

## GREETINGS AND INTRODUCTION

To our friend and Brother (Matthews) for that timely introduction

Dr. L. C. McMillian, president of the Alabama State Missionary Baptist Convention, and members of your cabinet – to include our host pastor Dr. Vernon Swift

Dr. Foster Woodrick, Congress president and members of your staff

Dr. Gerdie Lowe, Women Auxiliary president and members of your staff

A special welcome Home to Dr. Julius Scruggs our National Baptist Convention President

Brothers, Sisters, Delegates, and Messengers to this 143<sup>rd</sup> Annual Session of the Alabama State Missionary Baptist Convention

We greet you again in the precious name of Jesus the Christ

God has again granted us “Grace” and shown us a measure of “Mercy” in that he has brought us from the port city of Mobile Alabama to Tuscaloosa and all points in between ... and we’re grateful.

Only God the om’nip’o’tent one he who is om’ni’present (he that fills the universe in all its parts ... and is present everywhere at once. He that declared “I Am That I Am” and nobody disputed his claim ... because of the great “I Am” we are here this hour.

As we come before you today for the final time under the administration of this president, please allow me and the Laymen of the State of Alabama, to express our sincere gratitude to you Dr. McMillian for allowing us to serve in this capacity the past four (4) years. You and the members of your staff have been most helpful and supportive. You have not “Meddled” But as president you had every right to do so; instead you allowed us to do our work. If we had questions, you or a member of your staff was there to advise us. Rev. Mac it’s been a pleasure and we thank you.

We were appointed to this position in 2006 at the Bethel Missionary Baptist Church (Berney Points) in Birmingham .... We addressed the Laymen as president one year later at Beulah Missionary Baptist Church on Rosa Parks in Montgomery, Alabama. I said to our men that day as Paul said to the (276)

aboard the ship in the 27<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Acts ... As they found themselves in a storm **“Stay on Board”** Do not abandon ship. Today, four (4) years later, I still stand in your midst and say as Paul said” Fear not; be of good cheer’ the God whose I am, and whom I serve will continue to lead and protect us if we just **“Stay on Board”** and stay our course.

During that first year, we realized we needed to try and restore or build confidence in many of our people, if we expected them to be productive. We tried to change their way of thinking, and get them to see the glass half full, as opposed to half empty. We heard the word I or we can’t more times than I care to remember.

So in 2008, we traveled to the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Missionary Baptist Church in Anniston, Alabama and encouraged the brother to “Drop the T “. When we drop the letter (T) from the word can’t; we have the word “CAN” ... and when we start to believe that we can, then consider it done. But as long as we convince ourselves we CAN”T we are defeated ... Brother Laymen, we have made much progress, but we still have some CAN”T, we still need to drop the (T).

Last year in Mobile, I warned you that “It’s Decision Time” As Joshua challenged the children of Israel to choose which God they would serve; I challenged you to decide where we stand in

this Laymen Movement ... Do we really want to improve or do we just want to exist.

(QUESTION) Do we desire to be a vital part of a ministry that inspire **fellowship**, create **relationship**, produce **leadership** that lead to church or convention **growth**?

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(QUESTION) Are we satisfied with **Leave me alone; I'm doing my own thing!** My brothers, its still decision time, and time for us to choose.

**Today I want to say to you "Stay on the wall" Nehemiah 6:3**

This thought comes from the story of Nehemiah (6:3) that finds him concerned about the welfare of Jerusalem and its people. Nehemiah held a position of great responsibility ... his role of tasting the King's wine to prevent him from being poisoned, placed Nehemiah in a position of trust and confidence as one of the King's advisers.

Later as governor of Jerusalem, Nehemiah demonstrates courage, compassion for the oppressed, integrity, godliness, and selflessness. He was willing to give up the luxury and ease of the palace to help his people.

He was a dedicated Laymen who had his priorities right, and was concerned for God's work – one who was able to encourage and rebuke at the right times, who was strong in prayer, and who gave all glory and credit to God.

For sixty one (61) years, the Laymen of this Convention have built walls on which we stand today.

- Deacon W. S. Nichols, our first president from the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Anniston Alabama and the Laymen of that area, laid a solid foundation.
- Deacons W. S. Hayes of Dothan ... and O. J. Smith of Daphne, Alabama supplied the needed material for building
- Deacons Alphonzo Byrd of Troy, Alabama ... and Dr. Richard Showers of Huntsville, Alabama erected the walls where we now stand.

I can imagine, like Nehemiah, they all encounter much criticism and adversary along the way, but thanks be to God they: **STAYED ON THE WALL** ... and we should care enough to now stand and fight to preserve what has been built.

For sixty one (61) years, the afore mentioned leaders and a supporting cast of thousands, sacrificed their time and neglected family for the cause of Christ. I am told by some of those

supporters that are blessed to still be with us today, that they had very little in the way of resources, but much in desire.

Fellow Laymen, we should be honored to continue a work that has produced quality men, both leaders and followers from across this state.

My wife and I were privileged to attend a function in Birmingham, Alabama a few days ago, where twelve (12) such men were honored by the northwest district. Borrowing a few excerpts from that program, President Alvin Moore said the following of those men

“Our honorees have invested their lives in others, showing them the way .... They have been faithful men who have stood at the fork in the road, and made the right choice in which direction to take. They understood that there is a path that leads to God, and a path that leads away from him ... They did not get sidetracked they made the right choice, not travelling the broad road that lead to destruction.” Very well said President Moore.

Through these men, we have been advised as young Timothy were in a letter from the apostle Paul, while Paul was in prison ... There will be ordeals, tests, trials, and tribulations that we will have to bear, but do so and endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Soldiers on the battle field is exposed to danger at all times, he must be physically and mentally prepared to endure the risks, the suffering, the hardships, and all kinds of unpleasantness.

Many started, but some failed to endure, to endure is to persevere in spite of the odds. Some failed during basic training, others didn't make the grade in active duty, they did not have the means or determination to accept and survive.

The trail blazers of yesterday had issues to contend with ... every child of God then and now, must suffer hardships.

- The apostle Paul found himself plagued with a thorn in his flesh.
- Stephen, the first deacon of the church, was stoned to death.
- Timothy suffered with stomach trouble
- Matthew was killed in Ethiopia with a sword.
- Mark was drugged through the streets of Alexandria.
- Luke was hanged by the neck on a tree in Greece.
- John was put in a boiling kettle of oil.
- Phillip was also hanged to death.
- Andrew was bound to a cross and died there preaching.
- Barnabus, like Stephen was stoned to death.
- And Paul himself had his head chopped off at Nero's chopping block.

When you are on the battle field for the Lord, you are in a never-ending war, and the right thing is seldom the most popular thing. But we must learn to endure.

Nehemiah answered the call to return to his homeland and rebuild the wall to the city. In doing so, he faced opposition through ridicule ... threats of attack ... discouragement

### **BUT HE STAY ON THE WALL**

Opposition through extortion ... compromise ... slander, and treachery – but they completed the task.

Fellow laborers, it has been said before, man is forever on the testing ground, being tested by the most severe of enemies.

Throughout life, right is continually being challenged by wrong. In order not to be caught in the crisis, one must always be watchful and on the alert.

Finally fellow Laymen, Brother and Sisters, As Nehemiah exhorted his countryman then, I exhort you today **“Let US RISE UP”** and continue to build. Let the work not cease, for we are doing a great work, and we can’t come down **“Stay on The Wall”**. To the New leadership of this State Convention on tomorrow whom ever if may be, our prayer is that you not set us back.

It took Nehemiah and his people only fifty two (52) days to restore the walls, but it took years to restore the people. It has

taken the Laymen sixty one (61) years to reach this point in our state convention, we must not go back.

There will be some difficult days ahead, but lets face them, walking Hand-n-Hand for the cause of Christ. We can't win the race, if we're not in the race. God bless you now, let's have a great convention.

**LET'S STAY ON THE WALL**