

I have been a licensed, ordained Baptist preacher for thirty-one years. I have traveled over five million miles and preached over twenty-two thousand sermons in forty-eight states. Something has always intrigued me about the attacks of Satan on soul-winning, fundamental Baptist churches. I have noticed, from time to time, a wave of a particular attack by Satan on many churches around our nation at the same time. For a few years a wave of financial setbacks, in another few years struggles with immorality, etc. Lately it seems that a wave of seemingly solid church members are going wacky, leaving the men of God that they have sat under for years and joining other churches in the same area.

Some preachers are so eager for growth that it really doesn't matter if they are ethical about these transfers or not. The result is a lack of ethical cooperation among men of God who are supposed to be leading their people in the battle for the souls of men, and not a battle for transfers. When the battles come there are always a few cowards in every church who run. There are two temptations facing preachers who find themselves on the giving or the receiving end of these transfers. One is the temptation to ease up, as a pastor, on the standards and the soul winning. The other is the temptation to accept those who are running from the pastor who refuses to ease up in the battle for the souls of men, doing nothing to salvage a special relationship with their previous pastor.

In the last thirty days, I have received fifteen phone calls from pastors who have lost church members to other pastors in the same area. These pastors have never picked up the phone and called each other about those folks transferring to their churches. There is always a reason why people leave one ministry to go to another, and it is never the story they tell. It's an amazing thing to me how these pastors can accept transfers and never check those transfers out with the previous pastor. You may be taking in a thief, a child molester, a home wrecker, a homosexual, or a sexual deviant. Even the business world will check references. I would hate to think that Wal-Mart was more

diligent to their cause than Baptist preachers are to the cause of Christ. Currently it seems to be an epidemic among fundamental churches. I realize we are neither a convention nor an association, but it does seem to me that we are on the same team and in the same family of God. Wouldn't it help the cause of Christ if pastors would talk to each other? I find it hard to believe that a pastor who will take into membership someone from another soul-winning fundamental Baptist church in their area without calling their previous pastor really cares about those people.

We had a deacon at LBT that was caught stealing money from the offerings. He left and went to another fundamental church in the area. No one called to check him out, and soon he was their church treasurer. On another occasion a member who had been accused of making sexual advances to his own daughter left and joined another church in the area. Neither pastor called for a reference. I shiver when I think of the responsibility of placing folks in the nursery, Primary Sunday school departments, children's churches, junior churches, or on a bus route, only to find out later of some misconduct in their previous church. I would hate to put our young people in harm's way simply because I was so thrilled that someone actually joined our church.

The most important position in America is pastor of a local New Testament Baptist Church. I believe this God-ordained position is pivotal to the morality of the family units that not only make up a nation, but also affect the moral compass of that nation. If the pulpit slips, so will the morals of a country slip. The interaction between people and pastor is essential to the well-being of a nation. The faithful pastor who preaches the Word of God uncompromisingly will inevitably face opposition. No real man of God can go through this world without being scolded or scathed by those who oppose the absolutes of the Bible.

Everything is always relative to the liberal: there are no absolutes in his mindset. This leaves the door open for him to change his mind and his own lifestyle without facing condemnation. Liberals are not always unsaved people. Liberals can be found in a fundamental Baptist church.

Every church has within its membership three groups of people. One group is known as the right-wingers, or the conservatives. Another group are what one would call the moderates. The last group are liberal; not liberal in doctrine necessarily, but liberal in every other aspect of their lives. Liberals are easily spotted, for they generally cater to the whims of their own children and are usually found being overly friendly to those who oppose the man of God. They seem to believe that God has sent them to balance out that mean ol' man of God who preaches every Sunday.

Eventually these folks always follow the lead of their children and leave their pastor for another pastor because the children didn't like the rules, and the parents could not get the preacher to change the standards to accommodate their children. It has always been that way and it will always be that way until Jesus rules and reigns.

The tragedy is when men of God begin to re-evaluate the impact of straightforward Bible preaching. The affects of a wavering pulpit are devastating. The affects of compromising the message in order to salvage a ministry, or a man, is 180 degrees away from what our Saviour preached and practiced while on earth. Did He have opposition? Of course He did, but He never altered the message because it was not received.

I have often counseled our Texas Baptist College graduates who pastor to preach and teach as if the only ones they were talking to were their own wife and children. Then let the rest of the congregation listen in, and thus he will not find himself tiptoeing through the tith-ers "hoping to avoid offending the big givers.

It is a tragic thing for the spokesman for God to quit speaking for God. It is an unsettling feeling for the man of God when he ceases to be a man and finds himself catering to man. The results of straightforward Bible preaching are not always what we would prefer. However, the preacher who focuses on his responsibilities and not the results will always end up with the results.

My heart goes out to the people who have no security at all in the direction that their church is going. Every time

their preacher comes home from a different conference they find themselves going in a different direction. You dear men of God should set your face like a flint and provide a solid fundamental direction for the church you pastor. Preach an unwavering Bible so you can have an unwavering people.

You dear saints of God who have a good solid man of God, don't run from him when you find yourself disagreeing. Sooner or later you will disagree. To follow him when you are in agreement is really no big deal. However, to follow him when you find yourself in a disagreement will be a test of your character and his character. If you work through your disagreement, both of you will possess greater character.

You loved him - at least that is what you told him - when you agreed with him; now you find yourself in disagreement, and so you must leave him? The truth is there is no logic to this train of thought because, to be an honest person, you will have to leave the next pastor when you and he disagree. I also promise you that you and he will disagree. So you will never stop running from church to church. You will be a spiritual failure and a spiritual vagabond

The pastor must not allow the church members to dictate direction or morality. The Bible must dictate our morality. The man of God must simply hold the line on standards and conduct of the leadership, schools, and church-sponsored activities, in order to keep holiness and righteousness alive. The pastor must provide the example in soul-winning and in every other area. A man of God who does not do so is an unethical man. He is misrepresenting his Bible and his God. God did not call the pastor to allow the music he likes, the activities he likes, the type church services he likes, and the emphasis that he likes; but to convey to the people what God likes.

There is a second affect from standing true to the word of God. That affect is found in the exiting and receiving of church members who refuse to follow their man of God. When members of other fundamental Baptist churches are fleeing their man of God and coming to another pastor, I promise you they will make themselves look good and their man of God look bad in the sight of the new pastor. The ethical pastor will immediately call their pastor, and at the

same time send them back to take opportunity for reconciliation. The unethical pastor takes them into his membership without knowing the truth about them or their conflict. The receiving of such members without additional information is going to compromise the position of the new pastor. He is compromising his own position as pastor. He is hurting the cause of Christ in that region of the country. The truth is they will eventually do the same thing to their new pastor - you!

The ethics are woefully lacking in the pulpit with compromising preaching and in the pastor's office with compromising proselyting. God told us to be fishers of men and not keepers of the aquarium. Most Baptist preachers in our nation are merely swapping fish from one tank to another and leaving the fishing for men to others.

You dear men of God who are hurting because of the unethical fundamental Baptist preachers in your town please realize that God has not forsaken you or His truth. Get out there this week and win some more folks to Christ. These who bolt and run from you because you preach the truth will not hurt you in the long run. They are only going to hurt themselves. By the way, if they do hurt you or your work, God will deal with them appropriately. One pastor said to me, "but, Brother Gray, they are picking off my other church members one by one." Brother Roloff said to me one time, "only dead branches fall off a tree in the storm." So determine to be an ethical pastor in the pulpit and in the pastor's office.

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