

THE DUTY TO PROVIDE

Bryan Matthew Dockens

The individual must provide for himself. Solomon taught that *“The person who labors, labors for himself, for his hungry mouth drives him on”* (Proverbs 16:26). Hunger, the most basic need of all, is the legitimate motivation to work. God established this fact when He cursed the earth for humanity’s sin, telling Adam, *“Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; For dust you are, and to dust you shall return”* (Genesis 3:17-19). Thus, Paul commanded, *“If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat”* (2nd Thessalonians 3:10). The consequences are obvious and natural.

Family must provide for its own. As implied by the distinct curses placed upon woman and man, respectively, it is a husband’s duty to so work as to provide for his wife. He is expected to provide for his children, too. *“What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”* (Matthew 7:9-11). When the older generation can no longer work, then the roles reverse. *“If any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God”* (1st Timothy 5:4). Failure in this regard is utterly repugnant to God. *“If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”* (8).

Church provides where family cannot. When a widow no longer has family to care for her, then the church assumes the responsibility. *“If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows”* (1st Timothy 5:16). The care of widows by the church amounts to a *“daily distribution”* (Acts 6:1) for widows who meet specific qualifications (1st Timothy 5:9-10). Churches must fulfill material needs for other saints stricken by poverty (Romans 15:25-27; Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37), but only on occasion, not as a matter of ongoing dependence.

– Continued on page 3 –

– Continued from page 2 –

Government provision brings unintended consequences. When the famine was severe in Egypt, the people enslaved themselves to Pharaoh to prevent starvation. *“Now there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh’s house. So when the money failed in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, ‘Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For the money has failed.’ Then Joseph said, ‘Give your livestock, and I will give you bread for your livestock, if the money is gone.’ So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the cattle of the herds, and for the donkeys. Thus he fed them with bread in exchange for all their livestock that year. When that year had ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, ‘We will not hide from my lord that our money is gone; my lord also has our herds of livestock. **There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands.** Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? **Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh;** give us seed, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate.’ Then Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. So the land became Pharaoh’s. And as for the people, he moved them into the cities, from one end of the borders of Egypt to the other end. Only the land of the priests he did not buy; for the priests had rations allotted to them by Pharaoh, and they ate their rations which Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their lands. Then Joseph said to the people, **‘Indeed I have bought you and your land this day for Pharaoh.** Look, here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land’”* (Genesis 47:13-23). To whatever extent a person depends on the government for necessities, that person has been bought and is the property of that government. Such circumstances are best avoided whenever possible. *“Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but **if you can be made free, rather use it.** For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ’s slave. You were bought at a price; **do not become slaves of men**”* (1st Corinthians 7:21-23). Besides the problem of slavery, dependence on taxpayers reduces the gratitude of the recipient and eliminates the generosity of the giver.

"WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"

ACTS 16:30

LEARN THE GOSPEL

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

CONFESS CHRIST

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 3:19; 17:30

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

"THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES TOGETHER"

HEBREWS 10:24-25

SUNDAY

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

THURSDAY

Ladies' Studies @ 6:20 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard
Belén, New Mexico

**Seekers Welcome.
Members Expected.**

"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN ANY TRESPASS... RESTORE SUCH A ONE"

GALATIANS 6:1

CONFESS TRESPASSES

James 5:16; 1st John 1:9

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 8:22

PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS

Acts 8:22

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

– Continued from page 1 –
Peter 2:24). It is our fault He died.
This Man's blood is on us.

Thankfully, His blood was shed quite deliberately to make forgiveness possible. *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"* (Ephesians 1:7). Sinners contact that blood where Jesus shed it, in death. *"We were buried with Him through baptism into death... if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection"* (Romans 6:4-5).

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

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"THIS MAN'S BLOOD"

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Arrested for preaching the gospel, the apostles found themselves under investigation with the high priest accusing them, *"You have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"* (Acts 5:28). These are among the most bitterly ironic words ever spoken because some months earlier the chief priests and elders instigated the crowds to pressure Pilate into destroying Jesus (Matthew 27:20), with them welcoming the blame, crying out, *"His blood be on us and on our children!"* (25). They eagerly wanted Jesus dead, but resented the blame for His death.

In this case, the high priest was not overstating the situation or misrepresenting the apostles at all. They had preached on Pentecost, *"Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death"* (Acts 2:23). At Solomon's Porch, they accused the people of Jerusalem, *"You denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses"* (3:14-15). These people had literally and directly brought about the death of Christ.

Every sinner is responsible for killing the Son of God. *"Christ died for our sins"* (1st Corinthians 15:3). He *"was delivered up because of our offenses"* (Romans 4:25). Jesus *"bore our sins in His own body"* (1st – Continued on page 4 –

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