

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

That He Might Go To His Own Place

Scenario:

An aged brother of the congregation that is respected as a faithful and knowledgeable member lost his brother to suicide two weeks ago. His brother was not and had never been a Christian. The circumstances were not abundantly clear. All that was shared with anyone is that depression had led to this terrible tragedy. After a public announcement was made, several brethren stood around this older brother offering their condolences and support.

Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

The aged brother says this to a small group of brethren that had gathered around him: “Depression is a real and present danger, especially during this Covid-19 pandemic. There are those who are shut in, others who have gotten sick, some have lost loved ones, and some who have lost their sources of income. There are so many changes that have brought an unusual amount of stress upon us all. I have no doubt that is what happened to my brother. We are all human. Thankfully, Jesus understands what it means to suffer in the flesh and be tormented mentally.”

A Later Statement Is Made:

“I am not even sure that suicide will cost my brother his soul. I think his mind was broken long ago and that God will take that into consideration. After all, it was said of Judas that he went to his own place. I am beginning to think that place is somewhere in Heaven that Jesus prepared. Maybe, one of those little mansions in John 14:1-3 for those that never obeyed Him because their time was cut too short.”

For Discussion: What do you see in those statements?

- This scenario is heart-wrenching and brethren ought to feel for this brother and his loss (**Romans 12:15** and **I Corinthians 12:25-26**).
- We might look at some brethren and think their knowledge is some safe-guard. Knowledge does not equal to nor guarantee right actions. Solomon had God-given knowledge, wisdom, and understanding (**I Kings 4:20-34** and **II Chronicles 1:7-13**). That did not assure his faithfulness. He walked away from the Lord (**I Kings 11:1-13**).
- Elder brethren deserve respect (**I Timothy 5:1-2**).
- With respect, elder brethren are not always right (**Job 32:1-9**).
- Respect does not allow us to compromise the truth (**Proverbs 23:23**) or ignore someone’s errors (**Galatians 6:1-2**). See: **Proverbs 16:31**
- THIS POINT IS KEY to this discussion. Suicide or not, this elder Christian had an unbelieving brother die. If a person capable of being accountable to the will of God dies, and has not obeyed the Gospel, that person is lost (**Matthew 7:13-23**, **Mark 16:15-16**, **Acts 13:46**, **Romans 2:1-11**, **Romans 6:16**, **II Thessalonians**

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1:7-9, Hebrews 2:3, Hebrews 5:8-9, I Peter 4:17-19, etc.). What happened in or surrounding their death is irrelevant. The suicide, emotional problems, etc. are all really distractions from this KEY POINT!

- Though this scenario does not address this, initial obedience doesn't secure one's salvation either. One must not only initially obey, but continually and fully be obedient to God's will (**Luke 8:1-15, I Corinthians 10:1-13, Galatians 5:1-4, Colossians 1:23, Hebrews 10:38-39, II Peter 2:20-22, Revelation 2:1-3:22**, etc.).
- All Christians should know the above information. Therefore, when brethren lose loved one's, we try to surround the one with the loss with our love. Knowing that we really cannot say anything encouraging (**I Thessalonians 4:13**). It is good to attempt to support our brethren in needs like these (**I Thessalonians 5:11-14**).

Regarding the Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

- How important is the mind when it comes to doing things right in the sight of God (**Mark 12:28-34**)? With that, what if someone cannot think clearly?
- What if someone is stuck in carnal thinking (**Romans 8:5-8** and **Galatians 5:16**)?
- What can sorrow do to a person (**Proverbs 12:25, Proverbs 15:13, Jeremiah 8:18**, and **II Corinthians 2:5-7**)?
- For example, consider how Martha and Mary addressed Jesus when their brother Lazarus died. Also, consider in that same context what happened to Jesus Himself (**John 11:17-37**). This wasn't even the same. Jesus knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead (**John 11:1-16** and **John 11:38-44**). Yet, emotions still struck Him hard.
- As Christians, when our brethren are going through emotions, we need to remind ourselves that emotions CAN cloud judgment. For example: *"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God"* (**James 1:19-20**).
- So, with that, how SHOULD we proceed when a brother overtaken by emotions starts to talk unwisely or wrong (**Ephesians 4:1-3** and **II Timothy 2:24-26**)?
- Also, we have to balance being long-suffering with the fact that we cannot compromise the truth (**I Timothy 1:3-7**).
- He is right about unusual amounts of stress in this present time. Furthermore, the word of God DOES confirm that people suffer from things like depression, especially to the wicked (**Psalms 16:4, Psalms 32:10, Isaiah 48:22, Isaiah 57:21, Romans 3:12-18**, etc.). Living in this world is problematic (**John 16:33**).
- He is right, in principle, concerning Jesus. Jesus suffered with mental anguish, without sin, and that that makes Him able to understand what physical and emotional struggles we go through (**Mark 14:32-42** and **Hebrews 4:14-5:10**).
- Paul suffered mentally (**Romans 9:1-3** and **II Corinthians 4:8-5:1; 7:5**). Paul didn't allow his troubles to cause him to err (**I Corinthians 4:7-16; 9:27**). Tough times do NOT justify sin.

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Regarding the Later Statement That Is Made From Our Scenario:

- I have been in several situations like this. In each case, I was firm; but forbearing. In this case, I would urge this brother to stop talking. I would urge him to work through his emotions and then later we could study this matter out. Having said that, I am going to proceed through the scenario with information that I would hope I would help this brother with after the sting of his brother's death was a bit behind him.
- He starts with "I am not even sure..." STOP THERE (**Romans 14:22-23** and **I Thessalonians 5:21**)!
- Will suicide cost one their soul? Having said that...
- We have addressed emotional distress already. Let me remind again, this person is lost whether suicide or not was the cause of death!
- God does not authorize anyone to take his or her own life even in times of mental anguish. That alone makes suicide sinful because it is not authorized (**John 12:48**, **Ephesians 5:6-10**, **I John 3:4**, **II John 1:9**, etc.).
- The Greek word "φονεύς", that is translated "murderer" in **Revelation 21:8**, means: "a murderer (always of criminal (or at least intentional) homicide; which 443 does not necessarily imply; while 4607 is a special term for a public bandit): — murderer. A murderer, a homicide" (Strong's # 5406). If all we had was **Revelation 21:8**, the thought of a sane person committing suicide would be answered.
- In addition to **Revelation 21:8**, consider also: **Numbers 35:30-31**, **Jeremiah 7:1-16**, **Matthew 15:15-20**, **Matthew 19:18-19**, **Romans 1:18-32**, **Galatians 5:19-21**, and **I John 3:15**
- Since suicide is not lawful and/or murder is sinful, these are things a person cannot repent of seeing as how his or her life is ended. Sin, without confession, repentance, and conversion results in a person [Christian or not] being lost (**Luke 13:1-5**, **Acts 3:19**, etc.).
- The result of sin is clear (**Romans 6:23**, **I Corinthians 6:9-11**, and **James 1:13-16**).
- Judas took his own life (**Matthew 27:1-10**).
- In the account referenced by this older brother (**Acts 1:12-26**), he is focusing on partial wording in one verse (**Acts 1:25**). His is ignoring "iniquity" (**Acts 1:18**) and "by transgression fell" (**Acts 1:25**). What is going to happen to workers of iniquity (**Proverbs 21:15** and **Matthew 7:21-23**)? What will happen to those who fall by transgression (**Hebrews 2:1-3**)? Plainly: "*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son*" (**II John 1:9**).
- He is "beginning" to think... An error from **John 14:1-3**. We have to stop him from thinking like this. We have to stop him from trying to sneak his brother into Heaven [in his mind] in some twist of Scripture (**II Peter 3:15-17**).
- There is not a such thing as a person's time being cut too short. The thinking is wholly unscriptural (**Ecclesiastes 9:11-12**, **Proverbs 27:1**, and **James 4:13-16**).
- Every day is to be lived as our last day (**Matthew 24:35-25:46** and **I Thessalonians 5:1-10**).