

All New Testament references of the church giving to the needy involves **members only**. The church gave to their own needy in the congregation as we read in Acts 2 and 4. They also gave for the needy in other congregations (Acts 11:29-30). Money was given freely and distributed liberally to the members of the church who were actually in need.

This limitation (*saints only*) is not bound upon an individual Christian. A saint can donate to charities, neighbors, politicians, or others out of his own money. He should be careful that he is not supporting laziness or contributing to something sinful. He does not want to enable a sinner to continue in the sin of alcoholism. He does not want to support a scam. Neither does he want to take from the money he should contribute to the church and give it to some other cause. Once money is collected in the church it becomes the Lord's money. It can only be used in ways authorized by the Bible. We can not take out of the church treasury and give it to anyone who comes to our door with a hard luck story.

Before coming to Mooresville I heard of several churches that were getting involved in a form of socialism. They believed the mission of the church was to provide charity to the needy in their communities. They felt their benevolence was a God given responsibility. They believed people could be persuaded to obey the Gospel because of the congregation's generous spirit. This violates the teachings of the New Testament. People who come to church for a free meal will only stay as long as that meal is provided. Remember Jesus' rebuke of people who came to Him expecting a free lunch? They knew He fed 5000 the previous day, and they came to Him in order to be fed with bread instead of the word (Jn. 6:26-27).

The church's mission is to teach the lost (evangelism), build up its members (edification), and to provide funds when necessary to Christians only (benevolence). We cannot give into the treasury through taxation nor can we take from it for social programs.

Mooresville church of Christ

720 N. Indianapolis Road

Mooresville, IN 46158

March 8, 2020

Sunday:

9:30 a.m. Bible Study

10:30 a.m. Worship

3:00 p.m. Worship

Wednesday:

7:00 p.m. Bible Study

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Mooresvillecoc.com

Announcements

We recently learned that Dusty has been loosing spinal fluid through his sinuses. He will undergo surgery in April. Pray for him and the entire Russell family.

Braden is preaching for the church in Ellis today. He will speak for us next Sunday afternoon. He told me Johnnie Edwards is having gall bladder problems. Paul Hollingsworth usually substitutes, but he has heart problems due to cancer treatments. Pray for all of those at Ellis and for all the congregations of the Lord's people.

Lucille may have returned home by the time you read this. She was scheduled to go home on Tuesday.

Remember Erma, Bob, Dewey, and Alfred in your prayers. Also seek to encourage Joe and Wanda, Jesse, and others who are having health issues. Thank God for your good health.

**Received
you freely,
freely give.
(Matt. 10:8)**

Christianity and Socialism

Ron Roberts

One of the Democratic candidates in the primaries is a self confessed Socialist. This causes the term to be used a great deal but usually without any explanation or definition. Socialism is the practice of taking the wealth of individuals into a common pot and then redistributing it to the group. In the United States this would be done through taxes. The wealthiest Americans would get the greatest tax burdens. The money then comes into the government's hands where it is redistributed through social programs like health care, welfare, and Medicare to the entire nation.

I understand socialism was attempted in the early colonies in our country. All the crop producers pooled their harvests into a common barn. It was then passed out equally among everyone in the colony. The practice resulted in almost everyone starving to death. The reason it did not work was because those who worked hard got no more for their efforts than the person who did not work at all. The incentive to produce was lost. You might wonder how this ties into Christianity. There are those who feel the early church practiced socialism.

Acts 2:44-45 says, "*And **all that believed** were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."*

Acts 4:32 "*And the multitude of **them that believed** were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own: but they had all things common."*

Acts 4:34-35 "*Neither was there any **among them** that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet: and the distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."*

The early church is being discussed in all of these passages. We see the wealthy gave money to the Apostles and the Apostles saw it was distributed to the needy. Is this socialism? Was the early church practicing something we are failing to do? Is our nation's process of capitalism condemned by God? How should these questions be answered?

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "*For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat* (2 Thes. 3:10). The Apostle clearly condemns the social program of welfare to those abled bodied men who were lazy.

Those who were aided in the church were those who were in need for a reason other than laziness. In Acts 2 the need likely came from those Jews who came to Jerusalem for Pentecost and did not bring sufficient funds with them. They did not anticipate obeying the Gospel and remaining with the church longer than the typical feast day journey would take. Acts 4 may have been more of a need through poverty, a temporary job loss, or a physical handicap. In both cases the people with riches gave to the church for the needs of the poor.

How is this not socialism? You will notice that no one made the rich members surrender their wealth. This was a free will contribution. Socialism takes the wealth by the force of law through taxes. Those who would wish to help the needy could not because the government had taken their wealth. The government then looks benevolent (in order to get votes) while the truly generous man is rendered incapable of helping.

In the church the rich gave because of a specific need. Money was donated for members in need. The donations stayed in the church. It was not distributed through programs to unknown people.

Barnabas sold some of his land and gave the money to the church to help needy saints (Acts 4:36-37). Ananias also sold land, but lied about the price he and his wife received. They tried to deceive the church and claimed they were giving all the money when they actually kept part of it (Acts 5:1-10). Notice Peter said to Ananias in reference to the land, "*Whiles it remained, was it not **thine own**? And after it was sold, was it not in **thine own power**?...(Acts 5:4).* This is capitalism. The land belonged to Ananias and Sapphira. They had possessions and they could keep them. No one made Ananias sell his land or give the money to the church. It was not taken from him in taxes. This wasn't socialism.