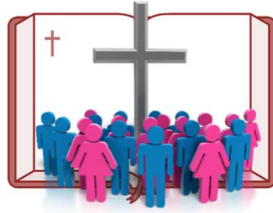


Being Baptist

"You have given me the heritage of those who fear Your name."
Psalm 61:5



Lesson 7

"IN CHRIST ALONE"

Individual Soul Liberty

LESSON AIM: To emphasize the historic Baptist belief that every individual has the absolute right before God and man to decide for himself what to believe, or not believe, without coercion or force from any outside source or power.

- **WELCOME & PRAYER / LESSON INTRODUCTION / THEME VERSE / LESSON AIM**
- **QUICK REVIEW: LESSONS 1-6**
- **PART 1: THE BAPTIST DOCTRINAL HALLMARKS (Continued)**
 - The Baptist Distinctives
 - B – Biblical Authority & The Lordship of Christ
 - A – Autonomy of the Local Church
 - P – Priesthood of Believers
 - T – Two Ordinances: Baptism & Communion
 - I – Individual Soul Liberty
 - S – Saved Church Membership
 - T – Two Offices: Pastors & Deacons
 - S – Separation of Church & State
- **FIFTH DISTINCTIVE: "I" = INDIVIDUAL SOUL LIBERTY**
 - Meaning of Individual Soul Liberty (Soul Competency)
 - The Concern: Throughout history, many atrocities have been perpetrated on people to force them to conform to a particular set of religious beliefs & practices. (Examples: Catholic Inquisitions; European State Churches; American Colonial Churches; Muslim Jihads)
 - The Contrast: Baptists have been consistent, from their ancient beginnings, in standing resolutely for the right of every person to pursue their own faith, worship God according to the dictates of their own heart, or to reject faith altogether if they so choose.
 - Key Reference: Romans 14:11-12

- Description: Every individual has the God-given liberty to choose what his soul dictates is right, as long as it does not bring harm or interfere with the rights of others, and is responsible to God alone for his choices. Matters of conscience are not to be forced on others against their will.

➤ Biblical Doctrine of Soul Liberty

- Men & Women Are Created as Individuals (Gen. 1:27-28, 3:20)
 - ✓ *Imago Dei*: God Gives Every Person Mind, Emotion, & Will
- God Ministers to Men & Women as Individuals (Eph. 4:7; 1 Cor. 12:7; Rom. 12:3-5)
 - ✓ Salvation: A Personal Decision—No One Is Saved in a Group or By Proxy
 - ✓ Service: God Gives Individual Christians *Specific* Spiritual Gifts to Serve
- Men & Women Make Decisions as Individuals (Rom. 12:1-2, 14:5; Acts 17:11)
 - ✓ Christians Are Never to Blindly Follow Any Religious Teacher
 - ✓ Christians Are to Exercise Spiritual Discernment & Judge Everything by Scripture
- God Teaches Men & Women as Individuals (1 Jn. 2:27; Heb. 5:12-14; 2 Tim. 2:15)
 - ✓ Each Individual Believer Must Become a Student of Scripture

BIBLE PARAPHRASE: "I've written to warn you about those who are trying to deceive you. But they're no match for what is embedded deeply within you—Christ's anointing, no less! You don't need any of their so-called teaching. Christ's anointing teaches you the truth on everything you need to know about yourself and him, uncontaminated by a single lie. Live deeply in what you were taught." (1 John 2:26-27, *The Message*)

- God Sees Men & Women as Individuals (Acts 10:34; Rom. 10:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11; Mt. 23:8-12)
- God Judges Men & Women as Individuals
 - ✓ The Unsaved: The Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15)
 - ✓ The Saved: The Judgment Seat of Christ ("Bema") (1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10)

➤ Practical Implications of Soul Liberty

- Freedom to Worship & Serve God Without Coercion
 - ✓ Foundation of Religious Liberty & Separation of Church & State (See Lesson 11)
- Freedom to Disagree Without Fear of Reprisal or Punishment
- Each Person Is Ultimately Responsible to God for His Choices (Rom. 14:12)

QUOTABLE QUOTE: "The [individual] soul...is answerable to God alone in the ultimate analysis... A true understanding of soul competency rests upon the freedom to reject or to accept God and his revelation... The true Baptist is tolerant of others from the very nature of the case. What he claims for himself he accords to them..." (R. Stanton Norman, *More than Just a Name*, 2007).

➤ Two Cautions Regarding Soul Liberty

- Not All Individual Choices are "Right" (Pr. 14:12; Jn. 17:17; Rom. 3:4; 2 Tim. 2:15)
 - ✓ "*Postmodernism*" • "*All Roads Lead to God*" • "*What Works for You*"
- Tolerating Harm to Others in the Name of Soul Liberty Is Unacceptable
 - ✓ Example: Modern-Day Radical Islam

• **SUMMATION / PREVIEW OF LESSON 8 / QUESTION & ANSWER TIME / BENEDICTION**