

Uncommon Courtesy

Dub McClish

Our title implies that “good manners” are in decline in the general public. Courtesy and kindness ought to “come natural” to a Christian. Rudeness, insensitivity, sharp and cutting words are not a part of the refined behavior that should characterize the elect. Such traits have caused countless doors to be forever slammed shut against the Gospel. Doubtless, many churches have suffered grievous problems by harsh and intemperate speech. Such ill manners are born and bred in utter selfishness, their owners apparently incapable of considering the possibility that their fellow-beings might have feelings. Those who boast, “I always say what I think, and everyone knows it,” might profit by being sentenced to a year’s confinement with none but their own kind. If these folk could hear what others think of their total insensitivity to the feelings of others, they would surely be ashamed. For myself, when I run across those who must spill every thought they ever had or have (often with the volume “wide open”), I avoid them. Generally, they can hardly ever be helped because they already know all there is to know.

While this utterly childish disposition may be found in all ages of people, it seems to be most common to those who are older. It appears that some think that longevity gives them the right to be downright discourteous and regular grouches. However, the uncivil speech malady is no respecter of persons; it is also frequently observable among teenagers and young adults, especially on “social” internet sites, their words often liberally laced with gross profanity.

In response some may say, “People shouldn’t be so sensitive.” Perhaps not. But no “perhaps” about it, the Lord’s people should not be ill-mannered and thoughtless of others in behavior “in general, including our speech: “Love Suffereth long, and is kind” (1 Cor. 13:4); “Put on therefore, as God’s elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness,” (Col. 3:12); “... the fruit of the Spirit is love,... kindness,... meekness, self-control; against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22–23). Kindness, gratitude, and courtesy are universally appreciated. Divine wisdom dictates behavior that is pure, peaceable, and gentle (Jam. 3:17). How beautiful is the life adorned with such increasingly rare jewels!

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