

Baptist Distinctives Part 1: Soul Competency

Baptists, especially Southern Baptists, have some distinctive doctrinal positions. At Criswell College we teach a course entitled Baptist Distinctives. For the next seven lessons we will explore doctrines that are distinctly Baptist and are part of our *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, which is the official doctrinal statement of the Southern Baptist Convention revised and adopted at the Southern Baptist Convention June 14, 2000.

The first of these seven Baptist distinctives is the soul competency of every individual. This doctrine affirms that every person is capable of knowing God and is therefore accountable to Him (Ps 46:10; Is 49:6). There are several additional points that clarify this doctrine.

- Human beings are a special creation of God, made in His image as the crowning work of creation (Gen 1:26-30; 2:5, 7; Ps 8:3-6). The image of God includes the moral, spiritual, and physical components of human existence (Gen 1:27) Jesus was the human embodiment of God in His image (Jn 14:7-11; Heb 1:1-4)
- Human beings have limited free will and are capable of knowing God (Ps 86:1-17). There is enough revelation in creation to lead a person to know God and receive the revelation of His Son, Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:18-20). God remains sovereign in that he has provided two options, heaven and hell, and every person must choose one or the other. We are free to choose either but we are not free not to choose one or the other.
- As soon as they are morally capable of sin, humans become transgressors fall under the condemnation of sin before God (Ezek 18:1-4; Rom 3:9-20, 23).
- All have the option of receiving the grace of God for forgiveness of their sins and receiving of salvation and everlasting life (Jn 3:16; Eph 2:8-9; Rev 22:17).
- God seeks us, as humans, in that while we were sinners Christ died to save those who would choose to receive Him (Rom 5:10; 1 Jn 4:10).

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