

Accurately Handling
The Word of Truth

By Gary Gilbertson

1 Cor. 12:23-27

Part 7



v. 23 “And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon those we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.”

“we think” = to have an opinion; a person’s own subjective mental estimate.

Honor = value, recognition, preferential treatment, respect given to someone in the opinion of others.

- a limited commodity (something rare to trade; land) Only so much and no more. To get more you must take from someone else.

less honorable = to regarded, in the opinion of others, as having less value

- Dishonorable = having a lack of integrity
- Less honorable = not given the honor that is truly deserved

“we” = those that have more value, recognition, preferential treatment, respect than they should have.

“bestow” = place upon; wrap around (not “cover up; hide)

“more abundant” = surplus; over-abundance; over-much

“honor” = value, recognition, preferential treatment, respect

I Cor. 1:11-12 “Bestowing” honor based on one’s own subjective mental estimate (opinion) will cause divisions and contentions in the church.

v. 23 (continued) Those that already have “more abundant honor” (over-abundance; over-much) are to voluntarily and lovingly bestow their surplus honor on those that have not been given the proper amount of honor that they truly deserve.

“and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.”

- Uncomely = unimpressive outward appearance by someone’s opinion.
- Comeliness = impressive outward appearance by someone’s opinion.

“unimpressive parts have surplus impressiveness”

Question: If the ‘unimpressive’ parts have ‘surplus impressiveness’, where did the ‘surplus impressiveness’ come from?

v. 24 “For our comely parts have no need.” No need of their surplus impressiveness. They already have more than enough. They need to give it away to those that don’t have as much as they should have.

v. 24 (continued) "...but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to the part which lacked."

Exodus 16:18 gathering manna

II Cor. 8:15 gathering donations

"He that gathered much (honor/comeliness) had nothing over; and he that gathered little (honor/comeliness) had no lack."

"God has tempered the body together..."

"tempered" = to combine together

God has combined the members of the body to operate in the same way as the members of the Trinity have always operated.

“having given more abundant honor” Who has given more abundant honor? The parts that have more than enough honor voluntarily bestow their excess honor on the parts that don’t get enough.

*Those that have surplus honor and comeliness **have no need** of it, so they give away their honor and comeliness to those that need it so that they will have no **lack**.

v. 25 “That there should be no schism in the body...”

- Schism = to split; to tear; to make a gap
- I Cor. 1:10-12 “I beseech you...that there be no divisions among you...there are contentions among you.”
- The personal opinions about who to “bestow honor” upon was creating divisions in the church. Some were bestowing honor on Paul, others on Apollos, others on Cephas others on Christ.

“...but that the members should have the same care one for another.”
An equal concern for the welfare of one another with no obligation of repayment.

Patronage only cared about:

- themselves/family

- those who owed you favors

- those whom you owed favors to

v. 26 “And whether one member suffer, all members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all members rejoice.”

This is the exact opposite of the patronage system that they had all lived by. If one member suffered other members rejoiced, if one member was honored, other members suffered.. This Christian way of life could cost them their social status, their livelihood and their chances for advancement. It was also considered seditious.

v. 27 “Now, ye are the body of Christ...”

- I Cor. 12:13 says that You became the body of Christ by being baptized in and drinking in the Holy Spirit.

“Now ye...” = transition from analogy of the body to the reality of their lives in the **patronage** system.

Patronage: A system of relationships based on the unequal exchange of favors, summed up as, **“I will give you what you need and, in exchange, you are obligated by honor to give me whatever I want.”**

- gratitude = the powerful sense of obligation the client had toward his patron
- The honor of the client was increased by meeting one’s obligations (being grateful) to do whatever your patron wanted.

No “sin” attached to it.

- “Homicides, tyrants, traitors there will always be; but worse than all of these is the sin of ingratitude”. (Seneca, 4 B.C. – 65 A.D.)

Not extortion, but instead the honorable way to advancement.

“...and members in particular.”

Particular = “an equal share; an equal allotment” by paying monthly dues.

Collegia = people united together to provide safety, influence and prosperity for those who had very little themselves. (unions)

Col. 1:12 “...giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us (paid our dues) to share (have an equal share) in the inheritance (allotment) of the saints (body of Christ)

The body of Christ is our *collegia*.