



SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION
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ADDRESS TO THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

By W. A. Criswell

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: W. A. Criswell is pastor of the 13,000-member First Baptist Church of Dallas, the largest congregation in the Southern Baptist Convention. He has been pastor of the Dallas church since 1944, succeeding the late George W. Truett. Previously he was pastor of the First Baptist Church, Muskogee, Okla.; and First Baptist Church, Chickasha, Okla. He is a graduate of Baylor University, Waco, Tex., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., where he earned the doctor of theology degree. Baylor University conferred upon him an honorary doctor of divinity degree. He was born in El Dorado, Okla., Dec. 19, 1909.

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION II Corinthians 5:17-21

By W. A. Criswell

QUOTES FROM THE ADDRESS

Man needs to be reconciled to God. After he is reconciled to God, he can be reconciled to man. Social action without commitment to God in Christ will not and cannot solve our problems. It is not an either-or decision, but a both-and commitment. Reconciliation has to do with character; social action has to do with conduct. Reconciliation is the impression of God upon the soul; social action is the expression of man in human life. Our mandate from Heaven is expressed in our commitment to evangelize. Evangelism is then to express itself in terms of personality and social progress. As churches, as preachers of Christ as ambassadors of God, our first and primary emphasis must be upon the ministry of reconciliation.

...The distinctive, determining doctrine of the Christian faith is this one of redemption and reconciliation. It differentiates our faith from all other religions. The Christian religion is distinctly a religion of reconciliation and redemption. It is not in the first place an ethic, although it is ethical. It is not in the first place reformational, although it has social, cultural and political overtones. It is first and above all a gospel of redemption, an announcement of the good news in Christ that through His sacrifice we are reconciled to God. The symbol of the Christian faith is not a burning bush. It is not a table of stone. It is not a seven branch lamp stand. It is not a halo around a submissive head. It is not even a crown of splendid triumph. The symbol of the Christian church is a cross. Here is the spectacle for men and angels to behold. Here the sinner looks for salvation and the Christian for comfort and encouragement.

...God has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation. This is the good news of hope that we are to announce to all men. A true church will be found witnessing in the cities and states and nations of the whole world. Our mission frontiers are everywhere. Yesterday they were in China and in Africa and in the isles of the sea. Today they are down every street and through every home.

...We are ever to remember the interlinking and interdependence of all humanity. We are ever to seek from God the spirit of missionary conquest. We are to share in this common endeavor of world-wide evangelism through united prayer, united witnessing and united giving. We then are to expect the marvelous blessing of God upon our dedication.