Many people quote 1 Corinthians 1:17 where Paul says:

> “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”
> *—1 Corinthians 1:17*

From this, some conclude: *“Since Paul wasn’t sent to baptize, then maybe I’m also not called to preach about baptism. I’m just called to preach faith in Christ.”*

But is that what Paul meant? And does it mean we can ignore preaching about baptism or other core doctrines like repentance, the Holy Spirit, or holy living?

Let’s explore this with Scripture and sound theology.

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1. Every Servant of God Is Called to Preach the Whole Word

The calling to preach the gospel includes the full counsel of God’s Word. Paul himself declared:

> “Therefore I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.”
> *—Acts 20:26–27*

This means no preacher is permitted to omit, minimize, or skip certain biblical truths because they feel unqualified or uncomfortable.

Though we may have different gifts (Romans 12:6–8), we all preach the same gospel (Galatians 1:6–9). Our styles may differ, but the message must be the same: a full gospel of repentance, baptism, faith, and the life of holiness.

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2. What Did Paul Mean in 1 Corinthians 1:17?

Paul was not denying the importance of baptism. He was making a distinction between his primary task and the supporting roles in ministry. His main focus was evangelism and church planting, not performing baptisms personally.

> “I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius… I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else.” *—1 Corinthians 1:14–16*

Paul was clearly involved in baptism, but he allowed others to administer it so he could focus on preaching the gospel more widely. He taught about baptism and even ensured people were baptized properly (see Acts 19:1–5), but he didn’t personally perform the act in most cases.

Acts 19:4–5

> “Paul said, ‘John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.’ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Paul didn’t avoid baptism—he simply worked as part of a team and prioritized his apostolic mission.

3. Preaching the Whole Gospel Includes Baptism

Jesus Himself made baptism part of the Great Commission:

> “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”
> *—Matthew 28:19–20*

Preaching faith in Christ without calling people to baptism and obedience is preaching an incomplete gospel. The apostles understood this:

> “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”
> *—Acts 2:38*

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4. Delegating Roles Doesn’t Eliminate the Message

In Acts 6, the apostles delegated food distribution to deacons so they could focus on the Word:

> “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables... We will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”
> *—Acts 6:2,4*

Likewise, Paul delegated baptism when needed. But he still preached about it and made sure new believers were taught everything Christ commanded.

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5. Preaching Selectively Is Spiritually Dangerous

God warns us not to add to or subtract from His Word:

> “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this

> scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues… And if anyone takes words away…, God will take away that person’s share in the tree of life.”
> *—Revelation 22:18–19*

Avoiding topics like baptism, holiness, or repentance because they’re “too sensitive” is spiritual compromise. Paul warned Timothy:

> “Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”
> *—2 Timothy 4:2*

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6. Truth May Hurt—but It Heals

Sometimes the truth offends or causes sorrow—but that sorrow can lead to repentance and salvation:

> “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.”
> *—2 Corinthians 7:10*

If you know someone was baptized incorrectly, or is living in sin, and you keep quiet to protect their feelings—you are not helping them. You are withholding the truth that could save them.

We Are All Called to Preach the Full Gospel

Every preacher, teacher, and believer is called to share the whole truth of God’s Word—not just what is popular or easy to say.

Baptism is part of the gospel. So are repentance, holiness, faith, obedience, and the Holy Spirit. If God has revealed it in Scripture, then it’s part of our responsibility to teach and preach it.

The Lord is coming!

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