

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

### **The Erring Widow**

#### **Scenario:**

There is a woman who obeyed the Gospel many years ago. She was, without a doubt, a Christian. However, she is erring in many ways. She is part of an apostate congregation. Efforts have been made by her family and others to bring her out of apostasy. Those efforts have not worked. She believes that she is faithful. She is a widow. She has only been married to one man. She has reached a point in time wherein she cannot care for herself. She needs financial help as well as physical care. Her children are spiritually divided. One of her children is faithful to God in all ways. Her other children are in the same position she is. They are in error, but believe their own ways to be the right ways. They too have refused correction.

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

One of this widow's children calls for a family meeting to discuss how to care for her. The one who is faithful to God says this: "I cannot be part of this meeting. I have withdrawn myself from you and her. If you want to discuss the error of your ways, we can talk about that. Aside from that, please do not contact me again."

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

The children that are in error write a letter to the faithful child. In that letter, they argue this: "The Bible says if any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them. The Bible also says honour thy father and mother. You say you are right and we are wrong, but you are refusing to help our mother. Why would we ever listen to anything you have to say. You are willing to allow our mother to starve to death instead of helping her. You are using the Bible to excuse yourself from what the Bible says you must do."

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

- Seeing how there is no question that this woman was once a Christian, we need to cover what sin not repented of does to a Christian. A person can obey the Gospel, be a Christian, err, and then fall away from the faith (**Luke 8:13, Acts 8:12-24, I Corinthians 9:24-27, I Corinthians 10:12, I Timothy 4:1, Hebrews 3:12-13, Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:26-31; 10:38, and Revelation 22:18-19**). If he or she does not repent, the consequences are clear (**Luke 13:1-5**).
- An apostate congregation is like an apostate individual. That whole congregation has to repent (**Revelation 2:1-7**).
- Falling away can even occur when they are doing "religious things" actually found in the Scriptures (**Galatians 1:1-9, Galatians 3:1, and Galatians 5:4-9**).
- If a person errs, and the situation warrants such, efforts should be made to restore that person (**Galatians 6:1-2 and James 5:19-20**).

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- Before we get into this, let's be reminded that of our Lord's view of who family is for His faithful followers (**Mark 3:31-35**). When our family members decide to obey the Gospel of Christ, our relationship with them should and must change. Consider a study from 2017 on this: <https://www.wordsoftruth.net/wotvol17/wotbulletin09102017.html>
- She believes she is faithful to God. One's "belief" that he or she is right in the sight of God means nothing (**Proverbs 14:12, Proverbs 16:2, Proverbs 16:25, Matthew 7:13-23, Luke 18:11-14, and Galatians 6:3**).
- She is a widow. The language of the scenario draws a Christian's mind to texts about aiding widows (i.e. **I Timothy 5:3-16** and **James 1:21-27**). It should be noted that a widow indeed is well-reported of good works and following every good work (**I Timothy 5:10**).
- When thinking about an older woman not being able to care for herself, my emotions get charged. Before emotions get involved, and we would act on them, we need to remind ourselves that someone who rejects the truth is headed for far worse than what anyone could face on this earth at the hands of the Lord (**Matthew 25:31-46, John 12:48, II Thessalonians 1:8-9, and Hebrews 12:25-29**; cf. **Mark 9:42-48** and **Revelation 21:8**).
- Another point to consider is that God is not hearing this widow's pleas (**Proverbs 15:29, Proverbs 28:9, John 9:31, and I Peter 3:12**). Why does this matter point matter (**Ephesians 5:1-2**)?
- In fact, God's viewpoint is what the world would consider harsh (**Proverbs 1:22-32, Isaiah 1:19-20, and Hebrews 2:1-4**; cf. **Acts 17:30**).
- This widow is going to have to reap what she has sown (**Job 4:8, Job 34:11, Proverbs 12:14, Proverbs 14:14, Proverbs 22:8, Proverbs 24:12, Isaiah 3:10-11, Jeremiah 2:19, Jeremiah 4:16-18, Jeremiah 32:19, Ezekiel 22:31, Hosea 7:2, Hosea 8:7, Hosea 10:12-13, John 5:28-29, II Corinthians 5:10, and Galatians 6:7-9**).
- This widow having known the truth and turned aside from it, she has to face what that means from God (**II Peter 2:18-22**).
- The division in the family is not uncommon. In fact, it is in accordance with the will of the Lord in such a scenario (**Matthew 10:34-39**). Situational ethics cannot arise wherein this situation would cause them to practice the error of unity in diversity (**Amos 3:3, I Corinthians 1:10, Philippians 2:2, Philippians 3:16, and II John 1:6-11**).
- The statement that arises from our scenario, from the faithful one, is nearly spot on. Regardless of the age or sex of a person, a Christian who has erred and has refused correction is to be withdrawn from. That includes social interactions as well. That is the pattern of teaching we see in the New Testament (**I Corinthians 5:1-13, I Timothy 6:3-5, II Timothy 3:1-5, Titus 3:9-11, II John 1:9-11, and Revelation 2:12-16**).
- Though it doesn't apply to the description in this scenario, we should understand this would even apply to personal matters that escalate into congregational discipline (**Matthew 18:15-35 and Luke 17:3-4**).
- If a person or persons has been withdrawn from, the ONLY discussion we should have with that person or persons is to admonish them (**II Thessalonians 3:6-15**).

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- Having said all of that, and let's proceed carefully with the following points. What is meant by they have refused correction? How has that gone? It may be in this situation that there should be no further discussions. The divisive person, and/or the heretic [schismatic, factious, a follower of a false doctrine] is to be rejected and avoided after proper measures have been taken (**Romans 16:17-18** and **Titus 3:9-11**).
- When it comes to teaching in general, once the Gospel is rejected by someone, we are not supposed to keep trying indefinitely (**Matthew 7:6** and **Matthew 10:6-15**). Therefore, the person who is faithful in this scenario shouldn't even attempt to answer the twisted Scriptures presented to them (**II Timothy 2:23**).
- In the later statement, a reference is made to **I Timothy 5:16**. Just for the sake of study, the context is talking about "widows indeed" (vs. 3). Read the whole context, multiple times, and you will find NOTHING said about aiding widows who have erred from the faith (**I Timothy 5:1-16**).
- Also in the later statement, a reference was made to **Ephesians 6:2**. Can you read **Matthew 12:46-50** and think the application being made to that passage is correct? Can you read **Matthew 10:34-37**, **Luke 14:25-33**, and like passages and think that the application being sought from **Ephesians 6:2** is correct? Fellowship matters (**Ephesians 5:11**). Aiding a person who is a Christian financially is spiritual fellowship (**II Corinthians 8:4, 9:13**). \*The word translated in the KJV in vs. 13 as "distribution" means "fellowship" (Strong's # 2842) and is only meant to be had amongst faithful Christians (**II Corinthians 6:14-7:1**).
- It matters that we understand that there is no authority from God, in the New Testament, for us to aid saints who have fallen from the faith and refuse to be restored. That matters. Every good work is revealed in the Scriptures (**II Timothy 3:14-17**). We need authority for all that we say and do (**Colossians 3:16-17**, **Ephesians 5:10**, **I Thessalonians 4:1-2**, **I Thessalonians 5:21**, **II Timothy 1:13**, **I John 2:3-6**, etc.). I cannot find one instruction that teaches us that it is right in the sight of God to support an apostate widow.
- The emotional appeal at the end of this should not move faithful saints from what is right. If BRETHREN refuse to do what God expects of them starvation is a just result (i.e. **II Thessalonians 3:10**). That is even the case wherein you can find Scriptures that say we are to aid needy saints (**Romans 15:25-27** and **I John 3:14-18**). A person cannot reject the faith and then seek to reap the benefits of being in the faith.
- Unfortunately, we as faithful saints will find ourselves in situations like these. They are heart-wrenching and difficult. As much as we want someone to be saved and are hurt that they are not, all we can do is sorrow over it if they refuse (**Romans 9:1-3**). For someone to charge a faithful Christian who withdraws from his or her mother in a way that states or implies a lack of love, that person is charging God with the same (**Revelation 3:19**)!
- For the faithful, there has to be that point wherein we love the Lord so much that those whom stand in opposition bring about a clear state of mind for us (**Psalms 101:3-4**, **Psalms 97:10**, **Psalms 119:104**, **Psalms 139:21**, **Romans 12:9**, and **Revelation 2:1-2; 2:6**).

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- If you were to act here and do that which is unlawful, consistency would demand you do so in other areas. Consider this, the Scriptures teach that evangelists are to be supported by Christians and local congregations (**I Corinthians 9:1-14**, **II Corinthians 11:8**, and **Philippians 4:11-18**). If erring widows can be supported, why not false teachers?