

The New Testament Church

Part 12: Patterns For the Church: Benevolence

I Corinthians 2:1-13

I. INTRODUCTION: I

I. 2 The New Testament reveals the mind of God (I Cor. 2:4-13). This has very critical ramifications:

A. Completeness:

- (1) God has revealed “*all truth*” (Jn. 16:13) and there is nothing more to be revealed (Jude 3; Gal. 1:6-9).
- (2) God has given us “*all things that pertain to life and godliness*” (2 Pet. 1:3).
- (3) The Scriptures enable “*the man of God*” to “*be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” (2 Tim. 3:17).

B. Pattern:

- (1) That God has a “*pattern*” for all things is undeniable:

Heb. 8:5: “*who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’*”

I Cor. 2:9: “*But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ I O But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.*”

- (2) This means the same “*pattern*” was taught and followed by all congregations in the first century (**I Cor. 4:17:** “*For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.*”).
- (3) We are admonished to follow the “*pattern*” of life of the inspired teachers (**Phil. 3:17:** “*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.*”).
- (4) Further, we are admonished to follow the “*pattern of sound words,*” i.e., the teaching of the inspired teachers (2 Tim. 1:13).

C. Authority:

- (1) Since God’s word is a complete “*pattern*” then all that we do or teach must follow that complete “*pattern*” (Col. 3:17). God’s “*pattern*” extends to every area of life:
 - (a) Individual manner of life (individual walk as Christ’s disciple; Phil. 1:27; Eph. 4:1),
 - (b) Corporate manner of life (i.e., worship, work, and organization of the church).
- (2) Because the Bible reveals God’s mind (i.e., His will for us), we must not violate the “*silence of the scriptures*” (I Cor. 4:6; I Pet. 4:11). For example, the Bible is silent concerning:
 - (a) Elements other than fruit of the vine and unleavened bread for the Lord’s Supper (Matt. 26:26-29).
 - (b) Partaking of the Lord’s Supper on days other than the first day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7).
 - (c) Worshipping with music other than singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
- (3) Those who respect God’s authority as expressed through His word understand that:

- (a) To use any other elements in the Lord's Supper than fruit of the vine and unleavened bread would be "lawlessness" (Matt. 7:21-23).
- (b) To partake of the Lord's Supper on any other day than the first day of the week would be "lawlessness" (Matt. 7:21-23).
- (c) To worship God with any other music than singing in "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" would be "lawlessness" (Matt. 7:21-23).
- (4) Faithful Christians understand the sinfulness of violating the silence of the scriptures, because once God has "specified" His will, we are bound to perform it exactly as He has specified. Consider the consequences of violating this principle:
 - (a) Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2; Lev. 16:12).
 - (b) Moses (Num. 20:11-12).
 - (c) Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:6-7; 1 Chron. 15:13).

2. **3** Today we want to continue our study of the New Testament Church.

- A. In this, our 12th lesson, we will begin examining some "patterns" we see for the church as it regards its mission and work.
- B. Recall that in lesson #7 we examined the work of the local church fell into three areas: evangelism, edification, benevolence.
- C. ****** This lesson will focus on the "pattern" we see in regards to benevolence.
 - (1) Benevolence is a very emotionally charged subject.
 - (2) We cannot let emotions rule and decide what is right (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12; Num. 20:1-13; 1 Chron. 13:11 vs. 15:13).
 - (3) What is right must be determined based on the principles we just reviewed concerning Bible authority (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 4:30: "What saith the Scriptures?"; 1 Pet. 4:11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

II. DISCUSSION:

I. **4** The New Testament reveals two realms of benevolent responsibility (1 Tim. 5:3-16):

A. Responsibilities of individual Christians:

- (1) **V. 4:** "But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God."
- (2) **V. 16:** "If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows."
- (3) Please note the severe condemnation directed at Christians who do not discharge their **individual benevolent** responsibilities (**V. 8:** "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.")
- (4) These three verses (4, 16, 8) plainly and explicitly teach that Christians who have family members that are widows have the **first** responsibility to care for their needs.

B. Responsibilities of the local church:

- (1) **V. 16:** "If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows." The local church only has a benevolent responsibility towards widows who are "really widows," that is, they have no family members to care for them.

(2) Very importantly, note also that in order for a widow to become the benevolent responsibility of the local church she must meet specific qualifications:

- (a) She must be destitute (vv. 4-5).
- (b) She must have no one in her family upon which to depend (v. 4).
- (c) She must be faithful in worship (v. 5).
- (d) She must live godly in life and character (vv. 5, 7).
- (e) She must be 60 years of age or older (v. 9)(Paul states reasons in vs. 11-15.)
- (f) She must have been benevolent and faithful in good works (v. 10).
- (g) She must have brought up children (v. 10).
- (h) She must have been the wife of one man (v. 9)(A woman is “the wife of one man” when she is scripturally married, regardless of the number of scriptural marriages (cf. Rom. 7:3). Does not mean she can never have more than one scriptural marriage, see v. 14.)

C. **5** Summary of 1 Tim. 5:3-16: This passage:

- (1) Clearly defines a “pattern.”
- (2) Clearly distinguishes between the benevolent responsibilities of individual Christians and the local church.
- (3) Clearly teaches the individual Christian has certain benevolent responsibilities that cannot be avoided and/or shifted to the local congregation without severe condemnation and consequences.
- (4) Clearly teaches the local congregation has certain benevolent responsibilities when members are in need.

2. **6 Benevolent responsibility of local churches in the New Testament:**

A. There are three recorded cases of congregational benevolence (Acts 4: 32-37; 11: 27-30; 1 Cor. 16: 1-3, 2 Cor. 8, 9, Rom. 15: 25-27).

**** (1) Jerusalem church cared for its needy (Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37):** Very earliest disciples were from many far-flung places and remained in Jerusalem much longer than they originally had planned (cf. Acts 2:9-11).

**** (2) The church in Antioch sent aid to “the brethren which dwelt in Judea” (Acts 11:27-30):** This famine was prophesied to take place “in the days of Claudius Caesar” (v. 28). Claudius reigned from 41-54 AD and history records four famines during his reign. Historical writers indicate the famine in 45 AD was particularly severe in Judea, although it was quite wide in scope (v. 28).

**** (3) Churches of Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia sent aid to “poor saints in Jerusalem” (1 Cor. 16:1-3; Rom. 15:25-26; 2 Cor. 8, 9).** This is a separate case from (2)(1 Corinthians not written until 57 or 58 AD). The poverty of the “poor saints in Jerusalem” may have been at least partly attributable to “the seizure of your [their] property” mentioned in Heb. 10:32-34 (NASB).

B. **7** The local church is authorized to have a treasury for such purposes:

1 Cor. 16:1-2: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

In I Corinthians 16: 2, “in store” is our word treasury; *thesaurizo* (thay-sow-rid'-zo); from “to amass or reserve” (literally or figuratively); lay up (treasure), (keep) in store, (heap) treasure (together, up). From noun *thesauros* (thay-sow-ros') a deposit, i.e. wealth (literally or figuratively)(cf. Jas. 5:3) (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright (c) 1994, Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, Inc.).

- C. It is also critical for us to notice that there was a “pattern” concerning the collection and distribution of these funds by the local church.
- (1) Pattern concerning the **purpose** of benevolence. The purpose was to “relieve” a “need” (**Acts 11:29**: “disciples...determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea.”).
- (a) The word “need” means “necessity.”
- ☛ “they distributed to each as anyone had need” (Acts 4:35).
 - ☛ “your abundance may supply their lack” (2 Cor. 8:14).
 - ☛ “the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints” (2 Cor. 9:12).
- (b) Very importantly this “need” did not arise because of:
- ☛ Frivolous spending (Prov. 28:19).
 - ☛ Prodigal living (Prov. 23:20-21; Lk. 15:11-21).
 - ☛ Greedy-minded business ventures (Prov. 28:22).
 - ☛ Materialistic desires (i.e., covetousness, Prov. 21:5, 25-26).
 - ☛ Laziness (Prov. 6:6-11; 2 Thess. 3:6-15).
- (2) Pattern concerning the **manner** of giving.
- (a) Contributing was something that “must” be done:
- ☛ “I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also” (1 Cor. 16:1)
 - ☛ “with much urgency” (2 Cor. 8:4)
- (b) Collection to be made upon a specific day.
- ☛ “On the first day of every week” (1 Cor. 16:2 NASB)
- (c) Every member had the responsibility to give according to their ability, purpose, and prosperity.
- ☛ “each one of you lay something aside” (1 Cor. 16:2)
 - ☛ “storing up as he may prosper” (1 Cor. 16:2)
 - ☛ “each according to his ability, determined to send relief” (Acts 11:29)
 - ☛ “according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have” (2 Cor. 8:12)
 - ☛ “as he purposes in his heart” (2 Cor. 9:7)
- (d) Every member was to give freely, not grudgingly or out of a sense of compulsion.
- ☛ “one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own” (Acts 4:32)
 - ☛ “freely willing” (2 Cor. 8:3)
 - ☛ “as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation” (2 Cor. 9:5)
 - ☛ “he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Cor. 9:6)

- ☛ “not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7)

(3) Pattern concerning the **subjects** of benevolence: always limited to “needy saints.”

(a) Jerusalem church (Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37):

Acts 2:

- ☛ Who is under consideration? “all who believed and had all things in common” (2:44)
- ☛ What did they do? “sold their possessions and goods” (2:45). Who “sold their possessions and goods”? “all who believed and had all things in common”
- ☛ Then what did they do with the proceeds? They “divided them among all” (2:45). Who divided what among whom? “all who believed and had all things in common” “divided them among all” That is, all who believed divided it among themselves “as anyone had need.”

Acts 4:

- ☛ Who is under consideration? “the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul” (4:32).
- ☛ What was their attitude? “neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own” (4:32). Who said “that any of the things he possessed” was not his own? “those who believed”
- ☛ What did they do? “they had all things in common” (4:32). Who were “they” who “had all things in common”? “those who believed.”
- ☛ What was the result of the fact that “they had all things in common”? “Nor was there anyone among them who lacked” (4:34). Who did not lack? “anyone among” “those who believed.”
- ☛ Why was this the case? “for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need” (4:34-35).
- ☛ Who were the “all” who sold “lands or houses” and “brought the proceeds of the things that were sold”? “those who believed.”
- ☛ Who was the “anyone” who had “need”? “those who believed” “had all things in common.”

(b) Church in Antioch (Acts 11:27-30):

- ☛ To whom did the “disciples” “determine[d] to send relief”? “to the brethren dwelling in Judea”.

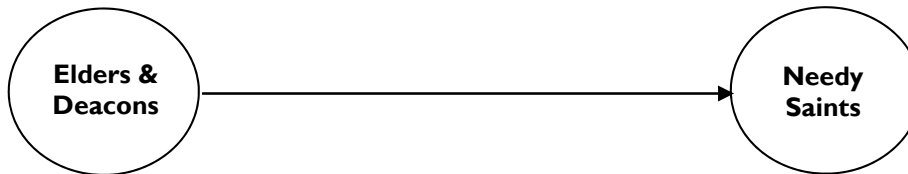
(c) Churches of Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia sent aid to the “poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem” (1 Cor. 16:1-3; Rom. 15:25-26; 2 Cor. 8, 9).

- ☛ What is under consideration? “collection for the saints” (1 Cor. 16:1); “ministering to the saints” (2 Cor. 8:4); “Now concerning the ministering to the saints” (2 Cor. 9:1).
- ☛ What was to be done? “supplies the needs of the saints” (2 Cor. 9:12). Paul said he was “going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints” (Rom. 15:25). What was he taking to Jerusalem? “a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem” (Rom. 15:26).
- ☛ To whom did the brethren in Macedonia and Achaia make a “certain contribution”? “for the poor among the saints.”

(4) **8** Pattern concerning the **distribution** of funds.

9 Jerusalem relief: (Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37) was by the elders through the deacons (e.g., Acts 6:1-8).

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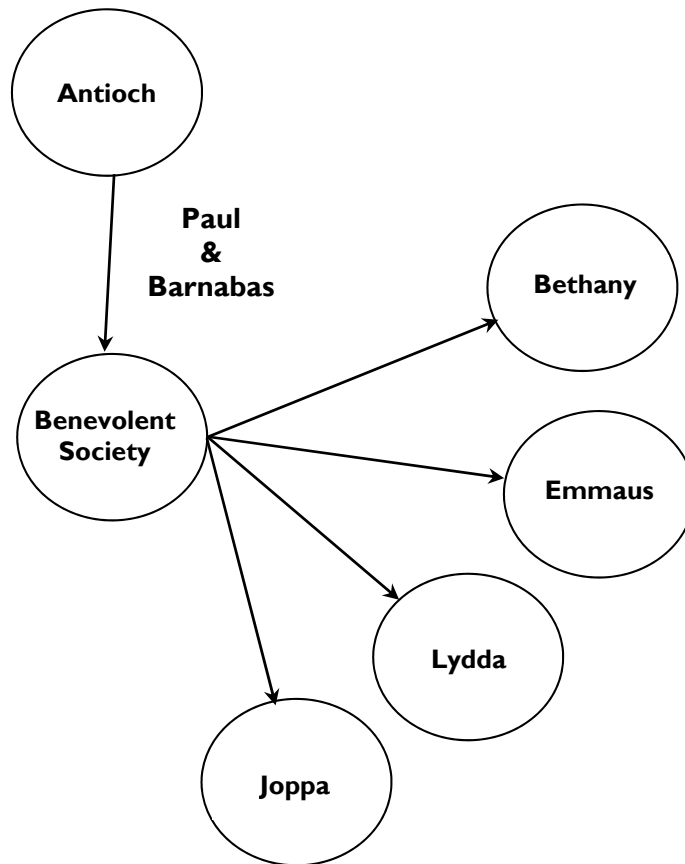
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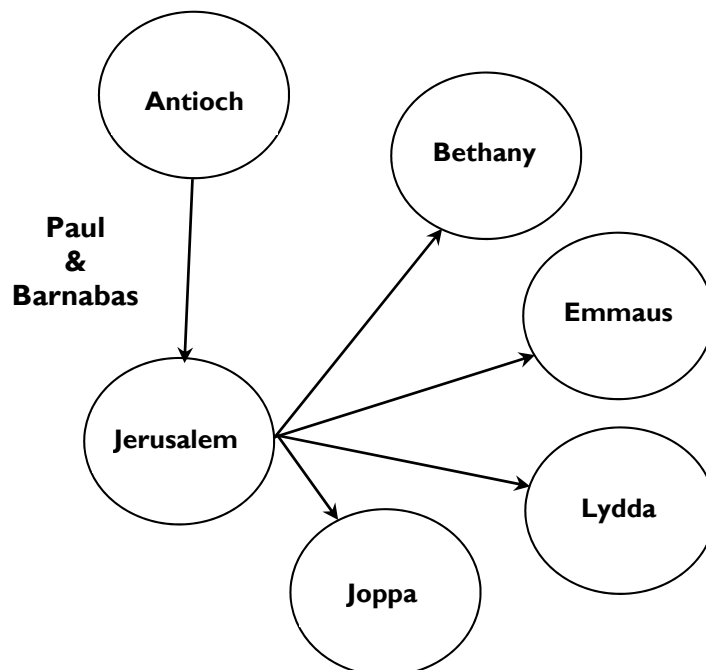
11 Judean relief: Sent by the “disciples” at “Antioch” (i.e., local church) “to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:30). Thus, funds were delivered “to the elders” among the “brethren in Judea.”

- (a) Elders were appointed “in every church” (Acts 14:23).
- (b) Oversight of the elders limited to “the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers” (Acts 20:28); “the flock of God which is among you” (1 Pet. 5:2).
- (c) The “brethren which dwelt in Judea” comprised more than one local church (1 Thess. 2:14; Gal. 1:22; each passage speaks of “the churches of Judaea”; i.e., in the plural).
- (d) Given these facts (a, b, and c) one must necessarily conclude the funds were delivered to the elders of each congregation for them to distribute to the needy saints of the congregation in which they served.
- (e) The brethren did not set-up some institution separate from the church to oversee this work (“Church of Christ Benevolent Association,” “Church of Christ Relief Society”).
- (f) Nor did the brethren designate one local church to oversee the work and control the distribution of funds to the local congregations having needy saints (BTW: this organization, which is not found in scripture, is call the “sponsoring church” arrangement and is commonly used among our liberal brethren.).

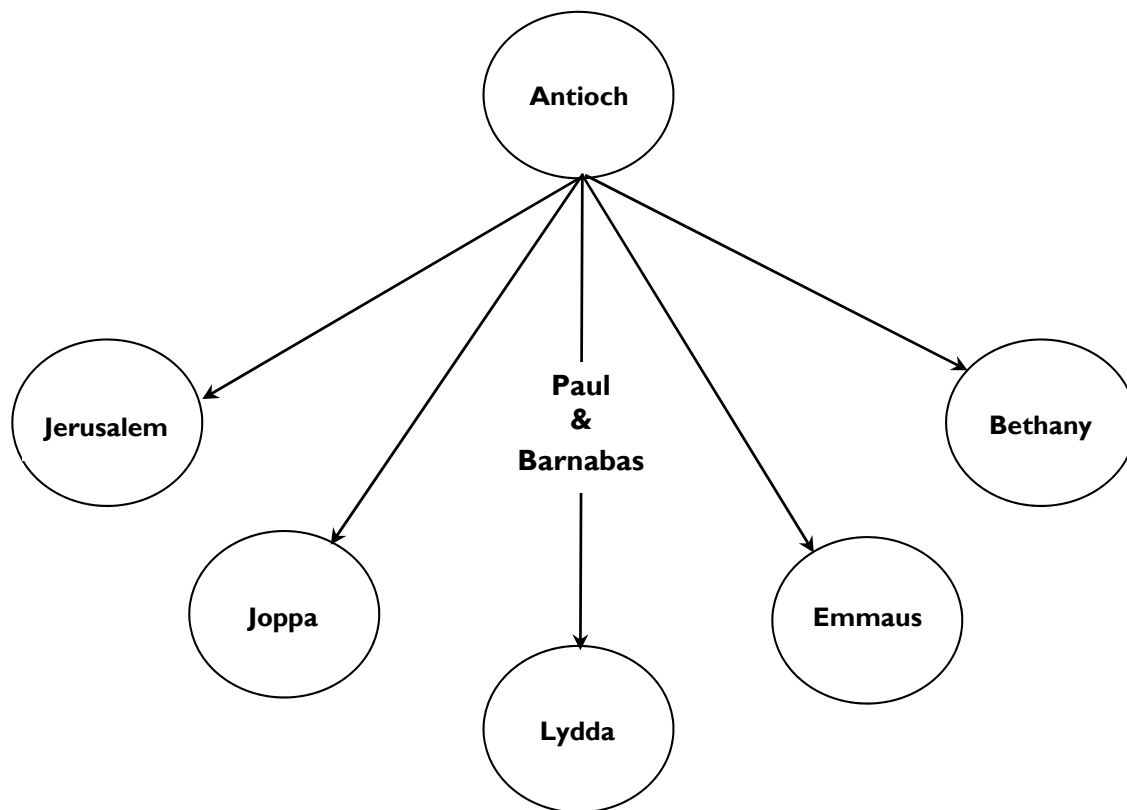
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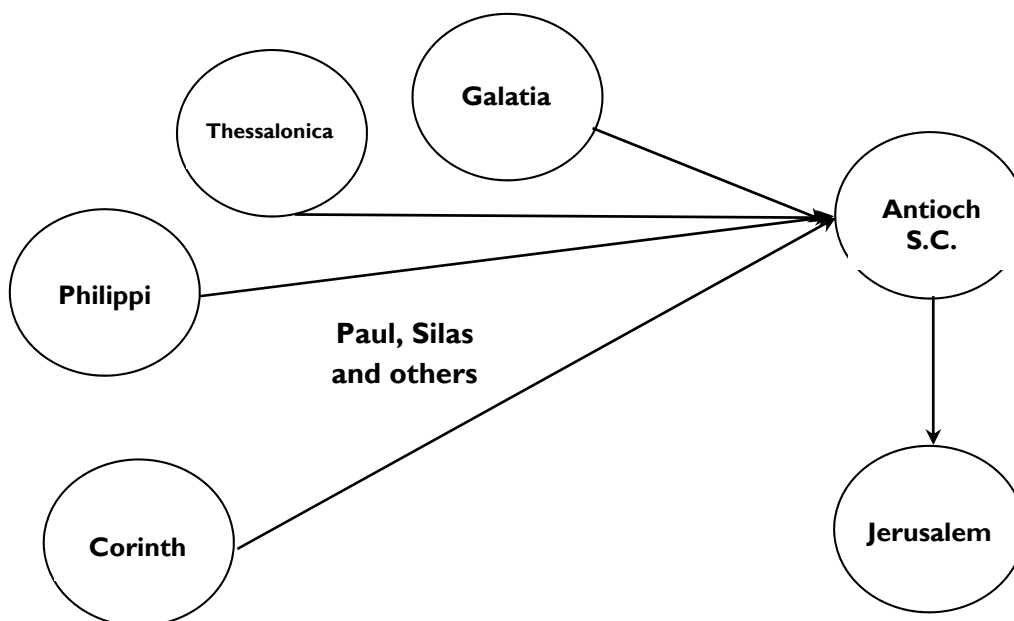


13 BUT THIS (Acts 11:27-30)
Direct from sending church to receiving church

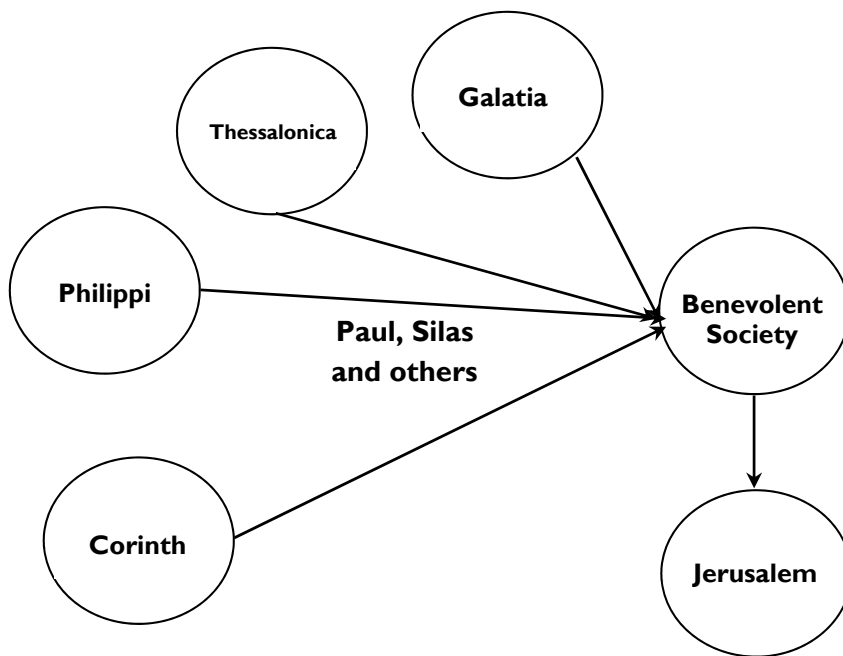


14 Jerusalem relief: “them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem” (1 Cor. 16:1-3: “collection for the saints”)

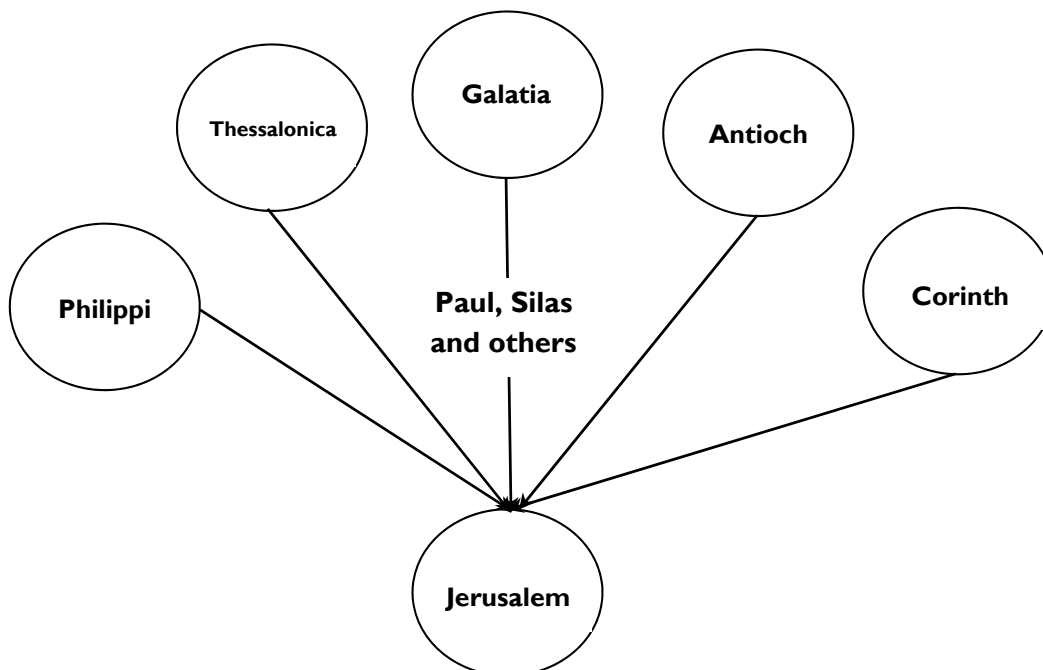
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15 NOT THIS



16 BUT THIS (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8 & 9)
Direct from sending church to receiving church



D. **17 Summary:** Let's review the "pattern":

- (1) **Purpose:** to fulfill the necessities of life for those truly in need. Aid was based upon "needs" existing among "needy saints" in the receiving church.
 - (a) In each New Testament case a real need or emergency arose *before* other churches were asked to assist (Churches did not create a need and then beg for funds!).
 - (b) The needs were always *temporary* in nature and benevolence was sent only until the need was relieved.
- (2) **18 Manner:** On the first day of the week, every member gave cheerfully and abundantly as he purposed in his heart and according to his ability.
 - (a) Funds not raised by bake sales, bingo games, car washes, beer tents, or raffling off a Buick.
 - (b) Funds not collected any other time than on the first day of the week.
 - (c) Christians did not "tithe" nor was the amount they gave based on some man-made formula (e.g., Methodist Church).
- (3) **19 Subjects:** "needy saints" only.
 - (a) God did not design the local church to be a *Red Cross Society*, community food pantry, etc. for the general public. For example, in Acts 11, the dearth was widespread (**v. 28**: "*great famine throughout all the world*"), but only needy saints were helped from the church treasury (**v. 29**: "*send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea*").
 - (b) Some argue "benevolence is an aid to evangelism," "After all, people won't care how much we know until they know how much we care." (They often use John 6 where Jesus fed the 5,000 to support this argument.) The very passage used to justify this concept, in reality, does the exact opposite (**Jn. 6:26-27, 66-67**).
 - (i) Most who use "benevolence as an aid to evangelism" never get around to evangelizing!
 - (ii) Human wisdom is not our source of authority (Prov. 14:12; don't fall for the emotionalism inherent in this argument!).
 - (iii) The *gospel* is what God uses to call men to salvation, not food or other carnal attractions (see Rom. 1:16-17; 10:17; 2 Thess. 2:13-14).
 - (iv) That the local church cannot scripturally aid non-believers does not individual Christians don't have responsibilities in this regard (more on this later).
- (4) **20 Distribution:** "sent it to the elders" (Acts 11:30)
 - (1) No local church both received and sent funds.
 - (2) Funds were sent directly to the elders of the local church to be distributed to the "needy saints" of that congregation. There was no intervening "benevolent society" or "sponsoring church."

****A failure by the local congregation to follow the New Testament pattern in benevolence has the same ramifications and consequences as not following the New Testament pattern in any other area (e.g., worship, plan of salvation, etc.; recall Lk. 6:46; Matt. 7:21-23).**

3. **21** What does the New Testament teach in regard to the benevolent responsibility of individual Christians?

- A. The materialistic attitudes of our society are our biggest enemy when it comes to properly discharging our individual benevolent responsibilities.
- (1) If not careful we are influenced by the world in which we live (1 Cor. 15:33; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).
 - (2) Christians have a duty to work so that we may extend benevolence to others (**Eph. 4:28**: “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.”).
 - (3) **22** Adverse effects of materialism:
 - (a) We overspend on “things” to the point don’t have anything to give others in need.
 - (b) We become consumed with the “bigger barn” syndrome (Lk. 12:16-21: **vv. 20-21**: “But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ 21 ‘So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.’”).
 - (c) Downright stingy like the rich young ruler (Mk. 10:17-22).
 - (d) Objects of benevolence can have unrealistic expectations (benevolence is meant to supply “needs” not “wants”!).

B. **23** Scope of individual responsibility:

1 Jn. 3:17-18: “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

Jas. 2:14-17: “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

1 Tim. 6:17-19: “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

Matt. 25:31-46

(1) Family (1 Tim. 5:4, 8, 16)

- (a) Must not let the church be “charged” with these individual responsibilities, if we fail in this responsibility we have “denied the faith” and are “worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8 KJV).
- (b) Some counter by saying: “Whatever the church is doing, the individual is doing.” If true, how could the individual Christian in this passage keep the church from being “charged”?

(2) Fatherless and widows (Jas. 1:27). Context of chapter plainly talking about responsibilities of individual Christians:

- (a) **V. 12**: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”
- (b) **V. 13**: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man”

- (c) **V. 14:** “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”
- (d) **V. 19:** “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath”
- (e) **V. 20:** “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”
- (f) **V. 21:** “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”
- (g) **V. 22:** “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”
- (h) **V. 23:** “For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass”
- (i) **V. 24:** “For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”
- (j) **V. 25:** “But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”
- (k) **V. 26:** “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.”
- (l) **V. 27:** “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

Note: “The word ‘visit’ in this passage does not mean just ‘going by to see’ these destitute widows and fatherless. It embraces the idea of ascertaining their needs and supply them—ministering unto them.” (Cogdill, R. E., *Walking By Faith*, pp. 68-69).

- (3) All men (Lk. 10:25-37: **vv. 36-37:** “So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” 37 And he said, ‘He who showed mercy on him.’”; Matt. 25:31-46; **Gal. 6:10:** “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”).

- (a) Lk. 10:25-37: Obvious refers to individual responsibility. Also, note that in order for us to extend individual benevolence there must be:

- ☛ Opportunity (vv. 31, 33)
- ☛ Compassion (v. 33)
- ☛ Means (vv. 34-35)

And combined it with action!!

- (b) Matt. 25:31-46: Men will be judged as individuals based on their success or failure to discharge their individual benevolent responsibilities (How sad to follow the truth on all things, yet fall short in benevolence!).
- (c) Gal. 6:10: Many brethren believe this passage refers to congregational action and is not limited to individual action. However, the context of Galatians 6 limits Galatians 6:10 to individual action. Let's examine the arguments:

Argument #1: “The letter is addressed to churches; therefore, 6:10 refers to congregational responsibility not individual responsibility.” If this argument is true then it is applicable to every passage in every letter addressed to churches.

- ☛ I Corinthians is addressed to the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2), but has many things pertaining to individual action, for example: a) sexual relationship of husband and wife

(1 Cor. 7); b) eating of meats (1 Cor. 8-10); c) going to law with a brother (1 Cor. 6); d) abstaining from fornication (1 Cor. 6:18).

- ☛ The letter to the Galatians is similar in that it is addressed to the church (Gal. 1:2), but has a lot to say concerning individual action, for example: a) fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23); c) works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21); c) laws of sowing and reaping (Gal. 6:7-8), etc.
- ☛ Argument has no validity. Instructions are often given collectively when only applicable personally.

Argument #2: “Gal. 6:10 uses the plural pronoun ‘we’; therefore; the passage refers to congregational responsibility not individual responsibility.”

Simply look to Gal. 5:2 which uses the plural pronoun “ye” (**Gal. 5:2:** “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.”)

- ☛ It is obvious that individuals are under discussion in 5:2.
- ☛ Circumcision is the act of an individual, not a church.
- ☛ In 6:10 the work of the church is in view as it considers the *distributive* action of each individual member.
- ☛ One should read the entire context of chapter 6 beginning in v. 1 and notice the number of times that “he,” “him,” “a man,” and “thysself” are used to see that individual action is clearly under consideration, not congregational action.
- ☛ Argument has no validity.

- C. **24** For an individual Christian to fail in our duty to the “*fatherless and widows*” or to “*all men*” is no less sinful than shirking our responsibilities to our own family.
- D. Remember, judgment by God will be on an “individual” basis (Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 25:31-46).
- (1) The biggest danger of the liberal position concerning benevolence (i.e., church responsible for benevolence to non-saints) is the fact that it gives one a false sense of security that when we’ve given of our means on the first day of the week that we have discharged our individual responsibility to those in need (e.g., non-saints).
 - (2) In reality, by giving of our means on the first day of the week we’ve done no such thing! We have not met the requirements of 1 Timothy 5:8, James 1:27, Matthew 25:31-46, or Galatians 6:10.
 - (3) We can no more turn over our individual benevolent responsibilities to the local church than we can turn over our other individual responsibilities (e.g., responsibilities to assemble and participate in worship, responsibilities of father, husband, wife, mother, or the responsibility to “*keep oneself unspotted from the world*”).

III. CONCLUSION:

1. The New Testament makes a clear distinction between the benevolent responsibilities of the local church and individual Christian (1 Tim. 5:16).
2. Failure to follow the New Testament pattern for church benevolence is no different than failing to follow the New Testament pattern for the work, worship, or organization of the church (2 Jn. 9).

3. We can no more *shift* our individual benevolent responsibilities to the church than we can *shift* our other individual responsibilities to the church (e.g., attendance, worship, study, etc.).
4. Denominations and many “churches of Christ” violate the New Testament pattern for benevolence, especially in how funds are raised (1 Cor. 16:1-2) and by involving the church in general benevolence (i.e., non-believers). This is a sin because it:
 - A. It violates the New Testament pattern (1 Pet. 4:11; 2 Jn. 9).
 - B. It detracts the church from its primary mission (1 Tim. 3:15; Matt. 28:19-20) and places upon the church a burden it could never meet (**Matt. 26:11**: “...*For you have the poor with you always,*”).
 - C. It lulls Christians into believing they’ve discharged their God-given benevolent responsibilities when in fact they haven’t.
5. When Christians object to these departures from the New Testament pattern two common emotional objections are made:
 - A. “You all are just stingy, cranky, mean-spirited Pharisees!”
 - B. “If we don’t do it this way, the work won’t get done!” (i.e., people’s needs will not be met)
6. How do we answer?
 - A. First, when it comes to congregational benevolence, individual benevolence, or any other matter, we must “Speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent.” (1 Pet. 4:11)
 - B. We are not “mean-spirited” and “stingy.” In fact, following God’s pattern for benevolence places a much greater burden of responsibility on His people! Heb. 13:16; Jas. 2:14-17; 1 Jn. 3:17-18; 1 Tim. 6:17-18
 - C. The work will get done **if every** Christian discharges His God-given responsibilities in the way God has directed.
 - D. If we fail, we’ll be judged individually for those failures (Matt. 25:31-46).

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