

Remember Who You Are What You Stand For And Be In By 11 (Knowing Your Heritage)

Rev 2:1-5

Intro: We had a good year last year we were able to regain some financial footing, many of us can say that we grew spiritually last year as a result of the Discovery Project and we added new members as well as added some new names to the Lambs Book of life.

But as we look forward to this New Year let us take time to remember our heritage.

When our kids were teens and they would go out in the evening with their friends Sally would often say to them as they left the house, ***“Remember Who You Are What You Stand For And Be In By 11.*** What she was really telling them was that it was important to know your heritage.

The theme for 2008 is **Digging for the Truth; Uncovering God's Glory.** In Eph 3:8 ***“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ”*** The truths we are going to be digging for this year are the truths about what God really wants from us, both as individuals and as a church. In that same text Paul refers to a mystery that Christ had reveal to him that he was passing on to them. It is that mystery we are going to strive to discover.

The place we need to start is discovering our true identity

What is our identity? We need to be able to remember who we are and what we stand for and be in church by 11; just who are we and what do we stand for anyway?

In our Text today Jesus is, in a sense, giving us the same reminder that Sally gave the kids

[Stand/Read Rev 2:1-5/pray/dismiss Jr. Church]

This busy, separated, sacrificing church really suffered from “heart trouble”—they had abandoned their first love! They displayed “works ... labor ... and patience” (Rev. 2:2), but these qualities were not motivated by a love for Christ. What we do for the Lord is important, *but so is why we do it!*

What is “first love”? It is the devotion to Christ that so often characterizes the new believer: fervent, personal, uninhibited, excited, and openly displayed. This is the same devotion that once defined most Baptist Churches but I fear has been lost in most modern day Baptist Churches. Jesus is saying essentially the same thing to the church there in Ephesus that Sally would say to the kids when he says in v. 5 ***“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works...”***

What are we, as an Independent Fundamental Baptist Church to remember? Do you know?

Let's discover the truth of what that really means...

- I. **Independent**
 - A. The words "Independent" and "Fundamental" have been added by Baptist churches after the use of the name Baptist failed to fully identify what they believed.
 - B. The word ***“Independent”*** means that the church is not a member of any council, convention or is a part of any hierarchy outside the local congregation

1. An Independent Baptist Church would not be apart of a national organization that would exercise authority over the local church
 2. Therefore the name "independent" means that the church patterns itself after the New Testament example and stands alone under the authority of the Bible and answers only to Jesus Christ
 3. Independent churches have no organized organization over them in authority
 4. They direct their own affairs under the authority of the New Testament Scriptures, free from the outside interference
 5. The New Testament teaches that Christ is the head of the church, (Eph. 5:23) and the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4)
 6. The local pastor is the shepherd (Heb. 13:17, Acts 20:28, Eph. 4:11) or leader of the congregation
 7. The Independent Baptist church has a congregational form of government with each member having the right of the vote and all the affairs of the church is conducted by the local congregation following the guidelines of the New Testament
- C. So, as an **Independent Fundamental Baptist** all earthly authority exists with in the confines of this building and we/I answer only Jesus Christ for all our decisions

II. **Fundamental**

- A. What is a Fundamental Baptist church? It is a church that believes in the fundamentals of the faith.
- B. The fundamental doctrines of the faith are:
 1. The **inerrancy** of **Scripture** meaning Scripture is without error
 - a) Our first article of faith says it this way:
We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men

- supernaturally inspired; that it has truth without any admixture of error for its matter; and therefore is, and shall remain until the end of the age, the only complete and final revelation of the will of God to man.*
- b) Our tradition has been that the Bible and the Bible alone determines what we do, how we act and how we live
 - c) Notice that this does not refer to a particular *translation of the Holy Scriptures*
 - d) What we mean by *Holy Bible* is that collection of sixty-six books, from Genesis to Revelation, which as originally written does not only contain and convey the Word of God, but **IS** the very Word of God
2. The 2nd Fundamental is **The Virgin Birth of Christ.**
 3. The 3rd Fundamental is **the substitutionary atonement of Christ**
 4. **Christ's bodily resurrection**
 5. **Christ's physical return to earth to set up His Kingdom at a time called the 2nd coming.**
- C. These beliefs were reaffirmed because many churches were rejecting these doctrines in the early 1900's.
1. In the late part of the 19th and early part of the 20th century churches began to turn their backs on some fundamental tenets of basic Christianity
 2. A series of articles called The Fundamentals were written as a response to this, what they referred to as, "modernism and liberal theology"
- D. **So, who are we? We are Independent and we are Fundamental but there is more; we are an Independent Fundamental BAPTIST Church.**
- ## III. **Baptist**

- A. What is a Baptist?
1. Let me tell you what a Baptist isn't
 2. A Baptist isn't Westboro Baptist church who runs around picketing soldiers funerals
 3. A Baptist isn't someone who is defined by which translation of God's Word they use
 4. A Baptist isn't someone who believes in a certain worship style
- B. A Baptist isn't a Baptist just because of the name they have on the sign out front of their church – Pastor Rob told me of a man who went out east to start a Baptist church and as he went door to door inviting people to this new Baptist Church they would as if he was the Baptist church that is pastured by the lesbian or the gay pastor. I seems that in the same community there were two Baptist churches, one pastured by a lesbian and one pastured by a gay man.
- C. **First of all a Baptist Church is one that holds to some basic distinctives** that identify them from all other churches and religion – **HISTORIC BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES**
1. **Bible** - the soul authority for faith and practice
 - a) 2 Tim 3:16 says, ***“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”***
 2. **Autonomy** or independence of the local church
 - a) Jesus told of how to exercise authority over the Church in Matthew 18:15-16, ***“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. ¹⁶But if he will not hear thee, then take***

- with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. ¹⁷And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”***
3. **Priesthood of all believers**
 - a) This is the belief that all born-again believers have the privilege of direct access to God. It is not necessary to go through any other human channel.
 - b) The Old Testament priest stood between God and man and represented man to God. They offered the sacrifices and performed all ceremonial acts of worship. They were keepers of the Tabernacle and later the Temple. They would burn the incense and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifices upon the altar. But now, because of the shedding of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, (which makes access to God possible), we can go directly to God as a result of our right standing before Him. We have the necessary way to be priests before a Holy God.
 - c) 1 Peter 2:9 says, ***“...ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”***
 4. **Two offices:**
 - a) Pastor/Shepherd (elder or bishop [overseer])

- b) Deacon
- 5. Individual soul liberty and responsibility
 - a) Every man by nature possesses the right of private judgment in the interpretation of the Scriptures, and in all religious concerns; it is his privilege to read and explain the Bible for himself, without dictation from, or dependence on, any one, being responsible to God alone for his use of the sacred truth
 - b) Every man has the right to hold these religious opinions as he believes the Bible teaches, without harm or hindrance from any one, as long as he doesn't intrude upon, or interfere with, the rights of others by doing so
 - c) This also implies individual accountability before God for those interpretations
 - d) Romans 14:10 sums this point up very well, ***"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."***
- 6. Separation of Church and State
 - a) The Church is to be separate and not under the authority of the government and the church is to have no authority over the church
 - b) Civil government is to be respected and obeyed so long as that obedience does not go against Scripture
 - c) Civil government is ordained and appointed by God and therefore should always be in our prayer
 - d) Christ sums this up very clear in Matt 22:20 & 21 when He is asked if they should continue to pay taxes to Rome He asks ***"...Whose is this image***

- and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's"***
- 7. Two ordinances
 - a) Believer's Baptism by immersion – only those who have made a personal profession of his or her faith in the Atoning work of Jesus on the cross for their individual sins
 - b) Lord's Supper - only regenerate persons, baptized on a profession of their faith, and living in a godly and Christian manner as members of a church, have a right to, or can properly partake of, the Supper
 - c) Both of these ordinances were given to us as way for us to remember what Christ did for us and to continually cause us to look back upon and be thankful for the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Christ
- 8. Saved, baptized and serving members – Only godly people who have been baptized on a profession of faith, are the only proper and suitable people for membership
 - a) 2 Cor 6:14 lays the foundation for this distinctive, ***"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"***
 - b) This verse speaks to more than just our who we date or marry but also speaks about who we should join in fellowship with

- D. In addition to these distinctives Baptist have traditionally been known for three **Life Passions**:
1. **First a Passion for Personal Evangelism**
 - a) Having an unquenchable passion for lost souls or
 - b) Men like CH Spurgeon, BH Carroll, Roger Williams and more recently GB Vick, WE Dowell and the list could go on an on all had one thing in common – they were often in tears for the lost around them
 - c) Their passion for the lost was transferred to their congregations
 - d) Why the concept of the bus ministry was an Independent Fundamental Church creation used as a way to find lost souls and bring them under the preaching of the Word of God
 - e) Some of the largest and fastest growing church of the 18th, 19th and early 20th century were Baptist Churches – not any more, of the 100 largest and fastest growing churches in America last year 10 were Baptist and of those 10 only 2 that I know of are what you would call Independent Fundamental Baptist
 - f) Some would say that is because the Baptist have become outdated and obsolete
 - g) I would say it is because the members of most Baptist Churches have lost their passion for lost souls and lost sight of Jesus' Command to **"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you**

- always, even unto the end of the world"*** (Matt 28:19-20)
2. **The Second was A Passion for Personal Holiness**
 - a) This is tied very close to a passion for lost souls
 - b) The Baptist of old were so acutely aware of the impact of their own lifestyle on their soul winning that they refused to do, think or say anything that would be considered by the lost as un holy or unbecoming a Christian
 - c) Not only that but they spent so much time in prayer and Bible study preparing for their next Soul winning opportunity that they grew so close to God that holiness was a natural byproduct
 - d) This passion was demonstrated by their individual desire to be in their church for every service
 - e) They believed that by being in service – Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night – they were coming into a special time of interaction with God
 - f) Peter instructs us that, **"... he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy"**
 - g) It was this passion for holiness and being in services that drove the third passion...
 3. **The third is A Passion for Separation from Evil**
 - a) Unlike the separation of Church and State referred to in the Baptist Distinctives this is a separation of all error and evil
 - b) Separation for the worlds evils – TV, movies, other worldly entertainment
 - c) Separation from other churches that didn't hold to the same depth of Biblical doctrines they did

- d) Separation was easy since most of the free time the lost world had to be involved in activities that were – unholy was spent in church
 - e) Paul gives us a chilling admonition from the Lord and a promise if we heed when he writes in his 2 letter to the church at Corinth, ***““ come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*”**
4. It is these 3 passions that I believe most Baptist Churches, and we may not be any different, have taken the biggest step backwards resulting in our loss of God's blessing
- a) We no longer have a soul winning passion as a church; in fact we don't even have an evangelism ministry in our church
 - b) There are way to many of us rely sole on what we hear on Sunday morning to keep us holy – we rarely read our Bible and come back for Church on Sunday night or make a trip to church for mid week Bible study – why that would cause me to change to many of my own personal lifestyle choices; that would require me to God's agenda ahead of mine and I am just not going to do that.
 - c) As a result, many of us are truly unable to discern when we are taking part in some activity that we really should separate ourselves from; our Bible understanding and passion for personal holiness have become so anemic that we have been able to justify just about any behavior.

E. **So, who are we?**

1. **We are Independent Fundamental BAPTIST Church**

Conclusion: Are you ashamed of being a Baptist? When someone asks you “What church do you attend?” are you able to unapologetically tell them “I attend New Hope Baptist Church?” More importantly, if they ask you what Baptist Church is can you tell them? And, can you give them reasons why you attend a Baptist Church rather than the “Everyone and anything is acceptable here church” down the street.