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Over the stony roads and through rushing waters, among dew-filled grasses and across sundried fields, the feet walk caked in dust and dirt carrying the body, yet not a complaint is felt. The body of Christ is comprised of many members and those people who mirror the feet make possible the walk with God and Christ, friends and family.

“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So, it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (I Corinthians 12:12-13).

The Apostle Paul listed in I Corinthians 12 the many roles and gifts given to its members in the church by God.

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church, **God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, and those with gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues**” (I Corinthians 12:27-28).

“There are **different kinds of gifts**, but the same Spirit. There are **different kinds of service** but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in everyone. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of **wisdom**, to another the message of **knowledge** by means of the same Spirit, to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of **healing** by that one Spirit, to another **miraculous powers**, to another **prophecy**, to another the ability to **distinguish between spirits**, to another the ability to **speak in different kinds of tongues**, and to still another the **interpretation of tongues**. All these are the work of one of the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines” (I Corinthians 12: 4-11).

If some members were made to feel insignificant and devalued, Paul made it clear that every member is considered precious, rare and exquisite in God's sight.

“Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. **If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body**” (I Corinthians 12:14-15).

Human nature often trends towards competition. Some members in the church may hold positions that bring a lot of attention, while others work like feet, behind the scenes performing their duties in undesirable conditions that do not bring them glory but feelings of insignificance. These members may be among the congregation of men and women.

During Jesus' ministry, many women worked to fund his ministry. “After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. **These women were helping to support them out of their own means**” (Luke 8:1-3).



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Funding for the ministry provides the means to move forward and take the gospel to the world. Into the 21st century, the congregation of the church is a primary source of funding. These men and women pay taxes, support their church and their families. Some men and women have little to give, yet they are prepared to go without or put aside their own comforts to give to God's work on earth.

“As Jesus was sitting opposite the treasury, He watched the crowd putting money into it. And many rich people put in large amounts. Then **one poor widow came and put in two small copper coins**, which amounted to a small fraction of a denarius. Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, ‘Truly I tell you, **this poor widow has put more than all the others into the treasury**’” (Mark 12:41-43).

Jesus knew the extent of her sacrifice, which was an extension of the depth of her love for God. When Jesus sent the twelve disciples out, he told them to take nothing with them, but to rely on those they served. This identified the people willing to hear the word of God at the cost of

taking care of the disciples' daily needs and the disciples' faith and trust in God to guide them and protect them along their way.

“When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases and He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ‘Take nothing for your journey,’ he instructed them. ‘Don’t take a walking stick, a traveler’s bag, food, money, or even a change of clothes. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that area. And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.’ So, they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere” (Luke 9:1-6).

Regardless of the roles or gifts given by God to members of the body of Christ, every member is exceedingly precious to Him.

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (I John 3:1)

In case any member believes themselves more valued than others, Paul corrected their error of thinking when he wrote, “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!’ On the contrary, **those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 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, while our presentable parts need no special treatment.** But God has combined the members of the body and has given **greater honor to the parts that lacked it**, so that there should be **no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it** (I Corinthians 12:21-26).

Whether Jew or Christian, apostle or member of the congregation, black or white, male or female, rich or poor, all members of the body of Christ are God the Father’s rare and exquisite treasures, all having suffered to bring the gospel to the world, all working faithfully and relentlessly to serve God. These people seek a city “with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10).

If any member of this body is made to feel insignificant or devalued, God will esteem these members with greater honor when they are awarded their position in the kingdom, not that He sees them less valuable, but that some members of the body have established a mankind-defined tiered structure of value.

God has defined a tiered structure, which is simply those who are **the great** and those who are **the least** determined by who both teaches and keeps the commandments.

“Therefore, anyone who **sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least** in the kingdom of heaven, but **whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great** in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19).

Paul asked, “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?” (I Corinthians 12:29-30) He added, “But **eagerly desire the greater gifts**” (I Corinthians 12:31).

This is the core matter in the story. Identifying the greater gifts and desiring, embracing and developing those will raise members up into God’s tier of the great. “And now these **three remain: faith, hope and love**. But **the greatest of these is love**” (I Corinthians 13:13).

Members of the body may be admired and esteemed highly, yet their gifts did not come from them rather **through the Spirit**. They received the message of wisdom and knowledge, gifts of healing, understanding of prophecy, ability to distinguish between spirits, or speak in different languages or interpret languages, work miracles—all these are gifted through the Spirit. God has awarded some to be apostles, prophets, teachers, yet the greatest are those who live the ways of love.

Paul detailed the characteristics of love. “**Love is patient, love is kind**. It **does not envy**, it **does not boast**, it is **not proud**. It is **not rude**, it is **not self-seeking** it is **not easily angered**, it **keeps no record of wrongs**. Love does not delight in evil but **rejoices with the truth**. It **always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always preserves**. **LOVE NEVER FAILS**” (I Corinthians 13:4-8a).

Those gifted with prophecies will have no audience when all the prophecies are fulfilled. When everyone during the Millennium knows the LORD and the knowledge of God’s word fills the earth, those gifted with wisdom and knowledge will become commoners. When the gospel is out to all the world and the nations are teaching and living the word of God, the interpreters and those who can speak multiple languages will not be sought out. When all of repentant mankind is transformed into their eternal bodies the gift of healing will be a service of the past and these eternal humans will see their Father in heaven; the unseen will be seen—their faith will transform into an awesome reality.

Of the three great gifts: faith will fade and hope will be fulfilled as life on earth becomes an eternal reality. The remaining gift—love will never fade nor ever be fulfilled. It is the greatest gift of all. Ask for it daily, so that you recognize the most importance service of all: love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and secondly, love your brothers and sisters as you love yourself. Put aside your will and follow Christ’s example, “Not my will be done, but the will of the Father” (Luke 22:42).

The measurement of greatness is not the job or title or gifts given through the Spirit, but the ability to love. Love is the only eternal gift. Yet, there is one gift that should be guarded with your life; it is faithfulness. One-third of the creation in heaven fell out of faithfulness and

started an avalanche that covered the earth in sin. They betrayed their Creator and introduced evil spirits: of hatred, contention, bitterness, nastiness and cruelty.

The Psalmist understood the importance of guarding faithfulness. In eternity, it is not the belief in the unseen, rather remaining eternally loyal never to depart and serve another. “Let **love and faithfulness NEVER LEAVE YOU**; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then, you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man” (Proverbs 3:3-4).

While mortal and weak, God has provided His people a way to become blameless before Him. Paul said, “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may **strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS through faith**. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love” (Ephesians 3:16-17).

More than any time, it is **today** that those who fear and serve God, eagerly work to “make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things... add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love... you will never fall, and **YOU WILL RECEIVE A RICH WELCOME INTO THE ETERNAL KINGDOM OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST**” (II Peter 1:10a, 5-7, 10b-11).

Whether made a foot or hand, eye or ear, mouth or hip, nose or knee, whatever the member all roles, titles and gifts while on earth do not reflect the glorious positions that God is preparing for those who love Him. His mansion has many, many highly esteemed positions being prepared for the body of Christ—all members who entered the race and ran to win (John 14:2). They are the saints who throughout time into the present and future suffered and will suffer persecution and martyrdom, yet never give up. They are always standing strong and loyal under the flag of Almighty God—men and women alike, standing shoulder-to-shoulder never to fall because they love God, Christ and their fellowman.

Compiled by Janette Andrejowich