

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

If They Have Been Baptized

Scenario:

A brother in Christ makes the following statement to an assumed brother in Christ: “It came to light that one of my brethren had been keeping company with erring brethren (so-called) that he should have withdrawn himself from years ago (Romans 16:17-18, I Corinthians 5:1-13, II Thessalonians 3:6, and II Thessalonians 3:14-15). I have had to study this out with him. He has confessed his errors and is in the process of repenting of them. This was a trying situation. The right things have been done. The good news is that my brother has confessed and is beginning to repent. It was bad to deal with, but a situation to have joy in for now (Luke 15:1-32).”

Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

The assumed brother responded: “I have myself struggled with many spiritual and physical things over the years and am quite certain that I will continue to have struggles, make mistakes, have sin, and errors to correct. Also, I am certain that because of prayers from brethren I have been blessed with a greater spiritual understanding, soberness, wisdom, knowledge, and hope. I also believe the Lord is patient and merciful with many of our honest truth seeking brethren whom, because of the teaching and preaching that has been done throughout this country in the last 100-150 years, do not know the truth as you and I do. Both of us have come a long way from where we started in our search. The Lord has been patient with us because we were honest, diligent, and true in our seeking of His will for us. Anyone who has been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for the remission of their sins to live faithfully (not perfect) unto death deserves my utmost patience and duty to teach him the correct way. Sometimes that way of truth is a journey that takes a long time. How long? As long as they make the honest attempt to study and pray for guidance.”

A Later Statement Is Made:

The assumed brother states: “Mercy is great unto those who truly seek it and I cannot determine that as a creature of the Creator. If they have been baptized into Christ, who am I to judge? They may not come to the knowledge you and I have, but I am not prepared to say whether they are lost or not. God is the judge.”

For Discussion: What do you see in those statements?

- First, I want to address the “assumed brother in Christ” aspect of this scenario. We know, in the simplest way to look at this, that our brethren are those that do the will of our Father in Heaven (**Matthew 12:46-50** and **Mark 3:31-35**). In more complex terms, brethren are those in fellowship with the Lord (**I John 1:3-7**). Aside from the question of whether or not a person was properly converted to begin with, there are things to consider. It is complex because we can’t know

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everything there is to know about our brethren to know FOR SURE who those in fellowship with the Lord are (**I Timothy 5:24-25**; cf. **Luke 6:12-16**, **John 6:70-71**, and **John 12:1-6**). So, while we properly measure fruit (**Matthew 7:15-20**), we have to understand that some false brethren could “slip through the cracks” (so to speak). Thus, we may have “assumed brethren” that are really unexposed wolves.

- There is nothing that really needs added to the point about withdrawing from erring brethren. The Scriptures presented in this scenario are clear. We cannot knowingly extend fellowship to the unfaithful (**Psalms 26:4-5**, **II Corinthians 6:14-18**, **Ephesians 5:6-11**, **I Timothy 5:22**, **II John 1:6-11**, and **Revelation 2:14-16**).
- It should have been refreshing to hear an erring saint repented (**Proverbs 25:25**).
- The assumed brother quickly makes it clear that he is no brother at all. The premise from which he makes his arguments is fully wrong. He says he is “quite certain” that he will have “sin, and errors to correct.” That is not in line with the Scriptures, if someone considers himself / herself to be a Christian (**Matthew 5:48**, **John 8:1-11**, **Romans 6:1-2**, **I Corinthians 15:34**, **Ephesians 1:4**, **Philippians 2:14-16**, **Colossians 1:25-28**, **I Thessalonians 2:1-2**, **I Thessalonians 4:1-2**, **II Timothy 2:19**, **II Timothy 3:15-17**, **James 1:13-16**, **I Peter 1:13-16**, **I Peter 2:21-22**, **I Peter 4:1-2**, **I John 2:1-6**, and **I John 3:1-10**).
- His words infer that the brother who was in the process of repentance should have been ignored or something. When we know a brother or sister in Christ is not doing that which is right in the sight of the Lord and we are in a place to help them (**Matthew 7:1-5**), we must help them (**Galatians 6:1-2** and **James 5:19-20**).
- He says “I am certain that because of prayers from brethren I have been blessed with a greater spiritual understanding, soberness, wisdom, knowledge, and hope.” I don’t know what he is meaning by this. If he is implying that brethren (not likely faithful) prayed for him and as a result, through prayer, he received understanding, soberness, etc.; he is woefully incorrect. The Scriptures give us all things pertaining to life and godliness (**II Peter 1:3-4**). We no longer live under the age of spiritual gifts wherein knowledge, understanding, and wisdom were given directly through the Holy Spirit (**I Corinthians 12:3-13:13**). Thus, if that is what he meant, this is totally wrong and continues to worsen.
- The Lord is merciful and expects us to be too (**Luke 6:36**). His mercy is not a license for sin though and does not mean He will ignore sin (**Exodus 34:7**, **Numbers 14:18**, **Nahum 1:3**, **Luke 13:1-5**, and **Acts 17:30**).
- The word patient can be understood in various ways. I will guess that he meant patient in the sense of being long-suffering. God is long-suffering (**Psalms 86:15** and **II Peter 3:9**). However, that does not mean He overlooks sin(s) (**Romans 2:1-11**).
- Blaming false teaching and using that as an excuse for ignorance is wrong (**Isaiah 9:16**, **Jeremiah 5:21-31**, **Jeremiah 6:13-30**, **Hosea 4:1-6**, **Matthew 15:1-14**, **II Peter 2:1-22**, and **II Peter 3:17**).
- “My journey” is not excuse for anyone else. Personally, I was lost for many years wherein I thought I was saved. God didn’t keep me alive (**Ecclesiastes 9:11**). He has however given me the path of repentance in His word. Had I not taken that

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path (**Acts 26:18-20**, **II Corinthians 7:9-10**, and **I John 1:9**), I would be forever lost (**Hebrews 10:26-39**).

- This statement is the part of the premise of his thinking (along with the “we all sin” false mentality): “Anyone who has been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for the remission of their sins to live faithfully (not perfect) unto death...” I have already given many Scriptures that disproves this logic. Consider how this reasoning DID NOT apply to Ananias, Sapphira, Simon, and five whole congregations (**Acts 5:1-11**, **Acts 8:1-24**, **Revelation 2:1-7**, **Revelation 2:12-29**, **Revelation 3:1-6**, and **Revelation 3:14-22**).
- This is NOT to deny the need for proper patience in teaching (**II Timothy 2:22-26**).
- Regarding the aspect of baptism. Those today who refer to themselves as members of the church of Christ often over emphasize baptism. Baptism is certainly essential to one’s salvation (**Mark 16:15-16**, **Acts 22:1-16**, **Romans 6:1-6**, **Galatians 3:26-29**, and **I Peter 3:20-21**). However, baptism is not of any greater importance than anything else God expects for someone to be His child. A person has to do many things to be saved (**Romans 10:14-17**, **Matthew 13:1-23**, **I Thessalonians 2:13**, **Luke 9:57-62**, **Luke 14:25-33**, **Luke 13:1-5**, **Acts 3:19**, **Acts 8:25-39**, **Acts 18:8**, **Colossians 1:23**, **Colossians 3:1-17**, **Hebrews 10:22-39**, **Titus 2:11-14**, etc.). Overemphasizing baptism has created a false sense of eternal security and fellowship based only upon one being baptized. Remember, the Apostles were told to convert [including baptism] and then to teach followers of Christ to “observe all things...” (**Matthew 28:15-20**). That “all things” has become buried in the doctrine of baptism saves and sin afterward is okay.
- Then a flowery statement about the way of truth being a journey. In the context of his statements, he means the flawed, sinful way. That is completely unscriptural and we have seen the Scriptures that show that. This is textbook unity in diversity which is not only a misnomer, but a false doctrine (**Amos 3:3**, **I Corinthians 1:10**, **Ephesians 4:1-6**, **Philippians 2:2**, **Philippians 3:16**, etc.). This idea has long been presented in statements such as: “I will not take action against this brother as long as he continues to study with an open heart...”. This is one reason as to why the true church of Christ is getting nearly impossible to find in the USA.
- Again, we see prayer thrust into this. Listen, when God guided it was direct and unmistakable (**I Kings 4:29-34** and **Acts 16:1-10**). Those directly guided did not need teachers (**I John 2:27**). As addressed above, spiritual gifts have ceased. Anyone who says God is directly guiding them is a damned liar!
- The logic about coming to “the knowledge that you and I have” is super misleading. The two in the scenario are nowhere near in knowledge. It is also virtue signaling. It is false humility (**Colossians 2:20-23**). As a Scripture noted above states, saints are to be unified in speech and judgment (**I Corinthians 1:10**). So, with the understanding of different “talents” (i.e. **Matthew 25:14-30**) and a person’s spiritual maturity; there cannot be a knowledge gap excuse. If someone errs in ignorance, he or she still needs to be corrected. It was ignorance that some had in common in killing Jesus and such was inexcusable (**Acts 3:11-26**). I would imagine this man would respond to that by saying there is no

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comparison to murder and erring fellowship. If such an argument were to be made, that too would be wrong (**James 2:10-13**).

- Then you have the “who am I to judge” error. Proper judgment (**John 7:24**) is required among brethren. Had he read the Scriptures given to him originally he would have known that (cf. **I Corinthians 5:1-13**). When the Lord instructed not to judge He was speaking of hypocritical judgment (**Luke 6:37-45**).
- We do know the Lord’s judgment because we have His word (**John 12:48**).
- In conclusion, Jesus is the judge (**II Corinthians 5:10**). His word says the righteous are barely saved (**I Peter 4:17-19**) and that the way is straight and narrow (**Matthew 7:13-14**). If we love our fellow man (brethren or not), we’d do our best to help those in sin to get out and stay out of sin knowing the judgment of Christ (**II Corinthians 5:11**). We would never make or allow excuses to keep someone in the bondage of sin. We’d be like Paul in confronting that which is amiss; without giving space for error (**Galatians 2:1-17**). We’d be like Jesus Himself, who rebuked the lost that they might be saved as an act of true love (**Revelation 3:19**).