

the church. It is NOT a glorified Goodwill. To believe that the churches primary or even significant function is to see to the physical needs of man is an insult to the Son of God (cf. Heb. 10:26-29). The blood of Jesus was not shed so men can have clothes on their back and a roof over their head. Rather, Christ died to save souls. He gave His life so men's sins can be washed away—thus giving them the hope of heaven. Yet, most people believe churches are to be “this-worldly” oriented.

Benevolence is a part of the work of the church, but it is secondary and not intended for the world at large. Individual Christians have responsibilities toward their neighbors—to help them in their time of need (Gal. 6:10; Jas. 1:27; Lk. 10:25-37). So, we are not saying let the unfortunate suffer or turn a blind eye to the physical needs of man. What we are saying is let the church adhere to its God-given purpose, the salvation of souls.

- Steven F. Deaton

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“The Lord God...sent warnings”

“And the Lord God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy” (2 Chron. 36: 15, 16).

The above passage ought to send chills down our backs. The Israelites were decimated by their enemies. They suffered horribly from starvation and war, as well as being taken captive. Zedekiah was forced to watch the death of his sons then had his eye gouged out (2 Kgs. 25:7). What would it do to you or me if our last sight was that of our children's murder? Do you think that would sear an image on your brain?

The suffering and pain experienced by the Jews was not merely the doing of man. They were facing the wrath of God Almighty. His anger at their sin and rebellion was no longer restrained as in years past. Yet, it was not in its fullness. If God desired He could have annihilated the Jews from the face of the earth after an extended torturous experience.

Has God's nature changed? Does He not still have a law by which He expects men to live? Is He now deaf or blind to our doings? Has He lost the power to move against His enemies?

Our nation is saturated with sin, much like ancient Israel. We have few who bow down to wood, stone, or gold statues. However, idolatry abounds. Multitudes continue to worship pleasures, possessions, and power.

If we hope to escape or avoid God's wrath, our nation must change; slim chance
continued on p. 2

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for that. The best we can look for, perhaps, is to keep ourselves pure and help individuals change their wicked ways. Even if we do live righteously, however, let us not kid ourselves that we will escape the pain and suffering. Even righteous Jews suffered because of the sin of the nation at large. The thing is, though we may face the consequences of living in an immoral country, we will avoid God's ultimate wrath—torture in hell.

God has sent us warnings in His Word, the gospel. He continues to use His people to warn us. Will we heed? Will you?

- Steven F. Deaton

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.

- Matthew 7:13-27

A \$75,000 Waste

Several news sources recently reported that a church in Memphis, TN, essentially conned out of \$75,000. The church wanted to help victims of Hurricane Katrina who supposedly lost their home and had other sad stories to go with it. So, the church bought a new house and gave it to the couple. It is now thought that the couple never were married and were not really victims of the natural disaster. The man reportedly said, "Take it up with God."

The man and woman involved in this scheme have their own faults and will have to "take it up with God" one day. However, to us this is really about the church. It is another example of a church going awry in an attempt to do good. The church left Bible authority for benevolent work and ended up throwing away \$75,000.

The Bible teaches that the church has three areas of work. First, the church is to teach the lost by upholding and broadcasting the truth into the world (1 Tim. 3:15). We see an example of this with the Thessalonians who spread the word far and wide (1 Thes. 1:7-9). Second, the church is to edify the saints; build up its own membership (Eph. 4:11-16). These two works are spiritual in nature and are the primary roles of the church. Jesus died for the lost so they can enter into the kingdom, the body of the saved (Jn. 1:29; Eph. 5:25).

The third area of work the Bible authorizes for the church is benevolence. However, it is not benevolence to the world in general. Rather, the church is only authorized to relieve saints in need. Study the following passages and notice the church's responsibility and right in helping saints only: Acts 2:44-46; 4:32-37; 6:1-6; 11:27-30; Rom. 15:35-37; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:1-5; 9:1-3. Paul even told Timothy that the church is the last resort—not the first—for a believing, faithful widow (1 Tim. 5:16).

Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the ashing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

- Eph. 5:25-27

People have become confused over the past 50 plus years on the true purpose of