

✍ The last time we were together we saw and dealt with some improprieties in worship that were going on in the Corinthian congregation, women without head coverings in a society where that was giving the wrong message; and we talked about paying attention to society norms and others' consciences as a rule of thumb for how we conduct ourselves. This was only an excerpt of what was going on in that church as far as issues around how they conducted themselves in worship. They were the "Body of Christ" locally, but they were not healthy as a body and needed outside help. This body was taking care of its own, a body that doesn't care for itself is not healthy!

1. Let's take a careful look at what was going on. A couple of things to note:

- 1) The early church observed the Lord's supper nearly every time they met unlike many churches today, so do not think that this was some kind of special service.
- 2) The early church that is carried on very little or not at all in churches today, in conjunction with the Lord's supper, they ate an entire meal together as a part of that observance. Jude referred to these meals/Lord Supper observances as "Love Feasts," Jude 1:12. Love feasts were supposed to be just as their name implies, a time to celebrate unity, brotherhood, love of God that works itself out in love for each other; all done while feeding their bodies and souls together. You may recall that in the book of Acts that many in that church took their own possessions and gave them to be used in common for those in the church that were in need. These love feasts were in some ways offered as an arena for the continuation of this kind of giving among members so that the Body of Christ could take care of itself.
- 3) Anything but love was what was being demonstrated at the Corinthian church's love feasts. 1st Corinthians 11:17, it was harmful for the "Body" and harmful for the cause of Christ. 1st Corinthians 11:18 they are cliquish and divided, like a body that was cutting off some of its parts, Paul sees these cliques as a good way to see those who do not participate in them showing themselves to be above such behavior, 1st Corinthians 11:19. 1st Corinthians 11:20, how was it possible for them to have communion with the Lord when they weren't having communion with each other. 1st Corinthians 11:21-22, a body that doesn't care for itself or feed itself is pretty sick! Let's say the Jones come to one of these love feasts. They are church members. They prefer to arrive early, and they always sit with the same group of people and do not wait for anyone else to arrive or share the food they bring with anyone else outside of their group. Sometimes Mr. Jones has a little too much wine at these feasts and gets loud and even less considerate of others. The Smiths come with very little because they have very little and are also part of the church but are not part of the clique that the Jones control. The Smiths lack is all the more made evident in such a situation and they feel ashamed. Also, Mr. Jones is well known for saying loudly how full he is all they while some in the congregation have barely had enough to eat. Then under those tense circumstances they observe the Lord's supper. How worshipful was that? This body was ill!

2. Some have described the illnesses of a Church Body by placing them into some interesting categories.

- ✓ Church ADD, a body that is easily distracted from the things of the Lord and, instead, flitters from one activity to another with no apparent purpose. Church allergies, a church that is allergic to certain parts of Scripture that condemn its mindset or activities. Church arthritis is an inflammation of church members that slows the progress of the rest of the body. Church sterility is sickness that results in no desire to reach the lost. Church obesity is a church that only takes in the teachings of the Word but rarely engages in the activities the Word promotes. Church cataracts, when the Body is sick, but it convinces itself to see only the things that are healthy.
-

3. These illnesses come as result of the church allowing toxins from the world into the Body's system.

- ✓ Am I or are you an entry way for the teaching, philosophies and practices of the world to enter the Body of Christ? Possible Toxins are:
 - 1) Division** is caused partly by those who are unwilling to set aside their own agendas and submit to the wishes of others or at least let them be equally heard.
 - 2) Consumerism**, "What's in it for me" attitude: approaching church the same way we would a department store or a restaurant, "this place" exists to serve my needs and if they don't meet my needs as I want them to, I'll just take my business elsewhere." Certainly, the church is a place where our needs can be met but our focus shouldn't be on ourselves but the needs of others, Philippians 2:4.
 - 3) Independency**: "I don't need anybody" attitude, no part of the body is self-sufficient, we need each other to survive. The Hand cannot say it has no need for the rest of the body.
 - 4) Pretense**, "I'll not let anyone in on my life and my struggles," presenting the pretense that everything is fine when, in fact, it is not.

By nature, we don't want people to know our true selves, but healthy fellowship is based on openness with each other and caring for each other's needs. Our bonds have to be caring and intimate, but that won't happen when we are not real with each other. These are toxic to a fellowship, a body of believers!
