



OUTSOURCED BENEVOLENCE

Why is benevolence to unbelievers an individual obligation rather than a collective one?

A black and white photograph of a grassy hillside. A single dandelion seed head is in sharp focus in the middle ground, with its seeds beginning to disperse. The background is a soft-focus view of a field or meadow under a bright sky, creating a bokeh effect with light spots.

CHARITY

It is very common to hear a knock at the door or answer the phone at the church building and find an eager hand waiting for help.

But why does our congregation not collectively participate in secular charities to those who are not Christians?

THE BIBLE MODEL

- There is a Bible model for church (collective) benevolence. Being careful to "not go beyond what is written" (1 Cor. 4:6) requires us to consider what this model is and how we must replicate it today. Remember that every church follows the same pattern, no matter where or when (1 Cor. 4:17, 2 Tim. 1:13, 2 Thess. 3:6-7).
 - In the NT, collective benevolence was ALWAYS from Christians to Christians.
 - Only those who were saved were sharing and having all things in common collectively.
 - Every example in the NT, without exception, follows this pattern.

"But what about..."

- “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith” (Galatians 6:10).
- “This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (James 1:27).
- “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” (2 Corinthians 9:13).

"Why does this matter?"

- It seems like quibbling to make a distinction between "this money" and "that money" – after all, whether benevolence comes straight from your pocket or through the church treasury, it still comes from and goes to the same places.
- But don't we place greater value on certain funds? Isn't there something to be said for savings? Retirement? Vacation money? When I give to the church, I'm giving for scripturally-authorized, specific purposes, and that must mean something.

BENEVOLENCE IS INDIVIDUAL

- Are we practicing what we preach? Are we being consistent and giving generously to those who are less fortunate, including unbelievers and strangers?
- Outsourced benevolence is not true benevolence at all. The benevolence model that makes it a collective activity just de-personalizes the charity, giving an extra degree of separation from the one helping to the one being helped.
- The individual benevolence model puts a premium on personal responsibility (1 Timothy 6:17-19).