

Continuing our verse by verse study through 1 Corinthians:

Last week we left off with Paul rebuking the church at Corinth - for dividing the Body. We were careful to point out that contextually Paul is addressing isolationism within the local church.

He ends on a line of questioning that refocuses the hearers attention on the fulcrum of our faith - Jesus Christ, and only Jesus Christ.

He asks, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or, were you baptized in the name of Paul?" - these questions have an answer: NO! The point Paul is making is that there is no ground for division on the essential issues of our faith. Christ is one, one with God, the Holy Spirit, and in us! Paul was not crucified for us, that belongs solely to Christ - who bought us at the expense of his life on a Roman cross; we who believe and follow Christ are not baptized in other name apart from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Paul continues his corrections by making some pretty strong illustrations to at definition to these matters.

[1Co 1:14-17 NKJV] 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. 16 Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

Man! That's kind of harsh! I'm glad I didn't baptize any of you because I don't want to rack up disciples based on who baptized who. And, Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel!

There is much wisdom in Paul's words. Certainly we are fickle enough to tie our worship to a personality - it happens all the time. And when, whoever we are following (if it's not Christ) stumbles or disappoints us we are rocked! So Paul's claim is that he had not baptized in his own name, and hence had attached no one to his person.

At any rate, since Paul was so forward in his speech here regarding his role in baptism at Corinth, we find ourselves on somewhat treacherous ground. There are those with a tentative discipleship, or a partial knowledge of scripture who would use these verses to say, "see, I don't have to be baptized, Paul said he didn't come to baptize and that he was glad he didn't." That of course is an incomplete and out of context defense to justify one's disobedience to scripture.

Remember, Paul's point here is not to dissuade baptism. He actually lists the people he had baptized! It is to clean up our understanding that we are not tied to the person doing the baptizing we are bound up to Christ in baptism.

So, this morning we answer the question, "what's up with baptism?"

Excuse my foolishness - Play video:

Noting a few things - this is a DEEP subject, we won't cover everything but there is plenty there to study and I want to encourage you to do that.

First off, let's be very clear on a few points:

1. Baptism doesn't save you
2. Baptism IS a big deal!
3. Baptism is biblical

Our message will center on these points this morning but first I ask you to consider a question - this is for the believer who is listening this morning and saying: well shoot, I'm already in agreement that baptism is important and biblical so I'm just going to check out.

Consider this: where did baptism come from?

Let's begin with a short history lesson:

First of all, baptism, is an anglicized greek word coming from Baptizo - the depth and breadth of this word are so complex that we have carried it over into our own language instead of identifying it with some other word.

This word should not be confused with baptô (911). The clearest example that shows the meaning of baptizo is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be 'dipped' (baptô) into

boiling water and then 'baptised' (baptizô) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptising the vegetable, produces a permanent change

metaphorically, to overwhelm

For example: [Mat 20:22-23 KJV] 22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. 23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but [it shall be given to them] for whom it is prepared of my Father.

Baptism, or ritual washing, was already a part of Jewish culture as Christ came on the scene and his precursor John...the baptist.

Ritual cleansing was very important in the Jewish law for a more detailed study you may visit Leviticus 15. Additionally, the priests who served in the tabernacle were required to conduct ritual cleansing themselves before their service.

This was all very strict and at times cumbersome.

As a matter of fact (online article):

Later, when the temple had been built, it was necessary for everyone to be immersed in a mikveh to become ritually clean before entering the temple. There are many ancient mikva'ot (plural of mikveh) to be seen in Jerusalem, ...two sets of steps for each one – a set of steps going down to the mikveh in an impure (tamay) state on one side, and on the other side, steps where the pilgrim will emerge fresh and ritually clean (tahor).

1] Tractate Miva'oth, Babylonian Talmud, Mishnah 1-8

There are six degrees of gatherings of water, each superior to the other. (recap - don't read it all)

So we see that “baptism” existed in Jewish culture and was quite well thought out. Although it was not necessarily intended to signify a “new life,” in fact, one who had gone under such ritual cleansing - finding themselves defiled in some other way would be required to do it again! and again! and again!

You could never be clean enough!

1. The physical act of water baptism doesn't save you - although baptism accompanies, or is found in tandem with, a believers act of faith - the physical act of coming into contact with water under a religious pretext will not seal your soul for eternities sake. Having just read through Romans we understand that it is the act of faith that saves us.

[Rom 10:9-11 NKJV] 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will

be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

[Rom 4:22 NKJV] 22 And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."

[Luk 23:41-43 NKJV] 41 "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." 43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." - having not participated in a physical baptism, listen - born out of special circumstances!

the simple truth - john 3:16 - whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life

2. Baptism IS a big deal to God and to us! Orthodox christian doctrine teaches that Jesus Christ instituted two ordinances for the church - communion and water baptism. Both of which are symbols attesting to the greater spiritual work being done by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

[Mat 28:19-20 NKJV] 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, [even] to the end of the age." Amen.

Act 2:38 KJV - 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.

[Rom 6:3-4 NKJV] 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Baptism is a big deal - baptism means something. It should be taken seriously by those who enter into discipleship with the Lord.

Incidentally, some variation of the word baptize is used over 90 times in the NT - we simply can't ignore it in favor of our own opinions.

3. Baptism is biblical, and is an important sign of obedience for the person making the decision to enter into a life of discipleship - following Jesus.

In Matthew chapter 3 we find a man named John the Baptist, a relative of Christ, calling people to a new sort of baptism - that of repentance. The act of being immersed in the Jordan River (considered 'living waters' under talmudic tradition) was a symbol of that persons acknowledgment of dirtiness in their own life and a conscious decision and committed effort to turn away from their previous lifestyle and turn to God.

Let's read:

[Mat 3:1-17 NKJV] 1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" 3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.' " 4 Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him 6 and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. ...13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. 14 And John [tried to] prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" 15 But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit [it to be so] now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. 16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17 And suddenly a voice [came] from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

*So, to inform our obedience and our grasp of the gravity of baptism we have Jesus Christ as our foremost example.

Pastor Sandy Adams, in speaking on an upcoming baptism for his congregation I think nicely made the comment, "if you haven't followed Christ is baptism, you will have the chance..."

Christ is our example. If it was a big deal to Him, if it was important to Him then it ought to be important to us.

Christ's baptism didn't make him who he is, it didn't seal his salvation - he is the Lord over all - it was an act of obedience to the Father - "to fulfill all righteousness."

It is pleasing to God when one of His children follows after Christ in the act of baptism.

This takes courage, it requires counting the cost, baptism should never be entered into lightly. We are moved by God's word and His spirit into the condition where we can rightly commit to following Christ by His grace through baptism.

[Act 8:35-38 NKJV] 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. 36 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, [here is] water. What hinders me from being baptized?" 37 Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." 38 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.