

From Where I Sit . . .

"GLORIFYING GOD THROUGH BENEVOLENCE"

Usually when an eldership mentions the need for additional members on the Benevolence Committee deacons begin to cringe. It's the one committee that only a few are willing to serve on, and understandably, when one considers the never ending line of requests and sometimes rude or ungrateful spirit with which receivers respond to givers. Many of us have been fussed at and made to feel guilty for not doing everything the seeker asked of us. I'm reminded, however, of the Lord's statement in John 12:8, *"For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always."* It's one of those needs that is there whether we enjoy responding or not.

In spite of the discomforts, we must learn the joy of giving and ministering to others. We are to be a benevolent, caring, and compassionate people to the glory of God. We need to recognize the importance of showing the Christ-like quality of doing good deeds for others. Paul instructed young Timothy to charge the rich not to rely on their riches, nor to be highminded, but *"...that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate"* (I Timothy 6:18).

The benevolent spirit begins with the Lord just as love does. John tells us that *"We love because He first loved us"* (1 John 4:10,11,19). Equally so, we are to give after the fashion of and in the same spirit of Christ who *"went about doing good..."*(Acts 10:38). He loved so much that he laid down his life for us (Romans 5:6-8). The nature of Jesus was to help the weak, the oppressed, the poor. We learn from him how to treat our fellow man.

We are touched by his compassion as evidenced in passages such as Matthew 9:36, *"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."* Matthew 14:14, *"And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick."*

The inspired apostle John instructs us in I John 3:16-18, *"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."*

I'm very thankful to be a part of a benevolent brotherhood. In recent years it has often been the case that our trucks filled with tons of food, water, clothing, and health items are among the first to roll into areas of devastation. I'm remembering the work done all the way back in the 60's when hurricanes Hilda and Betsy wiped out much of the Louisiana coast. I remember vividly the response to South Carolina and Miami-area needs after Hugo and Andrew demolished tens of thousands of acres of forests, business, and residential areas.

It was true in Poland over a decade ago when the Lord's church received official government recognition as our convoys of tractor trailers poured in the relief needed. Our people have been all over Central America following earthquakes, floods, and other natural disasters, and even some political disasters where people were left totally impoverished. Today we continue to send relief as special needs arise locally with food, clothing, and burn out relief, and we're actively involved in benevolent outreach to Romania and Belize.

The beauty of it all is that God receives the glory that He deserves when we reach out as a disciple in the name of the Lord, (see Matthew 5:16).

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Printed in the Broad Street Banner, Volume XIX, Number 29, July 21, 2004.