

Who was Crispus in the Bible?

Crispus was a leader of the synagogue in Corinth, Greece (Acts 18:8). He was a Jewish religious leader but became a believer in Jesus after Paul shared the gospel with the Corinthians. Crispus's conversion happened during Paul's second missionary journey.

The synagogue that Crispus was the leader of had opened its doors to Paul every Sabbath, and the apostle took the opportunity to testify that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 18:5). But after an unspecified number of weeks, the unbelieving Jews in that synagogue "opposed Paul and became abusive" (verse 6). At that point, Paul "shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles'" (verse 6).

Upon leaving Crispus's synagogue, Paul went next door and began preaching in the home of Titius Justus. Crispus and his entire household also left the synagogue and followed Paul, having believed in the Lord Jesus (Acts 18:7). Later, Sosthenes, the man who replaced Crispus as the leader of the synagogue, tried to stir up trouble for Paul but was soundly rebuffed by the Roman proconsul (verses 12-17).

Little else is known of Crispus. He is mentioned in one of Paul's letters to the church at Corinth. In this letter, we learn that Crispus was one of the few people Paul baptized (1 Corinthians 1:14-16). Out of all the believers in Corinth, Paul had only baptized Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas; and he used that fact to show that his main objective was to preach the gospel, not to baptize (1 Corinthians 1:17). This statement by Paul is a strong argument against the idea of baptismal regeneration, which holds that baptism is necessary for salvation. If that were so, Paul would not have so clearly separated the two.

Tradition holds that Crispus later served as the bishop of Chalcedon and was martyred for his faith. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches have canonized Crispus and declared him Saint Crispus of Chalcedon. Crispus was a saint, as are all those “baptized into Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 12:13). Scripture declares no specific persons as “saints”; instead, the Bible calls everyone in the body of Christ “saints” (Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 9:1; Revelation 11:18). All that is required of God for sainthood is faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10).