

## **Why I Am a Primitive Baptist** **By Zack M. Guess**

Brother Chris Crouse has asked me to write a short article explaining why I am a Primitive Baptist. At this writing [December 2006] I have been a baptized Primitive Baptist for 52 years. I was baptized into the fellowship of Morris Memorial Primitive Baptist Church by my dear pastor, Elder E. C. Holder, July 18, 1954. I have been an ordained Primitive Baptist minister of the gospel for over 39 years, being ordained by Whitehaven Primitive Baptist Church, under the leadership of my faithful pastor, Elder Hassell Wallis on April 9, 1967.

### **Heritage**

I was blessed to be married to a wonderful Primitive Baptist woman, Judy Machiavello, on August 23, 1969. I have been blessed to baptize all eleven of our living children into the fellowship of Primitive Baptist churches. Two of my sons, Isaac and Timothy, are ordained Primitive Baptist ministers of the gospel.

It is easy to see that my life is totally absorbed in serving my dear Lord Jesus Christ among the people called Primitive Baptist.

One reason I am a Primitive Baptist is because I have been blessed to have a rich heritage among them. I was raised in a devout Primitive Baptist home. My father and mother were devout Christians and devoted Primitive Baptists. They faithfully served their Lord in His church. They brought up my brother, my three sisters and me in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

My father's maternal grandfather was Elder E. A. Meaders. Brother Meaders was used of the Lord to establish several Primitive Baptist churches in north Mississippi in the middle 1800's. He had an evangelistic spirit and once traveled through some of the northern states and into Canada to preach the gospel. While on this trip he was introduced to President James Buchanan. President Buchanan offered him the governorship of the Utah Territory. Brother Meaders graciously declined the offer, saying that he had a higher calling of preaching the gospel. You can read about Brother Meaders in *Biographical History of Primitive or Old School Baptist Ministers of the United States*, compiled by Elder R. H. Pittman.

### **Conviction**

However, despite this rich heritage, for which I am profoundly grateful, that is not the primary reason I am a Primitive Baptist. I am a Primitive Baptist by **conviction**, not by **preference**. A preference is what someone places a value on, but can change if something better comes along. A conviction is something a person is willing to die for.

I believe I am willing to die for the cause of Christ among the Primitive Baptists. There are several reasons for this.

One is that the Lord showed me His grace and mercy in my heart under Primitive Baptist preaching. I was very young when the doctrines of grace became sweet to my soul. I rejoiced in hearing a successful Savior preached. I became aware at an early age that many Christians preached that Jesus Christ had died to save the entire human race. However, they taught that His sacrifice for sin would do absolutely nothing unless they exercised faith in Him and "accepted" His gift of salvation. Even as a child I could

see the fallacy of this. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. I could see that even if each Person of the Trinity had done His work (The Father electing, the Son redeeming, the Spirit quickening), there would be no salvation without the cooperation of the sinner. Such false doctrine was repugnant to me then and it is to this day.

The primary reason that I am a Primitive Baptist is that I believe they have historically preached more truth than anyone else. I know there are gross errors among some Primitive Baptists. I do not excuse these and do not try to defend them. However, historically the great body of Primitive Baptists have consistently preached salvation by grace and have given God **all** the credit and praise for salvation.

There are other people today besides Primitive Baptists who preach some forms of Sovereign Grace. However, I believe that they teach some inconsistencies, much as did Andrew Fuller, who caused the split in the Baptist family in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

### **Church Perpetuity**

I also believe in church perpetuity. This used to be an accepted Baptist doctrine. However, very sadly, most Baptists have rejected this doctrine. I believe the Lord Jesus set up His own church while He was here on earth. He promised perpetuity to her. That is, He promised that His church would never go out of existence. I believe that church is found in the Baptist family, and primarily among Primitive Baptists, as far as we can tell. I reject the Protestant school of thought concerning church history. I do not believe that God's church was ever in "Mother Rome." I believe in the Ana-Baptist tradition of church history. God's true church has existed in unbroken succession since her establishment by the Lord Jesus until this present time.

I know this is not a popular doctrine today and many people ridicule it as being bigoted and based on ignorance. However, those who reject it out of hand are themselves willfully ignorant of a great body of historical truth. By the way, I do not base my view of church perpetuity primarily on uninspired history. History is very valuable and is corroborative. However I base my view on church perpetuity on what I believe the Scriptures plainly teach. If any of you would like further information, I have written an article entitled *The Identity of the New Testament Church*.

### **Fellowship**

Some people get the idea that those who hold to the doctrine of church perpetuity are mean-spirited and do not want the fellowship of other Christians. This is not true. I want and actually enjoy warm **Christian fellowship** with people of many Christian denominations. However I do not have church fellowship with them. Why? Two cannot walk together unless they are agreed on basic fundamentals. I have several good Presbyterian friends for example. I believe they are genuine Christians. However, I believe they are in gross and basic error on both the subjects and the method of baptism. I would be unfaithful to the truth of the Bible and to the memory of many martyred saints to condone their unbiblical practices by having church fellowship with them.

### **A Good Day**

I believe that it is a very good time to be a Biblical and historic Primitive Baptist. The Lord has opened up great doors of evangelism for us in the Philippines, India, Africa, and other places. He is raising up

some very dedicated, studious, able, and humble young ministers among us.

It is true, that, as with any other people, there are some negatives among us. I was very encouraged by and identify with a statement made to me some time ago by Elder Billy Lawrence of Texas. He said, "Remember, Brother Zack. The bad may be getting worse among the Primitive Baptists, but the good is getting better!"

I hope to be a faithful Christian and a faithful Primitive Baptist as long as I live. After having been among them for over 50 years, I want to tell the young people to be faithful to the cause of Christ among the Primitive Baptists. The positives far outweigh the negatives. The grass is most definitely not greener in any other pasture!

I will tell each of you what I have told my own children. I have said, "Kids, always be a member of a good Primitive Baptist church. If the one you are in is not good, try to make it good. If you can't either move to where there is a good one or, with the help of God, start one."

### **Not Pride**

Some people may be proud of being Primitive Baptist. There are no doubt some bigots among us as there among other people. I am not one of them. I am not **proud** of being a Primitive Baptist. I am profoundly **thankful** to be one. I am glad that God, in His wonderful providence, let me be born in a Primitive Baptist home. I am glad that after diligent and faithful study and prayer I am one by conviction, not by preference.