Benevolence & The Church

Even worldly people expect a brother to help a brother

What is church's role in benevolence?

- **If NT commands church unlimited benevolence, it must care for the physical needs of the world; it sins by not giving aid to the fullest extent of its ability**
- **If NT limits church's benevolent work, it sins by going beyond limits**

I. Principles To Remember

1. There is a **difference** in church action and individual action

- The *church* is the collectivity; it acts from its treasury
  - Even worldly people know the difference
- An *individual* is not a collectivity, but Christian(s) acting independently

Mt.18:15-17, pronouns

- Even if every person in a church gets involved in an activity, we must distinguish between their acting as a church and acting in other ways (distributively). E.g.:
  - Corporal punishment
  - Entertainment, recreation
  - One man: citizen; married; father; business; club; Christian – each relationship is independent

Acts 5:1-4

- Plain distinction between individual and church (treasuries)

Ananias, Sapphira
(Ac.5:4 [4:36-37])

Apostles' feet
(Ac.5:2)

1 Co.12:12-14, a body

- We could as easily claim that one organ makes a body as to claim that one Christian makes a church
- If you (an individual) are a church, you don’t have to pay taxes

1 Tim.5:16, Paul made the distinction

- Individual → her widow
- Church → its widows
  - When a Christian helps her widow, that's *not* the church doing it
  - If the individual *is* the church, explain 1 T.5:16

2. Church's **goal** in benevolence is not same as in evangelism

- Church **must** preach gospel at every opportunity
  - 1 Tim.5:16, it must ***not*** engage in benevolence, even to needy saints, unless no one else (family) can help
- Col.4:3

3. NT **pattern** for evangelism is not same pattern for benevolence

Ac.6:1-2

- Apostles did not turn church into relief agency
- Benevolent needs did not distract them from primary duty of preaching the gospel or edification
- Salvation Army

3. NT **pattern** for evangelism is not same pattern for benevolence

2 Thes.3:10

- Church may preach to lazy man at every opportunity; cannot feed him
- This verse alone shows the difference in the two patterns

3. NT **pattern** for evangelism is not same pattern for benevolence

1 Tim.5:16

- Church may preach to individual's widow at every opportunity, but it cannot provide benevolence for her

3. NT **pattern** for evangelism is not same pattern for benevolence

2 Jn.9-11

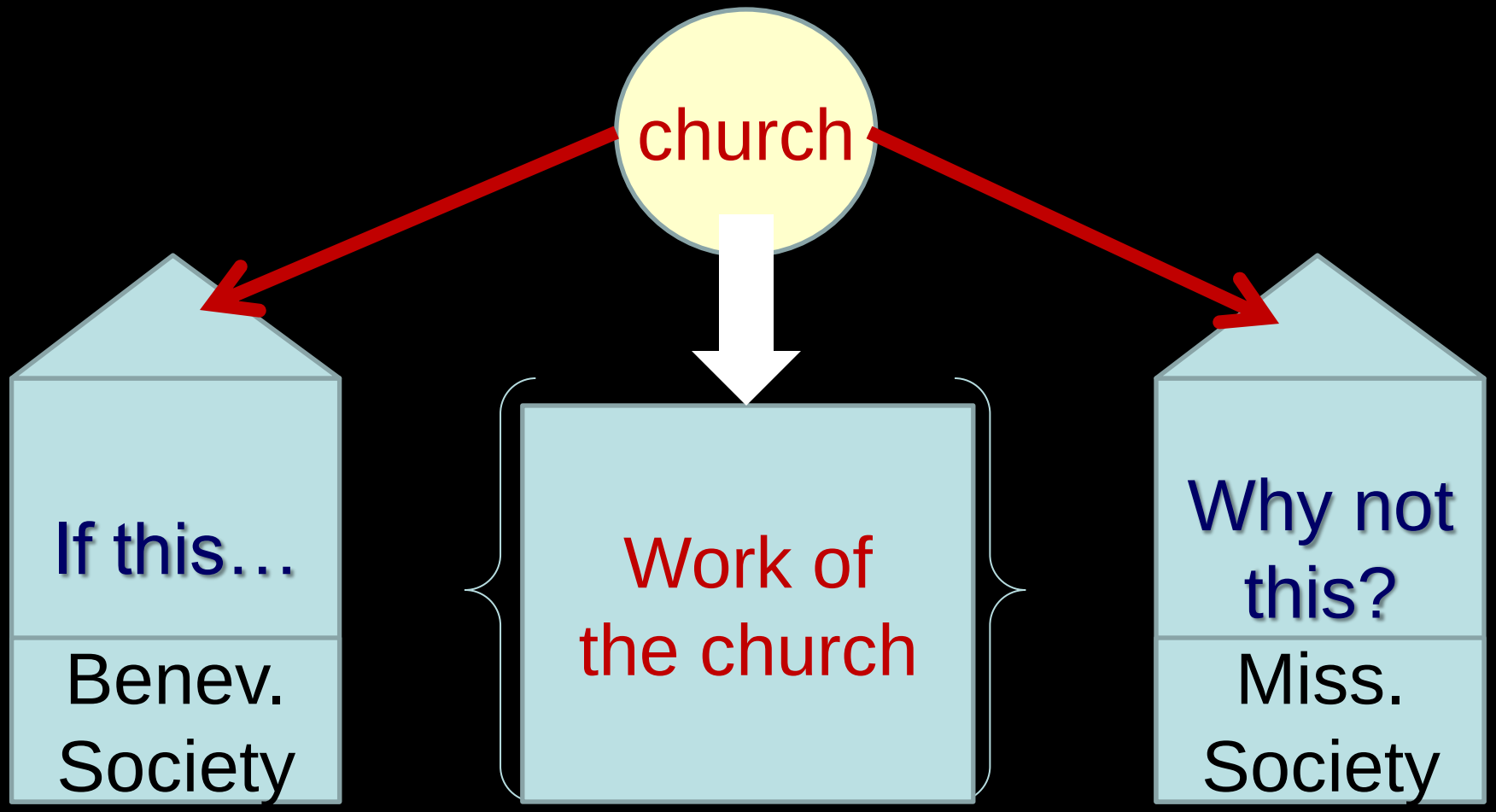
- Church may preach to false teachers, but cannot support them…

3. NT **pattern** for evangelism is not same pattern for benevolence

If patterns are identical . . .

- Most who support unlimited church benevolence argue that church may donate to board of directors who decide the ways to care for them.
- Then…church may donate to board of directors who decide the ways to evangelize – a missionary society!

3. NT **pattern** for evangelism is not same pattern for benevolence



I. Principles To Remember

II. Issue Is Not Whether Needy Must Be Relieved

Lk.9:61-62, people misrepre-sented Jesus . . . His church

Duties of individuals:

- Mt.5:43-48. Church funds??
- Mt.6:1-4. Good work; bad motive
- Mt.25:31-46. Churches??
- Lk.10:30-35. Own funds…
- Jn.19:26-27. John responsible…
- Ac.9:36-39. Dorcas…
- Ep.4:28. Secular business?

Lk.9:61-62, people misrepre-sented Jesus . . . His church

Duties of individuals:

- James 1:27.
  - Pure religion: [1]visiting; [2]keeping oneself

Lk.9:61-62, people misrepre-sented Jesus . . . His church

Duties of individuals

Duties of a church to its own:

- Ac.2:44-45
- Ac.4:32-34
- Ac.6:1-6
- 1 Tim.5:16

Lk.9:61-62, people misrepre-sented Jesus . . . His church

Duties of individuals

Duties of a church to its own

Duties of a church to another church:

- Ac.11:27-30
- Ro.15:25-31
- 1 Co.16:1-4
- 2 Co.8-9

Following God's plan, leaves no one out