

A Handicapped Body

Dub McClish

Sympathetic hearts are instantly and deeply stirred at the sight of a handicapped person. The real root of such sympathy is knowing that he is handicapped. While it is tragic enough for the physical body to be handicapped, it is a multiplied tragedy for the Lord's spiritual body, His church to be handicapped. Christ planned the church to be "glorious, holy, unspotted and unwrinkled" (Eph. 5:27). The church of Christ is "the fulness of Christ" (Eph 1:23). It should therefore fully demonstrate who and what Christ is to the world. Because of its human membership, it can become handicapped by the following practices:

- **Harboring Flagrant Sin.** A church that is hesitant to deal with the problem of flagrant, public sin in its members is comparable to a person who has a dread disease, but who allows the disease to ravage his body without any attempt to arrest it. The Corinthian church is illustrative. They had an immoral man among them whose sin was being ignored (1 Cor. 5:2). Paul commanded them to "put away" the man, a warning that the disease would spread if they failed to do so. (1 Cor. 5:13, 6). He taught the same thing to every other church (1 Cor 4:17). The Lord's church must be pure to be strong. Undisciplined behavior handicaps a church.
- **Chronic Absenteeism.** I speak not of those who desire to come and can't, but of those who can attend worship and study assemblies but choose not to. Such members leave the impression with their friends that the church is unimportant, and they discourage their faithful brethren. They rob God of their part of the load and make the burden of others heavier (Gal. 6:4-5). Regular worship attendance is somewhat the minimal level of activity for a Christian. If one eschews it, he declares his utter disdain for spiritual matters. Indefinite tolerance of this practice hinders a congregation.
- **Unused, Undeveloped Talent.** A person who has many talents and squanders them may as well have none. He has a self-imposed handicap. A church limits itself when it fails to develop and train its young men and women to fill roles of great service both now and later. A failure to utilize the many skills of its members makes a church crawl that could and should be running. If you pity the handicapped person, weep and mourn for the handicapped church.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, June 3, 1982, of which I was editor.]

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