

# Listen to the Spirit, receive the anointing, Coffey urges Baptists

July 29, 2010

HONOLULU — Human effort and creative strategies lead to futility apart from an anointing by God's Holy Spirit, British Baptist leader David Coffey told the opening session of the Baptist World Congress, July 28 in Honolulu.

Coffey, who completes his five-year term as president of the [Baptist World Alliance](#) at the international gathering in Hawaii, challenged Baptists from around the world to hear and heed the Holy Spirit.

Outgoing BWA president David Coffey preaches in the opening session of the Baptist World Congress. (Photo by Rand Jenkins)

"We can be a purpose-driven church. We can be a seeker-sensitive church. We can be an emergent and creative church. We can be a justice-and-peace church. We can be a conservative Calvinist church. But if we fail to hear the Holy Spirit of the living God, then all our serving will be futile and fruitless," he said.

Baptists run the risk of having "the appointing without the anointing," he warned.

From his virgin birth to his empowered ministry of teaching, preaching, healing and perfect obedience to God's plan, the Holy Spirit rested upon Jesus Christ, Coffey observed.

"The Holy Spirit is integral to the birth, the identity and the mission ministry of Jesus," he said. "So, why is it we so often to choose to go it alone?"

When Baptists choose to follow their own methods and timing rather than God's, they fail to follow in the footsteps of their forebears, Coffey noted. He cited the example of early English Baptists John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, missionary Lottie Moon and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

God wants the Spirit-filled ministry of Jesus Christ to continue through his people, Coffey said.

"The essence of the Holy Spirit's ministry is to bring the presence of Christ to his people. His purpose is that Jesus is known, loved, honored and praised," he said.

The Spirit of God brings attention to the Son of God, exalting Christ and making him known, he said.

To be the people God has called them to be, Baptists should be able to testify the Holy Spirit lives within them and rests upon them, Coffey said.

"If you can't say the Holy Spirit is in me, then you cannot be truly part of God's family. If you can't say the Holy Spirit is on me, you cannot be truly effective in ministry," he said.

When the Holy Spirit rests upon God's people, obedience and service mark their lives, he said.

"When the Holy Spirit is truly upon people, Jesus is leading his people and it shows," Coffey said. "It produces healthy churches and fruitful mission.

"The Holy Spirit inspires praise and worship. He creates fellowship between diverse people. ... The greatest sign of the Holy Spirit on us is that God makes us part of his action plan for winning a lost world. ... He has called and equipped us to be the actors in his great drama."

When God's people are anointed by God's Spirit, they have no call to them

of themselves as “nobodies,” Coffey insisted.

“Friends, the people of God are never a little people. The world may despise and hate us. The world may persecute us and seek to destroy us. The world may exercise might without morality and power without compassion,” he said.

“But the truth is when the world has left the battlefield, the last people standing will be those who can exclaim, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me.’”

At a news conference prior to the opening session of the Baptist World Congress, Coffey characterized the global Baptist fellowship as a people of “praying hands and dirty hands” — people who seek the Holy Spirit for vision but who face the world as it is and seek to make it better.

Coffey reflected briefly on his five years as BWA president and a few words of counsel for President-elect John Upton.

“We don’t have to make the gospel relevant, but we do have to demonstrate its relevance,” he said.

Baptists also need to respond to the challenge to “demonstrate the ongoing vitality of being a Baptist,” Coffey concluded. “The next generation may not want to inherit our institutional structures, but they want our vision.”

Coffey, a former Baptist pastor, was general secretary of the [Baptist Union of Great Britain](#) for 15 years before retiring.

—Ken Camp is managing editor of the *Texas Baptist Standard*.