

Gospel Implications, Part 2 - Baptism (1 Corinthians 1:14-18)

COMMUNION COMMENTS:

Well today we have a special blessing as a church to participate in the 2 ordinances Christ gave His church, the Lord's Table and the ordinance of baptism, on the same day. I'm excited to be able to be a part of both today with the whole church, and this will be the first time in the history of this church that our entire church will be part of a baptism, not just part of our church on a Sunday afternoon. It's a special day as we sing of grace, hear testimonies of grace in the baptism waters, and taste and see symbols of grace in Communion.

In Matthew 28, Jesus commanded '*make disciples...baptizing them ...teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you...*' That's normally the first step of discipleship, or it should be, for disciples or followers of Jesus, even young adult disciples of Jesus are to be baptized. Baptism is primary in the Great Commission above and before communion, which is part of what baptized disciples obey in that text. I'll talk more about baptism in the message, but it's something we now can do any Lord's Day with the whole church, not just on special occasions with some of the church once a year. We can do baptisms multiple times a year, even in winter months, which is a challenge outdoors. This helps put ordinances in normal biblical order, baptism then communion, and with all of the church

When Mt 28 says baptized disciples are to be taught to observe all Jesus commanded, part of that is the observance of communion as He commanded days earlier with bread and cup: '*Take eat...Drink ...Do this in remembrance of Me...proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.*' Before we get to the baptizing of disciples in the end of Mt 28, or in the end of our service today, Mt 26 first recorded this:

'Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." And when they had sung a hymn, they went out ...'

It says in Mt 26:26 that Jesus gave the bread to disciples. If you are not sure you're a disciple of Christ, or have His ordinances right, or aren't sure what it means to discern His body rightly, let it pass.

1 Corinthians says first *'let a man examine himself...'* that implies a mature person capable of introspection and self-examination and someone who regularly confesses his or her sin. If you're not sure if that's you, don't partake today, but commune with God in heart. If you have questions or aren't sure your life is right with the Lord, my brother up front after would love to talk or pray with you later.

Scripture says *'whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.* There's warnings if we don't discern rightly or if we treat lightly these things, or drink in an unworthy manner, a manner inconsistent with the gospel, blatant sins against Christ or His body that we're not repentant of, and not willing to make right.

How do you examine yourself? Pray like Ps 139:24 to the Lord in one translation *'Examine me, and probe my thoughts...see if there is any idolatrous tendency in me, and lead me...'* (NET). If God's Spirit convicts you as you pray, confess it, commit to turn from it by His grace, and take specific steps of repentance as God leads, and *'in so doing,'* it says we can *'eat of the bread, drink of the cup'*

Mt 26 says Jesus blessed the bread and spoke of it as His body. In a moment I'll pray to ask Jesus to bless this and us as well as His body spiritually, as we remember His body given for us physically on the cross. It says He took the cup and even after He said *'this is my blood'* He still called it the *'fruit of the vine.'* In other words it wasn't magically or mystically changed into blood, it was the fruit of the grapevine still. Jesus said on that same night *'I am the vine,'* not meaning He magically mystically turned into a physical green plant, it was a symbol of the reality of Christ's spiritual presence.

It also says as He took the cup He gave thanks, and that's what we should also do as well, for those of us that take the cup today, we should be thankful and joyful for the forgiveness of our sins by His blood poured out for many to pay for our many sins. It says after it they sang a hymn and went out. And after our time together, we'll sing a hymn and go out after the ordinances. Thankfulness and joy should be in hearts and faces, it's ok to smile as we celebrate His forgiveness and as we look forward to Jesus coming again to drink again anew with us, it says He'll drink this with us in that kingdom

BAPTISM SERMON COMMENTS

As I said before it's a special blessing as a church to participate in the 2 ordinances Christ gave His church, the Lord's Table and the ordinance of baptism on the same day. I'll say again I'm excited to be a part of both today with the whole church, and this is the first time in the history of GCBC this whole congregation will be part of a baptism. In the past we've had at least a third of our people at baptisms at a home or at a river or at a pond, on a good summer we had a good 40-50% of our church body present for annual baptisms and picnics. I don't know about you, but I'm excited to have 100% congregation participation at baptisms as a church with all present. I'm excited we can do baptisms any Sunday, not just once a year or when the weather is warm, but most of all I'm excited that we can have our whole church be a part of what I hope is the first of many

I'm excited to look at God's Word together to prepare us for this special occasion if you would please turn with me to 1 Cor. 1 (pew Bible page # 618). On Sunday nights we've been studying chapter 13 and on a recent communion Sunday morning we studied chapter 1. I shared with you then that on future communion Sundays as we celebrate the gospel benefits in the gospel symbols of the table, I want to take time to look at some of the gospel implications in the book of 1 Corinthians. We won't be unpacking every verse in this letter, but my prayer is that we can unpack gospel implications in this letter. First through v. 13 we studied gospel implications for unity, today we continue in v. 13-18 on its implications for baptism and Lord-willing next communion Sunday rest of chapter 1 to 2:5.

1:13 *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶ (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. ¹⁸ For the word of the cross [that's another title for the gospel, it says it's] folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

For us who are saved and in the continual state of being saved, this says the gospel is the power of God. The message of the cross has power that we can't improve upon with eloquent words of wisdom from man, and if we try, we empty Christ's cross of its power. The word of the cross is folly to the unsaved, but is power to the saved.

I want us to see 4 gospel implications in relation to baptism from this text and from other parts of the book of 1 Corinthians where it explains these things further. 4 truths about baptism from this letter

1. Baptism is identification with Christ before others

To start with the context, the Corinthians were wrongly identifying themselves with different human teachers and leaders, like in v. 12 “*I follow Paul,*” or “*I follow Apollos,*” or “*I follow Cephas*” (that was another name for Peter). In chapter 3 if you turn there, it says focusing on human leaders and following mere men was carnal and just like the world, boasting about or putting identity in mere men.

Look at 3:4: *For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human?*⁵ *What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.*⁶ *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.*⁷ *So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ...*²¹ *So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours,*²² *whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours,*²³ *and you are Christ’s...* [that’s our identity]

The Christian’s identity is in Christ, not a brand of Christianity, not boasting in why your version is better than others, not your favorite preferences or a famous teacher or family movements or choice for schooling or style of worship in a church. It’s not a denominational identity (Lutherans following Luther, Wesleyans following Wesley or Baptists following John the Baptist ... or I heard a Presbyterian preacher call him John the Presbyterian and said we’re all wet). It’s not about which Reformer you follow, or in NT time which apostle you identify with or resonate with in their personality or preaching. We’re not to boast about Christians or our Christianity preference, as Paul says in 1:31 “*...Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.*”

So in this context in v. 12, to those who were basically saying ‘my apostle is better than your apostle,’ to those focusing on men and following them rather than Christ, Paul reminds them in v. 13 that their baptism was about identification with Christ, not with Paul:
¹³ *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?* [the obvious answer is no, they were baptized in the name of Jesus, identifying with him. In v. 15 Paul’s glad he baptized few of them so they can’t say ‘*Paul baptized me*’]

Paul isn't downplaying baptism but he was glad others did it with this church, so the 'I'm of Paul' groupies wouldn't focus on him as their baptizer. Just like I don't think Calvin would want his name to be used for Calvinists, I get the sense Paul didn't want his name to be thrown around for those who believed his teaching, as Paulinists (plus that sounds like a guy who works with pollen). Calvin got the doctrines of grace from Paul who got them in Moses but we're not even to be Moses-inians, our identity is in Christ, we're Christians. Terms like Baptist can be helpful to clarify you believe in baptism of believers, the Reformation tradition can be helpful to clarify the solas, the Evangelical label can help to clarify gospel essentials but terms and traditions aren't helpful if they're our identity, not Christ.

Paul later wrote to this same Corinthian church: *we do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for the sake of Jesus* (2 Cor 4:5 NAS). We're all slaves. It's not all about the slaves, it's all about the Master! Paul says I don't preach us, I proclaim Jesus. 1 Cor 2:2 says when he was with the church in Corinth, his focus was '*Christ and Him crucified.*' Paul's identity was in Christ and everything in ministry was identified with Christ who was crucified for them on the cross. So in 1:13 he asks them '*Was Paul crucified for you?*' The obvious answer is no, the Christ who died for you on the cross is where you find identity, meaning.

In the book of Acts, baptism was publically identifying with Christ before others, beginning in Jerusalem at Pentecost, all those who believed Jesus was Lord and repented were baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:36-38). That meant identifying themselves with the very man the Jewish religion had rejected and killed, it meant them breaking with their Jewish religion and often with their family. The gospels say the leaders '*agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue...many believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue*' (John 9:22, 12:42). But the gospel calls people to confess their sin, confess Jesus as Lord, and be baptized before others to identify with Jesus (Matt 3, Acts).

Point #1: Baptism is identification with Christ before others

Point #2: Baptism is important, but it doesn't save

Look at v. 14 again where Paul is thankful he didn't baptize many of the Corinthians. He's not saying I'm thankful not many of you are saved, because he knew baptism wasn't salvation. Look at v. 17

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel ...
 Baptism is not the gospel, no works save, only Christ and His work for us on the cross has power to save (end of v. 17, and v. 18 says the gospel message of the cross is the power of God to salvation).

[remember the thief on the cross saved without baptism]

Acts 18 gives more of the context when it says as the Corinthian church was planted, '*Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ...many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized ...Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God*' (v. 5-11 NIV). Apparently Silas and Timothy did the baptisms, while Paul devoted himself to preaching Christ and Him crucified, like 1 Cor 2:2 says he did. It's not about Paul or who baptized who, it's all about Jesus, the gospel.

Now turn to chapter 15. If baptism doesn't save, what is the gospel Jesus saves by? Look at 15:1 *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers...*

That's the gospel by which you're saved if you receive it by faith in Christ. It's by trusting He died for your sins, and rose for your life, all based on scripture. In response to the risen life appearing before witnesses, we're called to be baptized, to die to our sins and appear before witnesses as committed to live in His risen life. It's when these things are true in our life in salvation, that Jesus calls us to represent this spiritual reality in the physical analogy of baptism. Baptism is important (it's singled out in the Great Commission, Mt 28:19), but Paul says here in v. 3 the gospel is '*of first importance.*'

Baptism is important, but it doesn't save (point #2, only the gospel)

Point #3. Baptism is immersion into Christ's Body

Chapter 10 gives an analogy of baptism with the OT people of God
¹ *For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea,² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,³ and all ate the same spiritual food,⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink.*

Paul uses the word baptize for Israelites in the exodus. The Greek word *baptizo* meant to immerse. My Study Bible on v. 2 has 'Israel was immersed, not in the sea but "into Moses," indicating their oneness, or solidarity with him as their leader.' This shows us how baptism meant identification with the one you follow. For Israel in the wilderness, God brought them through the waters which killed their old slavemasters in the Red Sea, on way to their new life with Moses leading them. For the church, passing through the waters of baptism pictures death to our old life and slavery to sin and that we are now on our way in our new life with Jesus leading us. Baptism meant immersion with people and identification with a person, and that's what we do in water today as a picture of that spiritual reality

[the NT (esp. Mt, Rev) often has this new exodus theme]

v. 3-4 here is the 1st exodus with the old covenant people eating the same spiritual food and drinking the same spiritual drink. All were baptized, all ate and drank together, similar to the pattern I think is best for the new covenant people of God in the church: baptism is the first step of obedience, the entrance into our new life, and then communion pictures our ongoing eating and drinking in that order.

¹⁶ *The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?* ¹⁷ *Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.*

Both baptism and communion are visible pictures of spiritual truth. The cup in v. 16 is called the *cup of thanksgiving* in NIV, it's the cup that should make us thankful for the blessing of forgiveness by the blood of Christ. The word participation is *koinonia* in Greek, a *fellowship* with the blood of Christ, or some versions say a *sharing* with His blood or *the communion of the blood of Christ* in NKJV. It's symbolic but that language also suggests a spiritual presence or special blessing, a special time of communing with Christ, sharing in some way, participating spiritually, fellowship with His body. It has the same word for the bread in v. 16 communion with His body

In the OT exodus, bread was eaten at night when sacrificed lambs shed blood for Passover, old covenant believers regularly observed it in remembrance of deliverance with bread, cups after supper. At a NT Passover with Jesus 11:25 says: *In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the **new covenant in my blood**. Do this, as often as you drink it, **in remembrance of me**."*

1 Cor 5:7 says '...Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed'

That deliverance is also to be regularly observed by NT believers, to remember our deliverance from sin. 1 Cor 10 roots the baptism and communion of Christians in the OT deliverance under Moses, then applies it to the body of Christ in the church in 11:29. Look at **12:13**: *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*
¹⁴ *For the body does not consist of one member but of many ...*
²⁷ *Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

Paul's speaking spiritually, not physically, but that's why we apply these realities in the local body of Christ, or why we should. Since God has made us members of His global body, that's why we join ourselves physically and visibly to a local body, to be members of a church in however the leaders do it. People ask 'if I'm part of the church invisible or universal at salvation, that's enough, right?' My response is you should become a part of a visible church however they do their membership, partnership, fellowship. It's an outward expression of the inward reality, it makes visible the spiritual, like baptism in v. 13. It's because we're spiritually already immersed in and identified with Christ that we should be baptized physically. It goes public with our faith with a church, as membership does, too. We're not just to be put under water, we're to be put under leaders.

Normally through church history baptism was when you joined the church and began taking communion after that, and v. 13 speaks of the Spirit's baptism into the body and then drinking of the Spirit. I think that's a spiritual reality primarily but it fits with the historical pattern I see for 19 centuries. What was the early church practice?

Point #4. Baptism is imagery of the gospel (for that turn to Gal 3)
 In some Greek writings of the time, the word *baptizo* was used for dipping, like in a dye, where it was one color and then you dunk or dip in another and it comes out that color (like something that's red dipped in white dye and it comes out all covered in white instead). In the early church fathers we read of a tradition where a baptized person would come in their old clothes they had been wearing and after they were baptized by immersion. Cyril of Jerusalem writes: 'on coming forth from the water, they were clothed with white garments, significant of the purity and brightness of that spiritual vesture with which they were ever henceforth to be clothed...After this followed holy communion, of which all the newly baptized were partakers, therein becoming "of one body..." of the church of the "Anastasis"... the white-robed band of the newly baptised was

seen approaching ... And as the joyous chant swelled upwards, “Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered,” it might well be thought that angels’ voices were heard’¹

Where did the imagery come from, putting on white? The angels in heaven rejoice when sinners repent, Jesus says, and in Revelation the repentant saints in are seen in white robes with the angels. Gal. 3:27 *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ* [or NASB ‘have clothed yourselves with Christ’]. Again, that’s spiritually speaking, but today we’ll even see that physically and visibly represented as people who have repented of their sins will walk into this baptistery behind me in clothes they’re wearing now, but as they come out they’ll then be clothed with white robes.

White robes were what the angels were wearing when Jesus rose, and it’s fitting for those who the hymn says are ‘alive in Him, my living head, and clothed in righteousness divine.’² Though our sins are as scarlet, they can be white as snow, Scripture says, and Rev 7 has a beautiful picture of a multitude in white robes washed by the blood of the Lamb, and in Rev 19 wearing white for His wedding!

You can turn to Romans 6 for more on this imagery. Baptism is a watershed moment, in every sense of the phrase. After going down in the water, we shed our wet clothes and put on new Col 2:12 says we’re ‘*buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.*’ That spiritually happens when we’re saved, in spiritual baptism, spiritual immersion in and identification with the Lord’s death, burial and resurrection. Physical baptism pictures it.

Rom 6:3 *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*⁴ *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.* These are the spiritual realities that we’re about to witness. The baptistery is like a big coffin. It’s for those who are baptized into the death of Christ. They go into this as people going to die, walking down into it to picture their dying to sin and self. As I lay them down in the baptistery, think of them laying down their old life. Their immersion pictures going under, buried with Christ but then they rise to picture His risen life, then they walk out of it to walk in newness of life. Let’s pray for them, then we’ll sing and I’ll ask those to be baptized to join me on stage

¹ Wharton B. Marriott, "Baptism," ed. William Smith and Samuel Cheetham, *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities* (London: John Murray, 1875–1880), 157.

² Charles Wesley, "And Can it Be?"