



The President's Corner

REMEMBERING CALVIN BURRELL – A BSA SERVANT

Kelly McDonald

On June 29th of this year, Calvin Burrell passed away. There are few people who have had the kind of impact on the BSA and the broader Sabbath community that Calvin had in his lifetime. In this edition of *The Sabbath Sentinel*, I want to pen a tribute to his life and work for the BSA and the Sabbath community.

Calvin was born at home to his parents Lawrence and Lottie Burrell in 1943. This was near the time that the BSA was founded. For many years, the Burrell house was the headquarters for the organization. His parents served as the BSA Secretary-Treasurer for over 40 years.

BSA Work

Calvin grew up in a home where serving God and others was emphasized. The dining room table was an assembly line for mailings. Folding, stuffing, addressing, stamping, sorting, and stacking for these mail-outs was a routine activity in their home.

Here is a quote from Calvin concerning his upbringing in a BSA home: “Growing up in a BSA home, we often mixed with folks beyond our own church. I still dream of greater fellowship, and collaboration among the many Sabbath keeping believers who are too often isolated behind denominational and doctrinal walls. BSA is one of the few voices out there committed to celebrate what we share in Christ, in the Bible, and in the good gift of God's weekly Sabbath. Let's make BSA work for all of us.”

Over the years, Calvin would tell us stories from his youth. Among them was how many visitors stopped by the Burrell home to visit with their family, ask questions about the Sabbath, and learn about the BSA. The Burrell family welcomed all people to learn about the Kingdom of God. Among these visitors were people who decades later would connect with the BSA work!

During his life, Calvin held many positions in the BSA. He was a board member from 1985-2020. From the late 1980s into the 1990s, he served as

Vice President on multiple boards. He served as President from 2012-2015, Secretary from 2016-2020, and was nominated and approved as Board Member Emeritus in 2021.

His other activities include: He was a regular contributor to the Sabbath Sentinel Magazine. He worked on updates to the group's Constitution/By-laws. He was instrumental in helping piece together the 2015 BSA directory of Sabbath keeping Churches. He participated in BSA elections and manned booths for the BSA. He served on a book committee to approve new materials to be offered through the organization.

To summarize, Calvin contributed in one fashion or another to nearly every activity connected to the BSA outreach.

Church of God Seventh Day Work

As busy as Calvin seemed with the BSA throughout his life, he was also a very dedicated member and minister for the Church of God Seventh Day (Denver Conference). He received a BA in teaching from Northwestern Teachers College in Alva, Oklahoma, and a Master of Religion from Bethany Nazarene College. These degrees equipped him for the work he would do through his home church.

As a member of the Church of God seventh day, he held nearly every position. This included, but was not limited, to: President of the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day), Editor of The Bible Advocate (the Church magazine), President of the International Ministerial Congress, and Missions Abroad Director. He also taught at Summit School of Theology, Life Spring, and Artios. He was a teacher and principal at Spring Vale Academy and pastored churches in Fort Smith, Arkansas, Shawnee, Oklahoma, Denver, Colorado, and Houston, Texas. He was a published author, on countless boards and advisory committees.

Calvin was a busy man!

A Family Man

While Calvin was busy doing God's work, he did not neglect his loved ones. He was a family man. He married his wife Barbara in 1966 and together they celebrated their 56th year of marriage earlier this year. He was known as a dedicated husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. Together with Barbara, they reared three children. At the time of his passing, Calvin and Barbara had 17 grandchildren and three great grand-children.

An Avid Outdoorsman

Over the last seven years of knowing Calvin, I was not aware how involved he was with outdoor sports. He enjoyed golfing and sightseeing. Even more impressive was the fact that he hiked all 54 of the 14,000 ft mountains in Colorado. He also hiked in other states.

My Friend and BSA Mentor

This article would not be complete for me unless I shared some personal testimony about how he impacted my life. In 2015, Calvin Burrell invited me to run for the BSA board election. I was honored just to be invited to serve in this capacity. I honestly did not think anything would come of it, but some opportunities in life only come once. I accepted just so I could say I gave it a try!

I was in for a big surprise. First, I was nominated to the board by the BSA membership. For the first board meeting, I planned to run for secretary. I wanted to start at the bottom and understand how the organization worked. Well, God had a different plan. At the first board meeting, Calvin asked for nominations for President. No one said anything. Calvin then asked me to share my thoughts on the direction the BSA needed to take.

After I spent some time sharing, John Merritt nominated me for President. It was followed by a second and then unanimous yes. It happened so fast I didn't have any time to react. I was shocked! I accepted the nomination realizing that I didn't have much of a choice at the time. When Calvin prompted me to share my thoughts about the BSA, it was prophetic!

I did not have the slightest clue about how to run a board. I was baffled, to say the least. Little did I know that Calvin Burrell was going to be there for me and guide me every step of the way. In those early days, it seemed like I called or emailed him nearly every week.

As busy as he was, he always took the time to give advice and prayers for the situation or issue I was having. He always spoke to me with such gentleness and wisdom. I eventually got to the place where I did not have to contact him as much. But if I ever needed his assistance, he was gladly there. There was times I could actually



feel his prayers on my behalf as God gave me wisdom and guidance on the direction of the BSA.

As I became more experienced with the BSA, I sometimes would call Calvin just to report to him how the BSA was doing. In some ways, I am saddened that he won't be able to see some of our current work and the plans we have for the future. He was always excited to hear the progress we were making with the group.

Great Advice

Over the years, Calvin provided invaluable insight into working with people from other Sabbath groups and navigating through their differences with each other. Using this advice, I went on the road to visit various Sabbath groups across the country. The more I traveled, the more I appreciated the views that different groups had. Calvin prepared me for this experience and really helped me to adjust as I encountered some difficulties along the way.

I can remember one particular time I had people who really came against me. I asked Calvin as to how I should respond, and he simply said: "Sometimes the best defense you have against your enemies is silence." I took his advice on this many times and it was great advice to say the least! But Calvin had many other bits of wisdom he shared. He always encouraged me to never be afraid of the views of other Sabbath keepers. Learn to respect their beliefs, but also make sure you understand your own.

He was not quick to make an accusation against other Christians – sabbath keepers or not. He wanted to gain understanding about their practice in a way that was not judgmental. Calvin would ask me and others questions about their beliefs. It was not to argue, but to understand. This is a rare trait in the Sabbath community and even Christianity at large.

Great Example

To this point, Calvin was never afraid to fellowship with other Christians even if they had very different beliefs. He was never intimidated because he was secure in his own beliefs. A great reminder for us all. His attitude in this area always reminded me of the verse in 2 Tim. 1:7 – "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

Often Sabbath keepers operate out of fear towards others who view things differently. In fact, a lot of problems in the Sabbath Community come from insecure leaders. This was not the case with Calvin. He knew how to stand his ground with his own be-



Are you enjoying the encouragement that the Bible Sabbath Association is bringing through its efforts? You can support the effort at no cost to you!

You can help support the cause, and help us continue to provide our magazine and services without charge. Simply sign up your Amazon Smile account with the BIBLE SABBATH ASSOCIATION named as your charity of choice.

Prices for products remain exactly the same, but Amazon will contribute 0.5% of the sale to your named charity: BIBLE SABBATH ASSOCIATION.

Simply go to smile.amazon.com, log into your account and choose us as your charity. Then, whenever you shop at Amazon, enter the site by going to smile.amazon.com, being sure that we are listed as the charity. Again, there is NO ADDITIONAL COST TO YOU! If you are going to purchase products on Amazon.com anyway, why not support this great work!



*Your BSA Work of Love,
proclaiming the Love of God
and of His Son, continues to
seek the Godly goal of reconcilia-
tion! Please help us with
a donation!*

liefs, but still love and appreciate others.

To illustrate this example, I will share with you an example. In 2016, the BSA board attended an in person gathering hosted by Dr. John Merritt in Tampa, FL. Dr. Merritt was attending a Hebrew Roots fellowship at that time, and we all went to visit. I remember this visit like it was yesterday.

The first part of the service was interesting. The leader of the group asked Calvin to speak about Sabbath history. Without hesitation, Calvin stood up and shared what he knew. That was impressive to me as many people would not be able to speak impromptu in a church with which they had no familiarity. Without fear, he spoke with conviction and passion.

The next part of the service involved live worship music. In the middle part of the meeting hall, they had Hebraic dance. Calvin jumped right in and danced without hesitation. This was amazing to me as most Sabbatharians do not practice this form of worship. He recognized that these ardent Sabbatharians were worshipping God even if it was different to him.

The last memory from this event is when we were in the car heading back for the board meeting that evening. Calvin curiously asked me why I practiced the Holy Days and what Bible verses supported the idea of a plan of salvation in the Holy Days. I shared with him Colossians 2:16-17, the meaning of those verses, and future prophetic events in Christ that they represent – past, present, and future. He acknowledged that I had a good answer and did not try to argue with me or nitpick my answers. He just wanted to learn more. He admitted that he had considered observing the Day of Atonement.

Calvin loved the Sabbath. He often said it was the best day of the week. In my early days as a BSA board member, I can recall him asking other board members: “How was the best day of the week for you?” He also loved Sabbath keepers of all beliefs.

He was a great family member, father, grand father, great-grand father, mentor, and brother to many people. He will be greatly missed.

