

Conversions in Acts
"Benevolence"

Introduction:

1. In Acts 1:8, Jesus gave the apostles a specific plan for carrying out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16).
2. As Luke showed how this plan was implemented in Acts, he also wrote about a number of conversions that occurred.
3. Studying these conversions helps us understand how we become Christians today.
4. In conjunction with these conversions, Luke wrote about a number of important activities that relate to Christianity, including "benevolence."

Discussion:

- I. PRIOR TO THE EVENTS RECORDED IN ACTS, JESUS TAUGHT HIS FOLLOWERS TO PRACTICE BENEVOLENCE
 - A. The second great commandment implies benevolence.
 1. This commandment is to "*love thy neighbor as thyself*" (Matthew 22:39).
 2. Jesus showed that this includes caring for the needy in "the parable of the Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:29-37).
 - B. The benevolent care of others is one standard by which we will be judged (Matthew 25:31-46).
- II. IN ACTS, LUKE WROTE ABOUT A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS WHEN THE EARLY CHRISTIANS PRACTICED BENEVOLENCE
 - A. The members of the Jerusalem congregation made great sacrifices to provide the needs of their fellow Christians.
 1. Acts 2:44-45
 2. Acts 4:32, 34-37
 - B. The widows of the Jerusalem congregation received benevolent care (Acts 6:1-3; 1 Timothy 5:3-4, 8, 16).
 - C. Dorcas showed how individual Christians practiced benevolence (Acts 9:36, 39).
 - D. The Christians in Antioch sent relief to the Christians in Judea (Acts 11:27-30; 12:25).
 - E. Paul taught the elders of the church in Ephesus to practice benevolence (Acts 20:35).
- III. BENEVOLENCE WAS ALSO ADDRESSED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES
 - A. Benevolence is included with many other Christian responsibilities (Romans 12:13).
 - B. Benevolence must be practiced with the proper attitude (1 Corinthians 13:3).
 - C. The Lord's plan for collecting funds is revealed in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.
 - D. Christians are to take advantage of opportunities to practice benevolence (Galatians 6:9-10).
 - E. Christians are to work so the needy may be assisted (Ephesians 4:28).
 - F. Those who will not work are not entitled to benevolent care (2 Thessalonians 3:10).
 - G. Wealthy Christians are especially admonished to practice benevolence (1 Timothy 6:17-19).
 - H. Christians are "*to maintain good works*" (Titus 3:8, 14).
 - I. God is "*well pleased*" when His children practice benevolence (Hebrews 13:16).
 - J. John used benevolence to illustrate how Christian love must be active (1 John 3:17-19).