

From all this we can fairly conclude that when the Church becomes just another department of the state and receives enormous amounts of tax money for social welfare, it becomes a cumbersome bureaucracy that is nearly as subject to waste, greed and graft as any modern secular government agency. We can draw the lesson that charity and philanthropy should begin and end at home, in the local parish where Christians should have first-hand acquaintance with the people seeking help, and are able to offer the right kind of assistance that will not create dependency, but rather restore them to spiritual as well as physical wholeness.

An excellent article on how best to offer help to the needy is "[Do Christians practice too much 'toxic charity'?](#)" by Fr. Dwight Longenecker. It is a summary of the book *Toxic Charity* by Robert Lupton (available at Amazon.com), which I highly recommend. Go to the link below for these resources.

(Available to download in PDF format at <https://agape-biblia.org/literatura/#welfare>)

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## Seek the Welfare of the City

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Where does the concept of "philanthropy" come from? Where did we get the idea of erecting hospitals, orphanages, homes for the elderly and infirm? Today we might think that these institutions were created by billionaires who made their money off railroads, steel mills or the stock market, or perhaps the government dreamed them up. But the historical fact is that these institutions for the public well-being were created during the one-thousand-year-long Byzantine Christian Empire. Only later did these ideas take root in Western Europe, and from there to the rest of the world.

When the people of Israel were carried away into Babylonian captivity because they had forsaken the Lord, many of them thought they should form their own closed cultural group to preserve their ethnic identity, having as little to do as possible with Babylon. But the prophet Jeremiah told them –

*"Seek the welfare of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its welfare you shall have welfare.... For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you hope for your future. You shall call on me, and you shall go and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all*

*your heart. I will be found of you, says the Lord, and I will return you from captivity". (Jer. 29:7, 11-14)*

Thus the idea of seeking the welfare or well-being of society at large seeped from the Jewish nation to surrounding nations such as Babylon, Greece and Rome, but those nations limited such social programs to "their own kind," not sharing their wealth with other tribes and peoples. It took Christ's Great Commission to "*Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations*" before this idea of sharing one's well-being with others – even one's enemies – could take root.

For the first three hundred years Christians were "in captivity" of frequent persecutions, but still reached out in love to those around them. Why? Because Christ Himself was and is the great *Philanthropos*, the "Lover of Mankind." This divine love for mankind enables us to perform genuine philanthropy:

*"The philanthropy of man is theologically grounded in the philanthropy of God. Although God is completely unknown in His nature, He becomes known through His revelation to mankind and in history as philanthropic and merciful. The philanthropy of God is apparent, among other signs, in the nature of man, in his destiny, and in his place in creation. Only man is created 'according to the image and likeness of God' (Gen. 1:26). Only he exists as a person who comes into communion with God. Only man has as his destiny an eternal progress, through a process of inner purification and sanctification, towards the attainment of the divine likeness." (Miltiadis Vantsos and Marina Kiroudi, "An Orthodox View of Philanthropy and Church Diaconia," *Christian Bioethics*, 13:251–268, 2007, Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, p. 253)*

According to the Romanian scholar Cristian Petcu,

priests forbidden to eat or drink in a public inn except in dire necessity when travelling, forbidden to ridicule the deaf, lame, blind or deformed, the hierarchy of metropolitans, bishops, priests and deacons, and much more. From these we see a definite order of worship and life, including ministry to the poor, lame, maimed and blind. But also we see that some bishops had yielded to the temptation of greed for wealth and power, so rules were adopted that forbade such sins, and the penalty was removal from office.

After Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official state religion of the Greco-Roman Empire, bishops often received not only offerings from believers for the Church's ministry to the poor, sick, widows, orphans and elderly; but also large sums of money from the government for these social ministries. Eventually, bishops occupied administrative positions similar to judge, mayor or governor, with all the honors and benefits that go with such positions, and their robes even today are derived from those of Byzantine government officials.

The book **A History of Simony in the Christian Church** details too many sad stories of buying church office and other corruption in the first eight centuries of the Church. And the death of Charlemagne in 814 AD was the zenith of the Byzantine Empire, after which the rise of Islam and its attacks on the Christian Greco-Roman Empire greatly diminished the borders of Byzantium, which eventually shrunk down to the fortress walls of Constantinople itself before that city fell to the Muslims. The Byzantine state was so encumbered by its social welfare programs that it could not properly fulfill its primary function to "bear the sword" and defend the populace.

their neighbors or the poor, sick or elderly – that often produces just the opposite of love – resentment. And how can the state prevent the inner desires of coveting, greed, jealousy, etc.? In fact, our consumer-oriented society promotes them!

The Apostles not only left us the New Testament, but also a collection of canons for governance of the Church called the "Constitutions of the Holy Apostles." St. John of Damascus, in his ***De Fide Orthodoxa: An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith***, Book 4, Chapter 17, actually considered that work compiled in the early second century by Clement of Rome, a disciple of the Apostles, to be included in the New Testament. Other scholars date it from the 3rd or 4th centuries. But its ancient manuscript had been lost and was only rediscovered and translated from the "Ethiopic" (Coptic) language in the 1800s. It is a rich source of information on Church order the first century, for example:

*"Canon XX. Concerning him who has been ordained through bribery. If there is a bishop or an elder or a deacon who has taken the grade of priest by bribery, let him be deposed. And let him who ordained him also be deposed and removed forever from the priestly office and let them not associate with him in any respect, just as I [Peter] removed Simon the Magician from me.*

*"Canon XXI. Concerning him who calls in aid that he may hold [office in] the Christian church. If a bishop obtains a position through the assistance of the princes of this world and rules the Christian church through them, let him be removed and deposed, he and all who follow him." ([biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jbl/1885\\_061.pdf](http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jbl/1885_061.pdf))*

It goes on to delineate between the bishop's stewardship of church property and his own property in Canons XXX and XXXXI,

*"...the main social welfare institutions of the Early Church were the Brephotropia (nurseries for foundlings), Parthenocomia (shelters for spinsters), Gerocomia (homes for widows), and Orphanotropia (orphanage). The Orphanotropia was an outstanding achievement of the Early Church in the field of social welfare, which manifested Christian love of one's neighbour. As early as the fourth and fifth centuries, the Church founded special establishments for orphans (both Christian and non-Christian), whose care was entrusted to the clergy under the guidance of a bishop, as attested by the archive documents. The earliest orphanage seems to have been the St. Zoticus Orphanage, from the time of Constantine the Great, Roman Emperor between 306 and 337, famous for his edict granting tolerance of the Christian faith. In the fourth century, St Sava, in chapter 48 of his Typikon, expressly lays out the duties of the abbot:*

*'It is fitting that the abbot should take care of healing the sick, be they those who dwell in the monastery, be they those who seek him out (...) Then let the abbot examine the patient and restore his health, and if he pay him no heed, then he is in great danger. And let it be binding upon him.'*

*"These rules for monasteries, which had an organised framework, were a practical extension of the situation that had existed during the time of the Church's persecution. Given that they were unable to organise themselves within a well-defined framework, the Christians of the first three centuries ended up in the strange situation of endangering their lives in order to help the sick. Thus, Ss. Cosma and Damian, St. Pantelimon,*

*St Ermolaos, Ss. Cyrus and John, and St. Thalasia are known as wonderworking unmercenaries, great healers of the sick. The work of these martyrs was continued after the period of persecution by private persons, outstanding among whom was St. Melanie the Roman, whose donations to the poor and asylums are reckoned to have been enormous."*

*"By the fourth and fifth centuries we find a corps of Christians who tended to the sick in particular. These Parabolani were recruited from among the poor and humble and were skilled in caring for the sick and also had medical knowledge. It was the bishops who appointed the Parabolani. From the extant sources it appears that in the Early Church the Parabolani were a corps of Christians ready to sacrifice themselves for their neighbour and serve the common good, and were permanently exposed to the danger of being infected by those they treated.*

*"Every religious society engaged in social and charitable work as a means of consolidating and spreading Christianity in the ancient world. Thus, in the beginning, the residualist model was dominant in the beginning as short-term assistance, through the founding of orphanages, asylums, hospitals, and so on. But this kind of traditional charity work could not cope with the difficulties of the needy during times of war or in the post-war period in particular.*

*"In order to be materially and psychically independent and in order to make best use of his own resources, a person must attain a certain degree of maturity and have*

*who resists the authority, withstands the ordinance of God; and those who withstand will receive to themselves judgment. <sup>3</sup> For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. Do you desire to have no fear of the authority? Do that which is good, and you will have praise from the same, <sup>4</sup> for he is a servant of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid, for he doesn't bear the sword in vain; for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him who does evil. <sup>5</sup> Therefore you need to be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake. <sup>6</sup> For this reason you also pay taxes, for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually on this very thing. <sup>7</sup> Give therefore to everyone what you owe: taxes to whom taxes are due; customs to whom customs; respect to whom respect; honor to whom honor. <sup>8</sup> Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup> For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not give false testimony,' 'You shall not covet,' and whatever other commandments there are, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'<sup>10</sup> Love doesn't harm a neighbor. Love therefore is the fulfillment of the law." (Rom. 13:1-10)*

Here we see our obligation as Christians to pay taxes to earthly rulers because they "bear the sword" – they protect citizens from external enemies and internal criminals and evildoers (verses 1-7). These are the spheres of human activity that the state should provide for. But verses 8-10 describe the spheres of human activity which the Church should provide for: loving one another, teaching sexual morality, when it is wrong to take another human life, not to steal, lie or covet. These moral ideals must come from within: the state cannot force people to love

truth, no matter who you teach, for you aren't partial to anyone. <sup>17</sup> Tell us therefore, what do you think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?' <sup>18</sup> But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, 'Why do you test me, you hypocrites?' <sup>19</sup> Show me the tax money.' They brought to him a denarius. <sup>20</sup> He asked them, 'Whose is this image and inscription?' <sup>21</sup> They said to him, 'Caesar's.' Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' <sup>22</sup> When they heard it, they marveled, and left him, and went away." (Mat. 22:15-22)

The Early Church Father Severus wrote in his Cathedral Sermons, Homily 104: *"Indeed, the act of giving tax to Caesar does not prevent the service of God, although you would like to think so. This is why it is necessary for you to give to God equally what is God's, in such a manner that if what is Caesar's is kept for the service of God, it is necessary that God be preferred to him. If you remain a tributary of Caesar, you should attribute this to your sins, not to God. In the same way, Paul similarly applies himself to the same distinction. In sending a letter to the Romans he wrote, 'Pay to the world, therefore, what is due to the world; to those you owe taxes, taxes; to those you owe tribute, tribute.'"* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture [digital version], IVP Press)

From this it is clear that we must not make an either-or choice; instead it is both-and: some spheres of human activity should be paid for with taxes collected by the state, and other spheres should be funded by giving to God. But how exactly can we delineate these two spheres? St. Paul gives us the answer:

*"<sup>1</sup> Let every soul be in subjection to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those who exist are ordained by God. <sup>2</sup> Therefore he*

*a developed personality and faculty of judgment. In Christianity, there is also the advantage of divine intervention. In fact, the development of the personality means the path towards likeness with God, the replacement of the old man with the new, who dwells in Christ. The role of social work is to make the recipient aware of the need to change and to assist him in the process of solving the problem."* (Cristian Petcu, "Historical and Canonical Reflections on the Church's Philanthropic Work," *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 4:4 (2013) urn:nbn:de:0276-2013-4069, pp. 116-119)

Here we clearly see the goal of the social ministry of the Church: *"The role of social work is to make the recipient aware of the need to change"* – unless the poor or disabled person makes a commitment to change, our efforts to help may be in vain. In his oration "Who is the Rich Man that Will Be Saved?", Clement of Alexandria explained that when Christ told the rich young ruler to sell all that he owned and give to the poor, *"Christ is not asking the young man to literally dispense with his possessions, but rather to become a free person by breaking his attachment to them, since the person who is concerned about acquiring or keeping wealth is not truly free. As Clement says, 'Christ does not, as some conceive off-hand, bid him throw away the substance he possessed, and abandon his property; but rather bids him banish from his soul his notions about wealth, his excitement and morbid feeling about it, the anxieties, which are the thorns of existence, which choke the seed of life.'"* The attitude of the heart must change, both for the rich man and the poor man. Greed must be expelled.

Saint Basil of Caesarea, however, took the words of Christ to the rich young ruler quite literally. Basil was a wealthy young man who became a monk and later bishop of Caesarea. He donated all his wealth to the poor by constructing the "New City" just outside Caesarea. He devised a new approach for monastics: both monks and nuns should serve God by serving mankind. Basil's Basiliad or "New City" had a hospital, lodging for pilgrims, and housing for the poor and elderly along with the monasteries. Doctors and nurses were brought in to minister to the sick. *"Basil explicitly rejects any attempt to formulate a two-tiered approach to the commandment. In Basil's view, 'sell your possessions and give to the poor' is an expression of the law of love, and is therefore equally applicable to all, both monastics and non-monastics."* (Paul Schroeder, "Building the New City: St. Basil's Social Vision,"

<http://incommunion.org/2008/12/07/building-the-new-city-st-basils-social-vision/>)

Saint John Chrysostom, while he was Patriarch in the late fourth century, also had homes for the poor and hospitals built in Constantinople. Another man,

*"less well known than Basil and Chrysostom, was the fifth-century patriarch Attikos. Under his leadership, the Church of the capital extended its philanthropic programs to the poor of other ecclesiastical jurisdictions. The Church historian Socrates relates that Attikos "was so liberal that he not only provided for the poor of his own parishes, but transmitted contributions to supply the needs and promote the comfort of the indigent in the neighboring cities also." On one occasion he sent to Kalliopios, a presbyter of the church in Nicaea,*

*finest prototype of harmony of Greek education and the Christian faith and a select example of a woman who used education, social position, wealth and service for people especially for the sick, the hungry, the unclothed, the poor and the neglected. Among the many philanthropic institutions that Athenais-Eudokia established was a great poorhouse for 400 indigents. Constantinople, Antioch, and Jerusalem benefited from the philanthropic generosity of Athenais. Her example became an inspiration for other prominent queens and ladies of Christian Hellenism."* (Demetrios Constantelos, "Women and Philanthropy in the History of Hellenism," <http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/arhu/content/docs/djc%20archive/Women%20and%20Philanthropy....pdf>, p.4)

Another great resource on women's ministry in the church is **Philanthropy and Social Compassion in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition** edited by Matthew J. Pereira, 350 pages containing 22 articles devoted to philanthropy in the Orthodox Church past and present. There is simply not space or time here to delve into all of these articles. What happened to the role of women as deaconesses? Why did the philanthropy of the Byzantine Empire come to an end? Perhaps it was precisely because of the great works of charity begun by Olympas, Theodora, Eudokia and others which began as personal charitable work but were gradually taken over by the state. The earliest Christian teachings on this are from Christ Himself, from the Apostle Paul, and from the Apostolic Constitutions:

*"<sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees went and took counsel how they might entrap him in his talk. <sup>16</sup> They sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are honest, and teach the way of God in*

those outside the Church, but rather demonstrate Christ's love for the tax collectors and harlots – sexual sinners.

Thus we see that the Church is to be governed by Christ-like *agape*-love, a pure and holy, unselfish love for God and neighbor. That's why *agape* was translated as "charity" in the King James Version. Charity or philanthropy (*phileo* + *anthropos* = "brotherly love for humankind") is showing care and concern for others who are worse off than ourselves, regardless of whether they "deserve" our care or not. This was the radically new aspect of social ministry that Christianity brought to the Greco-Roman Empire. Part and parcel of this was the role of women in the philanthropy of the Byzantine Empire. In Part 1 we learned of the deaconess Olympias, a follower of St. John Chrysostom who gave all her wealth and her life to serve the poor, orphans, elderly, sick, widows and outcasts. He had to warn her to be wise about her giving, so that it would be directed to those in immediate distress and not squandered on professional beggars. We also learned in Part 1 about the wife of Emperor Justinian, Empress Theodora, who was herself a converted prostitute, built hospitals for the sick and dying, and the "Metanoia" home for wayward girls.

*"And yet Olympias was not the only one who carried out the command of Christ. St. Makrina, sister of Basil the Great, St. Synklitike, Nikarete, Melania,... Theophano, Irene, Xenia of John Comnenus and many other auspicious and even known women of Greek Christian Byzantium practiced great philanthropy.*

*"I must, however, add two more words about the well-loved Athenais, the non-Christian Athenian woman who became a Christian in Constantinople. Athenais was baptized taking the name Eudokia, became the*

*three hundred pieces of gold (nomismata) in order to assist him in his work among the poor.*

*"The following letter is an interesting source of information about the poor in Nicaea and the Church's response to poverty. Attikos wrote to Kalliopios:*

*"I have been informed that there are in your city ten thousand needy persons whose condition demands the compassion of the pious. And I say ten thousand, designating their multitude rather than using the number precisely. Since I have received a sum of money from God who with a bountiful hand is eager to supply faithful stewards, take, my friend, these three hundred pieces of gold and dispose of them as you may think fit. It will be your care, I doubt not, to distribute to those who are ashamed to beg, and not to those who through life have sought to feed themselves at the expenses of others. In bestowing these alms make no distinction on religious grounds, but feed the hungry whether they agree with us in sentiment, or not.*

*"As the example of Attikos indicates, Churchmen were careful not to support professional beggars and those who refused to work. A second example is the deaconess Olympias, a very generous woman but also careless in her generosity. John Chrysostom wrote a letter advising her to use more discrimination in her contributions:*

*"I applaud your intentions; but would have you know that those who aspire to the perfection of virtue according to God, ought to distribute their wealth with economy.... You ought, therefore, to regard your wealth as belonging to your Master, and to remember that you have to account for its distribution. If you will be persuaded by me, you will in the future regulate your donations according to the wants of those who solicit*

*relief. You will thus be enabled to extend the sphere of your benevolence."*

(Demetrios Constantelos, "ORIGINS OF CHRISTIAN ORTHODOX DIAKONIA: CHRISTIAN ORTHODOX PHILANTHROPY IN CHURCH HISTORY," <http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/speeches/55575785/origins-christian-orthodox-diakonia-christian-orthodox-philanthropy-church-history>, pp. 17-18.

Under the heading "**The Hospital as Symbol of the Church**" we learn that the Church should see herself as a hospital for both the sick and for sinners. By the eighth century, the great Christian Emperor Justinian rebuilt the *Xenodochion*, or hospital, of Sampson, located between the Hagia Sophia cathedral and the Church of Saint Irene, which had been functioning for some time, but had been burned down in the Nika revolt.

*"Justinian rebuilt it on a grander scale and endowed it with an annual income so that it could extend its range of services to the sick of the capital. From this time onward Byzantine hospitals began to function proactively as centers where doctors assembled together professionally to practice healing arts on sick who were brought to the hospital. It proved to be a major stimulus to the medical capacity and skill of the profession. In Byzantine hospitals, unlike many of their medieval western counterparts, the treatment of the inmate was undertaken with concerted action.*

*"As his own foundation, and that of Theodora [his wife, a former prostitute who had been rescued and converted to Christianity – ed.] Justinian also established the two Xenones, hospices, of The House of*

Paul taught what the Christian viewpoint should be regarding these persons:

*"7 Purge out the old yeast, that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed in our place. 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old yeast, neither with the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 9 I wrote to you in my letter to have no fellowship with sexual sinners; 10 yet not at all meaning with the sexual sinners of this world, or with the covetous and extortioners, or with idolaters; for then you would have to leave the world. 11 But as it is, I wrote to you not to have fellowship with anyone who is called a brother who is a sexual sinner, or covetous, or an idolater, or a slanderer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner. Don't even eat with such a person. 12 For what have I to do with also judging those who are outside? Don't you judge those who are within?" (1 Cor. 5:7-12)*

By mentioning "*Christ, our Passover*" and "*let us keep the feast*" it is clear that St. Paul is referring to fellowship at the communion table, the early Church's "*agape* feast." He also uses the Greek word " *pornos*" that is translated here as "sexual sinners" and in this context refers to incest. But the root meaning of " *pornos*" is a male prostitute, that is, a homosexual. The Apostle Paul teaches here that sexual sinners, the covetous, extortioners, drunkards or idolaters should not be allowed to partake of communion (see his similar teaching in 1 Cor. 10), but he does not teach that Christians should judge or shun those in "the world" outside the Church. If we were to avoid contact with all sinners in the world, we "*would have to leave the world,*" he wrote. The Christian sub-culture should be radically different than the surrounding world; however, we should not judge



In the ancient Greco-Roman Empire it was common for the poor to attach themselves to a wealthy patron who would feed them, sometimes in exchange for being mistreated and made the butt of jokes, at other times in exchange for serving their patron. But there were some poor who would simply flatter their patrons, going from one patron's luxuriously spread table to another patron's table. This latter case was so embedded in the culture that it became the subject of ancient comedies and training in rhetoric: such people were called "parasites." In the above Scripture passage, St Paul warns against such behavior that would bring the Christian community into ridicule. St. John Chrysostom was trained by a rhetorician who used such stories, and Chrysostom adopted it in some of his writings.

*"In such a culture, the parasite effectively served to parody the lavish life – and especially the dinner habits – of the wealthy, people who could afford to have parasites at their tables as the evening entertainment. Chrysostom explicitly repudiates the mutual exploitation of the more affluent [who] pick out those persons whose laziness has made them victims of hunger, and maintain them as parasites and dogs feeding at the table: they stuff their shameless bellies with the leftovers of these iniquitous banquets and exploit their hosts at will." (Paul Blowers, "St. John Chrysostom on Social Parasites," <http://academiccommons.columbia.edu/catalog/ac%3A138418>, pp. 21-22)*

As an aside, in today's culture wars the post-Christian and neo-pagan elements of our society often blame Christians for "hateful" attitudes toward the marginalized, especially LGBT people. In a Scripture passage similar to 2 Thes. ch. 3 above, St.

*Isidore, and the House of Arcadios. It is recorded that he also constructed large hospitals at Antioch and at Jerusalem. In the latter case, he responded favorably to the petition of the ascetic St. Saba, which the pilgrimages to Jerusalem left many arriving visitors sick and exhausted and in need of special care. In this instance we know that Justinian supervised the building of a centre that contained two hundred beds and was endowed with an imperial gift of annual income of 1850 gold solidi for its maintenance (a very large sum of money)." (John McGuckin, "Embodying the New Society: The Byzantine Christian Instinct of Philanthropy," <http://academiccommons.columbia.edu/catalog/ac%3A138606>, p. 65)*

The hospital of Sampson continued functioning up to the fall of Byzantium in the early 1400s. Thus we see just a few of the great philanthropic institutions of the thousand-year Byzantine Empire. It is not enough for us to have good intentions when practicing Christian charity: we must also be careful to ensure that those who are physically and mentally able make the efforts needed to be restored to wholeness.

In case you're thinking "*That was then, but this is now!*" about Jeremiah 29:7 – "*Seek the welfare of the city*" – well, you're in for a surprise. In the above, it explains that there were beggars who refused to work, so Christian philanthropists were warned not to simply give them money: "*Here we clearly see the goal of the social ministry of the Church: 'The role of social work is to make the recipient aware of the need to change' – unless the poor or disabled person makes a commitment to change, our efforts to*

help may be in vain." Human nature hasn't changed much in the past 2,000 years!

On our "**Homes and Jobs**" page (<https://agape-restoration-society.org/homes-and-jobs.htm>), go to the link: "**Get Your Life on Track**." You'll see several Scriptures illustrating the lifestyle that Christians should have. At the bottom of that section is another link: "**Do you want to be restored to wholeness?**" which takes you to our **Problem Assessment: Physical and Spiritual Rehabilitation Plan** that we can fill out with our disabled or unemployed clients. Midway through the form, after gathering the client's work and health history, are the following words:

I want to be restored to wholeness, and therefore I am ready to change my lifestyle.

Signature: I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to follow the plan.

The client must be willing to change his/her mindset and lifestyle. Here is what the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians, chapter 3 about this:

*"<sup>6</sup> Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother living in idleness, and not after the tradition which they received from us. <sup>7</sup> For you know how you ought to imitate us. For we were not idle among you, <sup>8</sup> neither did we eat bread from anyone's hand without paying for it, but in labor and travail worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you; <sup>9</sup> not because we don't have the right, but to make ourselves an example to you, that you should imitate us. <sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: 'If anyone is not willing to work, neither let him eat.' <sup>11</sup> For we hear of some who among you walk in idleness, who don't work at all, but are busybodies.*

*<sup>12</sup> Now those who are that way, we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and earn their own living. <sup>13</sup> But you, brothers, don't be weary in doing good. <sup>14</sup> If any man doesn't obey our word in this letter, note that man, that you have no fellowship with him, to the end that he may be ashamed. <sup>15</sup> Don't count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."*

What did the Early Church Fathers have to say about the above Scripture passage? –

*"Paul strongly emphasizes, in strict words of command, the importance of labor, especially manual labor, as an accompaniment to prayer and fasting. These religious acts must never substitute for hard work (Chrysostom, Augustine). Prayer without work is a pious pretext (Cyril of Alexandria). There is no inconsistency between trusting God to provide and engaging in hard work in order to support ourselves and not be a burden on others (Augustine, Caesarius of Arles). Faithful and hardworking members of the congregation must be careful to make a sharp separation between themselves and those brothers and sisters who are living in a disorderly way (John Cassian, Theodore). Paul holds himself up as "the form of a believer," expecting the Thessalonians to see in him how one ought to live (Chrysostom, Pelagius). In our pursuit of faithful discipleship we are to avoid the controversy that arises from idle questioning and curiosity (Basil). Christian brothers and sisters who depart from the discipline and charity required by faith are to be directly confronted (John Cassian). There is the very real danger that if we consort with erring brothers and sisters, we will be infected with their wrongdoing (Cyprian)." (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture [digital version], IVPpress)*