

SAY WHAT?!

By Charles Roberds

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 1:17

For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power.

I honestly can't believe this is something Paul would say, "Christ did not send me to baptize," when, in fact, one of the last things Jesus said to His disciples was, "Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." So, when you read this verse in 1 Corinthians it can cause a "Say What!?" moment. Today I want to briefly walk through this verse and how it applies to us.

OBSERVATION

Now, almost every group of people does this at some point. Something shows up sooner or later as an identifying badge that marks them as "special," and it with comes privilege and status in that group. That is what they were doing with baptism here in Corinth. They were boasting over who had baptized them. Some of them were saying, "Paul baptized me." Others were saying, "Apollos himself baptized me." We can do that today with our talents, our jobs and even our social status. They were dividing over this whole issue, and Paul says it is all wrong. But more than correction, he gives a truer purpose to his mission and ours.

First, Paul introduces what can cure divisions. He says, in effect, "You don't cure divisions in a church by identification badges." Paul basically says, "Christ did not send me to keep a tally on how many converts I've won." Which is good because Paul would probably have too many to count. He is also not saying that it is wrong to baptize; he himself did it, and in verse 14 of this chapter he tells us the people he baptized in Corinth. He does not say we should stop baptizing.

Secondly, I think Paul as trying to tell the church at Corinth and even us today, Christ didn't call us out of darkness to do whatever job or task you are doing and wear some kind of badge for it but to preach the Good News in the place He has put you. I think we

can get so caught up in our called professions that we wear them so proudly as badges, whether it be doctor, lawyer, homemaker or even church production director, that we forget the first part of the great commission: go and make disciples. This means preach the word to people, living life together and talking with one another about the gospel. Paul tells us that we don't have a silver tongue or a fancy degree to preach the Word because it does not need to be clever speech, but we should speak in such a way that hearers can grasp the power of the gospel. The facts in the gospel are what will set us free, and particularly, he says, the Word of the cross. If there is any badge to wear it is that badge—the badge of being set free by the redemptive work of Christ on the cross.

OBEDIENCE

What was the goal of Paul's mission? He said, “For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power.” The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe. The gospel is the good news that anyone who receives Christ as Savior and Lord will be saved. Therefore, the preaching of the gospel is primary, and the work of Christ on the cross is vastly more important than any work man can do—in the case of this verse, baptism. What matters is not the badge you wear but the fact you are now commissioned as follower of Christ to preach the gospel.

Paul's mission was to *magnify Christ* and to *save men* by preaching the gospel. He was willing to give up anything that hindered that mission, including himself baptizing people. Are you will to give up anything that hinders that mission? Are you willing to lose any other badge to reveal the one most important to you? Do you have that badge of redemption?

PRAYER

Thank you, Father, for this time here in Your Word. We pray that it may be rich and real in our hearts as we live this week. Father, we pray that we would take to heart the gospel that broke our chains and freed us from sin. In that freedom, God, we pray that You would put Your kingdom foremost in our lives so that its overcoming goodness would flow from our mouth to those who need to hear it, and that we would rely on Your power to speak to those in darkness and not let any badges of status or profession hold us back from doing so. In Your name we pray, Amen.