

## Paul and Water Baptism By Pastor Art Watkins

### **1 Corinthians**

**14-16 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.**

These verses must be interpreted in view of the people they were written to and from the context. They were written to the church at Corinth and that church began in Acts 18 when they believed the gospel Paul preached.

Acts 18:7-8

**And he (Paul) departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.**

**And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.**

All of the Corinthians who believed Paul's preaching were baptized. How many of them were baptized? A few? A couple? A handful? No. It says MANY. But yet Paul said he baptized just a few of them and was glad he did not baptize all of them. Why did he say this? He wrote: **Lest any should say he had baptized in his own name.** The Corinthians were divided into warring factions and when Paul heard it he was glad he did not baptize all of them. They were all baptized, but it was not Paul who did it and looking back he was glad because they would have all bragged and boasted they were baptized in the name of Paul. But they couldn't say that because he baptized just a few of them. He did not thank God they were not baptized, because they were all baptized. He thanked God he didn't do it in view of how carnal they were and the tendency they had of boasting in men.

### **Verse 17**

**For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.**

These words were written to people that he persuaded to be baptized. When they heard Paul preach it says they believed and were baptized, so

what does he mean Christ sent me not to baptize? If they were persuaded to be baptized by Paul's preaching does this contradict what he said in verse 17? No. A text is always interpreted by its context. In the context ***salvation is the main issue.***

*Read these verses carefully.*

In verse 18 he wrote; ***For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.***

In verse 21 he wrote: ***For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.***

In verse 23-24 he wrote; ***But we preach Christ crucified, (for salvation) unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, (unto salvation) and the wisdom of God.***

In the context salvation is the main issue and they give us the answer to the puzzle of 1 Corinthians 1:17. It is simple; ***When it came to salvation Christ did not send Paul to baptize, but to preach the gospel, for the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, not water baptism.***

Paul preached water baptism for after the Corinthians heard him preach they were baptized, but we learn in 1 Corinthians 1 that it was not for salvation. When it came to salvation, Paul preached the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation and not water baptism. When he said Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, he is saying that it is the gospel that saves, not water baptism.

The practice of water baptism underwent a gradual change in the book of Acts which is a transitional book. Many transitions took place in the Acts period and one of them is water baptism. To see the change compare these verses with each other.

Acts 2:37-38

***Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.***

Now read Acts 10:44-48

***While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.***

***And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.***

***For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,***

***Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?***

***And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.***

In Acts 2 the people were required to be baptized to receive remission of sins and the Holy Ghost. But in Acts 10 Cornelius was saved and received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized. He was saved and received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized and without becoming a Jewish proselyte. This was major change in water baptism because for the first time in history an uncircumcised gentile received the Holy Spirit before he was baptized and without becoming a Jewish proselyte. From that time forward those who baptized did so for other reasons than salvation. Paul baptized all of his converts, but it was not according to Acts 2:38.

There is one thing we must be very, very sure about; What we must do to be saved. We must be sure we have done what is necessary to be saved because one second after we die we can't come back and do what we failed to do. I want to be sure now that I have done what is necessary to be saved, don't you? If there is something that I have failed to do, then I want to do it, don't you?

The issue we are dealing with is water baptism. Is water baptism necessary along with believing to be saved today? We must be absolutely sure about

this because if water baptism is necessary and you are not baptized you will end up in hell. It's a very important issue. Suppose that after you died you end up in hell because you were not baptized? If water baptism is a requirement for salvation and you were not baptized before you die, you will end up in hell. Therefore we must search the scriptures to make sure that what we believe about water baptism is true.

I will tell you ahead of time that the so called grace movement as they call it does not have the answer to water baptism. They think they do, but they don't and I will show you why. The Baptists have it half right. The church of Christ has it half right. To get it totally right we must read the scriptures and believe what we read.

In Mark 16:16 Jesus gave the apostles a commission to go into all the world and to preach the gospel to every creature. He also said: ***He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.***

If words mean what they say and say what they mean, this verse clearly says that water baptism was necessary for salvation. The Lord did not say he that believeth only shall be saved. He did not say he that is baptized only shall be saved. He *said he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*. Both believing and water baptism were necessary to be saved.

Most grace preachers agree that water baptism in Mark 16 was necessary for salvation. But my Baptist friends do not believe it. Baptists are quick to point out that the man who did not believe was damned, not the man who was not baptized. That's true, but that does not mean water baptism was not necessary, because water baptism was of no value to a man if he did not first believe. The man who was saved believed first and then was baptized. If he didn't believe, being baptized was of no profit. But if a man believed he was required to be baptized. It was not an option.

In Acts 2:38 Peter carried out the commission God gave him in Mark 16 and here is what he said: ***Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.***

In Acts 2 what Peter knew about water baptism is what the Lord said about it in Mark 16. He knew it was necessary along with believing to be saved because that is what the Lord said. Peter clearly states that the men he preached to had to be baptized BEFORE they could receive remission of

sins and BEFORE they could receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. In Acts 2 water baptism was FOR the remission of sins. If words mean what they say and say what they mean, water baptism was a requirement in Acts 2 along with believing to receive remission of sins and the Holy Ghost.

Most people in the so called grace movement agree with this, but the Baptists do not. They do not believe water baptism has ever played a part in salvation and so they change the words in Acts 2:38 to read *on account of remission of sins*. They teach they were not baptized for or to receive remission of sins, but because they had remission of sins. In other words, remission of sins and receiving the Holy Ghost came first and then water baptism. They reverse the order. They do this because Baptist doctrine says water baptism never had a part in salvation. Because Baptist doctrine says water baptism has never played a part in salvation, they are forced to change the words in Acts 2:38 to make Peter say they should get baptized because their sins were remitted instead of saying you must be baptized for or to get your sins remitted.

But they are wrong and that is why Baptists always lose their debates with the church of Christ over the issue of water baptism. The church of Christ believes Acts 2:38 means what it says and says what it means and they are right. The Baptists don't and that is why they change the verse to make it say just the opposite of what Peter said. When reading Acts 2:38 always remember that what Peter said was based upon what the Lord said to him in Mark 16:16; The Lord said: ***He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*** That is what Acts 2:38 says; it plainly says that if a man wanted his sins remitted he had to first believe, repent and be baptized FOR not on account of remission of sins.

Any time a man has to change the words in the Bible to prove his doctrine then you know his doctrine is false. And any man who changes the words in the Bible because they contradict his private doctrine is handling the word of God deceitfully. Baptists are guilty of this in Acts 2 and Mark 16.

In Acts 8:12 Phillip preach the gospel in Samaria and it says: ***But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.***

Who is Philip and why did he baptize? Read Acts 6:1-7. He was one of the 7 original deacons ordained by the 12 apostles. Therefore, what he knew

and believed about water baptism is what he learned from the 12 apostles. The 12 apostles were his teachers and what they taught him about water baptism is what he believed and why he baptized the people in Acts 8. In Acts 2:38 Peter and the apostles preached and practiced water baptism for the remission of sins. They did so because the Lord sent them to preach: *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved* in Mark. 16:16. Therefore, the people in Acts 8 were baptized for the same reason as those in Acts 2; for salvation and remission of sins.

The Baptists do not agree with this, but most preachers in the so called grace movement do agree with this. They believe that Philip preached what he learned from the 12 apostles. And if the apostles in Acts 2 preached remission of sins by believing and water baptism then so did Philip. Most grace preachers and believers will agree with what I have said thus far, but when they see Paul baptizing they become like the Baptists.

In Acts 18:8 Paul preached the gospel of grace to the Corinthians and it says: ***And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.***

Compare this verse with Acts 8:12.

***But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.***

What did the people in Acts 8 do when they heard Philip preach? It says they believed and were baptized. What did the people in Corinth do when they heard Paul preach? They believed and were baptized.

If they were baptized after they heard Paul preach, did Paul preach water baptism? It's obvious he did just like Philip in Acts 8. The people in Acts 8 were baptized when they heard Philip preach; therefore he must have preached water baptism. If the Corinthians were baptized when they heard Paul preach then he must have preached water baptism.

This is where many of the people in the grace movement go astray. Most of them do not believe Paul preached water baptism because of what he said in 1 Corinthians 1:17. But what he said in 1 Corinthians 1:17 were said to people who were persuaded to be baptized when they heard Paul preach.

Therefore, 1 Corinthians 1:17 does not mean that Paul did not preach or practice or persuade men to be baptized for its obvious he did.

***Examples of Paul preaching, practicing and persuading men to be baptized***

***Acts 16:12-14: And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.***

***And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.***

***And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.***

Lydia and her household attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul. In other words, she took heed to what Paul said. When she attended unto what Paul said, what did she do? The same thing the Corinthians did in Acts 18 and what the people did in Acts 8; she believed and she and her household were baptized. If she was baptized by attending unto what Paul said, then it is obvious Paul must have said something about water baptism. Therefore, to say Paul did not preach water baptism is wrong. It obvious he did by the fact that after this woman heard Paul preach she was baptized along with her household.

***Acts 16:31-34: And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.***

***And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.***

***And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.***

***And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.***

After the jailor believed on the Lord Jesus Christ he washed the stripes of Paul and Paul baptized him and his family. Here is another example of Paul

baptizing a man who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He was baptized by Paul straightway after he believed, just like the Corinthians in Acts 18 and Lydia in Acts 16:12-14.

I have read these verses to show that Paul preached, practiced and persuaded men to be baptized. Preachers in the grace movement say Paul did not preach water baptism and some even say he did not baptize anyone, but the indisputable facts say he did. They do not believe Paul preached or practiced water baptism because they do not understand 1 Corinthians 1:17. To them this verse means Paul did not preach or practice water baptism. But the fact is he did both as you just read. This is why I say the grace movement does not have the answer to water baptism. The very man who said Christ sent me not to baptize in 1 Corinthians 1:17 persuaded the people he wrote it to be baptized! So they are wrong on this issue and it is an issue you better be right about. You can't just flip it off by quoting half of 1 Corinthians 1:17.

We know that Paul baptized. There is no question about that. What we must determine is why he baptized. You just read Acts 8:12 and Acts 18:8. They say the same thing. If they say the same thing how do you know Paul preached water baptism in Acts 18 for a different reason than Philip in Acts 8? When the people heard Paul and Philip preach, both groups of people responded the same way; they believed and were baptized. We know that Philip preached water baptism for the remission of sins in Acts 8 because he was taught this by the 12 apostles. But how do we know Paul did not preach water baptism for the remission of sins?

The Baptists and the grace people and the church of Christ do not have the answer to this. The church of Christ says Paul baptized for the same reason Philip and the apostles did. The grace people say Paul did not even preach water baptism. And the Baptists say water baptism was never for salvation. The answer to the problem is the salvation of Cornelius in Acts 10, The salvation of Paul in Acts 9, The context of 1 Corinthians 1:17.

### **The salvation of Cornelius**

Compare these verses together again

***Acts 2:38: Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.***

**Acts 10:45-48: And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.**

**For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,**

**Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?**

**And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.**

What you see in these verses is a major change in water baptism. In Acts 2 baptism preceded salvation and receiving the Holy Ghost. In Acts 10 baptism came AFTER salvation and receiving the Holy Ghost. The order is reversed. The people in Acts 2 did not receive the Holy Ghost or salvation until they were first baptized in water. Cornelius and his family received the Holy Ghost and were saved BEFORE they were baptized. This means water baptism did not have a part in the salvation of Cornelius. He was baptized in water, but not for salvation or to receive the Holy Ghost for he had already received the Holy Ghost and was saved before he was baptized.

How was Cornelius saved?

See Acts 15:7-11:

**And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.**

**And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;**

**And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.**

**Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?**

**But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.**

According to Peter Cornelius was saved by grace (11) through faith alone (9) without keeping the law (10) or being circumcised (Acts 11:3) and before he was baptized (Acts 10:47-48). And Peter said that as God saved Cornelius he would save the Jews.

## The salvation of Paul

**Acts 9:17-18:**

***And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.***

***And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.***

By the laying on of Ananias hands he was not only given his sight back, but was filled with the Holy Ghost. Paul believed on Christ in Acts 9:6 when he called him Lord. But he was not filled with the Holy Ghost until Ananias laid hands on him in Acts 9:17. But it was AFTER Paul was filled with the Holy Ghost that he was baptized in verse 18. He was like Cornelius; he was filled with the Holy Ghost and then he was baptized.

Acts was a period of change. Water baptism was like many things in the Acts period that changed. There were things that the saints in the Acts period did that we don't do today. We do not sell all of our houses and lands and possessions and give the money to the apostles or the church to evenly distribute to the other saints as they did in Acts 2 and Acts 4. The church of Christ is very vocal about Acts 2:38 and say we should obey Acts 2:38 but they do not obey Acts 2:44-45 which says: ***And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*** The saints in Acts 4:34 did the same thing.

We do not worship God in the temple in Jerusalem, but they did. We do not observe feast days and Sabbath days, but many believers in Acts did. Acts is a book of change and one thing that changed was water baptism. In early Acts, people were saved and received the Spirit after they were baptized. Later in Acts as in the case of Paul in Acts 9 and Cornelius in Acts 10 they were baptized AFTER they were saved and received the Spirit.

## The context of 1 Corinthians 1

***17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.***

I want to remind you again that what Paul wrote in this verse was written to people that he persuaded to be baptized in Acts 18. When the Corinthians

heard Paul preach it says; they believed and were baptized, so what does he mean Christ sent me not to baptize? If they were persuaded to be baptized by Paul's preaching does this contradict what he said in verse 17? Put yourself in their shoes: Let's say a man persuades you to be baptized and then you receive a letter from him saying: Christ sent me not to baptize. What would you think? You would probably say that he needs to clarify what he means and Paul does just that in the context. A text is always interpreted by its context. In the context **salvation is the main issue.**

*Read these verses carefully.*

In verse 18 he wrote; ***For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (The power of God unto salvation is the preaching of the cross)***

In verse 21 he wrote: ***For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (What preaching saves? The preaching of the cross)***

In verse 23-24 he wrote; ***But we preach Christ crucified, (for salvation) unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, (unto salvation) and the wisdom of God.***

Salvation is the main issue in the verses that follow 1 Corinthians 1:17 and they give us the answer to the puzzle of 1 Corinthians 1:17. It is simple; ***When it came to salvation Christ did not send Paul to baptize, but to preach the gospel, for the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, not water baptism.***

It's obvious Paul preached water baptism for after the Corinthians and the Philippians and Ephesians heard him preach they were baptized, but not for salvation. When it came to salvation Paul preached the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation not water baptism. When he said Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, he is saying that it is the gospel and the cross that saves not water baptism.

Most grace preachers over look the context of 1 Corinthians 1:17. They over look it in their misguided zeal to prove Paul did not preach water baptism. But that cannot be the correct interpretation because we have seen he did over and over again. They wrest the verse out of its context to make it say something totally foreign to the context. In the context Paul is not saying he did not baptize or preach water baptism. He is showing us that water baptism does not save, but it's the gospel and the preaching of the cross alone that saves.

A smart church of Christ preacher wins the debate with the Baptists and most grace preachers about water baptism.

The Baptists say water baptism does not and has never saved anyone. All a church of Christ preacher has to do is hold his feet to the fire in Acts 2:38 and Mark 16:15 which plainly say that men were saved by being baptized along with believing and he wins the debate.

Many grace preachers say Paul did not preach or practice water baptism and use 1 Corinthians 1:17 to prove it. All a church of Christ preacher has to do is show him Acts 16, Acts 18 and Acts 19 where Paul preached and practiced and persuaded men to be baptized and he wins the debate.

Neither one has the answer because of their preconceived ideas and private doctrines about water baptism.

What about 1 Corinthians 1:14-16?

***14-16 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.***

These verses must be interpreted in view of the people they are written to and from the context. All of the Corinthians who believed Paul's preaching were baptized and their numbers were many. Yet Paul said he baptized just a few of them and was glad he did not baptize all of them. Why did he say this? He said: **Lest any should say he had baptized in his own name.** After the Corinthians were saved they became divided up into warring factions and when Paul heard it he was glad he did not baptize all of them. They were all baptized, but it was not Paul who did it and looking

back he was glad because they would have all bragged and boasted they were baptized in the name of Paul. But they couldn't say that because he baptized just a few of them. He did not thank God they were not baptized because they were all baptized; he thanked God he didn't do it in view of how carnal they became and the tendency they had of boasting in men. (Christ preached and persuaded men to be baptized but he never baptized anyone according to John 4:1-2. Why? For the same reason Paul did not baptize all of the Corinthians; they would have bragged that they were baptized by the Lord himself.)

When we interpret 1 Corinthians 1:17 from its context we see that water baptism no longer saves because when it came to salvation God did not send Paul to baptize, but to preach the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation and not water baptism. When men lift this verse out of its context they miss this important fact about water baptism.

And going back to the beginning; when it comes to salvation we had better be sure we have done everything we need to do now to be saved, because once we die we cannot come back and do what we failed to do. This is why we must be right about water baptism, for there was a time when it was necessary for salvation. If it was necessary for salvation in the past how do we know it is not necessary today? How do we know that the church of Christ is not right about water baptism? They say it saves and quote Acts 2:38 to prove it. How do we know they are wrong when we see Paul preaching it and practicing it? If Paul preached it how do we know he did not preach it for the same reason the 12 apostles did in Acts 2?

That is why we must prove that when Paul preached water baptism it was not for salvation, but for other reasons. And we do not prove it by ignoring what the Bible says or denying what it says like many Baptists and many grace preachers and people do.

That is why it is so important to interpret every text by the context in which it appears. That is why it's important that we believe what the Bible says even when it contradicts what we already believe. If what we believe contradicts what the Bible says what should we do? Should we just ignore

what the Bible says and keep on believing what we have always believed or should we change what we believe to fit the Bible? The answer is obvious.

One other thing: Most church of Christ preachers and members believe that water baptism is always for salvation and quote Acts 2:38 as their proof text. They say anyone who was baptized in the Bible was baptized for the remission of sins. They say water baptism is for no other reason than remission of sins. But what they overlook is Christ. Jesus Christ began his ministry by being baptized by John the Baptist in Matthew 3:16. Was he baptized for the remission of sins? Of course not, for he was sinless. His baptism proves there are other reasons why men were baptized in the Bible other than for the remission of sins. Christ was baptized in water but not for the remission of sins. Therefore, everyone who was baptized in the Bible was not baptized for salvation. Paul and Cornelius are two examples and so are those Paul baptized.

Pastor Art Watkins  
Codan Bible Church, Codan, Alabama  
Gulf Coast Bible Society  
Web site: [Codan Bible Church.com](http://CodanBibleChurch.com)  
E-Mail: [artwat@hotmail.com](mailto:artwat@hotmail.com)  
You tube channel: 828crimson