

and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit the orphans and widows in their trouble, and keep oneself unspotted from the world. My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel and there should come in a poor man in filthy clothes ... (James 1:27 – 2:2).

The context shows that James was dealing with neglect and/or discrimination of widows, orphans and the poor. In most cultures it is the widow and the orphan that are the poorest, the most despised and neglected. They are vulnerable to extreme poverty, rejection and prejudice by those who are more affluent. James by the Spirit gave specific orders as to what pure religion is and he warned against discrimination of the down trodden even in the assembly. But we are expected to believe that this is individual action *only*. My question is, cannot and have not whole congregations at times dishonored those who are of another race, those in the rags of poverty or those widowed or orphaned?

MATTHEW 19: 13-14

“Then little children were brought to Him that he might put His hands of them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Here Jesus rebuked those early disciples because they were forbidding the little children to come to Him for a blessing. How tragic it is that we have forbidding brethren today that forbid the bride of Christ to receive little children. And why? Their answer, they are not saints and the church must not help any, but “saints *only*.”

II CORINTHIANS 6:14 AND 9:13

We are told that “all” in II Corinthians 9:13 cannot mean “all men” for if it did, then that would violate II Corinthians 6:14, which says we are not to be “unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” In other words if funds from the church are used to buy food or saris for Tsunami victims (e.g., unbelieving widows), then that means the church would be having fellowship with them to the point of being “unequally yoked” to them in their error.

If that is the case why would such aid by individual Christians to “all men” (Gal. 6:10), not cause the individual to be unequally yoked with

sinner? Those who hold the doctrine of “*saints only*” admit that individual Christians may aid such sinners. II Corinthians 6:14 speaks of *individuals* not being unequally yoked with unbelievers. How is it, according to the *saints only* doctrine, local churches violate II Cor. 6:14 in doing benevolence toward orphans and needy unbelievers, but individuals doing the same thing do not? The truth is, feeding a hungry child or clothing a poor widow does not mean that we as individuals or congregations become “unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”

Does the fact that Jesus “healed all (*pantas*) that were sick” (Matt. 8:16) including those with evil spirits mean, that he was fellowshiping them in their sin? No! Neither does the bride of Christ (the church) when she puts food in the mouth of little children (orphans) or aids a widow in extreme circumstances as the Tsunami victims. The many words about the Greek word, “*koinonia* (*ko-i-no-ni-a*), [Strong - 2842: English, “communication, communion, contribution, distribution, (and) fellowship, etc.]” is so much smoke to hide the callousness of the “*saints only*” doctrine. It is foolish to claim that we become, “*unequally yoked together with unbelievers*” when we feed the hungry and clothe the naked and combine that effort with filling their hearts with the gospel.

I CORINTHIANS 16:1-2

This is the only place in the divine record where the church is authorized to raise funds for its work, “*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.*”

Those upholding the doctrine of benevolence by the church being limited to “*saints only*,” in order to try to prove their point will say, “You know very well that this contribution is (was) for the poor saints in Jerusalem.” That is true, but since that is the case, why do those who advocate the above position use the “first day of the week” contribution to pay their preacher to do evangelism and edification? The reply may be “because the church’s authorized work is three fold (evangelism, edification and benevolence, Eph. 4:12), and the necessary inference is that the church may raise funds for all three phases of its authorized work through the collection on the first day of the week?” If so, I would agree.

To emphasize, the explicit statement by the apostle was that the funds be collected for one of the three named above—benevolence. Yet, the necessary implication *is* that funds be raised for all three in the

same manner. Those who maintain the “*saints only*” doctrine in congregational benevolence hold that the collections received by the church on the first day of the week may be used locally for benevolence, *evangelism, and edification*. And they say that one congregation may send to another congregation for benevolent aid to saints. Yet, they strongly affirm that funds from one congregation may *not* be sent from one congregation to another for evangelism or exhortation (edification). In light of that position let us now read I Corinthians 16:3, “*And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem.*”

In this text (16:3) Paul, while speaking of the same collection (16:1-2), said that it would be sent to Jerusalem. Now those brethren who forbid one congregation to co-operate with another congregation by sending funds for edification or evangelism (e.g., a gospel meeting, a gospel paper or radio program) ought to answer a question for us. Why may these funds be spent locally for all three phases of the church’s work: benevolence, *evangelism* and *edification*, but churches are strictly *forbidden* to send them to another congregation *for evangelism and edification*? The truth is they are binding the imagination of their own heart on 16:3, which they are unwilling to bind on 16:2.

Concerning one church co-operating with another in evangelism, please note that the church at Jerusalem sent a portion of scripture – an epistle (Acts 15:22-31) to the church at Antioch, and to other churches (Acts 16:4). Here is a Biblical example that clearly demonstrates that it is scriptural and right for one congregation to send the scriptures (Bibles) from one congregation to another. In light of that, may a church in Malaysia or the United States send funds to churches in India to buy their own Bibles, locally in their own tongue? If not, why not?

The church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch for the purpose of exhorting (edifying) the new saints (Acts 11:22-23). This was co-operation from one church to another in edification. But the objection is raised that they did not send money! So the hang up is on money? Clearly if funds raised as per I Corinthians 16:1-2 could be spent for evangelism and edification locally, then I Corinthians 16:3 authorizes the same funds to be sent to “Jerusalem” for the same. Again we ask, if not, why not?

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IS THE DOCTRINE OF SAINTS ONLY IN BENEVOLENCE TRUE?

Jim E. Waldron

GALATIANS 6:10

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” This applies to Christians as individuals, but not to individuals *only*. It also applies to the action of Christians as a group, that is, in congregational action or individuals acting on behalf of the congregation. For example, in case of the widows being neglected in Acts 6, there were seven individuals that did the work (6:5), but it was the church acting (6:3). The individuals were appointed to do the work, but it was church action. The church cannot do everything the individual does, but that does not mean there are not things that both, not only may do, but must do.

We learn from the book of Acts that Barnabas as an individual went from Jerusalem to Antioch, but it was church action (Acts 11:22-23). Also note the words of Paul to the church at Philippi concerning his work as a gospel preacher about his need of support from them: “*Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account*” (Phil. 4:17). Paul was acting as an individual on the field, but the church at Philippi was acting as a group (church action) through him.

Let us consider Galatians 6:10 more closely. It is a command that individual saints must carry out, but, as noted, it does not mean individual action *only*. Words must be considered in their context, so let us note some pertinent points in chapter six. Is the contention true that all of Galatians 6:1-10, is for individual action *only*?

Note 6:1, which says, “*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass you, who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*” Here the *plural term* “brethren” is the very first word of the chapter and the pronoun “you” is plural also, yet “man” and “thysself – KJV” are emphasized to maintain the contention that it is individual action *only*.

The chapter begins with “*brethren,*” and the overall context of the book was to “*the churches of Galatia*” (1:2). If a gospel preacher goes to a brother who has fallen away and persuades him to repent, he, as an individual, has

obeyed Galatians 6:1, and saved a soul from death (James 5:19-20). Yet, as an evangelist supported by the local church it is church action, through their evangelist. In Acts 8:20-24, Peter by individual action brought Simon to repentance, yet the brethren at Corinth in congregational action brought a sinful brother to repentance (I Cor. 5:1,4; II Cor. 2:3-7). Galatians 6:1, covers both kinds of action.

Again we read, “*Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches*” (Gal. 6:6). Does that mean individual action *only*, so that the congregation cannot fulfill this command to support the preacher? Galatians 6:7 says, “*whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*” Does that apply to individuals *only*? The prophecy of Hosea was to the house of Israel (Hos. 1:2,4), but the prophet said, “*they sow the wind and reap the whirlwind*” (Hos. 8:7). Individuals (they) within the nation were going after idolatry, but the prophet applied it to the nation (Hos. 4:17). The church at Laodicea was to be spewed out of our Lord’s mouth, because they had become lukewarm (Rev. 3:15-17). It is extremely sad that someone would, “*strive about words*” (II Tim. 2:14) in such a manner as to pretend that Galatians 6:1-10, is individual action *only* and thereby divide Christ’s body.

II Corinthians 9:13

The apostle wrote, “*While, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and with all men.*” The Greek New Testament has “*pantas*” in both (II Cor. 9:13 and Gal. 6:10) for “*all men.*” The American Standard (1901) has “*all,*” in II Corinthians 9:13, but in Galatians 6:10, the same word is translated, “*all men (no italics).*” The translators of the King James version, translated the Greek *pantas*” in both texts as “*all men.*” The New King James translates it as “*all men*” in II Corinthians 9:13 and as “*all*” in Galatians 6:10. A careful examination of II Corinthians 9:13 and its context shows that the King James translators were right on target when they translated “*pantas*” to mean, “*all men.*”

We are told by those who hold the “*saints only*” doctrine that “*them*” in the text (II Cor. 9:13) means “*saints at Jerusalem*” and that “*all,*” means “*all those saints whom the church helped.*” Yet, in the context Paul used the term, “*saints*” (II Cor. 9:1,12). The contention that Paul was speaking of liberal distribution to one group of “*saints*” and to “*all saints*” is not reasonable nor scriptural.

This is reasoning like some false teachers, who refuse to accept that one must be “*born of water and the Spirit*” (John 3:5). To get around this truth they turn to John 7:38-39, and quote the words of Jesus where He said, “*out of his (a disciple’s) heart shall flow rivers of living water, but this He spoke concerning the Spirit...*” Taking this text out of context the clergy unashamedly says, “*water means Spirit,*” therefore, John 3:5, means that a person must be “*born of Spirit and Spirit.*” Such reasoning is pure nonsense, but not any more so than the contention that Paul was speaking of one group of “*saints*” and to “*all saints*” in II Corinthians 9:13.

We are told that if “*pantas*” is rendered as “*all men,*” then in 9:14, we would have Paul speaking of “*all men and by their prayer for you.*” But that will not hold up under scrutiny of the context. Paul wrote, “*For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and your liberal sharing with them and all men, and by their prayer for you...*” (II Cor. 9:12-14).

Note “*they,*” “*them*” and “*their*” shows that, all three apply to the saints named in I Corinthians 9:1 and 12. God was glorified and the Corinthians were prayed for by “*they,*” the saints (9:13-14).

The false doctrine of “*saints only,*” has a parallel in the denominational world. Its preachers proclaim that salvation is by “*faith only.*” Yet, the Holy Spirit by the pen of James wrote, “*You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only*” (James 2:24). “*Faith only*” is named in the scriptures, but it is refuted. Please note again II Corinthians 9:12-14, “*For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and your liberal sharing with them and all men, and by their prayer for you...*”

Here Paul wrote that the benevolence by the Gentiles, “*not only* supplies the needs of the **saints,**” but that it (1) Abounded through many thanksgivings to God. (2) Caused God to be glorified (9:12-13), For (a) The Gentiles’ obedience (9:13), and (b) for their liberal sharing with them (saints) and with all (men) (9:13). The doctrine of “*saints only*” came from the same kind of reasoning that produced “*faith only.*”

SOME FUNDAMENTALS FOR TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

The Lord Jesus Christ said, “*if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans (tax collectors) do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans do so?*” (Matt. 5:46-47). After the Tsunami struck 26 December 2004, churches of Christ across America sent funds to help the victims of that horrible flood, and they put no restrictions on the funds saying, “*this is for saints only.*” Why? Because they know the principle that we are not to simply love our own.

With those funds and others from Australia, Malaysia, Singapore and India itself (e.g., Shillong, Meghalaya) faithful brothers, in the state of Tamil Nadu, South India, wearing badges in the local language, which read, “*Church of Christ, Tsunami Relief Effort*” provided food and items for basic needs to about 25,000 individuals, representing several thousand families. Literally hundreds of Tsunami created widows, who had lost everything in the flood of water, were given saris (dresses) and household needs without discrimination as to whether they were Hindu, Muslim or other. School uniforms were provided for poor children in order that they could return to school. In some areas 25 kilogram (55 pounds) sacks of rice and other needed items (10 kilograms – 22 pounds) were delivered by lorry (truck) to families and individuals up and down the coast, whose lives had been turned upside down by the raging water. This work was possible because of the splendid co-operation among many churches of Christ.

At the same time the Tamil brothers began to preach the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus (Acts 8:12) to those who were devastated by that disaster. Thanks be to God that in the nine months since the huge wave struck more than 1,100 have been baptized in the coastal region itself. Thirty new congregations have been set up and are breaking bread each Lord’s day. This figure does not include several thousand baptized inland by native brethren in the wake of the Tsunami. The work of the church is threefold, benevolence, edification and evangelism (Eph. 4:12), but when the three are distilled down in the face of a lost and dying world that work is soul saving, that is evangelism, evangelism, evangelism (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). As of June 2005 we share this planet with 6.5 billion souls.

In like manner as above in the U. S. due to the hurricane, Katrina, (August 29, 2005) a similar

work of co-operation took place. For local congregations around America sent funds to churches of Christ in the area of the devastation without going to the Red Cross or some human disaster relief society created by well meaning, but misguided brethren (See Eph. 3:21; cf., II John 9).

One brother in India said about our evangelistic work in the obscure villages along Tamil Nadu’s seacoast, “*before the Tsunami brought us here these people would not have even let us enter their villages.*” What a wicked thing it would have been for the churches of Christ in the U.S., Australia, Malaysia, Singapore and Shillong, India to have said, we cannot help those people who have lost everything, because they are not saints. The Christians in those far away places wanted to help, but the needy were not just next door, thus funds were sent by those congregations to faithful churches who were working in the area. No human body (like a disaster relief society) was created, but local churches of Christ were co-operating to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and preach about Jesus and His kingdom to them. Why is it so difficult for some people to see that benevolence in such a crisis is a powerful tool of evangelism that may be used by the church; for God is glorified in the church (Eph. 3:21).

It is true that we cannot feed the whole world, and we are not authorized to preach a social gospel of fun, food and frolic, nor one of entertainment and pleasure with gyms, games, and gimmicks; but does that mean we will not help in such crises as mentioned above? Shall we, let the Red Cross, the Red Crescent (Muslim Relief), or a Hindu Society help them, because the churches of Christ are forbidden to help anyone, except their own? God forbid!! The doctrine of “*saints only*” is an exclusiveness gone to seed, which robs the bride of Christ of showing the compassion of her Lord and Master (Matt. 5:46-47).

JAMES 1:27

“*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit the orphans and widows in their trouble, and keep oneself unspotted from the world.*” Those who teach that the church’s benevolent work is limited to members of the church (saints) *only*, say the above text means that individual Christians *only* are authorized to support orphans. They maintain that the church **may not obey** this injunction. And why? Because orphans are not saints and the church’s benevolence is limited to “*saints only.*” James 1:27, includes individual action, but it does not mean, “*individuals only.*” Note the context: “*Pure*