

# BENEVOLENCE

## *It Is More Blessed to Give Than Receive*

### I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Scripture Reading: Acts 20:35.

B. What Does “Benevolence” Mean?

1. “Benevolent” means lit. “to wish well;” then, “to go good.” It is the opposite of “malevolent.”
2. We must avoid the “I-gave-at-the-office” approach to the needy around us.

C. Benevolence Has Always Been Encouraged.

1. Lev.25:35.
2. Prov.3:27-28; 19:17; 21:13.
3. Isa.58:6-7.
4. Mt.5:42.
5. Rich young ruler was not (Mk.10:21).
6. Zacchaeus (Lk.19:8).
7. Dorcas (Ac.9:39).
8. Cornelius (Ac.10:2).
9. Jesus (Ac.10:38).
10. Paul (Gal.2:10).

### II. BENEVOLENCE: THE INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN.

A. The “What” of Benevolence.

1. My responsibility to my family (1 Thess.4:11-12; 1 Tim.5:4-8,16).
  - a) It is not the government’s responsibility.
  - b) It is not society’s responsibility.
  - c) It is not the local church’s responsibility.
2. My responsibility to my brethren (Mt.25:35ff; Mk.9:41; Ac.20:35; Gal.6:6,10; Jas.1:27; 1 Jn.3:17-18).
3. My responsibility to my fellow-man (Lk.10:29-37; Gal.6:10; Eph.4:28; 1 Tim.6:17-18; Heb.13:2). Some suggestions:
  - a) Be careful not to encourage laziness.
  - b) Be careful not to offer cash that may be used in the wrong way.
  - c) Be careful not to put yourself in harm’s way.

B. The “Why” of Benevolence.

1. Because it is commanded (the passages listed above are commands).
2. Because it is compassionate (1 Jn.3:17).
  - a) Not for any compensation (Lk.14:12-14).

b) Not for any applause (Mt.6:1ff).

C. The “When” of Benevolence.

1. As you have the ability (Ac.11:29; 2 Cor.8:12; cf. “as he may prosper” in 1 Cor.16:2).
2. As you have the opportunity (Gal.6:10; cf. opportunities are qualified).

**III. BENEVOLENCE: THE LOCAL CHURCH.**

A. Examples of Local Church Benevolence (these are all the examples):

1. *“And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need” (Acts 2:44-45).*
2. *“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. For neither was there among them any 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 at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need” (Acts 4:32-35).*
3. *“Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables. Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:1-3).*
4. *“Now in these days there came down prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius. And the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judea: which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:27-30).*
5. *“but now, I say, I go unto Jerusalem, ministering unto the saints. For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. Yea, it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by you unto Spain. And I know that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ. Now I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judaea, and that my ministrations which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints” (Romans 15:25-31) (cf. Ac. 24:17).*
6. *“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come. And when I arrive, whomsoever ye shall approve, them will I send with letters to carry your bounty unto Jerusalem” (1 Corinthians 16:1-3).*
7. 2 Cor.8:1-24.
8. 2 Cor.9:1-15.

9. 1 Tim.5:5-16 (note especially v. 16 which teaches a difference between the individual work of benevolence and the congregational work of benevolence).
  - a) Question: What if a widow is needy, but also has children and those children will not care for her? Answer: She cannot be “put on the role” (regular assistance) because she does not meet the qualifications, but she can be helped from the treasury (periodic assistance) because she is still needy (cf. Ac.6:1ff).
  - b) Paul’s discussion of the widow in 1 Tim.5:5ff is a discussion of a certain kind widow - “the widow indeed” - who needs to be “enrolled” for permanent church assistance. It is not meant to be a discussion concerning all needy widows.

#### B. Summary of NT Teaching on Local Church Benevolence:

1. First, local churches helped needy saints (there was first a “need,” “want” or “poor”). However, the “need” came about because of something beyond one’s control (like a famine). The “need” was not self-imposed (I get myself into debt, I mismanage my money, I don’t pay my bills, etc.) or imposed upon someone due to cultural customs or traditions (funerals, weddings, school tuition, etc.). Brethren may be in “need” of all kinds of things today, but that does not authorize the local church to help them.
2. Second, local churches helped needy saints only.
  - a) The only examples we have in the NT of a local church taking from its funds to help the needy are examples of benevolence toward needy saints. We must limit ourselves to this Bible pattern and not change it or go beyond it.
  - b) Our institutional brethren ask us: “Where is the word ‘only’ in the Bible with reference to helping saints?” We ask them: “Where is the word ‘only’ in the Bible with reference to singing?”
  - c) Answer: Both parties agree that the word “only” is implied as one looks at the total pattern of NT teaching on the subject. When only one type of thing (like singing only) or person (like needy saint only) is mentioned, all others are excluded.
3. Third, local churches helped all needy saints, not just certain needy saints (however, see “1.” Above).
4. Fourth, local churches sent directly to the needy saints, not through a “sponsoring church”. This pattern must also be followed today.
5. Fifth, local churches did their own work of benevolence to care for needy saints. They did not build, maintain, or work through any human institution (orphan home, hospital, etc.) to care for needy saints. This pattern must also be followed today.

#### C. What Local Church Benevolence Does.

1. It brings the local church together (Ac.2:44; 4:32).
2. It gives the local church an opportunity to minister (2 Cor.8:4).
3. It demonstrates real brotherly love (2 Cor.8:8,24; 1 Jn.3:17; cf. Jn.13:34-35).
4. It makes the local church happier (2 Cor.9:7).

### IV. CONCLUSION.

- A. Attitude: Let Us Open Our Eyes and Hearts to the Needs Around Us.
- B. Action: Let Us Open Our Pockets and Wallets to Share What We Have. Let Us Open Up the Lord’s Treasury to Care for the Needy Saints.