



**Baptists In Bondage**  
**by Pastor F.M. Riley**

## BAPTISTS IN BONDAGE

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**"...If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."**

John 8:31-32

**"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth."**

John 17:17

Today thousands of Baptist people are in bondage! No, I'm not thinking of those in foreign lands who are enslaved by the iron hand of Communism. I have in mind the thousands of average Baptists here in America who regularly attend Baptist churches; those who speak glowingly of their Baptist heritage and their freedom in Christ. It is these who are in bondage. Tragically, most of them are in such a state of lethargy that they don't even recognize what it is that has ensnared them. It is time someone blew the whistle and called for an awakening. In this study I purpose to do just that!

### The Problem Identified

The past few years I have been appalled by the lack of God's power, and the outright ignorance of God's Word, that I have found prevailing among the churches. I know that I am not being overly critical in making this statement, because many others have called the same thing to my attention. One of the major complaints that I hear today, both from preachers and laymen, is that there is a lack of real spiritual power in the churches. Why? I think the answer should be obvious to anyone who will be honest with the Word of God. I could point out several very obvious reasons for such a lack of power. However, in this study I want to emphasize just one major reason for such a lack of spiritual power. Baptists have become enslaved by their denominational literature!

### The Sunday Scene

I visit many denominational churches. The Sunday scene is almost exactly the same irregardless of which church I happen to be visiting. It begins with the Sunday morning devotional. The Sunday School superintendent stands before the church, announces the title of the lesson for that Sunday, and the theme being emphasized, and the title of the devotional. All of this is taken verbatim from the Sunday School quarterly. Then the Scripture text designated for the devotional is read. This is followed by reading the devotional word for word as it is written in the quarterly. Few, if any, comments are

made by the person reading the devotional. In the event that the speaker actually does attempt to comment, they continually refer to the comments on the devotional that are given in the quarterly. It almost seems as if they are afraid to do any thinking for themselves. Following the devotional the classes then take their places. After about ten minutes of counting heads, Bibles, visits, money, percentages, and other totally useless rubbish, the teacher finally turns to the lesson. And what happens? In nearly every Sunday School where quarterlies are being used, the teacher reads the lesson word for word from the quarterly. "If I'm lying I'm dying!" By the time the class is over most of the class members are either half asleep, looking out the window, drawing doodads on their quarterlies, cleaning their fingernails, anxiously glancing at their watches, or reading their Bibles. If anyone derives any real spiritual benefit from such sessions, it is probably those who spend time reading their Bibles. This makes me wonder what ever happened to the old-fashioned Baptist teacher? I also wonder why we are encouraged to "study the lesson," if the teacher (?) is just going to stand there and read it to us all over again? I thank God that there are some exceptions to what I have described here. But if our readers will be honest, they know that what I have described is exactly what is taking place in most of the churches today.

The Sunday night "training classes" are no better. In fact, they are worse! On Sunday night the BTS (BTC..STU..BYPU..etc) director reads the devotional from the quarterly. The classes then assemble. After several minutes of more useless statistic gathering, the lesson finally gets underway. It usually begins with the teacher reading the introduction to the lesson word for word from the quarterly. Class members then read verbatim the parts that have been assigned to them. After forty-five minutes to an hour of listening to apologies for not having studied the lesson, mispronounced words, stammering, and giggling, it is easy to understand why many folks won't even attend Sunday night services. This BTS fiasco is commonly referred to as Training Service. It's supposed purpose is to train Christians, especially young people, to speak before others. What a flop! Even as a young boy I recognized the failure of the "part giving" system. It hasn't improved a bit over the years. It does look like, after all these years, that the denominational leaders would have sense enough to see that they are riding a dead horse, and abandon a system which has produced, for the most part, only negative results.

I am sure some will disagree with my conclusions. The so-called progressive brethren will insist that the Sunday School and BTS system works fine in their church. Well, that is great! Bully for them. But that doesn't change the fact that in most of the churches these systems are a dismal failure. Instead of training folks to serve the

Lord, these systems have been the primary reason why many folks have just quit going to church, especially on Sunday night.

### Quality?

There is also the problem of the literature itself. The denominational propaganda tells us that the Sunday School and BIS literature is set up in five year cycles. We are told that in a five year period the churches will be taken through a study of the entire Bible. Hogwash! I have been preaching for forty-two years. Twenty-eight years of this time have been spent pastoring BMA churches. Never in all of those years were the churches ever taken through the Bible by the BMA literature. Instead the churches were subjected to repeated Bible surveys over and over again. Such surveys skim over the surface of the Bible using a few well known Scriptures. But never is any in-depth study of the Bible presented in the quarterlies. It is a fact that God's people are almost totally ignorant of great portions of God's Word. If any reader doubts what I am saying, just take a survey in your own church. Ask the members in your church to give you an idea of the basic teaching presented in any Book of the Bible. Better yet, ask your pastor. The answers you receive will be very enlightening. What the literature has done is break the Bible up each week into little segments using well known Scriptures over and over and over again. Often these segments are totally unrelated to one another. Therefore God's people never get an overall view of what is being taught in a Book, or in the Bible as a whole.

Have our denominational "leaders" ever thought of trying verse by verse Bible study in the denominational literature? Probably not! That would be studying the Word of God the way God gave it, and that is just too simple for our great "leaders."

The literature has even failed to teach God's people how to study God's Word. Since most lessons in the quarterlies are strictly topical, the context is often ignored in order to put across some point the denominational writer wants to make. What ever happened to old-fashioned exposition? It appears that we are obsessed with the idea that some practical application must be made, even if it has to be manufactured. I wonder what is wrong with studying the Word simply to find out what God is saying? Does every Scripture have to apply to us? Is it even remotely possible that God could have said some things to the Jews, other things to the Gentiles, and still others to the church? Is that possible? Read 1 Corinthians 10:32 and see for yourself.

Men can boast about the so-called "great scholars" that write the denominational literature if they so choose, but the literature itself does not reflect such "scholarship." The past thirty years the

literature has increasingly contained subtle deviations from the historic faith that our Baptist forefathers believed in, taught, fought for, and died to uphold. I speak of subtle injections of modernism, universalism, Calvinism, Pentecostalism, and ecumenicalism. Most "Baptists" today no longer know what Baptist Doctrine really is, or even why they personally are "Baptists."

The literature is also known for what it doesn't teach. The sin of omission can be just as wicked as the sin of commission. How long has it been since you studied a quarterly that laid it on the line about drugs, sex, marriage, adultery, divorce, abortion, rock music, tobacco, alcohol, modesty, dancing, homosexuality, movies, pornography, or uncontrolled television? Is God's Word silent on these subjects? No! But the denominational literature is. And so are most of the literature trained preachers that are pastoring the churches today. Of course, I realize that it is unpopular to speak out against the favorite sins of the people. And the modern "Christian" must be popular, even if it means that the power and blessings of God are withheld from the churches. Read Isaiah 59:1-2, then ask yourself if there might be a parallel between ancient Israel and the churches of today. If folks try to defend the denominational literature on the basis of quality, they certainly have their work cut out for them.

I do not question the fact that some fine topics are introduced in the denominational literature. Some of the topics introduced are subjects that God's people need to study. But they won't get the opportunity to do so. Why? Because it is impossible to do more than just scratch the surface of these topics in a forty-five minute class period. And we must keep up with the schedule demanded by the system. Next week off we go to a completely different topic. It would be unthinkable to set aside the system long enough to thoroughly study a subject that the church might desperately need to study. No! Hang the needs of the people! The churches must forge ahead with the system, even if it means that the people will never become "rooted and grounded in the faith." Why, what would the brethren think if a church quit using the literature, even if it would be spiritually beneficial to the church? Why, such a church might get the reputation of being anti-literature, and no church wants that to happen. No, isn't it better for the churches to be deprived of the truth and remain in ignorance of God's Word, than to incur the wrath of the brethren?

In all sincerity I ask our readers, is it any wonder that thousands of people today, including many preachers, have been lost to the Universal Church movement, to Calvinism, to the practices of open communion and alien immersion, to the charismatic movement, and to all

kinds of false religions and cults? The honest reader knows that I speak the truth. Is it any wonder that the churches are filled with young people who believe that "Christianity" is a sham; young people who will go away to college and be caught up in some heretical religious cult, or who will just drop out and turn completely away from the Lord? Rather than our people being made free by the truth, they are enslaved by a system of literature that is spiritually shallow, and that is actually keeping the truth from the people. Breaking up God's Word into small unrelated segments from week to week, and maintaining a schedule that does not allow time for any real in-depth study of the Bible, is not a blessing. It is a curse!

### **Driving Home The Point**

Years ago I became a member of a church where the Sunday night services were literally falling apart. After attending several weeks it became evident what was causing the problem. One Sunday night I brought this matter to the attention of the class and the pastor. I suggested that the class drop the quarterlies and simply study the Bible. The reaction was immediate. The class was overjoyed that someone had finally said something. One after another of the class members arose to state how utterly bored and frustrated they were with the "part-giving" system. They had known for months what the problem was, but for fear of "rocking the boat" they had chosen to just endure a system that they knew wasn't working.

But then the pastor arose. The poor fellow was red in the face and shaking all over. He acted as if he was actually frightened by the discussion that was taking place. He told the class what an unprogressive move we were advocating. His exact words, "To dispense with the quarterlies and use the Bible alone would be to go backwards."

I was stunned! I could hardly believe what I had heard. To use a commentary about the Bible (a quarterly) was progress. To use the Bible itself was non-progressive. How twisted and perverted the logic of some folks has become. Here was one of the Lord's churches that was actually suffering for lack of spiritual food, and wanted to do something about it. And there stood the man that supposedly was called of God to lead them and feed them; their pastor, telling them that to study directly from God's Word was non-progressive. Shades of Catholicism! How brainwashed and enslaved can you get?

### **And Yet Another Example**

In another church a youth class was being taught by a dedicated Christian lady. One of the lesson topics in the quarterly was on the subject of prophecy. For the first time in months the entire class took part in the lesson. The young people were just full of

spiritual state that most of them are in today.

### Isolated Examples?

These are not just isolated examples. I wish they were. I could relate numerous such incidents. I find such wicked attitudes are widespread among the churches everywhere I go. I thank God that some are beginning to recognize the problem, both preachers and laymen, and are insisting that the Lord's churches turn back to the Word of God. But comparatively speaking, they are so few. A real brainwashing job has been done on most of the people that make up our churches today. They think they just really cannot function without the man-made denominational literature system. They just can't seem to grasp that God's Holy Spirit is actually capable of leading God's people as they study God's Word.

Oh, I hear a lot of talk and many flowery sermons about the leadership of God's Holy Spirit. But talk is cheap! There are so few who demonstrate by their actions that they actually believe in looking to and depending on the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

### Conclusion

I know that some who read this study will accuse me of being anti-literature. But someone has well said, "Ignorance is deserving of her children." Anyone who accuses this preacher of being "anti-literature" is revealing their ignorance of my ministry, my library, my methods of teaching, and of how I consistently encourage God's people to obtain good reference books to help them study the precious Word of God. I am not against the use of literature at all. But I am against the misuse of it. When literature becomes a hindrance rather than a help, it is time to either get rid of the literature or re-examine our use of it and make whatever changes are necessary.

It is my conviction that our churches have arrived at just such a time. I have written this study with a burdened heart for God's people, and not out of any desire just to be critical.

Now I appeal to God's people. Are you really satisfied with the depths of your Bible study? Are your spiritual needs truly being met in your Sunday School and BTS classes? Is the church of which you are a member free to follow the leadership of the Lord in these matters? Or...are you really chained to a system that is neither spiritually beneficial or satisfactory?

Oh, yes there are ways to look at matters, other than through the eyes of the denominational hierarchy. If God's people really want to be free, then let them turn back to God's Word and depend on the Lord for leadership, rather than on men.

The Word of God says,

"...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

2 Corinthians 3:17

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

John 8:36

### The Will Of God

What is God's will for His people? The Scripture says,

"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

1 Peter 4:1-2

"...If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. ...If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

John 8:31-36

