**“Christ did NOT send me to baptize…”**

By Steve Fontenot

Quoting this verse (1Co 1:17), a tract in a “Bible Church” said, “If the requirements of the Gospel had included water baptism, Paul was unfaithful to his call and misleading in his message.”

This is a classic example of failing to understand a figure of speech—the “not…but” Hebrew idiom, where one thing is denied (“not”) in order to emphasize another (“but”). Compare: “*Do not* work for the food which perishes, *but* for the food which endures to eternal life” (Jn. 6:27).

Baptizing with his own hands is what Paul had in mind, as the context shows (vs.12-16). The administrator (who dips you in the water) is unimportant (Jn. 4:1,2). The law of harmony will not allow the conclusion in this tract, for Paul *did* preach that “the requirements of the Gospel included water baptism” (Acts 16:14,15; 16:31-33; 18:8; 19:5; Rom 6:4!)

Therefore, if context and harmony rules interpretation, this is what the text means: “For Christ did *not* send me to baptize [i.e. to do the actual immersing of others so they would follow me], *but* [more importantly] to preach the gospel…” so men’s faith would rest, not in men, but in the message, “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (2:2)—and this is the theme of the first four chapters of 1Corinthians.

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