

**“I KNOW YOUR WORKS”
MINISTERING TO THE SAINTS**

INTRODUCTION

A. Hebrews 12:22-24

The church consists of those whose names are written in heaven, so let's stop pretending that church membership is unimportant.

B. Revelation 2:8-9

The Lord claims direct awareness of the works a church engages in. It is important, therefore, to collectively maintain those activities which honor Him as He has indicated.

C. We have previously considered the primary and secondary works of the church – namely, evangelism and edification. Knowing a church needs to be in the business of saving souls and keeping them saved, we recognize that it must not let the saved starve! The tertiary work of the church is to minister to the saints.

D. 2nd Corinthians 9:1

Often, the work we are studying is called “benevolence,” which is not incorrect, but it is imprecise. That word just means “good will,” which can be applied in many situations. Scripture, repeatedly, refers to the work we are looking at now as “*ministering to the saints*,” so that is how we will refer to it as herein.

I. ONLY SAINTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR RELIEF BY THE CHURCH

A. Romans 15:25-27

Paul explicitly stated that spiritual participation is the basis of material sharing, which is why “*saints*” are the specified recipients of the ministering.

B. Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37

The earliest examples of such sharing clearly show believers, not the community at large, sharing amongst themselves.

- C. Every other instance recorded in inspiration likewise specifies “*saints*” or those “*who believed*” as the beneficiaries of the church’s giving. Observe that pattern as the lesson continues.

II. NEED IS THE ONLY CAUSE FOR ASSISTANCE

The two instances we just read ([Acts 2:44-45](#); [4:32-37](#)) show that distribution was based on “*need*,” not want.

- A. **2nd Corinthians 9:12**

Again, “*need*” was the issue, and nothing beyond necessity was dealt with.

- B. **1st Timothy 6:8**

If food and clothing are sufficient, then the church shouldn’t be imposed upon for much more than this – just necessities.

III. WIDOWS CONSTITUTE A SPECIFIC CLASS WORTHY OF ENROLLMENT

- A. **Acts 6:1-7**

In the church at Jerusalem, there was a daily table service for certain widows.

- B. **1st Timothy 5:3-16**

1. Widows are required to meet certain exacting standards of character and experience to qualify for this ministry. Not every Christian need to meet these requirements to benefit from church relief, but an enrollment for daily service does demand this.
2. If a family member could relieve the need, the church was not to be bothered.

IV. CHURCHES MUST COLLECT FUNDS FOR THIS PURPOSE

- A. **2nd Corinthians 9:1-7**

In reference to the ministering to the saints (9:1), the church (1:1) had a gift to prepare (9:5), which necessitated each individual (9:7) giving purposefully and cheerfully (9:6-7).

B. 1st Corinthians 16:1-3

Churches are under orders to take up weekly collections for this purpose and these collections are intended to prevent future need, thus special collections when needs arise do not make sense.

V. CHURCHES MAY COOPERATE IN THIS MATTER

The collections of the church in Corinth and the churches of Galatia (1st Corinthians 16:1-3) were intended as a gift for Jerusalem to be delivered by designated messengers.

A. Acts 11:27-30

When the church at Antioch learned of a coming famine, they determined to send relief to their brethren in Judea. That it was received by elders shows this was not merely a transference from some Christians to other Christians, but from a church to another church.

B. 2nd Corinthians 8:1-9:15

The needs of the saints were addressed by the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, their gifts being sent by the hands of Titus and other designated messengers.