

"What is a Reformed Baptist?"

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A question that is often asked of those who are **Reformed Baptists** is, "What is a Reformed Baptist?" As a young Marine on guard duty I often had to ask, "Who goes there? Identify Yourself." The answer must include, at the least, name, rank, and military unit. Also, we are often asked to identify ourselves. The purpose of this tract is to give a **clear, concise, and definitive** answer to the question, "What is a Reformed Baptist?"? **Peter says**, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed." (**I Peter 3:15-16**)

Also, **Jude writes** to exhort us, "To contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (**Jude 1:3**)

I am relatively certain that almost all Reformed Baptists have been asked this question at one time or another. Thus it seems only appropriate that we prepare this brief reply for those who desire to know our faith.

As we were thinking thought the best way to identify ourselves, one of our original members suggested that we show not only our differences from but our likeness to other orthodox Christians and other Baptists. So in a tract entitled "WHAT IS A REFORMED BAPTIST?" we stated 1) how we were like other orthodox Christians, 2) how we were like other Baptists, and 3) some of our differences.

Below is the substance of that tract.

- I. A Reformed Baptist is one who, **like other orthodox Christians**, believes:
 - A. That the Bible is God's infallible word.
 - B. That there is but one living and true God, who has eternally subsisted as a Trinity of Persons.
 - C. That the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God Himself, became a man, and came to this world to save us from our sins; that He was born of a virgin; lived a perfect life; died for sinners; rose the third day; ascended into heaven; and is now enthroned as Lord over all.
 - D. That all men are sinners.
 - E. That Jesus Christ is coming again to judge all men.
 - F. That there is a heaven and hell where each person will spend eternity, the one in bliss and the other in woe.

- II. A Reformed Baptist is one who, **like other Baptists**, believes that the only valid subjects for baptism are believers in Jesus Christ; and that the only valid mode of baptism is immersion.
- A. That salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ.
 - B. That each man has a freedom of conscience to worship God as he deems scriptural.
 - C. That the church and state have separate spheres of authority, and that one should not usurp the authority of the other.
 - D. That each local church is autonomous and independent of all other religious or government institutions.
- III. A Reformed Baptist is one who, **in addition to what has been said above – and in these are our distinctives – believes***
- A. That God is the absolute and sovereign ruler over all of life: that He is sovereign in creation, providence, and salvation. See Arthur Pink's book, *The Sovereignty of God*, for a fuller discussion of this statement. (Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 42:8-9; 46:9-11; Daniel 4:34-35; Matthew 1:21; Acts 4:24-28; 15:18; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11; Hebrews 1:1-4; Revelation 4:11;)
 - B. That the Bible is not only God's **infallible** word to men, but that it is the only **authoritative** and **sufficient** rule for all that we believe, think, and do (Psalm 19:7-14; 119:89, 128, 163; John 17:17; I Corinthians 14:27; II Timothy 3:14-17; II Peter 1:15-21; 3:14-16; Revelation 2:1, 7, 8, 11, etc.)(Note the first 18 words of Chapter I of the *1689 London Baptist Confession*. And, by the way, this chapter of ten paragraphs is an excellent short statement of our view of the Scriptures.)
 - C. That God has a chosen people whom He has eternally appointed to life in Christ. (This doctrine is commonly known as "Calvinism" and is further summed up in what has been called "The Five Points of Calvinism" – The **TULIP** Doctrines – or "The Doctrines of Grace.") (Deuteronomy 10:14-15; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:28-39; Ephesians 1:3-12; II Thessalonians 2:13-14)(For a fuller discussion of this topic, see the book, *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, Documented*, by David Steele and Curtis Thomas.)
 - D. That the means God has chosen to save sinners is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. (John 3:14-18; Acts 4:12; 16:30-34; Romans 1:16-17; 3:21-28; Ephesians 2:1-3, 8-10; II Thessalonians 2:13-14)
 - E. That faith without works is dead; that all believers are created in Christ Jesus for good works; that the true believer, who is saved through faith in Jesus Christ and who is a new creation, is distinguished by his submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ; that his faith works through his love for the Lord Jesus and others. (Matthew 5:13-16; 7:15-27; Luke 6:46-49; John 14:15, 23-24; 10:27; Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 2:8-10; I Thessalonians 1:3; James 2:17-20)
 - F. That the local church in this age is central to the carrying out of the "great commission" of Christ – to go into all the world to evangelize, baptize, and teach disciples to do all that He commands in the Holy Scriptures. (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 13:1-4; Ephesians 4:11-16; I Timothy 3:14-16)
 - G. That **elders** (plural) are to function as God's appointed **pastors** (shepherds) and

overseers (bishops) in each local church. (Acts 11:29-30; 14:23; 15:1-5; 20:17-38; Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:1-7,14-15; 5:17-20; II Timothy 2:1-2; Titus 1:5-9; James 5:14; I Peter 5:1-4)

- H. That the individual, family, church, state, and society are to continually examine themselves in the light of the word of God, and in areas where there are deficiencies there is to be reformation (Romans 12:1-2; 13:1-7; II Corinthians 13:5; Ephesians 5:21-6:9; Titus 1:5; etc.) (**Note:** Every passage that calls for obedience, change, correction, submission, love, patience, faithfulness, etc. is a demonstration of this principle.)

IV. **An Abbreviated Answer** – In short, we, as **Reformed Baptists**, believe something distinct about **God**, the **Scriptures**, **man**, **salvation**, and the **church**. Thus our distinctives can be succinctly summed up in the following five statements, each beginning with an “**S**”. We believe

- A. That the **God** of Scriptures is **SOVEREIGN**; that He is the only true and living God; that He is the absolute and **sovereign** ruler over all of life; that He is sovereign in creation, providence, and salvation.
- B. That the **Scriptures** are **SUFFICIENT**: the Scriptures are the infallible, authoritative, and **sufficient** rule for all of faith and life.
- C. That **man** is **SINFUL**: That **man** is totally depraved and totally unable to deliver himself from this lost and helpless state.
- D. That the **SALVATION** of sinners from beginning to end **is of God**: that He chose sinners, in eternity past, to salvation; that in time He brings them to **salvation** through faith in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit; and that their **salvation** is eternal and thus secure because it is of God.
- E. That the **church** of Christ is God’s appointed **SANCTUARY** for the people of faith; that it is a holy convocation, made up only of those who give a credible profession of their faith in Christ as Savior and Lord, who have been baptized, and whose lives conform to their profession; that the church is to function under the pastoral oversight and care of a plurality of elders.

*Other Reformed Baptist have other tenets that they include as distinctives, such as 1) “The primacy of preaching” in the worship of God; 2) the “Christian Sabbath” as God’s appointed day of worship; 3) the “role of men” as leaders in the home and in the church of Christ; 4) the serious nature of church membership; 5) and the necessity of church discipline in the orderly functioning of church life. **Many of these are either included in or implied in what we have listed in III or IV above.**

FINAL NOTE: Some have raised the objection that other churches believe some of the “distinctives” listed above, and therefore they cannot rightly be claimed as distinctives of Reformed Baptists. It is true that one or more of the distinctives listed above are believed by other churches or denominations. However, we are not claiming that no one else believes these. What we are claiming is, that for us, adherence to **all of these** tenets as a system of doctrine and practice is what constitutes a Reformed Baptist Church.