

# The Church's Responsibility in Benevolence

Rom. 15:25-26; 1 Cor. 16:1-2

## Introduction:

- A. "Benevolence" as used among brethren refers to caring for the needy.
- B. To help us understand our subject we will consider two aspects of the N.T. teaching about the poor.

## Discussion:

### I. The Problem of the Poor (Mark 14:3-7)

- A. *A perpetual problem* (v. 7)
- B. *A priority problem.*
  - 1. The poor was not Jesus' greatest concern.
    - a. Did not declare a "war on poverty," but a "war on sin"
    - b. Did not seek absolute economic and social equality, but spiritual equality.
    - c. Economic "equality" taught was freedom from want (cf. 2 Cor. 8:14; Acts 2:44,45; 4:32,35)
  - 2. The poor get top priority under the social gospel system – feed, relieve, then teach.
  - 3. The lost get top priority under the gospel of Christ (cf. John 6:26, 27).
- C. *A perception problem.*
  - 1. Wrong perception of what "poor" means – it does not mean:
    - a. Those who are merely "less fortunate" – one having less than most of us have.
    - b. Those who are merely having trouble maintaining their accustomed life style.
    - c. Those with assets that can be converted into food, clothing and shelter.
    - d. Those who spend money on conveniences rather than on basic necessities (Ill. Baby - tv box)
    - e. Those with able non-working family members living in the household.
    - f. Those with non-contributing working household members.
  - 2. The biblical poor are destitute of the bare necessities of life (cf. Jas. 2:15)
    - a. "Ptochos (πτωχός)" means poor or beggar
    - b. Need what it takes to be "warmed and filled" or "things needful to the body" (Jas. 2:15-16)
    - c. Due to uncontrollable circumstances – not laziness or mismanagement (cf. Acts 11:28-30)

### II. The Aid to the Poor.

- A. Personal aid to any poor.
  - 1. One reason from working is to have to aid the needy (Eph. 4:28)
  - 2. To all men – saint or sinner – as we have opportunity (Gal. 6:10; Jas. 1:27; 2:15-16))
- B. Congregational aid to poor saints.
  - 1. To members of the congregation (Acts 2:42; 4:34; 6:1-3 Note: "their" widows)
  - 2. To saints in other congregations (Acts 11:30; Rom. 15:25-28; 1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 8 & 9).
    - a. Sent directly to church with the needy.
    - b. Did not send through a "sponsoring church" or human organization (cf. Acts 11:30)
  - 3. Principle: Church aided only saints without other means of support.
    - a. Family assistance (1 Tim. 5:8, 16).
    - b. Younger widows to marry rather than enrolled for church support (1 Tim. 5:11-14)
    - c. Other means not available to 1<sup>st</sup> century needy: SS, unemployment ins., state aid, etc.
  - 4. Church benevolence is a token of the fellowship that exists between church and the poor saint.
    - a. "Contribution" and "distribution" from koinonia (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 9:13)
    - b. Thayer: Shows "embodiment and proof of fellowship"

## Conclusion:

- A. Let us be concerned about the poor and needy, but more so about the lost.
- B. Let us aid the poor personally as we have opportunity and ability – saint or sinner.
- C. Let us let the church aid only those with whom it has been charged.