

Benevolence in the Old Testament

We all know that Jesus taught us to care for the poor and needy. Benevolence is to be an active part of every Christian's life. However, giving to those in need is not only a New Testament practice. God has always required His people to care for the less fortunate.

God required His people to care for those who fell on hard times. *Deuteronomy 17:7-11* says that Hebrews were not to harden their hearts nor close their hands to the poor, rather give as the poor brother had need. In *Leviticus 25:36*, the Lord commanded, *"If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you."* Those who had fields of crops or vineyards were mandated to leave the corners of the fields unharvested to allow the poverty stricken to gather the leftover *"gleanings"* for food (*Leviticus 19:9*) This is the what Ruth did in order to provide food for herself and her mother-in-law Naomi.

One aspect of the Old Testament law of benevolence that carried on into the Law of Liberty is one of cause and effect. In the Old Testament we read, *"The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself."* (*Proverbs 11:25*) This same principle is repeated by Jesus when He said, *"Give, and it will be given to you; For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."* (*Luke 6:38*). The circle of benevolence is one that we all should be involved with at every opportunity (*Galatians 6:10*) and when we do, we'll hear the King say, *"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* (*Matthew 25:34*)

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