

Session 12: 1 Corinthians 12

Church Etiquette...Paul Taught the Rules of Honoring Christ Jesus in Our Worship Services

Etiquette (Webster's Dictionary) = "the rules of conduct, action, or practice binding on members of a profession (as medicine or law), especially in their relations with one another."

For the members of the body of Christ, assembled together in public worship, there are also rules of etiquette.

In the Church at Corinth...the rules of church etiquette were boldly and habitually disregarded.

1 Corinthians 12-14

Already, in previous chapters, we have seen how:

- **Some of their women were overthrowing customs of dress,**
- **How their observances of the common meal had disgraced the Lord's Supper.**
Instead of communion (common union) between church members and our Lord...There was confusion, dysfunctional relationships, lack of true humility in the use of the gifts of the Spirit God had given them, and the disregard for common courtesy.

What were some of the other problems?

1 Corinthians 12:1-6, *"Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. ³ Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed,' and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit.*⁴ There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work."

One problem was...Because of the attention they received and of the honor they hoped to secure, certain members of the Church at Corinth were making a parade of their ability to speak in other tongues.

Remember...this was Corinth...this was a city, a community where excellence in oratory was cherished. Therefore....the ability to speak ecstatically under the influence of the Holy Spirit would have been highly prized.

The problem.....Selfish motives had corrupted a sacred blessing.

**Having begun in the Spirit, they were continuing in the flesh
(Galatians 3:3)**

Paul urges his errant INFANT church toward the unity characteristic of the body of Christ.

There are words that carry an emphasis on what is suggested or recommended ...and...another on what is mandatory.

For instance...In Dept. of Transportation Regulations, the word “should” and the word “may” are words that are suggested and recommended.

The word “shall”... “will” ... and “must” are words that demand change or carry with it no room for adjustments or slack. It is mandatory...and not doing it places the party in jeopardy of fines, confinement, or discipline when party is non-compliant.

The Bible does the same....Paul, in his own way...states that the church MUST renounce selfishness...and replace it with the most enduring gift of all....LOVE (1 Corinthians 13).

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul taught the church that “to each one (member) the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”

1 Corinthians 12:7-10, *“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,^[a] and to still another the interpretation of tongues.^[b]”*

This provides three (3) key points to the reader:

1. Every Christian receives some gift or enabling grace.

No believer is overlooked when it comes to receiving a spiritual gift.

2. Gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to individual members for the good of the entire congregation.

They equip members of the church to function as the body of Christ in a community.

3. To regard a spiritual gift as a merit badge to designate God’s elite or as evidence of total commitment is to misunderstand the purpose of the giving of these enabling gifts.

We must remember...that Paul emphasized that each gift has the same divine source and operation.

1 Cor. 12:11, *“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.”*

The Holy Spirit gives the gifts to each one as He determines.

(Sovereignty of the Spirit). Someone using his gifts unwisely or

begs to have the gift given to someone else is out of line....and is the dysfunctional part of the body of Christ.

This means that the body of Christ spends a lot of time trying to take care of the dysfunctional member because it causes the whole body to get out of sync.

Paul names a representative list of nine (9) charismatic gifts (12:8 – 11)

LISTING OF GIFTS IN 1 CORINTHIANS 12:8 – 11

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|------------------------|---|
| 1. Wisdom | 6. Prophecy |
| 2. Knowledge | 7. The Ability to Distinguish Between Spirits |
| 3. Faith | 8. Tongues |
| 4. Gifts of Healing | 9. Interpretation of Tongues |
| 5. Working of Miracles | |

In 1 Corinthians 12:12 – 31, the most famous picture of the unity of the Church was written.

“Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by [one Spirit](#) so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all

apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues^[a]? Do all interpret? ³¹ Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.”

Men have always been fascinated by the way in which the different parts of the body co-operate.

Plato (the great Greek philosopher) pointed out that we do not say, “My finger has a pain,” we say, “I have a pain.”

There is an “I”...a personality, which gives unity to the many and varying parts of the body.

WHAT THE “I” IS TO THE BODY, CHRIST IS TO THE CHURCH. IT IS IN HIM THAT ALL THE DIVERSE PARTS FIND THEIR UNITY.

Paul goes on to look at this in another way.

“YOU,” HE SAYS, “ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST.”

Christ is no longer in this world in the body; therefore, if He wants a task done within the world He has to find a person to do it.

- If He wants a child taught, He has to find a teacher to teach him;
- If He wants a sick person cured, He has to find a physician, surgeon, the person with the gift of healing, and a great crowd of prayer warriors to do His work.
- If He wants His story told, he has to find a person to tell it.

Literally, we have to be the body of Christ, hands to do His work, feet to run upon his errands, a voice to speak for Him.

“He has no hands but our hands
To do His work today;
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in His way;
He has no voice but our voice
To tell men how He died;
He has no help but our help
To lead them to His side.”

A body is healthy and efficient only when each part is functioning perfectly.

This is the unity that should exist inside the Church if it is to fulfil its proper function.

There are certain things which ought to exist in the Church, the body of Christ.

(1) We Ought to Realize That We Need Each Other.

There can be no isolation in the Church.

If the Church is to be a healthy body, we need the work that everyone can do.

(2) We Ought to Respect Each Other.

In the body there is no question of relative importances. If any limb or any organ ceases to function, the whole body is thrown out of gear.

It is so with the Church. "All service ranks the same with God."

Whenever we begin to think about our own importance in the Christian Church, the possibility of really Christian work is gone.

(3) We Ought to Sympathize With Each Other.

The Church is the whole. The person who cannot see beyond his or her own organization, the person who cannot see beyond his or her congregation, worse still, the person who cannot see beyond his or her own family circle, has not even begun to grasp the real unity of the Church.

Paul speaks of various forms of service in the Church at the end of Chapter 12. He speaks of:

- **The Apostles**

They were beyond question the greatest figures in the Church. Their authority was not confined to one place; they had no settled and localized ministry; their writ (writings) ran through the whole Church (still does). They had the closest contact with the Lord Jesus. They witnessed the Resurrection of the Lord (Acts 1)

Jesus never wrote a word on paper; instead He wrote His message upon men, and these men were the Apostles.

- **The Prophets**

The prophet is a man who lives so close to God that he knows His mind and heart and will, and so can make them known to men.

His function is two (2) fold:

- (1) He brings rebuke and warning, telling men that their way of action is not in accordance with the will of God.
- (2) He brings advice and guidance, seeking to direct men into the ways God wishes them to go.

- **Teachers**

It is impossible to exaggerate their importance. **These were the men and women who had to build up the converts won by the preaching of the evangelists and the apostles.**

They had to instruct men and women who knew literally nothing about Christianity.

Remember, a scholar will learn more from a good teacher than from any book.

- **Helpers**

These were people whose duty and responsibility was to help the poor, the orphan, the widow and the stranger. He may not have the gift of speaking in front of a bunch of people, but he was given the gift of being a light in a dark room of lonely people.

- **Administrators....**

Literally means the work of a pilot who steers the ship through the rocks and shoals to harbor. **He is the unseen person that shouldered the day to day routine work of administering to the congregation.** A servant that

serves....who wins no publicity...but, without him or her the work of the Lord could not go on.

If the Lord was in our midst...talking to us...He would tell each one of us how much He needs us (you and me) to carry on the Father's work (Our brother telling us to keep carrying the light to the world).

Where are you in the midst of these gifts...this service function of the body of Christ?

Find your place...you belong...you are important!

Set an example for others...use your gift for the glory of God...by helping others understand that God has always the best interest at heart for His children.

Will we face trials? Will we face difficult times in our lives? Will we die eventually?

God has something better for us no matter where we are in life!

