

Abstain From All Appearance Of Evil

I. Introduction:

- A. It is not possible to avoid all evil (**I Corinthians 5:9-13**).
 - 1. Yet, when it comes to what we participate in we have to be very cautious (i.e. **Ephesians 5:6-11**).
 - 2. We cannot partake in sin (**I Timothy 5:22**).
- B. Having said that, the very work Christ expects from us demands that we will be in environments wherein sin is present (**Philippians 2:14-16**).
 - 1. Jesus was separate from sinners (**Hebrews 7:22-26**).
 - 2. Yet, not altogether separate in every way (**Luke 15:1-32**).
 - 3. Inasmuch that there was a continual allegation levied at Him (**Matthew 11:16-19**).
 - 4. However, He was sinless in and through all of that (**I Peter 2:21-22**).

II. Body: So, How Do We Follow **I Thessalonians 5:22**?

- A. Looking at the terms and context: If something looks evil, opposed to good, refrain from it.
 - 1. Abstain: “to hold oneself off, i.e. refrain: — abstain” (Strong’s # 567). I.E. **Acts 15:20, Acts 15:29, I Thessalonians 4:3, I Timothy 4:3, and I Peter 2:11**).
 - 2. All: “all, any, every, the whole...” (Strong’s # 3956). “Every” (**James 1:17**).
 - 3. Appearance: “a view, i.e. form (literally or figuratively): — appearance, fashion, shape, sight. The external or outward appearance, form figure, shape, form, kind” (Strong’s # 1491). I.E. **Luke 3:22** [shape], **Luke 9:29** [fashion], **John 5:37** [shape], and **II Corinthians 5:7** [sight].
 - 4. Evil: “evil (properly, in effect or influence, and thus differing from 2556, which refers rather to essential character, as well as from 4550, which indicates degeneracy from original virtue); figuratively, calamitous; also (passively) ill, i.e. diseased; but especially (morally) culpable, i.e. derelict, vicious, facinorous; neuter (singular) mischief, malice, or (plural) guilt; masculine (singular) the devil, or (plural) sinners: — bad, evil, grievous, harm, lewd, malicious, wicked(-ness)” (Strong’s # 4190). I.E. **Luke 6:45, Romans 12:9, I John 3:12** [wicked one] etc.
 - 5. The previous verse: “*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good*” (**I Thessalonians 5:21**), shows that this passage is about holding to good and avoiding things that even appear evil.
 - 6. If taken completely and strictly literal without exception, where could you go in this world (**I John 5:19**)?
 - 7. Obviously, the conclusion, without exception, is not the right conclusion (**Mark 2:13-17**).

B. Finding the balance...

1. How could Jesus repeatedly keep company with sinners and not be violating the premise of His own law? Well, He was teaching (**Matthew 18:11** and **I Timothy 1:15**)?
2. Does that mean the only time(s) we can be in the company or environment that includes sin/sinners is if we are teaching them? No, there are exceptions (**John 2:1-2**, **I Corinthians 7:12-13**, **I Corinthians 10:23-33**, etc.).
3. We have to consider the impact of our environment and the company we keep on our faithfulness (**I Corinthians 15:33**).
4. Like most things, this all can vary by the individual. The ultimate picture of abstaining from the appearance of evil is similar to that of living above reproach (**I Peter 2:5-4:19**).

C. How might this subject matter be affected by one's conscience (**Romans 14:14**)?

1. The weaker conscience might be more restrictive (**I Corinthians 8:1-8**).
2. The differences that there can be (**Titus 1:15**).
3. If I am strong and I can say or do something, what impact could my actions have on someone not so strong that may follow my lead (**Romans 14:21** and **I Corinthians 8:9-13**)?

D. Keeping the question of authority at the forefront of our minds is helpful (**Colossians 3:16-17** and **I Thessalonians 4:1-2**).

1. Should I go here and do this or that (**Proverbs 4:14-16**)?
2. Why do I want to go here and do this or that (**Galatians 5:17**)?
3. My motives need challenged - Am I pleasing God by having this motive or that motive (**I Corinthians 14:20**)?

III. Conclusion: Look, even the principle of **I Thessalonians 5:22** existed under the old law (**Exodus 23:7** and **Isaiah 33:15-16**).