

SBC's Floyd: Doctrine of Unity Demands Decree Against Dissenters

by Bud Ahlheim · May 18, 2016



In what might be appropriately compared to that time back in the 16th century when a certain pope, riled by the outrageous Biblical truths being spouted by an up-start academic German monk, issued a papal cease and desist order, Ronnie Floyd, President of the Southern Baptist Convention, has written a perhaps kinder, gentler entreaty with the same goals. *Silence the detractors for the sake of power ... err ... unity!*

Floyd, soon to complete his second and final term at the helm of the SBC, wrote yet another blogged diatribe about his hallowed doctrine of unity. It's over on the [Baptist Press](#), in case you want to read it. Be

aware that Floyd's plea isn't theologically rooted either in the doctrine of the unity of the Trinity, nor, even, the doctrine of the unity of the church. Floyd touts the doctrine of denominational unity, a tenet unfounded, as you know, in actual Scripture.

"Unity demands we accept one another in love."

That's how he starts. Well, umm, actually Ronnie, the overwhelming impact of Christ's grace in saving me, giving me a new heart, and generating fruit of the Spirit in my life is what prompts me to love my perhaps otherwise unlovable neighbor. Unity has nothing to do with it. In fact, "unity" is never on my mind as either a concern or a motive for my Christian love. Then again, I'm not enthroned over a denomination that seems to be looking up as the drain drags the clog further down.

Floyd needs unity, wants unity, *craves unity* because he thinks the magical potion of "come together, kum-ba-ya-ism" will be a tourniquet for the massive bloodletting of members from the ranks. That wound of bloodletting has only widened under Floyd, by the way.

In his blog, Floyd goes on to blindly pass right over the actual reason the bloodletting continues. The hemorrhaging is being catalyzed by the perpetual proclamation of little more than a prosperity gospel from pulpits, the so overly-contextualized Gospel that it's surprising that the name Jesus even remains in it, and the self-righteous SBC presumption that we will do a job Jesus reserved for Himself – namely, build the church.

"Southern Baptists are no longer in a battle for the Bible, but in a battle with one another. The very soul of our convention is at stake."

Ooohhh, that sounds so foreboding. The soul of the convention is at stake.

"The soul of the convention?" Gimme a break. Believe it or don't – and apparently Ronnie "don't" – Jesus is incredibly more interested that His Gospel – the real one, not the one contextualized to nearly obscuring the divine – be proclaimed, in its' fullness, to souls that He may just save. Those are the souls matter.

But Floyd is *absolutely mistaken* that we aren't any longer "in a battle for the Bible." That's the error. And it's an error of ... well ... Biblical proportions.

IT IS ALWAYS ABOUT THE WORD, Ronnie. Always. Just pretend that your life as a believer is always in an "Eden" moment, because in some way, by some means, the enemy is incessantly attacking that Word ... and your obedience to it.

In the sense that the SBC did, indeed, stand firm on our convictions regarding Scripture he is correct. The results precipitated the "conservative resurgence" which swept through affiliated Baptist colleges and seminaries, insuring professorial compliance with our Statement of Faith, particularly on Scripture.

Yet Ronnie Floyd would have you, and me, rest on the laurels of a "been there, conquered that" battle as if the war itself were over. That war rages on. We know that because Jesus hasn't returned yet. So the Word is still being attacked and the battles yet continue.

Floyd's assumptive statement about that "battle" being over leads to his complaint that now we are "in a battle with one another." *Hopefully, those battlers unnamed by Floyd are battling against his claim that the battle over the Bible is won. It assuredly is not.* While he does name the foes in this unity-threatening battle, he defines it with a sense of ultimate, potential demise. "The very soul of our convention is at stake."

But here's the problem. Floyd, like so much of the SBC, disregards Scripture. While affirming its authority, infallibility, and inerrancy, he, and so many SBC pastors and leaders, deny its sufficiency.

We give it lip service but you can look at the very things we do that deny the sufficiency of Scripture to see that the enemy is winning that battle. *When you plant 1,000 new churches and lose a quarter million members in a single year, explain to me how that momentous victory in the battle for the Bible works out.* It doesn't.

If we believed in the sufficiency of Scripture, we would actually trust Christ when He said, "I will build my church." Instead, scour the SBC web world and you will find enough church plant models and church

growth procedures to shoot out of Floyd's baptistry confetti cannons for a month of Sundays. We have presumed to do Jesus' job because we just don't think He'll do it right, I suppose.

It's a simple formula you find in Scripture. We share the Gospel. God saves whom He will through its proclamation ... all to accomplish the words of Jesus, "I will build my church."

Instead, we skip right past the Gospel. We fold it, spindle it, mutilate it, contextualize it and THEN – and only THEN – we engage the culture with THAT "gospel," which is not the Gospel. It's a man-made, user-friendly appeal to join our family, or get in our club, or become a member. We'll do it our way, though "our way" is failing dramatically. (*Thank you all the same but the Gospel ain't an order down at the BK.*)

Floyd proceeds to lay out an agenda for his doctrine of unity . Among his unity-inducing points is this comment:

"A runaway, unaccountable church lay leader, pastor, or a leader in our convention poses a major threat to unity among us. "

SILENCE THE DISSENTER! *So let it be written. So let it be done. I'm thinkin' Pope Leo felt the same way about that Luther fella. Whaddya think?*

Who is Floyd talking about here? Anyone who challenges him? Anyone who speaks up? (*kinda like in this very article you're reading*) Floyd doesn't state whom he's referring to, but anyone anywhere in the denomination that threatens its unity is suggestively being called anathema.

But it's evidence that Floyd and others worship the idol of unity, rather than trust the One True God. In calling out dissenters, those "unaccountable" voices Floyd bemoans, he's engaging in nothing less than a reverse form of disunity. By attacking those who speak up, Floyd himself engages in defiant acts of disunity he himself bemoans. (*Sounds kinda medievally popish.*)

Nowhere in Scripture are we told that we must achieve, attempt, or ensure the unity of the church. While the unity of the SBC may be, and probably ought to be, regularly, healthily assailed with “examine yourself” critiques, denominational unity is not a Scriptural goal. Obedience to Scripture, and thus to God, is the goal.

As a denomination, we should be focused on the singular mission Christ gave all believers. And, that mission is NOT to build the church or the denomination. It is to proclaim the Gospel. This is why member churches are cooperating, isn't it? *(Instead, during Floyd's tenure, the SBC had to yank nearly 1000 folks from mission fields. But I don't think I'm supposed to mention that, FYI.)*

I learned this little secret from Scripture ... Jesus ensured the unity of His church – *the true church* – back there when He prayed for it in John 17. We don't need to fret over it. It's a done deal.

Of course, Jesus was not praying for unity within the SBC because truly that is of little import to Him. We would, instead, do well to serve Him well which means “do all that I have commanded.” But the SBC is bleeding members like a stuck pig and ... *trusting Jesus just ain't working! We're losing members! (We're losing members because of a watered down Gospel proclamation, not because of a lack of unity.)*

We aren't obeying. We aren't trusting Jesus. We aren't trusting the Word. We are trusting in – as Paul says in 1 Corinthians – the “wisdom of the world” to fix our woes with such things church planting models, church growth mechanisms, and a myriad of multiplication maneuvers. All things founded in the world's wisdom. And that wisdom is folly to God, as you know and as you can see within the SBC.

The Gospel alone is the power of God for salvation. If lost souls being saved is our true desire – rather than back-slapping church growth statistics – then it's the Gospel we must proclaim.

This is the downgrade folks. A return to the primacy of, and obedience to, the sufficiency of Scripture is the fix for it because the disregard of those very things ARE the downgrade. *(Toss in a well-needed dose of Biblically commanded discernment and things might begin looking rather hunky-dory.)*

As for “dividers” in the church, let’s define from Scripture who they are.

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. [Romans 16:17](#)

Dividers are those teaching contrary doctrine. It may be properly exegeted to also include those in pulpits and ecclesiastic leadership who simply teach *NO* doctrine. Of note, Floyd, who has shown an eagerness to hold hands with those of blatantly unbiblical beliefs, thinks, though, that someone raising their voice in concern is a dissenter, a divider.

Based [on his own behavior](#) when compared to Scripture, though, Floyd is actually the divider, because rather than “exposing them,” Floyd [holds hands with heresy](#). Rather than “avoiding” true dividers, Floyd bemoans those who just may be, simply like Luther, begging, pleading, and praying for a return of the denomination to the Word of God and strict obedience to its commands. Such voices can only be considered divisive if you don’t agree to the sufficiency of Scripture and wish to obey it.

Methodists think Floyd has identified the wrong foes, and aligned himself, and the SBC, with the wrong “friends.” Scripture is sufficient. It’s been sufficient for Christ’s purposes for two millennia. The SBC ought to repent, believe, and obey.

The Kingdom of God is, indeed, at hand ... but the SBC is wandering aimlessly in a doctrine-free desert with a leader exuding pride over winning a “battle for the Bible.” It’s not enough to affirm a bold statement about Scripture in the BF&M. (BF&M – Baptist Faith and Message) That’s not the victory we need. The one we need comes only from “trust and obey.”