

LESSON #25

BENEVOLENCE

TEXTS: MATTHEW 25:31-46; Galatians 6:9, 10; James 1:27

INTRODUCTION:

A little boy living in the slums of a large city was given a Bible. He studied diligently and, eventually, became a Christian. He was happy in his new found relationship with God, although he continued in poverty.

He told friends of God's love. Someone thoughtlessly tested his simple faith in God by asking, "If God loves you, why doesn't He take better care of you? Why doesn't He tell someone to send you warm shoes and some coal and better food?"

The little fellow thought for a moment. Then, with tears starting in his eyes, he said, "I guess He does tell& somebody, but somebody forgets!"

- I. Benevolence in this study has reference to supplying the physical needs of others.
- II. The word occurs only once in the King James (I Corinthians 7:3), and is used in reference to marriage. The use of the word today has reference to doing good toward others.
- III. Benevolence requires only need and opportunity.
 - A. Does this one need my help or would I be interfering?
 - B. What is the best way I can help?

DISCUSSION:

- I. What determines need? Only when some one expresses such?
 - A. Many people had rather starve than ask for help. Here the "golden rule" applies.
 - B. Many wisely make known their needs because these needs would not otherwise be known.
 - C. All men, especially Christians, are to be recipients of our doing good.
 - D. What ever you need others need.
- II. Both the church and individual must feel a responsibility toward those who are in need.
 - A. The first emphasis is upon the individual. If you do all your benevolent work through the church, you are doing precious little. (Take the total amount given and divide by 275 and you have your share).
 1. The church is not to be burdened with certain cases.
 - a. Widows under 60 years of age (I Timothy 5:9).
 - b. Widows who have children who can take care of them (I Timothy 5:16).
 2. The church's responsibility toward the needs is not excused because of individual failure.

- B. Many cases of those who are in need could be handled unobtrusively if one can do without the praises of men.
- C. Individual relief really involves one.

III. The church has a great responsibility toward the physical needs of others.

- A. This was one of the basic qualities of the early disciples.
 - 1. Sold what they had and gave to everyone who had need.
 - 2. The word "fellowship" (Acts 2:42) involves benevolence.
- B. The second problem confronting the infant church was the care of widows (Acts 6),
 - 1. The problem was recognized.
 - 2. The problem was dealt with.
 - 3. The problem was solved.
- C. The Bible does not give the pattern for the care of the needy except for Christians to recognize the problem and then deal with it in a decent and orderly manner.
 - 1... If children come from a broken home, how best should they be cared for? (Remembering that anything you do for them will be a substitute for their natural home.)
 - 2. What should be done for the needy in the community?
- D. People who know very much about the church of Christ have known more about what it stands against than what it stands for.
 - 1. The judgment scene in Matthew 25:31ff is based upon benevolence.
 - 2. We are sheep, or a goat - benevolence, or the lack of it, makes it that simple.

IV. A generous benevolent program does two essential things.

- A. It brings the giver a greater blessing (Acts 20:35).
- B. It can lead also to the beneficiary's salvation. (it is impossible to teach someone the gospel when they are starving (Galatians 6:10).

CONCLUSION:

- 1. The religion of our Lord is not complex (James 1:27).
 - A. Keeping one self pure.
 - B. Helping those who are in need (Luke 10:25-37).