation is mentioned, oh my, you really are a dinosaur.

Yet with all of this “stuff” I recall the Apostle Paul charging us over and over and over to stand fast. “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” II Thess. 2:15

Where we stand and what we hold true may make us Dinosaurs today. So hang on and don't become extinct!

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### **God Began, Continued**

never touched drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes again. She has regained her memory, started going to church, and was just baptized!” He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. (Ps 40:2)

“What about the two youngest girls, Susie and Carla?” I inquired.

“They were both saved around 11 or 12 years of age. Susie doesn't go to church, but she has recently been listening to sermons on line. Carla is a wonderful Christian woman. I love that girl!” Kelly exclaimed.

“Is your mother saved?” I wondered.

“Mom is saved. She may have been saved as a child. I know that she was sitting next to me in a church service once, and at the invitation, her hand went up. For many years, I was very angry with my mom. She never gave us kids any direction, guidance, or discipline. We just ran wild! Honestly,” Kelly said wryly, “I don't know how we were such polite kids!”

“God has really worked in Mom's life,” she continued. “She had to have emergency surgery and ended up in a coma on full life support. The doctors wanted to pull the plug, but I said no. She was in a coma for a month and had no memory for eight months. When she woke up, the first thing she said was, “Kelly! I need to be baptized!” Mom couldn't be immersed because she was in a wheelchair and had a tracheotomy. So the pastor poured a pitcher of water over her head?” (I am not passing judgment on that one!) “Mom has changed so much!” Kelly added. “We have a good relationship now. ”God is so good! He brings you through, and I'm so thankful!” Kelly summed up our conversation. “I think about Moses. He spent 40 years in a castle, and then 40 years in the desert, and finally he was ready to serve. That gives me hope!”

As I reflected on Kelly's story, the story of the Cooper family, I was struck by God's grace and mercy. You know, I tend to worry about the future for my children and grandchildren. What if they stray from the Lord's path? But I know that God will continue working with them as He has with me, the Coopers, and every one of His children. What He starts, He will finish. As the hymn writer wrote:

Trust in Him, ye saints forever—  
He is faithful, changing never;  
Neither force nor guile can sever  
Those He loves from Him.

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# DUMB THINGS PEOPLE SAY

Dr. Clay Nuttall, The Shepherd's Staff

Some of the things people say are just plain funny, while others are extremely harmful. Quite often, things that are stated are only strange because of where they are uttered. This is like the visitor who goes to the OB ward to visit an obviously expectant mother. The visitor says, "Are you still here?" Then there is the man who is visiting at the funeral home and comments about the deceased, "My, he looks so nice". My favorite is church bulletin humor. "The Pastor's message: What the fool said". Dumb things can often be quite entertaining.

When the time rolls around for elections, we are subjected to some of the dumbest things I have ever heard. You sometimes have to wonder how anyone could possibly be elected who appears to be totally brain dead. I love one-liners, and they probably are the best way to respond to dumb statements, if you are not still laughing after five minutes. Dumb things are not always verbal; sometimes they are put in print. I tend to do this in emails because I never spell-check them. That can get you into a lot of trouble, as some of you well know! Then there is social media. This is the king of written dumb things. It covers almost 50% of the comments posted. We live in a world that doesn't think. That, of course, is the fruit of today's liberal American education, and almost everyone I know struggles with thinking before speaking.

## IN THE CHRISTIAN CIRCLES

Let me begin with dumb things preachers say. An oft repeated statement is, "The lost will be separated from God for eternity" or "The worst thing about hell is that God is not there". Unless you have a different God than the one described in the Bible, that is a dumb statement. The God of the Bible is omnipresent. That means He is present always, everywhere, for all time and eternity. There is NO place where He is not eternally present. The psalmist put it this way: "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there." (Psalm 139:8)

My pet peeve involves a string of things that all mean the same thing. "I believe", "I think", "my view", "my opinion is". Let me be blunt. What the preacher believes, thinks, opines is not relevant. I don't care. What we want to know is what the clear teaching of the Word of God says. If you don't know, either say so or wait until you do know. The authority in the pulpit is the Word of God, not the imagination of the preacher. If you do know what the Bible says, then say it clearly and pointedly: "The Bible says..." That is not arrogance; it is obedience.

We should all agree that preachers telling lies in the pulpit is dumb. Everything we say ought to be tested with the truth. Let me focus on lying about time: "This is my last point", "I am almost done", "Just a minute more". This is fine if it is true; but if you then ramble on for another half hour, let's face it - you lied, and that is dumb. Oh, I see - "the Lord led you". Why do we always blame our errors on God? That is also dumb. The best preaching doesn't ever refer to time. It holds the attention of the listener so that, when the end does come, the listener is surprised.

The problem appears to be that there is more error taught in the name of God than truth. Part of this has to do with a tragic, casual approach to the study of God's Word. Digging in the text is hard work. It takes time, energy, and persistence. I often wonder why anybody listened to me in my early years of preaching, and I wish I had known then what I know now. What I do know, for sure, is that I now know very little of the whole even after fifty-seven years of ministry!

A second problem with this issue of dumb things is the infringement of "historical theology" upon the clear teaching of the Scriptures. Instead of being like the saints at Bera (Acts 17:11). who "searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" too many preachers blindly accept what other men have said about the text. Everyone wants to be loved and accepted, so asking questions about historical positions is off base. To those who have chosen to be followers of a man, disloyalty is almost criminal. Even the faithful know better than to ask questions about historical conclusions that don't make sense.

This would include the problem of the worship of scholars. I repeat: scholars and scholarship have great value for all of us, but they do us no service if we are not allowed to ask questions. How often are scholars wrong? The answer is "often", and that is easy to prove. With so many and such varied conclusions about a text, they couldn't possibly all be right. Maybe one of them is; but even if one is right, it means the majority must be wrong. Let me remind you that

the Bible was not written to scholars; it was written to the common man. Deep inside, the liberal in you may be saying that this writer is opposed to scholarship and serious education, even if the evidence is the exact opposite.

## THE HEART OF DUMB THINGS

The road to “dumb things” is paved with wrong interpretation. Actually, it is paved with wrong systems of interpretation. I am racing to finish the book “The Normal Hermeneutic”. In it I deal with the word “interpretation”. The Bible interprets itself. God put truth in, and He wants to lift it out of the text. Somewhere, it seems, we got the idea that God needs our help; so, we began to add our wisdom to that of the scriptures. We end by adding our ideas to the text. Our task is to find out what God has plainly said and to make sure that is what we teach. What has happened is that we teach what we think about what the Bible says and so end up saying a lot of dumb things.

An example of this problem is found in our own national government. The founding documents of this nation are its laws. The responsibility of the courts is to see that the original documents are upheld and that people obey those laws. Now enters a system that allows the courts to interpret the law rather than uphold what was written. The product is a corrupted judicial system that does not represent the original documents.

That is exactly what has been done to the Bible. Instead of letting the Bible speak, we have added our ideas and ignored the things we don't like. So, we end up drowning in a sea of dumb theological ideas. And then there is music... but don't even get me started!



Dr. Clay Nuttall has been a pastor, missionary teacher and theologian. He has blessed many of us with his ministering of God's Word.

*“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”*



## PARBC FALL Conference

September 11-13, 2017

First Baptist Church of Elimsport, Allenwood

Theme: *Second Coming of Christ – II Thessalonians*



### **Monday September 11<sup>th</sup>**

- 3pm Keynote Message – Pastor Todd Baker, First Baptist Church of Elimsport
- 4pm Comfort in Persecution (1:4-12) – Pastor Paul Roofner, Faith Baptist Church, Waynesburg
- 5pm Dinner Break & Fellowship
- 7pm Warnings Against Unrest (2:1-2) – Pastor Andrew Frey, First Baptist Church, Grove City

### **Tuesday, September 12<sup>th</sup>**

- 9am Coming Events (2:3-12) – Pastor Dale Mooney, Mountain Top Baptist Church, Mountain Top
- 10am Prayer Time – Pastor Wayne Burchwell, First Baptist Church, Limestone
- 10:45am Break and Fellowship
- 11am Appeal to Believers (2:13-15) – Pastor Marty Montgomery, First Baptist Church, Roulette
- 12 noon Lunch Break & Fellowship
- 2pm Business Meeting – Pastor Allen Harris, Hope Baptist Church, Hanover
- 3:30pm Workshop – “Bring the Books” – Pastor Allen Harris
- 5pm Dinner Break & Fellowship
- 7pm Comforting Believers (2:16-17) – Pastor Steve Lyon, Bible Baptist Church, Upper Darby

### **Wednesday September 13<sup>th</sup>**

- 9am Church in Good Standing (3:1-6) – Pastor Joshua Franklin, Open Door Baptist Church, Greensburg
- 10am Prayer Time – Pastor Paul Connor, PARBC State Rep.
- 10:45am Breaktime and Fellowship
- 11am The Steady Church (3:7-15) – Pastor Earl Shawley, Messiah Baptist Church, Kylertown

