

# WHY I AM A FREE WILL BAPTIST

I think there are times in our lives when we should evaluate what we are doing and our motive for doing it. This is true of our church and our denomination. Have you ever thought about why you are a Free Will Baptist? Tradition? Friendships?, Location of the church? First of all, I am a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ. Nothing supersedes this! A denomination should be a vehicle to serve the Lord in a greater way. Our goal is not to build a denomination, but the kingdom of the Lord.

In this day that we live in, it is popular to be "non denominational" but to be honest I do not know what "non denominational" means or stands for! I do know, however what FWB's stand for! The main reason I am a FWB is what we stand for, our beliefs, our doctrine.

Many today are choosing a church that has the best programs, the most dynamic music or the most exciting worship. However, the greatest reason we should have for attending a church is, what is the message of that church? What is being preached and taught at that church? Nothing is more important than that!

There are many who would say that what the sign says over our doors doesn't matter, but, I for one, believe that signs and labels are important. Labels sure are important when we go to the grocery store!

There are many good Bible believing churches that preach the Gospel who are not Free Will Baptist. Any Bible believing church will have basic beliefs:

- 1) Inspiration of Scripture.
- 2) The Virgin Birth.
- 3) The Deity of Jesus Christ.
- 4) The Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
- 5) Eternity in Heaven or Hell.
- 6) The Coming Judgment.

However, Free Will Baptists have some distinctives that I think are very important. As we look at these, they will answer the question; Why am I a Free Will Baptist?

## Our Doctrine

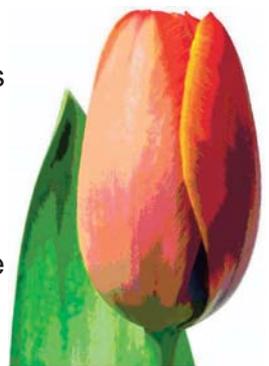
### The Doctrine of Salvation

In order to understand where we are coming from we need to understand what was taking place in this country's beginning. The doctrine of Calvinism was the predominant view of the churches in the early 1700's. This was developed by the great Swiss reformer-John Calvin. The basic beliefs of Calvinism are explained with the acrostic **TULIP** as follows:

Total Depravity-Man possessed no ability to make a choice about God.

Unconditional Election-Because man had no ability to choose God, before the world was created, God chose who would be saved and lost.

Limited Atonement-According to Calvin, Christ did not die for the whole world but only for the elect.



Irresistible Grace-If you were one of the chosen, when the call of salvation came, you could not resist the call!

Perseverance of the Saints-Once you were saved you could never lose your salvation which is called "Unconditional Eternal Security..

There are not many five Point Calvinists today but many do hold on to the final point-Unconditional Eternal Security!

I'm glad at this same time there were men like Paul Palmer in North Carolina and Benjamin Randall in New England preaching something else! They did not agree with Calvinism and preached a different doctrine. There were basically two ways that Palmer and Randall disagreed with Calvin.



**Benjamin Randall**

### **1. That all men have a free will to accept or reject the Gospel.**

Free Will Baptists have always believed that it was God's intention and desire for all men to be saved.

The following scriptures illustrate this.

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

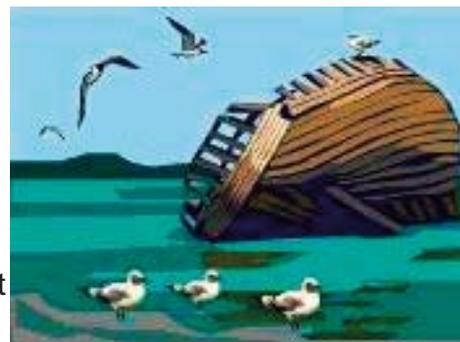
Romans 10:13 *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

Revelation 22:17 *"And the Spirit and the bride say come. And let him that heareth, say come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him come."*

Free Will Baptists have always proclaimed Free Will, Free Grace, Free Salvation to all who wants it! And they were branded as heretics for preaching this! I am glad they were willing to accept the scorn to preach the truth!

### **2. That men in their free will can make shipwreck of their faith.**

First of all I would like to say that Christians have much security in Jesus Christ. We are not saying that God is up in heaven just waiting for an opportunity to cut us off when we fail. He is a longsuffering Father who patiently teaches, corrects and disciplines those who are His. We are saying that we cannot willfully walk away from Christ and expect to go to heaven!



There are many warnings in the scripture to believers about making shipwreck of our faith.

II Peter 2:20-21 *"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."*

Hebrews 3:12 *"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."*

Hebrews 6:4-6 *“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”*

Hebrews 10:26-27 *“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”*

Free Will Baptists have always taken the position, that a man does not lose his free will after he is saved and that God will not take anyone to heaven against their own will!

I am a Free Will Baptist because I believe in free will and not predestination or unconditional eternal security.

### **The Doctrine of Ordinances**

An ordinance is a practice of the church that we are “ordained” to perform. We can look at ordinances one of two ways; we can observe them as a church ordinance or a divine ordinance. What difference does this make? It makes a big difference in the way they are practiced.

There are many churches who practice church ordinances who will not accept the baptism of someone who comes from another Bible believing church. In order to be a member of their church, they must baptize you because it is a church ordinance.

Also, those churches who believe in church ordinances will not serve communion to a believer who is not a member of their church because they believe this is a church ordinance.

Free Will Baptists observe these ordinances as divine ordinances because they did not originate with the church but with Christ Himself.

After all, Jesus gave us direction about baptism in Matthew 28:19 *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:” All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* That is why a person who is baptized the way Jesus prescribed is accepted in a FWB Church. We recognized Jesus’ authority!

It is the same with communion. Free Will Baptists will welcome to the table any believer in Christ because it was Jesus who instituted the last supper. Luke 22:19 *“And he took bread and gave thanks and brake it, and gave it unto them saying; This is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.”*

There is another ordinance Free Will Baptists observe--the washing of the saints feet. Why do we practice footwashing? First of all, the lessons that can be learned by observing this ordinance found in John 13 are enormous.

The first lesson we learn is **Humility**--a greatly needed lesson for today. Just before John 13 we find the disciples in Luke 22 having an argument over who was the greatest. Doesn’t this sound just like us? It is ironic that the greatest One among them was the One who girded Himself and performed this humble task. What a great lesson for us.

Secondly, we can also learn **Service**. Jesus had sent everyone out of the room except for Himself and the disciples. All the servants who would usually wash their feet were gone. So you had

a room full of disciples who had come to be served rather than to serve. How much does this sound like the modern day church? Many come to church today looking to be served rather than serve. How different it would be if we had a church full of people coming to serve? I believe it would revolutionize our churches if this attitude would prevail!

Lastly, we learn the **Daily Need of Cleansing**. When Jesus approached Peter to wash his feet, Peter refused. Jesus said that if He didn't wash him, that he had no part with Jesus! Peter relented and asked for Jesus to wash everything. Jesus said that it was not necessary to wash everything, but he did need his feet cleaned. This teaches that when we come to Christ, He cleanses us completely, but we do walk in a dirty world. There are many things in the world that will attach themselves to our feet. It may be a bad attitude, bad habit, a grudge or host of other sins that may seek to cling to us. Feetwashing shows me that I must come to Jesus daily to keep my feet clean and not allow these things to soil my relationship with Him.

I will conclude this portion about feetwashing by saying: Jesus did it, Jesus commanded it, the early church practiced it and Jesus said we would be happy if we did it!

### **The Doctrine of Baptism**

Free Will Baptists believe that baptism is a vital part of the Christian experience. There are three major points about baptism that Free Will Baptists promote

We practice **Believers Baptism** only. This is why you will see no infants baptized in a FWB Church. We believe that baptism is an outward act that pictures an inward experience. In Acts 8 where Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch, the eunuch asked what was hindering from being baptized. "Philip said If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." And he answered I believe that Jesus is the Son of God." Only when the eunuch professed his faith in Christ would Philip baptize him.



We do **not** practice **Baptismal Regeneration**. Some teach that you must be baptized in order to be saved. Free Will Baptists never have accepted this, believing that salvation comes "*by grace through faith*"-Ephesians 2:8-9.

The thief on the cross in Luke 23 never had the opportunity to be baptized. If Baptismal Regeneration is true, then there are some places on the earth that I could not be saved! I am glad however that there is not a square inch on this earth, where a person who cries out to the Lord cannot be saved!

We will only **Baptize by Immersion**. The reason we do this is if you go back to the root words "Baptiso" "Baptizien" they do signify a burial. This is why Biblical baptism is to baptize by immersion.

It is also the only way to show the picture of death and burial in Romans 6. When a person is baptized they are saying that they believe in the death, burial and resurrection. Further, they are saying that they are identifying themselves with the death, burial and resurrection. Immersion is the only mode of baptism that will show this great truth.

### **The Doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

We teach that **Every Christian receives the Holy Spirit at Conversion**. The Holy Spirit comes to live in a believer the moment they receive Christ as Savior.

Look carefully at this verse. I Corinthians 12:13 *“For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free and have been all made to drink into one spirit.”*

Notice the word “all” used two times to show that every Christian has been baptized into the body of Christ.

Paul teaches in the book of Romans that you cannot be a Christian without the Spirit. Romans 8:9 *“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”*

He further says in the book of Colossians that if you possess Christ, you have the Godhead” (Father, Son, Holy Ghost) Colossians 2:9-10 *“For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”*

It is clear that every believer possesses the Holy Spirit.

We also teach a **Progressive Sanctification** that will be complete when Jesus comes. Sanctification is that process whereby God takes weak, sinful, and mistake prone Christians and makes us like Him. The One who saved us will patiently work with believers. Philipppans 1:6 *“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”*

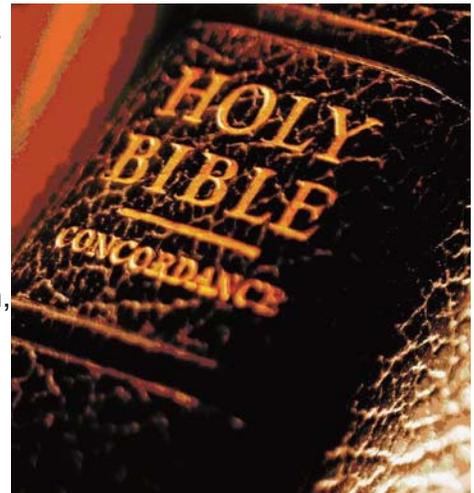
When is this process complete? It is found in I John 3:2 *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”* This is graduation day! On this day temptation will mean nothing. All the failures, problems and trials will be over. We will be like Him!

## **Doctrine of the Bible**

This has always been a vital question and it is most important in the day in which we live. Many churches and denominations are having much controversy over the Bible. I am glad to report that Free Will Baptists are not arguing over the Word of God. We believe:

### **The Bible is Inspired**

We do not look at the Bible as being simply written by men, but we believe that God wrote this book by inspiring men to write it. II Peter 1:21 *“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”* II Timothy 3:16 *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”*



### **The Bible is Infallible and Inerrant**

We do not teach that the Bible is an error filled book. The best answer I could give to the question, “How do you know the Bible is true?” would be that Jesus said it was! Think of it, when Jesus was on earth the Old Testament was completed. If there were any errors or omissions, He had every opportunity to tell us what they were. Jesus did not do this, rather He said in John 10:35 *“The scripture cannot be broken.”* He went on to say in Matthew 24:35 *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”* How true this is!

## **The Bible is our Authority**

The authority in a Free Will Baptist Church does not rest in the leaders or hierarchy of the church. It rests firmly on the Word of God! We have all we need for authority in the Word. Our treatise says that the Bible be our "only rule of faith and practice". When men and the Word of God clash in a FWB Church, we don't get rid of the Word, we get rid of the men! The Bible is the final authority.

## **The Bible is Complete**

We are living in a day where we have a multitude of cults and religious groups telling us that we have missed God's truth and we need their "revelation" to enlighten us. Others are working on their computers looking for some secret Bible code that God has left.

We teach that when you hold the Bible in your hand, you have the completed Word of God. In its pages you will find all you need in how to be saved, to live in this life, to resist temptation and to one day, step on Heaven's shore!

When the Lord was directing John to write the book of Revelation, He came to the last chapter and proclaimed a curse for those who would add anything to His Word. In addition, He gives a warning of removing one's name out of the book of life for taking away from His Word Revelation 22:18-19. The Lord has made it clear. The Bible is complete!

With all the religious activity going on, not everyone is valuing doctrinal truth. But I am glad that Free Will Baptists still are! I would rather stand on the truth alone, than to stand on error with the crowd.

## **Our Government**

The local church is the highest authority in our denomination. All ministries are subject to the local churches. No denominational hierarchy has any power over the local congregation. Our churches are self-governing. They hold the deed to their own properties and select their own pastors.

The way I see it, this allows Free Will Baptists the best of both worlds. Our churches have the freedom to minister to their particular area without interference from the denomination, yet at the same time have the vehicle to voluntarily unite with other local bodies to do together what we cannot do alone. (Examples: Missionaries, Bible College, etc.) Not many of our churches would have enough resources to place missionaries on the field, provide a Bible College, or maintain a publishing house, but 2,500 churches can! In our own state, I can see churches like First Austintown, Lancaster, Neville, Ashtabula, and London. These churches were started because the 150 churches of the state of Ohio have planted them! It's a wonderful thing to work together for the cause of Christ.

You will see listed below those ministries that Free Will Baptists have united together to support.

### National Ministries

#### Executive Office

National Convention  
Contact Magazine  
Together Way Giving Program  
National Leadership Conf.

#### International Missions

Oversees Missionary Families in 11 Foreign Countries



### Home Missions

Oversees Missionary Families in USA, Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands

### Free Will Baptist Bible College

Trains Ministers, Missionaries and others who desire a Christian Education

### Retirement Program

Retirement for Ministers & Full Time Workers

### Randall House Publishing

Provides Sunday School Literature, Teaching Helps, and Books

### Women National Active For Christ

National Women's Auxiliary to assist our National Ministries and our churches.

### Master's Men

National Men's Auxiliary to assist our National Ministries and our churches.

## Ohio State Ministries

### Ohio State Office

State Evangelist  
Ambassador Magazine  
Ohio Website  
Ohio Email Update List  
Ohio Men's Retreat  
Together Way Giving Plan  
Ohio Bible Institute  
Ambassador E-Bookstore  
Pastor to Pastor  
Church Assistance  
Revitalize Your SS Seminar

### Ohio State Missions

Supports Mission in Ashtabula, and

London.

### Ohio Youth Conference

Oversees the Youth Ministry of the

State



## Our Support

How are these ministries funded?

There are two ways to support this ministry.

1. **The Co-op Plan.** This plan is like tithing to your local church. It is given and distributed as the Ohio State Association has voted on at the State Meeting yearly. When a church gives to the Co-op plan, the offering is divided the following way. 70% of the offering stays in Ohio and are used for our ministries and 30% are sent to Nashville for National ministries. The way the 70% that Ohio ministries will use are divided as follows: 52% comes to the State Office for the ministries mentioned above, 15% goes to our State Mission Program, and 3% goes to our State Youth Program.

2. **Designated Giving.** You also have the option of designating your offering. You can give the percentages that you decided to each individual ministry. You have the option of giving directly to the State Office, Ambassador Magazine, State Missions, State Youth or any of the National Ministries.

All these state and national ministries are worthy of support. Some churches give a combination of Co-op and designated.

As I said earlier, Free Will Baptists have the best of both worlds. We do not have a denomination hierarchy that forces our churches to do what the denomination wants them to. No one comes to our churches and tells us we "have" to give to any ministry. We do however, have the opportunity to voluntarily work with our sister churches "To Do Together What We Cannot Do Alone." I believe that every church should do their part to support Free Will Baptist ministries.

### **In Conclusion**

I hope this article has given you a clear answer to the question, "Why I am a Free Will Baptist." Our doctrine, our fellowship and our common purpose hold us together to be able to accomplish much more than if we could do individually. I am thankful and proud to be called a Free Will Baptist!

Edwin Hayes  
Executive Secretary  
Ohio Association of Free Will Baptists