

## Question from a Concerned Viewer

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The Gospel Broadcasting Network is being viewed over a wide area of the country. It is to be expected that doctrinal questions that have troubled the church for years would surface as programming expands into more and more areas of the country. A person who is enjoying GBN has written with concerns over how one of these doctrinal issues has created problems with the local congregation refusing to support GBN and even discouraging this person from viewing GBN. (For the purposes of this article this person will remain anonymous.) An excerpt from the person's letter will uncover the doctrinal error with which the person is being confronted. Then, the demonstration that the support GBN receives is, indeed, scriptural will clear the way for greater enthusiasm and financial support of GBN both individually and congregationally.

The "question from the concerned viewer":

*"Their [the men of the congregation] strong position is that it is unscriptural for an undertaking by the eldership of one church (congregation) to accept contributions from other churches for a project. Now, if they accepted only individual support, this would not be seen as unscriptural. Yet since, in this case GBN, accepts funds from other churches, that makes it an unscriptural undertaking, therefore, making it unscriptural to support even individually. Further, there has been negative comment made about my having GBN in my home because of the level of support this indicates I am showing for this unscriptural and, therefore, sinful undertaking. The fact I have told them I find the programs entirely sound is viewed as irrelevant."*

What we have here is a congregation without the advantage of being overseen by an eldership that has the men providing the leadership. They consider it to be within their

realm of responsibility to censure a person for watching what is believed to be "entirely sound" Bible programming within the confines of a person's home. The point at issue is how GBN is supported financially. They say the work, if supported at all, must be supported individually, that is, by individual members of the church, and it is sinful for the elders of the church overseeing GBN to receive support from a congregation or congregations. Specifically, the support cannot come from the church treasury; if every member of the congregation were to support the effort individually so long as the funds did not pass through the church treasury, then that would be viewed as scriptural. No one would have sinned in making a financial contribution on their own to GBN even if every single member of the given congregation made a financial donation to it. But, the congregation could not contribute even \$1 out of its treasury because even if just one congregation somewhere in the world did it would make the entire financing of 24/7 sound Bible programming via satellite television sinful.

The obvious convoluted reasoning aside, may one congregation contribute to a work or project of another congregation without committing sin? The men involved cleared the air about what they mean by a practice being unscriptural; they mean it is to be involved in a sinful practice. Let us establish the authorized practice of the early church in regard to the financial support of its work. When we will have shown that one church may support financially the work of another church, we will have shown the views of these men to be in error. Our urging to them is for them to turn from the practice of binding upon others where God through his word has not bound. Please, study the proof from the Bible.

In Acts 11:28 a famine was prophesied by Agabus that would impact the whole world.

The text informs us that this happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. He was the fourth Roman Emperor, and he reigned from A.D. 41-54. His full name was Tiberius Claudius Nero Germanicus. The impact of this famine had lasting consequences on the brethren in Judea and the Christians "determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul" (vv. 29-30). In point of fact, Paul gave "order" to the churches of Galatia and to the church at Corinth to "lay by in store" "upon the first day of the week" for the purpose of assisting with this need. First Corinthians 16:3 says, "And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem." And, as already discussed the funds were delivered to the elders at Jerusalem (Acts 11:30). First Corinthians was written in A.D. 54 or 55 (Unger, ISBE) or possibly as late as A.D. 56 (Nelson). Clearly, these passages are interrelated. But, what does it mean when the Bible says the funds were sent to the elders? It means the elders of the church at Jerusalem because in Acts 14:23 it was the practice of the apostles to "ordain them elders in every church."

So, what we have here is an inspired apostle "giving order" to churches throughout the world (Galatia and Corinth) to systematically and routinely collect funds to be sent to another church (Jerusalem) to assist them with their work. Down goes the argument against one church (congregation) accepting funds from another church for a project "world without end!"

What have we shown? We have given book, chapter, and verse proving that yes, indeed, one church may help and participate by way of financial support with the work or project of another church. It was not our task to show that one church may support another church's work in a specific field or area such as evangelism. Those involved in the present concern did not limit their objections to evangelism only but affirmed: "It is unscriptural for an undertaking by the eldership of one church (congregation) to accept contributions

from other churches for a *project*." Therefore, the scriptural precedent being set, it would apply equally to the scriptural work of a church (congregation) consisting of evangelism, edification, or benevolence.