

Beware of General Benevolence!

by Wayne Goff

We are still seeing some churches of Christ getting involved in the practice of **general benevolence**. They are *advertising* and *promoting* programs to assist people of the world in “outreach programs” which basically cover things like food, clean-up, and various health, medical, and social needs. The only problem with this is that it is **not** authorized by the Lord for His church.

Do not misunderstand, dear reader! We are not *opposed* to helping the needy in the general public, but it is to be done by various *individuals* – either alone or in various community groups. Organizations like the Red Cross are designed for just such efforts, and we can *individually* support them. But the Lord’s church has a much higher mission – that of saving man’s eternal soul! This was Jesus’ chief mission in coming to the world (Lk. 19:10). When He went about doing good in healing the sick, He did so *miraculously* to prove that He was the Son of God and that mankind should believe in Him – “*Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased*” (Jn. 6:2). Some churches today confuse His works with the idea that the church should care for the sick and needy in the world, generally speaking. But these signs simply confirmed the message of the Gospel (Heb. 2:3-4).

So while the *intent* is sincere and good, we must not let the Lord’s church get **sidetracked** by social programs! Of course, the argument is made that doing such things is merely an *avenue* or *portal* to reach the lost. But we should not be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16). It is the power of God to salvation, and it *alone* can attract those who desire to be saved among the nations.

Even Jesus refused to feed the multitudes when it became apparent that they followed Him for the loaves and fish, not because they “*saw the signs*” (Jn. 6:26). It was an **unpopular** message, and most turned back to walk no more with Him (Jn. 6:66). But Jesus urged His true followers to pursue the *Spirit* above the *flesh* (Jn. 6:63-64). Today, many churches get bogged down in their social agenda, and forget to reach out to save the lost with the Gospel. **BEWARE!**

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