Lesson 10
The Extent of Benevolence
1. When discussing **benevolence**, *emotions* are always involved.

2. Some **decisions** have to be made about:
   - *Who* needs help
   - *How much* should be given
   - *How long* should the help continue
   - Many of these issues are **matters of judgement**

3. It is an **advantage** to be in a church with elders and deacons, scripturally **chosen and appointed** by the **congregation** to deal with such matters.
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Introduction

1. Is benevolence a “primary” or “secondary” work of the church?

2. Is it a “work” of the church at all?

3. The church is a “spiritual” organization having a “spiritual” work to perform. It’s purpose is to:
   - Evangelize – meaning to preach & teach
   - Edify - meaning to strengthen, build up, encourage its members
   - Provide limited benevolence (within a scriptural context)
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Introduction

1. Not only is benevolence a “work” of the church, it is a commanded work of the church.

2. On occasion some of the saints in a local church may experience financial difficulties.

3. They need some assistance – sometime a serious immediate need is made known.

4. What does the Bible teach about our obligations to help them?
1. One who is lazy and will not work does not deserve help from anyone – Note 2 Thess 3:10-15
2 Thess 3:10-15

10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

11 For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.

12 Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.

14 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.

15 Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. NKJV
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Scriptural Church Benevolence

1. One who is lazy and will not work does not deserve help from anyone – Note 2 Thess 3:10-15

2. For those who will not work – God says what?

3. Some may be guilty of poor stewardship of their personal financial resources and need help:
   - Does the church have an obligation in this case?
   - What if it’s an emergency situation?
   - What if it is judged the church is not obligated?

4. Can the church provide financial counseling?
5. There are certain circumstances beyond a person’s control
   - Major illnesses, tornadoes, a car accident, bad economy, no jobs available

6. What is to be done then?

7. The Bible outlines a 3 Step Process to deal with such situations.
   - Family has the first obligation
   - Then individual Christians
   - In the case of needy Christians, the church.
1. The *primary responsibility* of caring for people has been *placed* on the family.

2. Notice Paul’s instructions to Timothy: *1 Tim 5:8*

   “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.” NAS

3. The duty of caring for *one’s own family* is placed on the *man of the house*.
   - Those duties extend *beyond* those living under his roof.
   - “Those of his household” implies other family members *not under his roof* must also be cared for by him.
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The Family

1. Paul’s *instructions* to Timothy in the first 16 verses of 1 Timothy 5 teaches that *family must take care* of their own.

2. Only a special, *select group of women* who met certain *qualifications* could be cared for *by the church* on a *regular* basis.

3. They are referred to as “*widows indeed*” and their *earthly family* had the *first obligation* for their care.

*Notice 1 Tim 5:16*

*If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, let her assist them, and let not the church be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.*  

4. But those who were *totally alone* could be *cared for* by the church.
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The Family

1. When the **local church** receives a **benevolent** request from an **individual** ….

2. What are the **initial questions** that should be asked?
   - What about your **family**?
   - Have you **talked** with them?
   - Will they **help** you?

3. And if their family **cannot** or **will not** help, then what?
1. If one’s family cannot or will not help, it becomes the duty of individual Christians to help.

2. Such help would include Christians & non-Christians alike.

**James 1:27**
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. KJV

**James 2:15-16**
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? NKJV
1. Jesus taught that we all must have a heart of compassion.

2. He further taught that those who do not will be rejected by Him in the final judgement (Matt 25:31-46).

3. As in all areas of service to God, our responsibilities are limited by our opportunities and our abilities.

4. But we must not be guilty of shunning our responsibility to help those in need with thoughts like “sorry, I gave at the office”!
1. When family and individuals have done what they can, then the church has an obligation to help.

2. But every example of this in the Bible mentions only helping needy Christians. Not non-Christians.

3. There are 3 methods of “church benevolence” mentioned in the New Testament.
   - A congregation may take care of its own members.
   - Other churches may send to one church that is unable to take care of its own members.
   - One church may send to many churches if those churches have saints who are in need.
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The Church

A congregation may take care of its own members.

Acts 4:34-37

34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,

35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,

37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.  

NKJV
Other churches may send to one church that is unable to take care of its own members.

Rom 15:25-26
25 but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.
26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. NAS

- The Jerusalem church also received a contribution from the churches of Galatia and Corinth

1 Cor 16:1-2
1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. NAS
One church may send to many churches if those churches have saints who are in need.

1. The church in Antioch sent to the churches in Judea – note Acts11:28-30

28 “. . . Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.

29 And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.

30 And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.” NAS
One church may send to many churches if those churches have saints who are in need.

2. The relief was not sent to Jerusalem as the “sponsoring church” for the whole arrangement.

3. But it was sent to each church in Judea for distribution.

4. Some of the towns in Judea which likely had churches would include Jerusalem, Joppa, Lydda, Emmaus and Bethany.

5. The “churches in Judea” are mentioned in 1 Thess 2:14

“For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews” NAS
What about 2 Cor 9:12-13?

1. We need to take a special look at this passage in its context.

**2 Cor 9:12-13**

12 For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.

13 Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, NAS

2. Some believe this verse 13 refers to benevolent help from the church in Corinth to both saint and non-saint.
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What about 2 Cor 9:12-13?

3. Two *important questions* need to be asked to help us understand the meaning of these passages:

- **Why** was the money collected?
- **How** was the money used?
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Question #1 - Why was the money collected

1. Every verse in the NT that deals with the collection of these funds specifies that SAINTS (Christians) would be those who received help. A few are:
   - 1 Cor 16:1 - “Now concerning the collection for the saints”
   - Rom 15:25-26 - “Now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints” “For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem”

3. The money collected was for needy Christians.

4. Did Paul represent it as that and then have it distributed to anyone and everyone who asked?

5. Did he collect the funds for one purpose and then use them for another? If so, where is the contextual evidence?
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Question #2 – How was the money used?

1. This question is clearly answered by reading 2 Cor 8 & 9.

2. Here are four selections from those two chapters

   - **2 Cor 8:4** – “imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.” NKJV
   - **2 Cor 8:14** – “but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack -- that there may be equality.” NKJV
   - **2 Cor 9:1** – “Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; NKJV
   - **2 Cor 9:12** – “For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God,” NKJV
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Concluding Thoughts

1. The Bible *clearly teaches* that needy people deserve *to be helped* and that *faithful Christians* will help them.

2. But we must *be careful* to *do God’s work in God’s way*.

3. And we must *make certain* that we are *fulfilling our duties* both individually and collectively according to *God’s divine pattern*. 