

# 08 - Respect for Teachers: A Guise of Disunity

by Ben Torrey

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*The sermon warns against the subtle problem of respect for teachers becoming a source of division within the Church, and encourages the way of foolishness and humility as a solution.*

**Duration:** 7:10

**Scripture:** Romans 12:3-16

**Topics:** "Disunity"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of division within the church. He emphasizes the importance of unity and love among believers. The speaker warns against being swayed by personalities or the power of someone's teaching, as this can lead to idolatry and factions. He encourages humility and a focus on serving Christ, rather than being caught up in seniority or who our teachers were. The speaker also references Romans 12:2-3, urging believers to be transformed by the renewing of their minds and to seek God's will.

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## Transcript

Hello, it's Ben Torrey again. Glad to be back with you this evening. I trust that your week went well.

As we have been thinking about unity in the Church, we have looked at the Church's Christ body and what that means. We have looked at how important love is in holding this body together. Tonight I want to talk about a specific problem that we can run into that often causes division within the Church.

One that is very subtle. One we usually do not recognize. In fact, we often think that it is right and even an expression of love.

Let me read to you from 1 Corinthians 1, verses 10-13. 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? One of the most pernicious sources of division among us is disguised as a virtue extolled by everyone. Respect for one's teacher.

What better way to honor a wise teacher than to call oneself 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.

That can be found in 1 Timothy 1, 2, and 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, the way of humility.

God made foolish the wisdom of the world, 1 Corinthians 1, 18-20. And then also, verses 26 and 29. God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, so that no man may boast before God.

The way of foolishness is the way of humility, of open simplicity before God and man. Wherever 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. Paul also speaks about these attitudes in Romans 12, verses 2 and 3. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

For through the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Give preference to one another in honor.

Bless those who persecute you. Bless, do not curse. And then verses 16, 17 and 18.

Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

These are the attitudes that we should have towards one another. They are the attitudes that we should have towards our pastors. They are also the attitudes that those of us who are pastors should have towards those in our churches.

If you feel like there are problems with your pastor's attitudes, don't complain to others about them. Take them to God in prayer. And see if He doesn't work in your pastor's heart to bring change.

Being a pastor is not easy. And pastors are particularly vulnerable to these kinds of things. In fact, speaking as a pastor myself, in our very concern and responsibility to protect our people from being led into error, we can slip into these errors.

We, as pastors, really need your prayers. Let each of us seek and model the ways of foolishness and of humility. Let us not allow ourselves to be swept up in personalities or in the power of a person's teaching, preaching or rhetoric.

Let us enjoy these things as God wants us to, drawing blessing from them. But let us make sure that they do not turn into idolatries or lead us into factions. It is important that we remember in whose name we minister.

And don't forget to pray for your pastor. Good night.

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