

**For Shinangye: August 2006**  
**Towards a Theology of Unity – A Series**  
**IV – In Whose Name?**

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*Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you... For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*

(1 Corinthians 1:10-13)

As we consider the unity of the Body of Christ, we looked first at how we become members of His body then at the "new commandment" love that He requires of us. This month we will look at sources of division.

One of the most pernicious sources of division is disguised as a virtue extolled by everyone – respect for one's teacher. What better way to honor a wise teacher than to call one's self his disciple? There may be nothing wrong with this. St. Paul, himself, had close and beloved disciples whom he called his "children". He refers to both Timothy and Titus as "my true child in the faith." (1 Timothy 1:2, Titus 1:4).

The problem arises when this loyalty to our teacher crosses over the line to factionalism as it clearly did in the Corinthian church. Think for a few moments about your own pastor or favorite teacher. Does he encourage you to listen to other teachers? Does he extend his respect to pastors from other denominations or factions within his own denomination? Or does he try to hold you to himself first and foremost? How many churches have split over disagreements between pastors or teachers? How many groups have been formed out of a misplaced sense of loyalty? This happened in the church of Corinth. What about your church?

It is often difficult to discern the right path in situations like this. Paul, himself, said elsewhere that there had to be divisions because of sin and false teaching. So how do we find our way in this? Paul gives us a way – the way of foolishness.

*For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE." Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?*

(1 Corinthians 1: 18-20)

*...God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise... so that no man may boast before God.*

(1 Corinthians 1: 26-29)

The way of "foolishness" is the way of humility, of open simplicity before both God and man. Where ever there is struggle for seniority, position or disciples, there is no humility, no Godly foolishness, only pride and the wisdom of the world that leads to death.

Under whom do you serve? It does not matter. Who was your teacher? It does not matter. All that matters is that Christ died for you and called you to serve Him. Honor those who were your teachers in the faith but do not allow them to separate you from your brothers and sisters in Christ.

I leave you with an exhortation to meditate on the first three chapters of 1 Corinthians. Division destroys the Body of Christ. Unity was Paul's constant theme.