

MAY A LOCAL CHURCH RELIEVE NON-SAINTS OUT OF ITS TREASURY?

Marc Gibson

The question about the proper and scriptural use of the Lord's money given in contribution by members of a local congregation is a very important one. The fact that it is the Lord's money and not our own should make that very clear. We should be careful to hear what the Lord has revealed in His word concerning the work of the local church and how it is to accomplish His work. And it is vital to understand that there is often a distinction made between the work of the church collectively and the work of the individual Christian.

WHAT THE ISSUE IS NOT: Whether non-saints should be helped – no one is arguing that any person with legitimate needs should not be helped

WHAT THE ISSUE IS: The issue is whether this responsibility is given to the local church or the individual Christian, or to both.

HOW SHALL WE DECIDE THIS ISSUE?

- The same way any issue involving the work of the church is resolved, by searching the revelation of God concerning His church and its work.
- We must always be careful to do God's work in God's way, which is only known by divine revelation, the New Testament scriptures.
- NOT decide by feelings, emotions, think-so's, or tradition

DO WE NEED AUTHORITY FOR ALL WE DO?

Yes, even Jesus recognized the need for divine authority over human authority.

(Matt. 21:23-27)

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH AS REVEALED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

- Evangelism (1 Cor. 11:8-9)
- Edification (Eph. 4:15-16)
- Benevolence (Acts 11:27-30)

WHAT IS SPECIFICALLY AUTHORIZED ON BENEVOLENCE BY APOSTOLIC EXAMPLE AND STATEMENT

- From church treasury to saints (Acts 4:34-35; 6:1; 11:27-30; Rom. 15:25-27; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8-9) (Please note the spiritual fellowship involved in this benevolence, a very important matter showing the saint-to-saint relationship.)
- From church treasury to non-saints (???)
- From individual Christian to non-saint (Lk. 10:25-37; Matt. 19:21; Gal. 6:10; Jas. 1:27)
- Examples of individual action are not authority for collective church action.

CONCLUSION: There is no scriptural authority for the church to relieve non-saints out of its treasury.

- The church has its divine realm of work, and this is to be respected and obeyed that the church may do the work God gave it to do (and to not be burdened with that which is not its work – 1 Tim. 5:16).
- Individual Christians are to be desirous and active in helping the needy (Gal. 6:10; Jas. 1:27).
- To act without divine authority is to go beyond the doctrine of Christ – a very serious matter in God's eyes (2 Jn. 9).