

Why I Resigned as a BAPTIST PASTOR

This is a reprint of a letter addressed to the “Harmony Baptist Church” of Coleman, Texas, Baptist Association, giving some reasons for my resignation as Pastor of this organization. Written on July 22, 1952, by James Cox.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It was the apostle Paul who wrote to the Colossian Christians: “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body: and be ye thankful” (Col. 3:15). The same apostle wrote to the Roman Christians and said: “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). As he addressed his letter to the saints at Corinth, his greeting was this: “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 1:3).

Certainly you are conscious of the fact that every “born again” child of God has been forgiven and cleansed of all sin, and has been given a “peace that passeth all understanding;” that is the peace of God’s indwelling Spirit (Philip. 4:7). Paul tells us that we are to let this wonderful peace of God “rule” in our hearts, that is, we are to consider as sin *anything* that would disrupt fellowship with our heavenly Father.

When I resigned as the Pastor of the “Harmony” assembly on the 29th day of June, I told you that I did not feel, under the circumstances, that I could explain my leaving to your full satisfaction. I also sought to make it clear that it was not because of any difficulty that had arisen in the work at “Harmony.” I therefore hope in this letter to explain more fully my actions. Will you, as a brother or sister in Christ, bear me out and hear me in this? I beg you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to do so.

On the night before our Lord was crucified he, the Son of God and our Savior, prayed for you and me. He had been praying for the eleven disciples, and then He made this petition for us: “Neither pray I for these alone (the disciples) but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: *that they all may be one*; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be *one* in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (John 17:20-21). We see two specific things that our Lord prayed here: the first one was that every Christian, every real child of God, be joined together as *ONE*. The second petition gives the reason for the first. Christ prayed that we as born again children of God may be *ONE in order that the world may recognize our Lord Jesus Christ* as the One Who was sent of God into the world. We see, then, that the greatest testimony to the power of God in Christ is to be found in the UNITY OF CHRISTIANS!!

In a very real and precious sense God answered the prayer of our Savior. “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). From the day of Pentecost God has continued to add to His church every single member of Adam’s fallen race who has been saved by the shed blood of His dear Son. This same truth is stated in I Cor. 12:13 in this way: “For by one Spirit are we *all* baptized into ONE BODY...and

have *all* been made to drink into one Spirit.” God’s work is always a complete work, so we find that in making all true Christians *ONE*, He not only joins us to Christ in a spiritual unity but He also makes us members one of another. “For as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, being many, are *ONE BODY* in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Rom.12:4-5). God has answered the prayer of His Son by bringing *every redeemed* son of Adam (born again and justified) into *ONE* great spiritual body, *THE CHURCH WHICH IS CHRIST’S BODY* (Col. 1:24 & Eph. 1:22-23).

Now, we must remember that this is God’s work! We should and must consider it the gravest sin for anyone to disrupt the unity which God has made of and for His children. In fact, we are expressly commanded to *keep* this unity and to support it in every way. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be *no divisions* among you; but that ye be *perfectly joined together* in the *same mind and in the same judgment*” (I Cor. 1:10). The Spirit exhorts us through Paul’s letter to the Ephesians that we “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to *keep* the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...THERE IS ONE BODY AND ONE SPIRIT...” This stands regardless of our attitude or understanding, but we are commanded to “endeavor to *KEEP*” this unity (Eph. 4:1-6).

In many places God goes even further than this. He not only commands us to keep the unity which He has made but also to have no fellowship with anyone who causes division and strife among brethren! “Now I beseech you, brethren, *MARK THEM WHICH CAUSE DIVISIONS* and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and *AVOID THEM*. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:17-18). Anyone who causes division among the children of God should immediately become a marked man or woman, and should be avoided by those who are truly endeavoring to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:4).

There is one great illustration in the Word of God of how some Christians became divided. They were the Christians at Corinth. In I Corinthians 1:12 we find that they had chosen for themselves leaders—Paul, Apollos, and Cephas—and had separated themselves into various groups under the name of the man they favored. In the third chapter of this same book, God gives the reason for this division. The Corinthian Christians were *CARNAL, FLESHLY MINDED*, and not walking in the Spirit! “For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal; and walk as men?” (I Cor. 3:3). The Lord further rebukes these carnal Christians through the apostle Paul by pointing to their apparent ignorance of the fact that they were the temple of God, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (I Cor. 3:16-17). We can see by these Scriptures that God will not tolerate the division of His people.

Are there any modern day Corinthians? Assuredly so! Where shall we find them? Are there any such divisions among the redeemed sons of God today? If so, in what way are we divided and what is the result of this division? Please consider these questions

with me carefully! In view of the foregoing Scripture passages, I think you will admit that these are vital questions!

I am thoroughly convinced that the various denominational splits that exist today, that is, the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterians, the so-called “Churches of Christ,” “Pentecostals,” Episcopalians, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholics, and so on evidence exactly the same kind of spirit that was seen in the “church of God at Corinth.” Modern Corinthians are those who say: “I am a Baptist,” “I’m a Methodist,” etc., etc. I am sure that you can see that this amounts to the same thing that the Corinthians were doing! PLEASE READ I CORINTHIANS 3:1-4 SLOWLY AND PRAYERFULLY.

WE must conclude then, that denominations are a source of rank division among Christians and are therefore wrong and sinful! But is this to say that those who belong to such organizations are not Christians?? I will hasten to add that I believe there are real, born again Christians in most so-called “church” organizations, but they are not Christians because they belong to that organization!! The only reason any person in this world is a Christian is because he *belongs* to Christ and is a “new creature in Christ” (II Cor. 5:17). There are Christians in these organizations, to be sure, but they are misguided and misinformed on the Word of God, and they are walking in the traditions and doctrines of men!

Sincerely, why do most Christians belong to some religious corporation today? Is it not because we were either brought up in them or, when we were saved, we were told that it was God’s will that we join them? Perhaps some have joined out of convenience in one respect or another. But may I, in all fairness, ask this question: Have we ever searched God’s Word, which is able to “thoroughly furnish us unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:16,17) to see if these organizations are part of God’s program? Perhaps a few of us have, but if we have it has always been with sectarian and denominational views clouding our thinking so that the sunshine of God’s truth could not come through.

Let me point this out in still another way: Can you find in God’s Word any command, anywhere, which tells you or me to join a so-called “church” organization?? (Baptist, Nazarene, etc.). WE MUST ANSWER, NO!! We have been taught all our lives that it is a fine thing to be a Christian but we have also had it drilled into us that we haven’t done the will of God *completely* until we have joined or been made a member of some “church.” But may I point out to you what God has to say on the subject—

AS A CHRISTIAN you have already been “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).

AS A CHRISTIAN you have already been enriched by Christ “in all utterance and in all knowledge” (I Cor. 1:5).

AS A CHRISTIAN God has promised to supply all your needs “according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philip. 4:19).

AS A CHRISTIAN you have already been made COMPLETE IN CHRIST in Whom “dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9,10).

AS A CHRISTIAN you have already been added to the “church which is Christ’s body” for “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Eph. 1:22,23 & Acts 2:47).

AS A CHRISTIAN you have already been “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” by the WORD OF GOD (II Tim. 3:16-17).

ALL OF THIS was and is yours before you (or any other Christian) ever joined or were made a member of the “Baptists,” “Methodists,” or so-called “Church of Christ” or any other religious denomination. You did not need the addition of a thing these organizations can offer! In fact, when we joined them it was our way of admitting that we did not *really* believe Philippians 4:13, which says: “I can do all things through CHRIST which strengtheneth me!” CHRIST IS EVERYTHING that we need now and forever! To belong to some religious corporation is to deny HIS SUFFICIENCY, and to rob HIM of HIS glory!

But let me give you God’s final blow to religious organizations. You will admit with me that in every one of these so-called “churches” there are some lost people, either deceived or deliberately hypocritical. In other words, right in with the beloved redeemed of the Lord are those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; there are those who are unbelievers.

Hear God’s Word to His sons and daughters: “BE YE NOT UNEQUALLY YOKED TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? ...Wherefore come out from among them (the unsaved) and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord ALMIGHTY” (II Cor. 6:14-18).

What is God’s ANSWER TO DENOMINATIONS?? It certainly is not that we stay in them and seek to purify them; may I say from sad experience that this is impossible. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” *God commands that we come out from among them and be separate!!* But with this command, He also gives a blessed promise! We will not be coming out to nothing, we will be coming out to ALMIGHTY GOD Who has promised to receive us as His sons and daughters. Notice, the command is “come out (not ‘go out’) from among them” indicating that God is on the outside waiting for Christians to obey His voice. Thus Hebrews 13:13 is written: “Let us go forth therefore UNTO HIM without the camp, bearing His reproach.”

These, then, are some of the reasons for my resignation as Pastor of the “Harmony”(?) so-called “church.” Burnadette (my wife) and I have come out of the Baptist organization and have determined to live only unto the Lord, for we believe that we can “do all things through Christ which strengthens us” (Philip. 4:13).

May I assure each of you to whom this letter is addressed that we (my wife and I) are not leaving the Baptists in order to start some new movement or sect. We have come out only in order to worship with other separated Christians, to live and walk in the light of God’s Holy Word, and to do all things” in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him” (Col. 3:17).

It is our earnest prayer that you will seriously consider the truths contained in this letter, and be willing to come to the decisions made necessary by them.

Your servant in Christ, James D. Cox