

## Dr. Ralph Sexton Sr.



(Sept. 14,1919 – Jan.13,2004)

**The following words are from Dr. Ralph Sexton Sr.'s obituary:**

Dr. Ralph Hanes Sexton, Sr., 84, of 156 Shelburne Road went home to be with Jesus Tuesday, January 13, 2004 at his residence.

Dr. Sexton was born to the late Charlie Harrison Sexton and Mary Elizabeth Shetley Sexton on September 14, 1919. He was born in a log cabin just beyond Buzzard Rock at Sassafras Gap on the Ox Creek side of Elk Mountain.

He was a 1937 Graduate of Emma High School where he was Valedictorian of his class. He attended Toccoa Falls Bible College in Georgia and Nyack Missionary Training Institute in Nyack, N.Y. He received his Doctor of Divinity by Tabernacle Baptist College, Greenville, SC on May 25, 1979.

Dr. Sexton was Pastor Emeritus of Trinity Baptist Church on 216 Shelburne Road, Asheville. He preached for 66 years starting in the streets, in tent meetings, in Jesus Saves Mission (of which he and his brother, Lee built and still stands below the east end of the eastbound lanes of Smokey Park Bridge). He then preached at the Church of the Nazarene, 107 State Street and in 1968 founded Trinity Baptist Church.

Throughout his ministry Dr. Sexton did Daily Broadcast Radio on WWNC through World War II, started his TV Ministry in 1960 on WLOS-TV of which it continues today on Cable Channel 16.

In addition to his parents he was preceded in death by his brothers, Lee, Raymond, Perry and Paul Sexton; sister, Evelyn Roberson and great grandchildren, Ralph Jackson Parrish and Kalin Rebecca Ingle.

Surviving are his wife, Jacqueline Buckner Sexton of which they were married on Christmas Eve in 1944, having just celebrated their 59th wedding anniversary; son, Pastor Ralph Sexton, Jr. and wife, Muzette of Leicester; daughter, Rebecca Templeton and husband, Jim of Asheville; grandchildren, Beverly Sexton Parrish and husband, Dwight of Costa Rica, Mark Sexton and wife, Sheri, Matthew Templeton and wife, Heather of Asheville, Pastor Kent Sexton and wife, Leigh of Clinton, Maine and Elizabeth Ingle and husband, Josh of Candler; great grandchildren, Winston Parrish, Savannah Parrish, Scarlett Parrish, Preston Sexton, Sophia Parrish, Ian Sexton, Alena Templeton, Irely Ingle, Alexis Sexton and Juliet Sexton; brother, Frank Sexton and wife, Jean of Alexander and sister, Ethel Hyatt of Asheville.

Dr. Sexton will lie in state from 11 a.m. Thursday at Trinity Baptist Church until the service hour.

The family will receive friends from 6 to 9 p.m. Thursday at the church and at other times will be at the residence.

Funeral services will be at 1 p.m. Friday at the Trinity Baptist Church with Pastor Ralph Sexton, Jr., Pastor Jerry Payne, and Dr. Sextons grandsons, Brother Matthew Templeton and Pastor Kent Sexton officiating. Burial will be in Green Hills Cemetery.

Pallbearers will be Matthew Templeton, Mark Sexton, Kent Sexton, Josh Ingle, Paul McKinney, Cliff Shuler, Dwight Parrish and Danny Quinn.

**The honorable Charles Taylor Congressman said the following about him:**

With the death of the Rev. Sexton Sr., Asheville lost one of the most energetic and effective members of its religious community. Sexton, who founded Trinity Baptist Church, died from a brain tumor. He was 84.

Sexton began preaching when he was just a teenager after being drawn into a tent revival where he gave his heart to God. He was on his way to see a movie when he physically felt something pull on his coat. "He said it really frightened him," said Jerry Payne, who served as Sexton's assistant pastor for 42 years. Sexton left the movie and ended up at the tent revival.

Not long afterwards, he began preaching. And what a preacher he was. In the early years, he preached in tents and front yards, in empty lots and driving down the street in a car outfitted with a loudspeaker. He even found himself in jail a few times when police arrested him for disturbing the peace. "He was from that old mountain cut," Payne said. "He preached in simple layman's terms."

"He was just a powerful preacher," according to his longtime friend, J. Wendell Runion, president and director of International Baptist Outreach Missions based in Asheville. Audiences were "spellbound" by him, Runion said. In time, Sexton found a more potent way to deliver his message about Christ. His Sunday morning television program "Send the Light" first went on the air in 1960. He also preached on radio and at tent revivals. Then in 1966, Sexton founded Trinity Baptist Church. He built an auditorium for 500 people even though he had a congregation of about only 125.

Trinity has since grown into one of Asheville's largest churches, with programs that support missionaries around the world and provide assistance to the victims of poverty, natural disasters and famine. Trinity's programs today include a Spanish Church, Trinity Baptist Bible College and Hearts with Hands, a nondenominational nonprofit humanitarian relief organization. Sexton served as the church's pastor until 1988, when his son, Dr. Ralph Sexton Jr., who had served for 13 years as youth pastor and evangelist, became pastor. The senior Sexton remained pastor emeritus and stayed involved despite health problems.

Sexton, who was always true to his calling, will be remembered as "a very straightforward, unashamed preacher of the Gospel," according to Asheville Citizen-Times columnist Bob Terrell, who wrote a book about him. "He was a giant among the nation's old-time religionists," Terrell said. "He helped change literally thousands of lives."

Sexton was a man of God and of the mountains who will be missed by many. His family and others who loved him can take comfort in knowing that he left a legacy through which lives will continue to be changed and enriched.