

**DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCH:  
FOLLOW PAUL, FOLLOW APOLLOS**



*The Problem: Divisions,  
Baptism, & The Cross*  
**1 Corinthians 1:10-17**

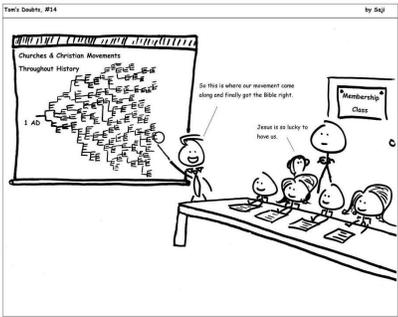
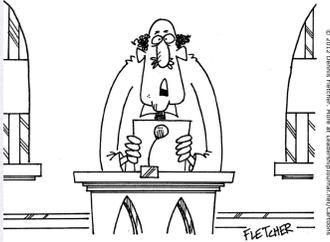
**What do you see here?**



**In the Family**



**In the Church**

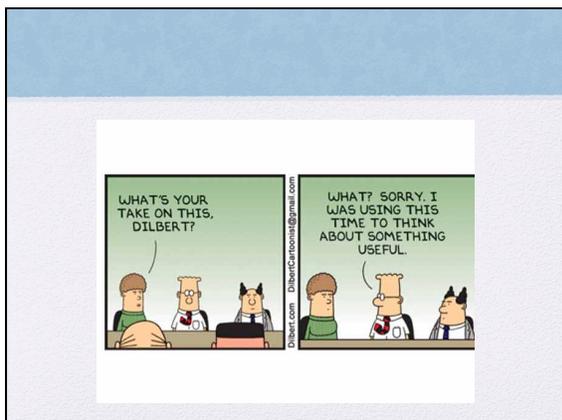
**FLETCHER**

"... and the church unity workshop has been postponed until the deacons can agree on the date, time, and color of the participant's name tags."

**At Work**



"I find it's best to just stay out of office politics."



## What do they have in common?

- Disunity and Divisions

## 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

**10** I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. **11** For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. **12** What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." **13** Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

## 1 Corinthians 1:14-17

**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.

## Hermeneutical Questions:

- What would Scripture be missing if this passage was omitted?
- What does this passage teach us about ourselves?
- What does this passage teach us about God?
- How does this passage of Scripture point us to Jesus?

## Outline

**1:10**: The Appeal for Unity

**1:12-16**: Obstacles to Unity

**1:17**: The Restoration of Unity

## 1:10: The Appeal for Unity

- Paul is very careful in how he handles the Corinthians in this situation:
  - He is **not heavy handed** and making demands, nor is he ignoring the issue.
    - To be **overly tender** and ignore the issues is to pass over the truth;
    - To be **overly authoritarian** and press the listener is to lose a hearing.
  - Instead, he employs the Gospel principle of *speaking truth in love*, and appealing to them *"by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

## The Substance of Paul's Appeal

- Paul instructs them to *"agree,"* literally *"fit together"* (*kat-artizo*).
  - The language is that of a tentmaker.
    - Pieces of canvas must *"fit together"* or the tent will leak.
    - If the canvas *"splits,"* the tent is worthless.
    - No one will buy a ripped tent.
    - Therefore, he urges his readers to be of the same *"mind"* and the same *"purpose/intention."*
    - People with differences can work together if they have the same purpose.
    - What is their common purpose?

## The Cross

- The upside down content of the Gospel is to shape our minds and worldview.
- The cross is the only means by which we can have harmony both with God and each other.

## 1:12-16: Obstacles to Unity

- The divisions in the church were serious.
  - The word used in v. 11 for *"quarreling"* comes from the Greek word *Eris*, who was the Greek god of war (or strife & discord).
  - Paul was not discussing a *"little misunderstanding"* but rather bitter contention.
  - There was a battle raging in Corinth.
    - What was the root of it all?

## Identity through Patronage

- They were seeking to find their identity in various preachers:
  - Paul, Apollos, and Peter.
  - Though all these men preached the same Gospel, the Corinthians divided themselves along stylistic and rhetorical lines:
    - Who was the most eloquent,
    - The most impressive,
    - The one with the most pizzazz?
  - Point:** The Corinthians were trying to find their identity in these various men.

## Do we do this?

## We all do this!

- We tie ourselves to specific people, institutions, and roles **in an effort to establish that we are a somebody.**
- We want to be validated.
- The more elite, successful, and honored the thing/person I attach myself to; **the more honored and elevated I will be.**



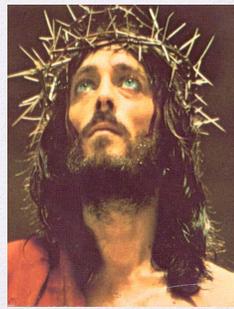
## What is going on?

- Patronage is our escapist fix to numb the suspicion and fear that there is something wrong with the world and that it might be us.
- Patrons/institutions/jobs become our surrogate savior.
- **These things give us a sense of identity and purpose and make us feel distinct from other people,** yet at the same time they create walls and destroy the peace that we are seeking.



## Christ as Patron

- The Corinthians even turned Jesus into a patron, and said: **“we are of Christ” (v. 12).**
  - **Which implies that the rest of us are not “of Christ.”**
  - We alone can claim that identification.
- **Many churches have a small clique of people who consider themselves “the true believers.”**
- **They are not sure of the salvation of their pastor, but they are praying for him!**
- Self-righteousness is usually on display in such groups and dealing with them can be extremely difficult.



## Baptism Subsumed Under Patronage

- What mattered to the Corinthians was not being baptized into Christ, **but who baptized them!**
- **Paul responds by teaching that Christianity is the end of patronage, the end of factions, and the end of self-identity building.**
- **Thus Paul responds rhetorically: “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (v. 13).**
- **Factionalism is the symptom of a deeper issue.**



## We don't have peace with man because we don't have peace with God.

- **Cain & Abel:**
  - Cain killed Abel out of jealousy.
  - **What was at issue was not Abel, but Cain's relationship with God.**
  - **How can our broken relationships with others ever be mended?**
    - **How can we ever stop trying to prove ourselves or our attempts at self-validation?**



## 1:17: The Restoration of Unity

- **Answer:** The Cross of Christ.
- The only way for unity to be restored is for us to give up our lesser visions of unity.
- **No cause, or party, or patron has the ability to bring about our identity or ultimate unity—it must come from God alone.**
- Our horizontal factionalism can only be eroded by the vertical condescension of God in Christ.

## Hence, Paul says...



**POWER OF THE CROSS**

YOU'RE CRAZY!  
I DON'T SEE HOW  
THAT CAN SAVE YOU!

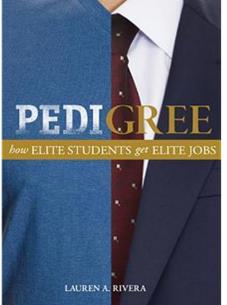
POWER of the  
CROSS

*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 1Cor 1:18*

- “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” (v. 17).
- In essence Paul is saying, “Christ didn’t send me to create a faction of followers who look to me as their patron. He sent me to preach the Gospel—the end of patronage! Which is the end of grasping after security, identity, and peace.

## What Does this Passage Teach Us About Ourselves?

- Paul teaches us that the reason for our going after patrons or causes is driven by our desire to receive praise and honor.
- However the cross is counterintuitive and it promotes God’s strength and love through Christ becoming weak and our servant.
  - He then calls us to do the same for others.
- The way of the cross is completely foreign to how the world and our culture operates.



## What Does this Passage Teach Us About God?

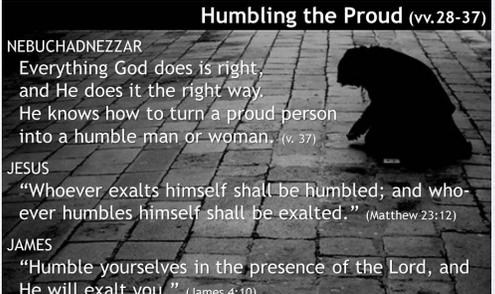
God makes His power known through weakness.

**Humbling the Proud (vv.28-37)**

**NEBUCHADNEZZAR**  
Everything God does is right, and He does it the right way. He knows how to turn a proud person into a humble man or woman. (v. 37)

**JESUS**  
“Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.” (Matthew 23:12)

**JAMES**  
“Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.” (James 4:10)



## Where is Christ in the Passage?



- Christ became divided from His Father on the cross in order that we may no longer be divided!
- On the cross Jesus emptied Himself in order that we might be made filled with God’s presence.
- Christ gave up His identity as God’s son on the cross in order to give it to us.

## The Gospel



- To the degree that we understand that our identity is secure in Christ will be the degree by which we cease trying to find our identities in false saviors.
- To the degree that we grasp that unity can only be found in Christ will be the degree by which we cease erecting new dividing walls.

## September 13th Study



**1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5: Christ the Wisdom & Power of God**