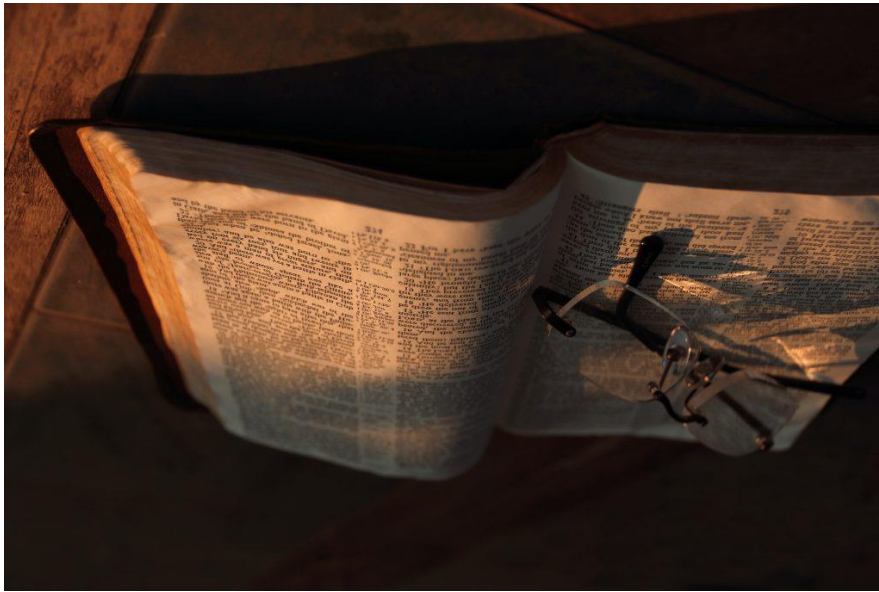


# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## What Can the Righteous Do?: Some Thoughts on the Sufficiency of Scripture and the SBC

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### A STORY

I began my first pastorate at the age of 24, ready to conquer the world for the glory of King Jesus! I commenced preaching through the book of Philippians of all books and quickly ran into some unforeseen trouble. In discussing Paul's idea of the joy of the gospel lived out in the local church, I began discussing things like regenerate church membership, how a person becomes a Christian, and how the Christian life is lived out.

Essentially, the associate pastor and I had begun to try and "revitalize" this local church before the word "revitalize" became a buzzword in Baptist life. We ran into some pushback.

We certainly made some mistakes, after all youthful zeal is not always tempered with enough wisdom and compassion. But one of the things we kept running into time and again with church members were variations of the phrase, "I know that the Bible says this, but..."

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For example, in [Philippians 2](#) I was talking with our deacons about people in the church giving up preferences for one another, when one man said “Paul’s teaching is utopian, pie in the sky stuff.” The associate pastor got in trouble once for telling students that baseball could be an idol in their life. A church member’s son “couldn’t pitch well for three games!,” he irately told us.

One day the associate pastor and I were praying and he pointed me to [Psalm 11:3](#). “If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

To make a long story short, we made the painful decision that we really had no effective ministry there apart from a belief in the Bible’s authority and sufficiency. Without those foundations, we had no foundation to stand on, and given the “option” of leaving or trying to have enough votes in a business meeting not to be fired, we chose to leave.

## THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE AND THE SBC

I share this story only to mention that the battle over the sufficiency of Scripture is something I have personally been involved in for the past decade. Thankfully, others have been in this battle much longer than I have, and others will continue in this battle for long after we are gone until Jesus returns.

I cannot help but have Psalm 11:3 on my mind as we consider the state of our beloved SBC today. If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? What direction do we have, what hope do we have for a future of effective partnership and ministry, if the foundations crumble?

In his commentary on the Psalms, the late James Montgomery Boice asks this question in response to Psalm 11:3—“What shall we do when the Bible is undermined and its teachings disregarded—when even churchmen seem to support the rising tide of secularism?”<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, what shall we do? I think this is the question many of us are asking at this time period in the life of the Southern Baptist Convention. Granted, I am sure there are contentious and ornery Baptists out there just wanting to stir up controversy, but this is not my experience.

For the last 5 months I have met with likeminded Southern Baptists from all over the country face to face, on phone calls, and various online meetings. I’ve had email

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<sup>1</sup> Boice, James Montgomery (2005). *Psalms 1–41: An Expository Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 91.

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exchanges, social media exchanges, and eaten meals together with Southern Baptists who do not want to see the foundations destroyed.

It is truly a measure of God's grace that this isn't just a concern for the older "heroes" in Baptist life who have fought this battle for the sufficiency of Scripture for half a century, but also the heartbeat of many younger Southern Baptists. We do not want our foundations to be destroyed.

So, when we see practical denials of the sufficiency of Scripture in Baptist life, we are concerned. I know that not every practical denial is "intentional," just like my 10 year-old didn't "mean to" break my coffee mug the other day while he was doing dishes. But the result is the same: the mug still broke. And the foundations will still crumble when the sufficiency of Scripture is slighted, even if done unintentionally.

## WHAT SHALL WE DO?

If the foundations are destroyed, what shall the righteous do? "What shall we do when the Bible is undermined and its teaching disregarded – when even churchmen seem to support the rising tide of secularism?"

- What shall we do when we see preaching to felt needs or for cultural relevancy rather than faithful exposition?
- What about when we see a compromise on gender roles in the home and church?
- What shall the righteous do when they see churches worshipping in sensual ways or "repackaging" the gospel in order to make it more relevant or using carnal means to attract people to the church?
- What about when regenerate church membership is not practiced or [the rising number of 4-year olds being baptized](#) in our churches (or firetruck baptistries? – yes that is a thing)?
- When we elect an SBC president we often are more concerned about the Cooperative Program percentages of the pastor's church than percentage of church members that actually faithfully attend his church? Two recent presidents in the SBC had a very high number of people on their rolls in comparison to the people that actually came each Sunday.
- What about the general lack of concern for holiness?

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- What about the strategy to plant affinity based churches like cowboy churches, biker churches, and outdoorsmen churches?
- What about disregard for the Lord's Day (which is mentioned in the BFM 2000, by the way).
- What about the CEO model for pastors used in many churches?
- And finally, what shall the righteous do about situations like Resolution 9?

You see, all of the above examples are what I see as fruits of a denial of the sufficiency of Scripture. Intentional or not, if the sufficiency of Scripture is lost in the SBC, then the SBC itself is lost. If we cannot trust the Bible to speak a sufficient word to the core problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, what hope do we have?

If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?

## A BATTLE FOR TRUTH

This is the reason so many of us are so serious about what is going on in the Southern Baptist Convention. It's because we love the SBC that we seek to do what we can to keep the foundations from crumbling.

It's why we think we need to hold our entities accountable. It's why we think we need to have pastors' conferences that honor the Lord and His Word. It's why we think godless ideologies have no place as analytical tools. It's why we think the pastoral office and function is reserved for men.

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*Everything we think about this life is to be informed by and shaped by the Scriptures.*

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We still believe the Bible "is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter." And that, "all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried." (BFM, 2000)

I know that many of us are determined not to let the foundations crumble. And so we continue to pray, labor, work, and at times confront all in an effort to see our convention

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of 46,000+ local churches unified again around this standard, namely, that the Bible is an authoritative and sufficient book.

The Bible teaches us the core problem of man, which is sin, and how that problem is addressed and rectified, which is the gospel. It speaks a sufficient word into the problems so prevalent today like gender issues, racial reconciliation, and abuse. It tells us how to worship, how to “do” church, how to reconcile with brothers, how to understand our government, and the list goes on. Everything we think about this life is to be informed by and shaped by the Scriptures. For God Himself is speaking to us by, in, and through His Bible.

It is my endeavor to continue to work toward not seeing our foundations crumble in the SBC and to continue to hope for a resurgence in the trust – in heart, mind, and practice – of the sufficiency of Scripture.

This is not about a “takeover”. This is not about silencing voices. This is about God’s people humbly and joyfully sitting under God’s Word and building every ministry endeavor, every church practice, every institutional decision, every conference, every entity, and all that we do as Southern Baptists upon God’s sufficient truth.

It is time we eschew human wisdom and philosophy and recover our once tenacious and collective commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture for, if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?



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