

# SOURING THE “SUGAR STICKS”

By  
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There are many arguments put forth by those wishing to justify the practice of “unlimited benevolence” on behalf of the church as a local collectivity. Stated another way, there are many folks who come up with all sorts of “reasons” why it is acceptable to God to materially assist both Christians and Non-Christians from the collected funds of a local church. Eight such arguments (sugar sticks) are refuted (soured) below.

- ▶ **Argument #1** – *“There is no passage that says the church cannot do so.”*
  - ▶ This is not how Bible authority is established.
  - ▶ When God gets specific about any issue either via command, example, or even by necessary inference, doing so eliminates any substitution by man. For example, when God got specific and said to make an ark of gopher wood (**Genesis 6:14**), all other options were eliminated. Noah wasn’t free to build a sailboat, a rowboat, or a raft. Noah wasn’t free to use cherry wood, oak, or maple. Now let’s make the application of this principle to benevolence. In that God was specific and decided to limit the church to assist just the saints (**1 Tim. 5:3-16; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8-9; Rom. 15:25-27**), that does away with the idea that the church may also assist non-saints.
  - ▶ Can you imagine how big the New Testament would be if God told us everything that we cannot do?
  - ▶ This argument simply will not work.
  
- ▶ **Argument #2** – *“James 1:27 allows the church to render material aid to all widows (some of which are not Christians) and to orphans (not Christians).”*
  - ▶ First of all, it is assumed that churches are authorized to be in the orphan business.
  - ▶ Next, note what is not said! Does the passage say anything about the church? No!
  - ▶ When one keeps the context of James 1 in mind, one will never see room for collective action. The action is individual.
  
- ▶ **Argument #3** – *“In Acts 24:17 it is recorded that Paul said he brought alms to his own nation. The word nation cannot be referring to saints only.”*
  - ▶ Again note that the point is assumed to be true without proof.
  - ▶ It is a fact that “nation” (ethnos) can, and does, refer to saints only – **1 Peter 2:9**.
  - ▶ To suggest that Paul assisted non-saints is to ignore the contextual background of the passage (**1 Cor. 16:1-4**).
  - ▶ There are two other Greek words that perfectly describe countrymen (suggenes and genos), but neither word is used.
  
- ▶ **Argument #4** – *“The body (the church) cannot be disconnected from the head (Christ), therefore whatever Christ did while upon the Earth the church can and should do while upon the Earth. Christ fed the masses, therefore, the church can and should feed the masses.”*
  - ▶ Once again, the position is assumed to be true without any proof.
  - ▶ This argument proves too much! If the church can and should do what Jesus did while upon the Earth then the church can and should: forgive sins (**Matthew 9:6**), observe the Passover (**John 2:13**), be literally crucified so as to draw men unto her (**John 12:23**), eat the Lord’s Supper on Thursday (**Luke 23:54**), and attend synagogue services and participate therein (**Luke 4:16ff**). Who will accept such nonsense?
  - ▶ This argument assumes a thrust of Jesus’ ministry was to aid folks physically. This is just not the case, as a careful reading of the gospel accounts show. Jesus came to deal with spiritual poverty and any aid was to confirm Him (**John 5:36, et al**).

- ▶ **Argument #5** – “*By rendering material aid to “brethren only,” you “antis” are clearly violating Matthew 5:42-48.*”

  - ▶ The argument assumes that the Lord is speaking of the work of local congregations when the passage is in a context dealing with what individuals need to be doing (**cf. Matthew 5:1-2**).
  - ▶ The argument assumes that the Lord was speaking of funds being taken from a local church treasury. Where is the evidence?
  - ▶ The argument assumes that the Lord was talking about distributing funds to both Christian and non-Christian alike from said treasury. Where is the evidence?
  
- ▶ **Argument #6** – “*You anti brethren need a passage that says the words “Saints Only!”*”

  - ▶ This is just silly. Notice below how easily the nonsensical nature of this argument is.
  - ▶ Nowhere in the New Testament will one find the words: “SING ONLY,” “Elders must be MEN ONLY,” “Baptize ONLY WILLING PEOPLE,” “Partake of the Lord’s Supper on ONLY THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK,” etc, etc, etc.
  
- ▶ **Argument #7** – “*Galatians 6:10 authorizes the church to render material aid to all men and the the household of faith – after all, the letter is addressed to the churches of Galatia.*”

  - ▶ It is true that the letter is addressed to churches (**Galatians 1:2**). However, in every letter addressed to churches in the New Testament, some things apply to the church and call for collective action, whereas some things apply to individuals and call for individual action. The context of any passage must determine which is under consideration.
  - ▶ If the passage is discussing church action, then it makes Paul inconsistent and a liar for his instructions were different for the church that met in Ephesus (**1 Timothy 5:1-16**). How can this be in light of **1 Corinthians 4:17**?
  - ▶ It is assumed that the good under consideration is material good, but this is not the case as the context clearly reveals. The context is purely spiritual and has to do with the soul winning, not material benevolence.
  - ▶ Even if material benevolence were under consideration, it is individual action being discussed.
  
- ▶ **Argument #8** – “*2 Corinthians 9:13 is clearly a material context and it says that benevolent aid was given to saints and all men.*”

  - ▶ Notice the word “men” is in italics, and thus not in the Greek manuscripts.
  - ▶ The exact same Greek construction – “Parted them to all *men*” – is limited just to saints (**Acts 2:44-46**).
  - ▶ The context of the passage is totally ignored (**1 Cor. 16:1-3; Romans 15:25, 26, 31, 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1; 12, 13**). Each time the material aid is said to be going to saints.
  - ▶ If Paul allowed for the gift to be given to saints and non-saints alike then he lied eight times; he would be exposed as a hypocrite in light of **2 Corinthians 8:20-21**, and his credibility would be destroyed. What else did he write that was not true?
  - ▶ If the gift went to non-saints then churches were fellowshipping evil (distribution = the Greek word for fellowship). Churches and those not fit for God’s presence sharing in spiritual blessings of Christ. I think not!
  - ▶ If part of the gift went to non-saints, then we have non-Christians who have acceptable prayer lives. This cannot be (**John 9:31; 1 Peter 3:12**).
  - ▶ There are at least three good options to think about when trying to arrive at what this verse is teaching, and not one of them has a thing to do with a local church rendering material aid to non-saints.

So then, we have noted and soured the best eight “sugar sticks” the liberals have to offer. As we have seen, not one of them, when examined, authorizes a local church to use its collected funds to render material aid to non-Christians. In that there is no authority to do so, when a local church uses collected funds to materially aid non-saints, sin is being committed.