***Why I Left the Baptist Church***[***www.aubeacon.com***](http://www.cvillechurch.com)

***Introduction:*** Each of us must learn to stand upon the way that God’s word reveals.

 A. The emphasis of this series of sermons is God and His word and not myself.

1. I ask that you carefully examine the scriptures and test all things. **(1 Thess 5:21)**

 2. I seek present this in a spirit of love and ask that you receive it in the same

 manner. Please let me know if I have misrepresented anything.

B. The apostle Paul had was willing to stand with the Lord, even if it meant leaving the religion
 of his parents and nation. **(Rom 10:1-3)**

 1. Paul had a deep love for God and his nation and family.

 2. When it came to the “righteousness of God” there could be no compromise!

***I. Things that were not a factor in my leaving***

 A. **Personal Preference**

 B. **Friendliness and Associations**.

 C. **Moral Purity**

 D. **Zeal**

 E. **Activities**

 F. **Personal Offense**

 G. **Personal Opportunities**

 H. If I was to choose among the denominations as to **my preference**, I would be a Baptist!

 1. Paul gave up all preferences to stand with the Lord. **(Phil 3:4-9)**

 2. We must walk by ***faith*** and not let ***personal advantage*** sway us!

***II. What Does True Faith in Jesus Christ Mean?***

 A. It means ***loyalty to Jesus***. In our hearts and in our actions He is first. **(Mt 6:24, 33)**

 B. It means ***obeying the commands*** He has given us out of love. **(Jn 14:15, 21)**

 C. It means ***seeking Christ’s will*** in all matters. **(1 Jn 2:3-5)**

 1. “Show me what God’s word says and I will do it! God will never lead me wrong.”.

 2. There will be no hiding behind the traditions of men or family. **(Mt 15:8-9)**

 3. All of these principles of faith I was taught and practiced as a Baptist!

***III. My First Major Challenge: Is Denominationalism acceptable with God?***

 A. What does the Bible say? **(Eph 4:4-6)**

 B. Does it matter if we have different gospels, faiths and creeds? **(Gal 1:6-9)**

 C. Does it matter if we have different churches? **(Eph 1:22-23)**

 D. Are all believers today one as Christ prayed? **(Jn 17:20-23)**

 1. In short **denominationalism equals division!**

 2.In time I was confronted with several contradictions between the Bible

 and various Baptist beliefs.

 4. The question then came: “Is the Baptist Church the one Jesus established?”

**Baptist Churches**

 **1. Origin**

a. Founder - John Smyth

b. Place - London, England

c. Time – 1607

**2. Name**

a. Church - Baptist

b. Members – Baptist

**3. Organization**

a. **Local** - A pastor, board of

 deacons and other offices.

b. **Universally** - Conventions,

 Colleges and other societies.

**4. Rule of Faith**

a. Little distinction made between

 Old and New Testament

b. Has various manuals and creeds

**5. Worship**

a. **Giving** - Tithing (10%)

b. **Prayer** - Women leading in the
 assembly.

c. **Music** - Vocal, instrumental and

 choirs.

d. **Lord’s Supper** - Seldom

 observed.

**6. Work of the church**

Spiritual, Physical and social.

**7. Membership**

Saved by **faith alone** and then

baptized into the Baptist Church.

**8. Apostasy**

Once Saved, Always Saved.

**The Church Jesus Built**

**1. Origin**

Jesus Christ

Jerusalem

AD 33

**2. Name**

Church of Christ **(Rom 16:16)**

Church of God **(1 Cor 1:1-2)**

Christians **(Acts 11:26; 1 Cor 1:10-13)**

**3. Organization**

# A local church with elders, deacons

and members **(Phil 1:1;**

**Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17-30)**

Jesus is the **only head** of His body!

**4. Rule of Faith**

Jesus rules his church through the New Testament **(Col 2:14-17;**

**Heb 8:6-8,13; 9:14-16; 10:9-10)**

**5. Worship**

As Prospered **(1 Cor 16:1-2)**

Men lead in Church

**(1 Cor 14:33-35)**

Singing Only

**(Eph 5:19; Col 3:16)**

The Lord’s Supper partaken every

 Sunday **(Acts 20:7)**

**6. Work of the church**

Spiritual **(Eph 4:11-12)**

**7. Membership**

Those who believe, repent, confess and are baptized are added to His body. **(Mk 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 9:3-11; 22:16; 1 Pt 3:20-21)**

**8. Apostasy**

We must continue in the faith.

**(Gal 5:1-4)**

***V. Difficult Decisions that I faced***

A. What am I to do?

 1. There were several excuses that I considered.

 a. “I have been sincere.”

 b. “All of my family is Baptist.”

 c. “I do not know anyone.”

 d. “But I have been baptized already!” **(Acts 2:38: 19:1-6)**

 2. The man of faith would ask: “What would Jesus do?” Jesus said:

 a. Truth is narrow **(Matt 7:13-14, 21-23)**

 b. Human traditions must be put aside **(Matt 15:8-9)**

 c. There is only ***one baptism***. **(Matt 28:18-20)**

 B. What should I do about the consequences?

 1. There were indeed consequences, but no regrets! **(Phil 3:8-9)**

 2. As a result of my stand, others obeyed the gospel.

 3. I began a walk of faith that involves careful study for the rest of my life!

 4. Later these **same principles** would cause me to make **additional changes**!

**Why I Left the Baptist Church**[**www.aubeacon.com**](http://www.aubeacon.com) **By Larry Rouse**

In the fall of 1973 I had no intention of leaving the church in which I was raised. On the contrary, I had recently publicly professed my faith in Jesus Christ and was baptized on the same day. I could well be described as “on fire” for the Lord. I was quickly received and surrounded by men and women who wanted with all their hearts to reach others with the gospel. Both in social settings and in door-to-door efforts I was taught and shown by example how to share my faith.

I began studying the Bible on my own for the first time in my life. I was greatly encouraged in this by others in the Baptist church who also expressed great confidence in the Bible as the perfect, complete word of God. They encouraged me to memorize scripture, to quote scripture, and, above all, to follow the scripture, even above what a man or a church might want. I truly had learned the nature of a living faith as expressed by Jesus when He said: “If you love me, keep my commandments” **(John 14:15).**

There were issues that I began considering as I looked at the current state of what was broadly called “Christianity.” Jesus clearly pointed to a definite, clear path for all of those who trust in Him to follow **(Mt 7:13-14).** Our Lord, in the very night He was to be betrayed, prayed to the Father about each of us that would later come to believe in Him. “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me **(John 17:20-21).** When I read the Lord’s words, uttered in the very shadow of the cross, I became determined that I would not be the one that would cause another to turn away from the Lord. These words plainly show that unity can come only from a complete commitment to the Lord.

Anyone who looks at the religious world can easily see that most of the effort of men in the name of God is done to be seen by men and out of loyalty to men and the denominations they build **(Gal 1:10, Mt 15:13-14).** While my knowledge of the Bible was limited, I decided to test my own practices and be open to new things by focusing on God’s word and not on men. “The Lord will not lead me wrong” was often in my thoughts as I looked at the scriptures. I was not afraid to be challenged by His word!

One Sunday morning, as I was driving from the Baptist College, Samford University, to my parent’s house, I heard a lesson from a preacher concerning the Lord’s Supper. While I was in the Baptist church, I had never partaken of this memorial of the Lord. The lesson on the radio described passages that I had read, concerning how Jesus instituted His supper and how He wanted every disciple to partake of it **(Mt 26:26-28; 1 Cor 11:23-25).** As the preacher continued, he showed the significance of Sunday, the first day of the week, in the regular assemblies of Christians **(1 Cor 16:2).** The Holy Spirit recorded how one church partook on the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week **(Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 10:16).** As I drove my car, I also wrote down these and other passages of scripture to examine later. I became convinced that I should partake of the Lord’s Supper on every first day of the week.

That very day I faced a dilemma. The Baptist church where I attended was not offering the Lord’s Supper that Sunday. How was I going to resolve this situation? Rather than point to inconsistencies of others, or make up some hypothetical situation to justify myself or “my church,” I simply tried to obey the Lord. That day I viewed the lunch I ate at my parent’s house as a private partaking of this supper of the Lord. I was soon to see that this sincere effort was not the way to follow these instructions of Jesus. It would not be long, however, before I would find a proper way to remember Jesus as He had instructed.

After attending a semester at Samford University, I had enrolled at the University of Alabama and was in the process of visiting several churches. On a Wednesday night I decided to visit the University church of Christ. I sat in the back of the auditorium and heard a class taught by their campus minister, Ron Gholston. This class would plant a seed that would change my life.

Brother Gholston began with the great commission of Jesus as recorded in the book of Mark. “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” **(Mark 16:15-16).** The teacher likened this verse to a math equation (1+1=2). He proceeded to make this point. “Suppose someone decided to be baptized but did not have a personal faith in Jesus. Would he be saved? It is like taking one of the “1’s” away from the equation. When that happens then you cannot have the proper result. A person who does not believe but is baptized cannot rightly expect salvation.”

I fully agreed with brother Gholston, but was surprised at the next point he made. “What about the person that believes but is not baptized?” He gave the same illustration with the equation (1+1=2) but then made a point that I had not considered. Was baptism an *essential* step in salvation?

Over the course of that class I came to see passages of scripture that I had never considered. The preacher made a similar point with the equation illustration (1+1=2) on another passage of scripture. ”Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” **(Acts 2:38).** He began to make the point that whenever you find baptism and salvation (or forgiveness) in the same context, that baptism always precedes salvation **(1 Pt 3:20-21).** This point made a deep impression on me.

As a Baptist, I used the “4 Spiritual Laws” tract. In this tract I taught others to seek the forgiveness found in the blood of Jesus shed on the cross **(Rom 3:23; 6:23).** I urged them to receive Jesus as their Savior by saying the “sinner’s prayer,” being a fruit of genuine faith and repentance. This is what I had been taught and this was what I had seen practiced in the Baptist assemblies.

Brother Gholston continued in his class to give the example of the conversion of Paul. After the Lord had struck Paul blind, we find that Paul now came to believe in Jesus and obediently follow His instructions **(Acts 9:1-6).** I heard many sermons in the Baptist church describing how Paul was saved at that point. I could read in my Bible how Paul in Damascus was fervently praying and fasting before the Lord **(Acts 9:7-11).** I had considered Paul’s prayer as positive proof that he was now saved.

There was one more scripture to be presented in the class that would deeply move me and cause me to reconsider earlier teachings I had received as a Baptist. When Paul, in his own words, describes what Ananias said to him, it became crystal clear to me about the point in time that Paul was saved. “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” **(Acts 22:16).** Paul had prayed and fasted for three days and still was not forgiven! He needed to be baptized!

The next week I spent a considerable amount of time in Bible Study and reflection. I privately talked to brother Gholston and came to see that there were some real questions about my own baptism. From the Bible I learned that it is possible to be immersed in water for the wrong reason and, as a result, that baptism not be acceptable to God **(Acts 19:1-6)**. Rather than be unsure about my stand, I was baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of my sins **(Acts 2:38).**

This was just the beginning of my journey with the Lord. I knew that I needed to stand for the undenominational Christianity that the Lord had prayed for **(John 17:20).** From that point on, I have sought to be a part of local churches that would stand with the Lord in keeping the great commission He gave **(Mark 16:15-16; Mt 28:18-20).**

Since that time I have continued the same process of examination and standing. I since have often thought about Paul and the reasons he left the religion in which he was raised **(Phil 3:4-11).** Are you standing in God’s righteousness alone?

**larryrouse@aubeacon.com**