

## *An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)*

### **Be Thou Faithful Unto Your Spiritual Retirement Date**

#### **Scenario:**

There is an older couple in the congregation. As they grow older, it is obvious to all that their ability to do things physically has slowed greatly. This couple is able to make it to the grocery store, the doctors they need to see, and a few other things. However, they are limited in the distances they can travel safely. They definitely cannot be out at night because of various physical limitations. As they continue to age, they begin to suffer various illnesses and injuries that prevent them from being able to assemble with the saints regularly. Various members of the congregation are aiding them, checking in on them, and looking out for them.

#### **Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:**

As a member is talking with this couple when checking on them, this statement is made by the husband: "Like Paul, we have fought a good fight, finished the course, and have kept the faith. It is too hard for us to keep up with the congregation. So, you are not going to see us very often any more at services." The person visiting them questions this decision.

#### **A Later Statement Is Made:**

The wife responds to the questioning of their choice and says this: "We can barely get around any more. We plan on just reading our Bibles together here at home on Sundays and listening to sermons on the internet. If we keep coming to classes and worship services we will not have the energy we need to get to our doctor appointments and to make our Monday grocery store trip. You should know that we have put in over sixty years of faithful service to the church. It's time for us to step back."

#### **For Discussion:** What do you see in those statements?

- With age, physical limitations are certainly understandable as strength begins to fail (**Psalms 71:9**).
- That doesn't make being older is a disability, it just means one's abilities are used differently (**Proverbs 20:29**).
- As Paul aged, he was still at work and even facing persecution for it (**Philemon 1:9**).
- The older members of the body of Christ ought to be the ones guiding the young and being examples of godly living (**Titus 2:2-5**).
- It is terrible that they have reached a point of physical decline wherein they cannot regularly assemble with the saints. They are needed. It is good that brethren are looking after them and checking in with them. The work of the saints and responsibilities toward one another goes beyond the times we assemble together (**Matthew 25:31-46, Romans 12:10-16, Philippians 2:25-30, and I Thessalonians 5:14**).

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- Aiding the aged would certainly include helping them with transportation in times wherein they can not provide such for themselves (**I John 3:14-18**). We see examples of brethren aiding one another in similar manners in the New Testament (**Acts 21:1-5**, **Romans 15:24**, and **III John 1:6**). Such was true even in a manner in which some might call “imposing oneself” on brethren (**Philemon 1:20-22**).
- We go from unfortunate events to false conclusions quickly in this scenario. The older “brother’s” usage of **II Timothy 4:6-8** is incorrect. Furthermore, the underlying concept that being at “services” is what is meant in **II Timothy 4:6-8** is grossly incorrect.
- There is much more to faithful service to God and the saints than just assembling together. The fact is, assembling together with the saints is among the easiest and least of that which is expected of faithful disciples. The entire text of the Scriptures (**II Timothy 3:15-17**), rightly divided (**II Timothy 2:14-18** and **II Peter 3:15-18**) is what is expected of saints. That is an over-simplified point, but it establishes that there is much more to being a Christian than assembling with brethren.
- Having said that, the willful decision to cease assembling with the saints is plainly sinful (**Hebrews 10:23-25**). Much could be done to help this older couple. Rides can be provided, assembling times adjusted (**I Corinthians 11:33**), etc. If they are not badly ill or completely disabled there is no physical reason they cannot meet with the saints. There is simply no Scriptural authority to be apart from the saints.
- Herein is where you know someone by their fruits (**Matthew 7:15-20**). They can make trips to doctors and stores, but not to be among the saints. That is telling about one’s priorities. Assembling is apparently too taxing for them. Clearly, spiritual things are not on that list as they should be (**Colossians 3:1-4**). Additionally, they obviously think there are many more important things than being among the saints. That is wrong on MANY levels. They are needed members of the body (**I Corinthians 12:14-27** and **Ephesians 4:16**).
- Brethren are to assemble together in “one place” (**I Corinthians 11:20** and **I Corinthians 14:23**). There is no authority for substituting assembling with the saints with any at home worship; study plan. See a recent study on respecting God’s silence: [https://www.wordsoftruth.net/issilencepermissive\\_2020.html](https://www.wordsoftruth.net/issilencepermissive_2020.html)
- The idea of forsaking what God requires of a disciple to retain strength for other things is terrible. To think there will be a favorable reward for such is false (**Galatians 6:7-9**).
- There is no such thing as spiritual retirement for faithful saints living in this world (**Matthew 10:22**, **Luke 17:7-10**, **John 8:31-32**, **John 15:9-10**, **Acts 14:22**, **I Corinthians 9:24-27**, **I Corinthians 15:58**, **Colossians 1:23**, **I Thessalonians 5:1-10**, **Hebrews 3:1-4:11**, **Hebrews 6:11-12**, **Hebrews 10:35-36**, and **Revelation 2:8-10**).
- God expects us to work based on our capabilities (**Matthew 24:35-25:30**).
- As our example Jesus Christ (**I Peter 2:21-25**) shows us, we have to be faithful finishers (**John 4:34** and **Hebrews 12:1-3**). If you want the reward, finish the work (**Matthew 20:1-16** and **Mark 13:34-37**). Once you stop working, your faith is dead (**James 2:14-26**).
- The righteous are scarcely [hardly] saved (**I Peter 4:17-19**). The reward is at the end, not before (**Philippians 3:3-21** and **I Peter 1:3-9**).