

Was Paul Against Baptism?

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Many in Christendom believe that baptism is not something one is required to do in order to be saved, even though both Jesus and Peter said differently ([Mark 16:16](#); [1 Pet. 3:21](#)). One of the reasons many sincerely believe this is due to what Paul said to the Corinthians in [1 Cor. 1:14-17](#), specifically his statement, ***“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel...”*** ([v. 17](#)). Many conclude from this statement that baptism must not be essential to salvation. However, when one takes into account the immediate context ([1 Cor. 1:10-13](#)), as well as the inspired record of Paul’s preaching in Corinth ([Acts 18:1-8](#)), it becomes apparent that Paul definitely preached that baptism is necessary. Therefore, his comments to Corinth should not be taken as suggesting that baptism was not essential.



How did Paul view baptism?

When we examine the context of [1 Cor. 1:14-17](#), we see that Paul was addressing a problem within the church there. They had the wrong attitude towards preachers, an attitude which divided them ([1 Cor. 1:10-12](#)). Some of them gave all of their allegiance to Paul, others to Apollos, others to Peter, and others to Christ. Basically, they were thinking too highly of the different preachers who had preached the gospel to them, an attitude which was worldly rather than spiritual ([1 Cor. 3:3-4](#)). After all, preachers such as Paul and Apollos are nothing more than fellow servants of Christ ([1 Cor. 3:5-9](#)), which is why Paul told the Corinthians that they should not boast that their allegiance was to their fellow man ([1 Cor. 3:21-23](#)).

With this in mind, notice Paul’s question to them: ***“Were you baptized in the name of Paul?”*** ([1 Cor. 1:13](#)). Since many of them had this divisive, misguided allegiance to preachers, the fact that Paul would ask them this question seems to imply that the Corinthians were claiming to be disciples of those who had personally baptized them. This would be the reason why Paul would then express his gratitude that he had personally baptized only a few of them, lest anyone should say that he was baptizing in his own name rather than in the name of Jesus ([1 Cor. 1:14-15](#); cf. [Acts 2:38](#)). Luke records how ***“many”*** of the Corinthians were baptized as a result of Paul’s preaching the gospel to them ([Acts 18:1-8](#)). Paul himself baptized only a few of them, including Crispus ([Acts 18:1-8](#); cf. [1 Cor. 1:14](#)).

Thus, one should not twist Paul's words to the church at Corinth to imply that he didn't believe baptism was necessary for salvation. On the contrary, his writings make it clear that baptism is a necessary component of spiritually dying to sin, being buried and clothed with Christ, being spiritually resurrected to a new life, and entering into a covenant relationship with God similar to the Old Testament covenant relationship manifested by circumcision ([Rom. 6:3-4](#); [Gal. 3:27](#); [Col. 2:11-12](#); cf. [Gen. 17:9-14](#)). Paul himself verbally testified of his own baptism and how he was told that it was how his sins would be washed away and he would call on the name of the Lord in order to be saved ([Acts 22:16](#); cf. [2:21](#)). So when we read Paul's statement to the Corinthians, ***"For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel..."*** ([1 Cor. 1:17](#)), we should understand that he is not repudiating the necessity of baptism. Rather, the context informs us he is trying to cause the Corinthians to repent of their misguided allegiance to the ones who had personally baptized them.

Furthermore, the fact that Paul was an apostle ([a word which means "one sent"](#)) should also be taken into consideration, especially when we read him give the reason Christ "sent" him: ***"to preach the gospel"*** ([1 Cor. 1:17](#)). As an apostle, Paul's role was to preach the gospel, ***"the unsearchable riches of Christ"*** ([Eph. 3:8](#)). Paul fulfilled his role by preaching divinely inspired sermons wherever he went ([Gal. 1:11-12](#)). His preaching resulted in the baptism of his converted listeners, as was the case at Corinth ([Acts 18:8](#)). However, it was not imperative that he himself baptize his believing listeners. Others (such as his traveling companions like Apollos), could easily do that task. This evidently happened at Corinth, for while ***"many"*** were baptized ([Acts 18:8](#)), Paul himself personally baptized only a few ([1 Cor. 1:14-16](#)).

In rebuking the Corinthians for their misguided allegiance, Paul reminded them that he had not been crucified for them, nor had they been baptized in his name ([1 Cor. 1:13](#)). However, Christ HAD been crucified for them, and for us as well. Have you been baptized in the name of the One who died for you?