

Bedford Bulletin

Columbus Street church of Christ
512 Columbus Street Bedford, Ohio 44146

----- Building Phone: 440-232-2231 -----

Website: www.bedfordcoc.com

E-Mail: dave.evangelistcoc@gmail.com

November 8, 2020

**“GOD
Made us
Alive...”**

**Together
with Christ**

Ephesians 2:5

The Bible on Benevolence

This article is written so that saints can be ready to give an answer to those in the world who make claim that the churches of Christ, you, are unloving and uncaring because you, the church refuse to give to the poor. When people call the church phone it is automatically transferred to my cell phone and between November and “Christmas”, I receive multiple daily calls from individuals outside the church asking for assistance of one kind or another. All have a sad story, all say, “can you give...” and all pull at my heart strings. Over the years I have notice it was the same people calling every year. So, I began to store each call in my phone contacts list with names like, “Wants Help”, “Husband was just diagnosed with...”, “Lost Job”, “Need help with rent, utilities”, etc. Sure enough, the calls come like clockwork, same number, same caller ID, and same stories. In November calls are marked, “Need Food”, “Can you buy us a turkey”, and in December, “I have children that won’t have a Christmas if your church won’t buy them some presents”. A yearly regular, ID-“Christmas Wish”, repeats, “I have a shopping wish list I can send you which includes gifts for herself, her husband, brother and sister, along with her 5 children.” I have currently over 60 of these numbers stored in my phone.

The hardest thing for me, is to say no. Sharon and I have helped often. But even harder is when we can’t help and the caller accuses us, and the church of not being caring, loving, or not having compassion. Some even get extremely angry saying, “God is a God of love, He has compassion on the poor, why don’t you?” Truly, God is love and he who does not love does not know God (1 John 4:8).

The question is: Does “love” give the local church authority to use the collection to support anyone or anything outside of needy saints? Most in the world of modern

Knowing & Doing God's Will

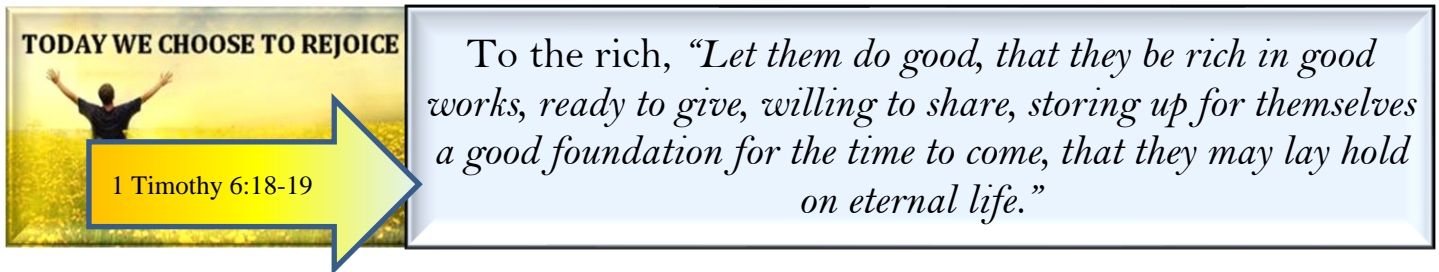
Proverbs 11:14

religion say yes and teach that the church is responsible for the poor, and have setup programs, food pantries, free meals, and such to fulfill their ill perceived notion. But the authoritative word of God teaches quite differently. By direct command, example and necessary inference, the Bible shows the benevolent work of the church is limited to saints only. The church was never given authority or responsibility to feed, clothe and care for the world's needy, as is widely taught by the many denominations. One only needs to read the accounts of benevolence to conclude this to be true.

In the book of Acts, chapter 2, we are right there when the church first began. As one reads chapter by chapter all through the end of the book and many examples of benevolent acts by the church are found. Two facts will be true to every record. One, the givers are always saints, and two, the recipients are always saints. Example, Acts 2:44-45, "*...all who believed were together...^[d]sold their possessions and goods, and divided^[e] them among all, as anyone had need.*" They that believed are the saints who sold their possessions and distributed it among all who had need. Saints helping saints. Again, Acts 4:32-35, "*32 Now the multitude of those who believed...had all things in common...all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them...the proceeds of the things that were sold... and they (the Apostles) distributed to each as anyone had need.*" Who sold lands and houses? "*those who believed*". Who received the benefit? The saints in need. Read Acts 6:1-3: "*...the number of the disciples was multiplying...their widows were neglected...Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation...whom we may appoint over this business*" Saints meeting the need of the needy widows in the church. The entirety of scripture that pertains to benevolence and the New Testament church over and over refers to saints, helping needy saints. 1 Cor. 16:1-2, "*Now concerning the collection for the saints*". (Read also, 2 Cor. 8:1-4; 2 Cor. 9:1-2; Rom. 15:25-26; Acts 11:27-29). Who sent relief and to whom it was sent?

When it came to the believing family there were restrictions also. Each one is to be responsible for his immediate family, aged parents and other relatives as much as is possible. Those who refuse to do so have, "*denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever*" (1 Tim. 5:4,8). Paul commanded, "*If any believing^[a] man or woman has widows, let them^[b] relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows*" (1 Tim. 5:16). As for laziness / idleness Paul commands, "*For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone*

will not work, neither shall he eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). Laziness is a sin which cannot be tolerated and anyone who aids such become partakers of this sin. Strong language, yes, but remember from Whom it came, God! It is He who expects each person to stand on his own feet and do for himself as he is able and has opportunity. Imagine if these principles were practiced out in the world. There would be little need for welfare. The greater majority of benevolent work is to be done by individuals, not the church, thus the church will not to be overly burdened and will have the resources to take care of needy saints.



TODAY WE CHOOSE TO REJOICE

1 Timothy 6:18-19

To the rich, *“Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”*

Question: If the apostles prohibit the church from supplying the needs of a widow who is a Christian, or a Christian who is lazy, or refuses to support his own family, what about aliens? From the Day of Pentecost to Paul arriving at Rome and, *“preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus”* (Acts 28:31), at least 32 years have passed by. It could hardly be accidental that every benevolent work on record by the church is always among saints.

There are some who argue that Galatians 6 and verse 10 is the exception. But remember that *“a text without a context is a pretext, and no text at all”*. In this account Paul is referring to the individual. In the first 8 verses of Galatians 6, you read, *“a man... you...such a one...yourself...himself...he...each one...his own work...himself alone... him who is taught the word...share...with him who teaches...a man sows”* This “man,” this “one,” this “him,” is the one who is to *“let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith”*.

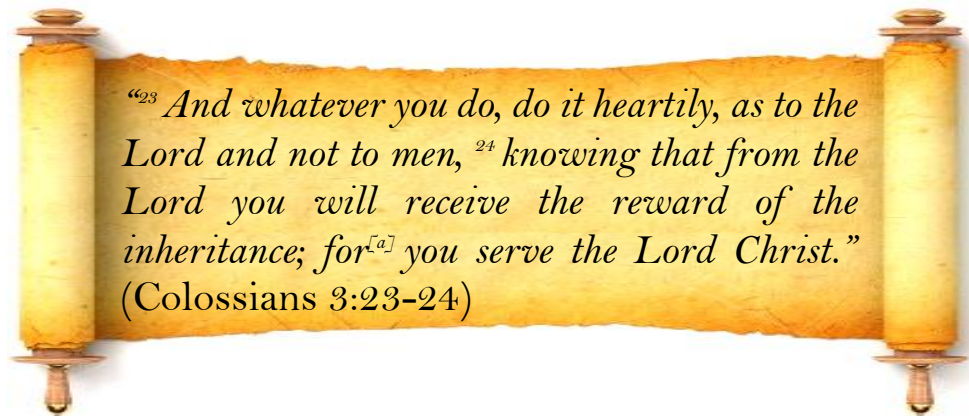
Search the scripture and find one that authorizes the church by command or example to engage in a work of general benevolence. I believe an honest search will lead you to the same conclusions. The church cannot use its resources accept to fill the needs of the saints. Individual saints can and should help wherever possible. For the world in general this is a shocking and heartless statement, and has brought no end of scorn upon those who hold fast to the truth and letting God be true and every man a liar (Rom. 3:4).

Consider this question. God will never ask us to do anything we are not able to do, therefore would He command the local church to be responsible to meet the needs of “all” men? Consider the size of most congregations, how would that be accomplished?

There are many who are truly needy, and there are many who are simply lazy, looking for a free handout and it is not always easy to tell the two apart. But God is always glorified when saints help saints, and when an individual brother or sister extends a helping hand to anyone in need out of the abundance He provides.

Let us not forget to meet the greatest need, that is the need for others to know the blessing of salvation in Christ Jesus. God sent relief to needy souls, lost in sin, His name is Jesus, and there is no greater gift of giving than to give the word of God to others.

In Love
Dave Scarpino



*“²³ And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for^[a] you serve the Lord Christ.”
(Colossians 3:23-24)*

Our faithful Creator is worthy to be praised in this assembly. All praise to Him who reigns above in majesty supreme! He gave His Son to die, for all mankind, that He might redeem all. Our blessed Redeemer suffered and died for our sins and is now risen and sitting at the right hand of God as Head of the church. Let us offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, knowing that He is the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him. (Hebrews 5:8-9) ***“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!”*** (Isaiah 6:3)

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (Luke 2:14)

What Must I Do to Be Saved?

1. Hear the gospel-----John 6:45; Romans 10:17
2. Believe the gospel-----John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6
3. Repent of sins -----Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30
4. Confess Christ-----Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:10
5. Be baptized-----Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38
6. Remain faithful unto and until death-----Revelation 2:10; Matthew 10:22