

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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August 26, 1970

**Chafin Calls For Realism  
On Racism in Baptist Churches**

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Baptists need to be more realistic about how deeply racism is ingrained within the members of their churches, the evangelism director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board said here.

"Many of our churches are controlled by racists," Kenneth L. Chafin of Atlanta told about 2,500 persons attending Home Missions Week sponsored by the denomination's national mission board at Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly here.

Chafin defined racism as "one man judging the worth of another man by his race."

The evangelism director for the mission board said he had deluded himself into believing that the churches were further along than they really are. He put it this way:

"When a great church in a great city is confronted by a little woman and a ten-year-old daughter who have been converted as a result of that church's ministry, and they (the church members) sit up until 3:00 in the morning, and by four votes finally agree 'not to fire the staff,' we are not as far along as I had thought."

Chafin was apparently referring to action taken only a few days earlier by First Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala., which voted down a motion to fire the entire church staff by a margin of 241-237 after eight hours of debate and 10 ballots. The church staff had led the downtown church in an interracial ministry and had advocated accepting as members two Negroes, a woman and her daughter, who joined as a result.

Chafin observed that if you were to take away the women of the Woman's Missionary Union who have tried to educate the church in missions, and the members of the churches' missions committees who have tried to do missions, "and you get down to the hard core of the power structure of many churches, they are controlled by racists."

The former seminary evangelism professor said that only the power of God is able to change such people.

Chafin made the remarks while teaching the Bible study of the week from I Corinthians, where the Apostle Paul wrote of breaking down barriers between Jew and Gentile.

"I used to think that all we needed was to want to do what is right, but I am discovering how difficult that is," he said.

"I can't say what is right for Atlanta's school system, but I am willing to say unapologetically what is right for the Baptists in Atlanta in their attitude toward people who are black," he declared.

Chafin emphasized that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a universal gospel for all men, and those who believe it ought to cross every barrier to communicate and practice it.

He added that unfortunately many churches are unequipped for the acceptance of all people into their fellowship because the churches reflect too much the culture in which they are located.

"We are reaching people who have been shaped by the culture to be almost like us," Chafin charged.

Instead of moving out with the gospel for the whole world, the church in evangelism begins to be selective moving out only to those people who are like the members, he observed.

Thus it really ceases to be evangelism but is rather a sort of sociological extension of what every group happens to be, Chafin said.

Baptists need to get rid of the myth that identifying with people is a form of compromise, he said.

"If that were so, Jesus Christ would never have come," Chafin told the mission week audience.

"If you don't love people, there are not enough beads in this universe to help you communicate with hippies," he added.

"Identification is noticing people, being aware of people, putting yourself in their place, and accepting them and loving them and seeking to understand," he explained. "It is caring enough to communicate what you have found about God in Jesus Christ."

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Youth Lost Nine Days Says  
Faith Helped Him Survive

8/26/70

ODESSA, Tex. (BP)--A Baptist teenager here said his new found faith in Christ helped him survive for nine days while lost in some of the wildest country in New Mexico.

Leslie Hamrick, 16, a member of West Park Baptist Church, Odessa, was lost on a church outing when he told two hiking companions he was returning to the base of the mountain.

He said he stayed alive eating berries and drinking water from streams, but he always felt he would find his way to safety.

"I was saved a few weeks ago, and this was an act of God," the teenager said when he finally walked out of the Lincoln National Forest near Ruidosa, N.M.

"It took a lot of faith," said his mother, Mrs. Walter Hamrick. "There were rock slides, sheer drops and underbrush over your head. Searchers said they could have walked within two feet of Leslie and never seen him."

She said her son lost about 25 pounds during his ordeal. He was bruised and exhausted, but otherwise seemed in good shape, said Leslie's father.

Leslie's parents and doctors refused to allow reporters to question him due to the shock of what he had been through.

Mrs. Hamrick said the prayers of friends and neighbors and people from several states aided in her son's finding his way out of the wilderness.

Dale Pruett, pastor of the West Park Baptist Church, said a "lady prayer warrior" (a woman whom he considered to have an outstanding prayer life) predicted that the youth would be found, but "in such a way that no one would be able to take the credit."

About 22 people, including men of the West Park Church, participated in the search. Helicopters and spotter planes from Holloman Air Force Base, Alamogordo, N.M., were used without success due to the dense growth in the area.

Leslie finally walked out of the forest on Sunday afternoon and asked some men working on a ski lift to take him home.

A prayer meeting for him scheduled for 3:00 p.m., at his home church turned into a "praise" service, said Pruett.

Leslie's mother said the experience has brought her family "a lot closer to God." The Hamricks have another son and two daughters.

"The greatest thing we learned as a family," said Mrs. Hamrick, "was the importance of three little phrases we don't use enough: 'I'm sorry,' 'thank you,' and 'I love you.'"

"We woke up to see how great friends could be," she said. "People are just waiting for you to reach out to them."

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Missionaries' Son  
Kidnaped, Released

By Wally Poor

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay (BP)--A 19-year-old premed student, son of Southern Baptist missionaries in Uruguay, was held at gunpoint here by members of a guerrilla faction while the station wagon he had been driving was used in an attempted bank robbery.

Stephen Spann, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jimmie D. Spann, Baptist missionaries to Uruguay since 1959, was in the last day of a month-long visit with his parents when he was abducted. He was released unharmed by his abductors.

While Spann was being held, the station wagon was used by the would-be bank robbers. A policeman who deterred the bandits was shot several times, and died on the way to a hospital.

The abandoned station wagon, which was assigned by the Baptist Mission of Uruguay to Spann's father, was found late that night.

Spann, a junior at Baylor University, Waco, Tex., had gone to say goodbye to a friend who lives here. When he returned to the station wagon, a man and a woman approached him and one of them leveled a pistol at Spann.

Spann started the engine but it stalled as he tried to drive away. The pair, who said they were members of a guerrilla faction, shoved Spann to the center of the seat. The man got behind the wheel and the woman sat on the opposite side.

The trio drove around for about 20 minutes and then stopped at a street corner, where they were joined by another man. He took over the car and drove away after Spann and his two abductors got out.

They walked around until 1:30 p.m., at which time Spann was given money for taxi fare home and was released. The two offered to call Spann to let him know where the car was left if he would give them a phone number. They fled after releasing Spann.

He notified his parents and the police at once. Since he already had reservations for a flight to the United States, and was to depart at 3 p.m., he obtained permission from the authorities to leave as planned.

Spann's father is pastor of Betesda Baptist Church here and a teacher in the Baptist Theological Institute of Uruguay.

Terrorists have been waging urban guerrilla warfare against the police and government in Uruguay for several years. Their activities have gained international notoriety in the past few weeks, especially the kidnaping of two North Americans and a Brazilian.

One North American, Dan A. Mitrione, was found murdered in a stolen car after the government refused to release the 180 extremists currently in jail.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Wally Poor is a Southern Baptist Missionary, and the press representative for the Baptist Mission in Uruguay.

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