The Church’s Responsibility in Benevolence
Rom. 15:25-26; 1 Cor. 16:1-2

Introduction:
A. “Benevolence” as used among brethren refers to caring for the needy.
B. To help us understand our subject we will consider two aspects of the N.T. teaching about the poor.

Discussion:
I. The Problem of the Poor (Mark 14:3-7)
A. A perpetual problem (v. 7)
B. A priority problem.
   1. The poor was not Jesus’ greatest concern.
      a. Did not declare a “war on poverty,” but a “war on sin”
      b. Did not seek absolute economic and social equality, but spiritual equality.
      c. Economic “equality” taught was freedom from want (cf. 2 Cor. 8:14; Acts 2:44,45; 4:32,35)
   2. The poor get top priority under the social gospel system – feed, relieve, then teach.
   3. The lost get top priority under the gospel of Christ (cf. John 6:26, 27).
C. A perception problem.
   1. Wrong perception of what “poor” means – it does not mean:
      a. Those who are merely “less fortunate” – one having less that most of us have.
      b. Those who are merely having trouble maintaining their accustomed life style.
      c. Those with assets that can be converted into food, clothing and shelter.
      d. Those who spend money on conveniences rather than on basic necessities (Ill. Baby - tv box)
      e. Those with able non-working family members living in the household.
      f. Those with non-contributing working household members.
   2. The biblical poor are destitute of the bare necessities of life (cf. Jas. 2:15)
      a. “Ptochos (πτοχός)” means poor or beggar
      b. Need what it takes to be “warmed and filled” or “things needful to the body” (Jas. 2:15-16)
      c. Due to uncontrollable circumstances – not laziness or mismanagement (cf. Acts 11:28-30)

II. The Aid to the Poor.
A. Personal aid to any poor.
   1. One reason from working is to have to aid the needy (Eph. 4:28)
   2. To all men – saint or sinner – as we have opportunity (Gal. 6:10; Jas. 1:27; 2:15-16)
B. Congregational aid to poor saints.
   1. To members of the congregation (Acts 2:42; 4:34; 6:1-3 Note: “their” widows)
   2. To saints in other congregations (Acts 11:30; Rom. 15:25-28; 1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 8 & 9).
      a. Sent directly to church with the needy.
      b. Did not send through a “sponsoring church” or human organization (cf. Acts 11:30)
   3. Principle: Church aided only saints without other means of support.
      a. Family assistance (1 Tim. 5:8,16).
      b. Younger widows to marry rather than enrolled for church support (1 Tim. 5:11-14)
      c. Other means not available to 1st century needy: SS, unemployment ins., state aid, etc.
   4. Church benevolence is a token of the fellowship that exists between church and the poor saint.
      a. “Contribution” and “distribution” from koinonia (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 9:13)
      b. Thayer: Shows “embodiment and proof of fellowship”

Conclusion:
A. Let us be concerned about the poor and needy, but more so about the lost.
B. Let us aid the poor personally as we have opportunity and ability – saint or sinner.
C. Let us let the church aid only those with whom it has been charged.