

I. Individual Soul Liberty

Romans 14:5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let **every man** be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Romans 14:12 So then **every one** of us shall give account of himself to God.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that **every one** may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

2 Timothy 2:7 Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

Of all the Baptist Distinctive Complex or Baptist recipe, if you please, this one is the most slippery! This teaching is, on the one hand, exaggerated (to its illogical conclusion) and, on the other hand, isolated from Baptist / Christian fundamentals

It then becomes soul competency – the one essential doctrine!

Not the Trinity? Not the substitutionary atonement? Not the blood atonement? Not the resurrection?

Indianapolis, Indiana 1922 NBC: Agreed to differ, resolved to love!

Doctrine divides, love unites! Leave your doctrine at the door!

SBC: has had and has now an excellent doctrinal statement that **neither** churches **nor** individuals are bound to believe!

Judges 17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

People who deny the Trinity, total depravity of man, inspiration of Scripture, hell, +++...are still somehow Baptists???

So what does this distinctive teach us?

1. God – given ability

Every individual has the God-given ability to read Scriptures, hear teaching and preaching, read books, and to come to one's own conclusions → through the proper use of means!

Individual Soul Liberty: I don't need anyone to represent God to me (in an absolute way)

1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man receiveth **not** the things of the Spirit of God: for they are **foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because** they are spiritually discerned.

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is **not** subject to the law of God, **neither** indeed can be. **Romans 8:8** So then they that are in the flesh **cannot** please God.

1 John 2:20 But ye have an unction (**ὑμεῖς χρίσμα ἔχετε**) from the Holy One, and ye know all things. **1 John 2:27** But the anointing (**τὸ χρίσμα**) which **ye** have received of him abideth in you, and **ye** need not that any man teach you: **but as the same anointing (ώς τὸ αὐτὸ χρίσμα)** teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

Jonathan Edwards: Natural ability (which all men have) and moral inability (the real reason we don't understand)

All people have the ability – **naturally**

The Holy Spirit illuminates us – **supernaturally**

2. God-given liberty

A. God-given liberty: from g

interference & coercion

These ideas came to a head in England dealing with oppression from a state church.

➤ 10 articles of Henry VIII – 1536 (“Protestant” leaning...meaning maybe)

- 6 articles of Henry VIII – 1539 (Catholicism **without** the Pope)
- The Act of Uniformity – 1549 (Under Edward VI – strongly reformed) 42 articles
- The Act of Uniformity – 1552
(Then under Mary – back to RCC **without** a pope from 1553-1558)
- The Act of Uniformity – 1559 (Under Elizabeth and the **via media**) – 39 articles

The result was the explosion of Puritanism → separatism → Baptists!

➤ The Act of Uniformity 1662 (also 1663)
2,000~ pastors (about 20% of pastors) ejected / excluded from their livelihoods and many imprisoned, persecuted, fined, harassed....

After 1662 & 1689 Puritans⁺ were called dissenters / non-conformists.
Baptist's like Roger Williams believed we could have a unified state without conformity in religion.

First table of the Law: 1-4	Second table of the Law: 6-10
Man's responsibility to God	Man's responsibility to man
Enforced only by God – not enforced by state	Enforced by state

➤ The Act of Toleration 1689
Liberty is certainly not toleration!!!
In England the Act of Toleration allowed freedom of “worship” but highly limited those who dissented.

B. God-given liberty: **in public, corporate**

To worship (or not) according to one's conscience.

Regulative principle: Scripture regulates worship. What is not commanded is forbidden so as not to violate anyone's conscience.

C. God-given liberty: **without any**

Persuasion not coercion!

Acts 13:43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, **persuaded** (*ἐπειθούν*) them to continue in the grace of God.

Acts 17:1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: Acts 17:2 And Paul, **as his manner** (*τὸ εἰωθός*) was, went in unto them, and **three sabbath days reasoned** (*ἐπὶ σάββατα τρία διελέξατο*) with them out of the scriptures, Acts 17:3 **Opening** (*διανοίγων*) and **alleging** (*παρατιθέμενος*), that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. Acts 17:4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

Acts 18:4 And he **reasoned** (*Διελέγετο*) in the synagogue every sabbath, and **persuaded** (*ἐπειθέν*) the Jews and the Greeks.

Acts 19:26 Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul **hath persuaded** (*πείσας*) and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:

Acts 21:14 And when he would not **be persuaded** (*πειθομένου*), we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

Acts 28:23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom **he expounded** (*ἐξετίθετο*) and **testified** (*διαμαρτυρόμενος*) the kingdom of God, **persuading** (*πείθων*) them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

Acts 28:24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

2 Timothy 1:12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded (**πέπεισμαι**) that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

We begin to hear phrases like:

Chosen faith not an imposed faith

Faith must be free

If faith is valid it must be voluntary

No autonomy, no authenticity

3. God-given responsibility

Romans 14:12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. **2 Corinthians 5:11** Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

Church of England, Presbyterians, & some Puritans read church-state issues in light of the Old Testament

Baptists+ read church-state issues in light of the New Testament