

Benevolence Patterns from Scripture

Benevolence is a part of our labor for the Lord

All understand that those (we) who have excess should help those in need

Certainly this is demonstrated in the teaching of Jesus

Luke 10:30-37 Good Samaritan

Paul also gives general instruction in this matter

Ephesians 4:28 He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.

James is a little more pointed when he uses benevolence as an illustration regarding faith & works

James 2:14-17 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

Responsibility to care for needy is not question. (Individual or Collective)

Collective Work

Problem arises regarding how the collective body of saints are to be involved in relieving such needs

Considered Paul's instruction to Timothy in lesson on Differences

Look a little closer

1Timothy 5:9-16

First responsibility is laid upon individuals & family

Only limited circumstance when collective action was to take place

Now consider examples of early Christians handling needy

Acts 2:44-45 New converts remaining in Jerusalem for instruction

Who was relieved? Saints

Who offered relief? Local Saints - Specifically, individuals with much gave to leaders for purpose of helping those in need

Acts 4:34-35 Continued action from Acts 2

Who was relieved? Saints

Who offered relief? Local Saints - Same as above

Acts 6:1-6 Needy among brethren in Jerusalem

Who was relieved? Saints

Who offered relief? Local Saints - Seems an ongoing need among the saints in Jerusalem required more attention than Apostles could give

Acts 11:27-30 Famine relief to Judea

Who was relieved? Saints

Who offered relief? Local Saints - Once again, individuals gave so that funds could be carried to elders in Judea for purpose of helping those in need

Romans 15:25-31; 1Corinthians 16:1-3; 2Corinthians 8-9 Relief to Judea from Gentile & Jew converts from Paul's ministry

Who was relieved? Saints

Who offered relief? Local Saints - Similar action to that recorded of brethren in Antioch in Acts 11, with relief made available from a greater area than just one group of saints

A Pattern Is Evident

Every example of relief offered by a collective of saints has the same characteristics.

Saints were the beneficiaries of the relief and it was sent to the leaders in the local collective for distribution

No extra collection agency. No extra distribution agency.

That is a solid pattern

God's Way is The Right Way

We do well when we limit our action to following the examples God has preserved for our guidance.

This we know is right. Any other action or arrangement is without guidance from God.

Based on chart "Who Relieved Whom" Charles N. Rieber, Jr.