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St. Louis, Missouri. Speaker: Ramsey Pollard, Memphis, Tennessee.

I wish to read from the sixteenth chapter of the book of Matthew: When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples saying, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" And they said, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." And he saith unto them, "But whom say ye that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

We live today in a world of staggering events and because of these staggering events the world is numb and often-times we know not which way to turn and which way to go. But let me remind you that a shaken world is nothing new. Through all of the generations from the beginning of time these things have been relative. But every generation has lived in a critical day. And today the world is expecting the churches of Jesus Christ to have something to say about this matter.

One of the great problems, of course, we face in the world today is the matter of Communism. And I want to tell you that the best answer to Communism is the gospel of Christ, and wherever the gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached, Communism does not and cannot have a foothold. You don't believe it, get your map and look at your map, and you'll find that wherever people have been in that country preaching the unsearchable riches of God's grace and where Jesus Christ has been lifted up and where a living Christ has been magnified, Communism does not exist in force or in power. And Communism today is strong in many countries of our world because the only religion they knew was a perverted Christianity.

Now a militant church is the answer. We need that the hearts of men shall be changed, and the only way that can be done is by the power of Jesus Christ. Now this is no day for timidity; it is a good time for humility, but it is not a good day for timidity. And I want to impress upon you that we are not on an Easter egg hunt and we're not on a Sunday school picnic and we're not on a garden club party. We're on big business for the Lord Jesus Christ,



and it's no time for compromise. I think some of us have been embarrassed because Baptist people sometime in places of leadership have compromised what Baptists believe and what the Word of God teaches. And let's not be guilty of compromise. Some have been so greatly concerned about the Baptist image, what Tom, Dick, and Harry will think and what they will say about Baptists. I think we'd better look into it a little bit carefully and see what God thinks of us and what we're doing according to the teachings of his Word. And we have to have a militancy, we have to have a conviction, we have to have a church that's on fire, and we have to have courage enough and moral backbone enough to be unpopular if it's necessary. John created a very poor image, and Isaiah created a very poor image, and Jeremiah did, and Simon Peter did, but God used those men because they had conviction. And there isn't anything in the world that's more insipid in the world in which we live than a man or a woman or a nation or a denomination or a church that does not have conviction!

I speak as an individual, but I'm not interested in Southern Baptists joining up in any kind of a program that would lead us to drop our convictions and say for the sake of expediency and for the sake of a little bit of sweetheart religion that we'll just soften up and we'll agree to this and that and the other. If it takes that to join in the great movement of ecumenity, I don't want it.

A militant church must have a victorious morale. You don't build seminaries and colleges and churches on fear and discouragement and timidity. And you have to move forward with a consciousness of a great partnership with God. We serve a living Saviour. We serve a reigning God. And in the midst of all the crowds and in the midst of all the uncertainty, let us remember that nothing is ever settled until God gets through with it.

Somebody asked the question, "Is the religious issue dead?" Why, certainly it's not dead. You don't know that, you haven't read the papers, and you haven't watched TV and you haven't heard the radio and you haven't read magazines. And today there is a great movement abroad in our land to brainwash everyone who has courage enough to stand up for rights. You'll be referred to as a bigot. You'll be referred to as a man who's hard to get along with, a man who is narrow minded. Well, all truth is narrow, and Southern Baptists have been a narrow-minded people for many, many years. And in spite of those who would lead us out into the great broad-minded areas of life and improve our intellects and make us know how ignorant we are, Southern Baptists are not going to follow that kind of a leadership.



Now somebody says Mr. Kennedy is against using tax money, and I agree with him and I know you do; and there's a young man who is in a lot of trouble, and we ought to pray for him, and none of us have the right to go around finding fault with that man just because we didn't vote for him. Some of you did; you need to repent. But there's one thing sure: He is our president and we ought to pray for him and support him and back him up to the end of our ability, except where we have to cross the line of our convictions, and then we can quit. Now Mr. Kennedy's having a good deal more trouble with his Roman Catholic hierarchy than he is with some of us Baptist preachers. And I don't think any of us ought to be gullible; Roman Catholic hierarchy is seeking federal money and don't you ever think that anything Mr. Kennedy says will stop them. We've got to be on constant guard. I reiterate something I said last year and I say it everywhere I go, that Baptists are a great people, and we believe in religious liberty for all people, and we believe that Roman Catholics and Protestants and Baptists ought to have all the schools and churches they want, but they ought to pay their own bills. I think some of our Baptist schools and colleges, hospitals, need to remember that any time you become involved with the federal government, with federal loans and grants, that you are on the wrong road. It is not our inability, but a poor sense of stewardship. We have the sufficient resources and if we will not pay for them we ought not to have them, and I'm speaking of hospitals and schools and churches. I don't believe that we have any right to expect a Jew to finance our program of preaching that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and the Son of God. I do not believe we have any right to ask an atheist to pay our bills when we seek to glorify almighty God. I believe that Baptists are in danger at this point, and I could wish, I could pray, and I have, that there should be a great spiritual awakening among Southern Baptists, and that we should develop a great program of Christian stewardship and quit asking the government for handouts like our Roman Catholic friends have done through the years.

Another thing that we have as a militant church is the Cooperative Program. Now I believe in the Cooperative Program. And you take my word for it--it may not be worth very much--but anything you do to hurt the Cooperative Program is wrong. Now we're not to worship the Cooperative Program. It may be that out in the future God will give us something better, but thus far I don't think he has. I believe in the Cooperative Program, and the only thing that's wrong with it is that the people of the Southern Baptist Convention do not know what the Cooperative Program actually is. And it's our fault. And if we can let the people see our missionaries on the foreign fields and see our missionaries on the home fields and they can see our seminaries and they can see all the other work we're doing, then our people will become enthusiastic about the Cooperative Program.



Some people have asked about the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Good many people are saying that we don't stop taking the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering we're going to ruin the Cooperative Program and I don't believe there's a word of truth in it. I think the Cooperative Program can be undergirded and strengthened and helped by the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and by the Annie Armstrong Offering. I think we need them all. Someone has made the suggestion that some of these days we ought to bring those two great offerings together, and like this man was suggesting back here, put the emphases on a great world mission program on that particular day. And I'll tell you any day in the world that you travel around the world as I have done in recent months, and you see what the Cooperative Program has done and what it means to this lost world, I believe that you'll come back in favor of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and the Cooperative Program walking together, helping each other. And I believe the same thing is true about the Annie Armstrong Offering. Now the trouble of it is that if we're not careful, the Cooperative Program will become a cold piece of machinery, and we'll lose the sight of actually what it is. And I firmly believe that our folk in Memphis and Nashville and Atlanta and all the other great cities and all the country churches and rural churches of our Southern Baptist Convention need to be taught what the Cooperative Program is.

A militant church must also have a training program. And the very future of our denomination depends on our schools and seminaries. And I believe in all of my soul that we have a great group of Christian schools, and I think the Southern Baptist Convention wants those schools to be unashamedly Christian, and I think they want them to be distinctly Baptist, and there isn't any conflict between real Christianity and what Baptists believe and teach.

Dr. Charles M. Howard, speaking recently in the state of Florida at the evangelistic conference, he's been a teacher for a long time: "We Baptists have been known as the people of the Book. Oh, may God help us to keep it so." He goes on: "I've been a teacher in our colleges for twenty-five years. I've suffered for our colleges. Don't say I criticized them. We've got to have our colleges, more of them and better ones. But if you want to pray a prayer that needs praying, ask God to keep our schools close to the Book. Oh, may God help us to see that the Word of God is the way to get people born again-- preaching and teaching and living the Word of God."



We're putting on great campaigns for our colleges, universities, and seminaries, and I believe in them. My record shows I believe in them. I've gone up and down the length and breadth of the Southern Baptist Convention promoting Christian education, and I'm also saying again this year that Southern Baptists want their seminaries and their schools to be Christian and they want them to be Baptist and we must remember that if the vat be unclean that which comes out will be foul. Keep our schools anchored to the Word of God. Some of our states are putting on great campaigns for Baptist schools, and they ought to; they ought to do it; we ought to do it. Our seminaries need more endowment. Our universities and colleges need more money. All of us know that. And I'm going to tell you one way that you school men can stir a wave of enthusiasm for fund raising, and that is tie your colleges, your universities, and your seminaries onto our Baptist program without any apology. It'll be easier to raise money.

A militant church must have a spirit of evangelism. We must seek people; we must weep over people; we must win people; we must have the spirit of compassion. Now some of us are in danger, I fear, of becoming intellectual snobs. I fear it. And I want to remind some of you younger preachers here, don't you preach everything you hear, and don't you believe everything you read, because if you do some of you will be writing some of us who are old men and saying, "My work is finished here and I wonder if you know of a place I could go." And if you preach what some Baptist preachers preach, you ought to be fired. Got to have evangelism.

I believe God gave the Southern Baptists a program of evangelism. I believe it. We're not to worship that program; we ought to be willing to change it any time God leads us. But so far it's the best program any denomination has ever had to win people to Jesus Christ. But it isn't everything. Sometimes we hear about great churches. Church got ten thousand members, it's a great church. Well, who said so? Fellow's got fifteen-hundred people in Sunday school, it's a great church. Well, who said so? If a church baptizes two hundred and fifty people a year, it's a great church. Well, who said so? There are many great churches out in the country. And there are many great churches that do not give very much to the Cooperative Program. And there're great churches which do not baptize many people. In other words, what I'm trying to say is this: Let's don't put all of our evaluations in one basket. There are some churches that give a huge amount to missions, but they're just as dead as they can be in their own communities. And there're some churches that boast and brag of their great record on baptism and the Cooperative Program doesn't even know that they exist. Let's build great churches and grow great churches, but let's have a world program in our hearts.



Now you don't grow great churches without the thrust of conviction. You have to believe something. It's better to believe something and be wrong than to be one of these wishy-washy preachers who just follows anything and everything. And a denomination, to be great, has to believe something. You must believe that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. And there is no need for any of us to piously sing "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins," and at the same time doubt that Jesus Christ was the divine Son of almighty God and that we're saved by his death and by the shedding of his blood. You've got to believe something.

Now I believe that all of us ought to be proud of Southern Baptists. I am; I'm glad I'm a Baptist. And I'm proud that I'm a Southern Baptist, and I make no apology for it and I don't want anybody else. You're ashamed of being a Southern Baptist, there're a lot of other churches you can join. If we lose the spirit of evangelism, we're doomed, and we shall be taking the first step in our funeral march if we cease to evangelize. It's not an optional matter; it is the marching order of Jesus Christ. And none of us can ever get away from the fact that Jesus Christ expects us to win people to the ends of the earth.

I know one thing that's essential if we're going to do this, as we mentioned last night, and that is we've got to have power from above. Baptists need to get back into the business of preaching about and believing in and accepting the power of the Holy Spirit. You can't preach without it. You can stand up and make a good deal of noise, like some preachers do--go ahead, it's all right--you can stand up and impress some people that you really are a smart fellow, that you've read all the latest books; you can do that. But you will never be able to stand in the pulpit and preach with liberty and power and conviction as long as you stand there in your own strength and might. You preachers know what I'm talking about? Not many years ago at Broadway church in Knoxville, I got up a sermon on faith. I worked at it. I don't mean I went on Saturday night and jotted down a few notes, I meant I started a couple of weeks ago on the thing. I worked! I preached on faith. I could hardly wait for the musician to get through, and these musicians can almost drive a preacher crazy sometimes. I never heard as many morning hymns and morning responses in my life. And there I was sitting there waiting to preach; I had a great sermon. I could hardly wait. We had the announcements, all of them: the G.A.s and the R.A.s and the Y.W.A.s, the Brotherhood (some



of you fellows have heard me tell: Women of my church at Broadway invited me to go down to a covered-dish luncheon one day--I didn't even announce the covered-dish luncheon. I went down stairs to eat with those women--covered-dish luncheon--and I want to tell you, I found out why they covered it up. I have never seen as much macaroni and cheese in my life! I said, "I don't blame you; I'd cover it up too." You don't get me to these covered-dish luncheons anymore). When I got up to preach that morning, oh, I was full of victory in my heart. I just knew that something would happen. And it did: The people went to sleep. Oh, I tell you it was a long sermon. The dear old saints of God who usually come by and pat you on the back and say, "Brother Pollard, that was a wonderful sermon," they never said anything. They just went on out. I got in my car and started home with Mrs. Pollard. Now she's a beautiful woman, and she looks sweet, but I'm telling you, you people don't know what some of us preachers have to put up with. A preacher's wife can be awful mean sometimes; awful mean. We got about three or four blocks from the church and I said, "Honey, what in the world was wrong with that sermon this morning?" She said, "I don't know, Ramsey; you lost me five minutes after you got started." Well, I went home; nobody joined the church; nobody showed any evidence of interest at all that morning service; but I went home that afternoon; felt pretty bad. You ever gone home feeling like that? You ought to, and I ought to; ought to feel pretty bad. That night I went back and preached a little old sermon outline, but the difference was that at the morning service, I had depended on myself and at night I went back with a broken heart, with a heart filled with contrition and leaning upon the Holy Spirit of God. And that night thirty-seven people walked down the aisles to join the church and to accept Jesus Christ. Brother, it makes a difference.

Now we have great seminaries; thank God for them. We have great universities, and we have great church sanctuaries, and we have a great denominational machine, and I like it. Some people get an idea once in a while that anything that comes out of Nashville is tainted with machinery and with politics. Well, I want to tell you that the Holy Spirit of God can be in Nashville, Tennessee as well as any other place. And our denominational leadership up there are men and women who have prayed and who are just as earnest and serious about the work of our churches as any of us are. Let's pray for them, thank God for them, believe in them, and back them up. And let's go back home with grateful hearts. We're not a perfect people, Southern Baptists are not; not at all. But let's look at the records and thank God and take courage and let's not let anybody lead us into the spirit of defeatism and fear, and let's keep on doing what the Word of God says, and let's keep on preaching what the Word of God teaches, and Southern Baptists will be all right.