

What The Bible Teaches About Church Benevolence

by Johnie Edwards

Many in the church have failed to understand what the Bible has to say about the responsibility the church has in the realm of benevolence. The only way we can know the truth on the matter is to let the Bible speak (1 Pet. 4:11). There are nine passages of Scripture which deal with whom the church should relieve. Let's take a look at them:

1) “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men (the word men is not in the original, JE) as every man had need” (Acts 2:44-45). Believers were relieved in this passage.

2) “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul:....neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need” (Acts 4:32-35). Again, believers were the ones helped.

3) “And in those days, when the number of the disciples was

multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations” (Acts 6:1-6). These disciples were looked after by the local church.

4) “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:27-30). Here relief was sent to the brethren.

5) “But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem” (Rom. 15:25-26). Poor saints were the object of this help.

6) “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye” (1 Cor. 16:1). This collection was for the saints.

7) “Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints” (2 Cor. 8:4). Again,

it is the saints.

8) “For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God” (2 Cor. 9:1, 12). Saints were supplied.

9) “If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed” (1 Tim. 5:16).

This is the extent of New Testament teaching on the responsibility of the church in the realm of benevolence. Without an exception, when the church helped or relieved others, they were always SAINTS, BRETHREN OR BELIEVERS! This is the Lord's plan and we have no right to change it.

GOSPEL MEETING:

APRIL 22-27

Preacher: Larry Ping

Two Areas Of Benevolence

by John Isaac Edwards

The word “benevolence” is used of “...the work of the ministry...” (Eph. 4:12). The Scriptures reveal two areas of caring for the needy. Let’s explore these areas:

1) *Individual Responsibility.*

The judgment scene of Matthew 25:31-46 pictures individuals assisting the needy. Paul worked with his hands to minister unto his needs and to the needs of others, and taught others to do the same. “Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me” (Acts 20:34). “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Eph. 4:28). The house of Stephanas “...addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints” (1 Cor. 16:15). Paul wrote Timothy, “But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God....If any man or woman that believeth have

widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed” (1 Tim. 5:4, 16). An individual, charged with keeping himself unspotted from the world, is “...To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction...” (Jas. 1:27).

2) *Church Responsibility.* *In New Testament days, the local church took care of its own needy saints.* Believers “...sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need” (Acts 2:45). “...as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need” (Acts 4:34-35). When widows were neglected in the daily ministrations of the church at Jerusalem, brethren looked out among them men whom were appointed over this business of serving tables (Acts 6:1-7). 1 Timothy 5:5-16 shows that the church may enroll “...a widow indeed, and

desolate...” *Churches also assisted other churches in benevolence.* Paul wrote the Romans, “But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem” (Rom. 15:25-26). In Acts 11:27-30, when there came to pass “a great dearth throughout all the world”, “...the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.” Galatians 1:22 mentions “...the churches of Judaea...”

Thus, the Scriptures show the responsibility of individuals, churches taking care of their own needy and churches assisting other churches in benevolence. As individuals, we cannot shift our responsibility to the church; nor can the church shift its responsibility to another church or some human institution or organization!

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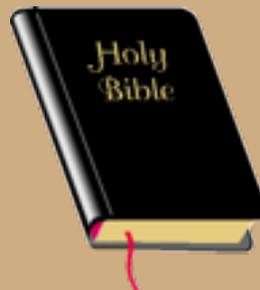
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