

Why We Should Uphold and Seek to Extend the Baptist Principle.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE JUBILEE OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH, HERBOS, WASHINGTON, D. C., APRIL 10TH, 1887, BY H. FRANKLIN ADAMS, PASTOR OF THE FIRST WASHINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH.

What is the one great principle that... the basis of our separate denominational structure? What is the greatest duty that the faith owes delivered to the saints... to which no part of the world is bound to conform?

Is it Baptism by immersion? By no means, for there are hundreds of thousands and scores of millions who are baptized by immersion. For there are 600,000 of Campbellites on this continent and sixty millions of Romanians who have as truly been baptized by immersion as I have.

Is it the baptism by immersion? No, because the baptism by immersion is a Baptist church; therefore, baptism, with all its grand spiritual teaching, is not and never has been the great principle for which our denominational structure is based.

Is it a solemn attachment to any one set of Scriptures—whether it justify the necessity of the new birth, or justification by faith, or the inspiration of the Scriptures, or believer's baptism, or any other one doctrine—that we contend for, for them all, and no more than that?

The Baptist Principle is nothing more nor less, nothing broader nor narrower, than obedience.

Not obedience to any one doctrine or precept, but obedience to the Lord in the spirit and in the truth.

Others have paid a profound and reverent regard to certain parts of the Word, scrupulously fulfilling both its letter and its spirit, cause of an hereditary belief, or a convenient support to a theory they cherished in the heart.

But to take the whole of the New Testament, as the Holy Spirit has recorded it, and render obedience to its commands, both with regard to the individual believer and the organized church, this is the great principle of our mission.

Obedience in baptism by immersion, and disobedience in the doctrine of justification by faith, would at once invalidate our claim to obedience as the distinctive principle of our mission.

When will our brethren in other denominations cease to charge us as being disobedient in the Lord's commandments, when we have no desire to be different from them in concerning this ordinance to the participation of immersed believers?

When we have adopted another principle, such as Episcopacy or Methodism, either of which involves obedience to Christ in all things, and then converted to the Baptist principle, we are Methodists or Episcopians, or we are not at all.

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Why should we extend this principle? Here I again adopt the same reason for extending this principle as for holding it, namely, (1st), "Because our Lord commands us to extend what we uphold." It is our duty to obey in the way the Lord commands us to be baptized, and to extend what we uphold.

Why should we uphold the Baptist Principle? Because our Divine Lord commands us to obey His word. All authority comes from Christ. His words come to us with an uncanceled sound, but have behind them the order of "Thus saith the Lord."

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The Courage of a Young Gentleman. A pastor was holding extra meetings in a school house in a rich, rural neighborhood. A wealthy farmer, living nearby, had not attended, nor had any of his family, when the wife, an unemotional woman, but of rare good sense, went to the meeting one evening.

Her special cross now was to tell her husband of her new experience. Teaching home she found the family had retired. Her husband, arising from sleep, said, "You are a little late home."

When the hired man pushed back to leave the room, the man of the house said, "My wife says she is converted, and of course she will want to read and pray before we go to work; you better sit down."

There is one more reason to be gathered from these solemn words spoken at midnight in that sacramental chamber. Our Lord might (if he chose) have remained here all night in loving converse with his disciples. He might have waited for his enemies to find him. He might have stolen away under cover of the darkness out of the city, and escaped their clutches.

He does not ask our obedience as a cold duty, and as such He never accepts it; He asks us to render obedience to all His commands from the same motives that prompted His obedience to His Father's will. He says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments, then you will love the Father who has sent Me, and you will have life in you, and your obedience will be in love."

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