

Avoid the Appearance of Evil

If we are going to have victory over the flesh and sin, we need to stop acting tough around sin and temptation. We need to flee and start avoiding the appearance of evil. Some people try to show how strong they think they are by going as close as they can with sin. This is foolish and is the very opposite of God's will and instructions to us. Playing strong is simply setting ourselves up for failure.

We live in a world where people are no longer shy nor ashamed of evil and sin. They publicly do the despicable on live TV such as late-night shows while many are busy clapping. What has happened to the shyness of evil? Our societies through the fear of God used to be shy about sin and evil. Adultery and many other ungodly behaviors were never celebrated but shunned. Today, these people pay big money for sin and the promotion of evil. We should be shunning evil not embracing it.

I remember a guy in Uganda who was celebrated for having sex live on TV. People came out on the streets and were celebrating a "hero", yet he was a zero with the rim knocked off.

Sin and evil are not smart. They are detrimental to our lives.

- Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Those who believe otherwise are nothing else but deceived. Sin and evil have destroyed lives, families, marriages, jobs, societies, countries, relationships and so forth.

One reason we fall to sin is because we neglect all the warning signs and refuse to stay away or depart from all appearances of evil. This teaching is designed to awaken and arouse the departure from the appearance of all evil or removing the appearance of it from ourselves.

We should make all efforts to avoid evil. We should foresee it and hide (Proverbs 22:3). Our natural tendency is not to depart, abstain or flee from evil. It takes effort, and it must be done deliberately.

1 Thessalonians 5:20-22 "Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil."

In these verses, Paul had spoken about not despising prophesying. He qualifies that by saying that as much as we should not be despising prophesyings, we should not blindly accept all and everything. We should not be gullible. We should not be just accepting anything because it is a prophecy, but we should prove all things. We need to discern all things. Examine all things and hold on to what is good.

a) Prove all things

- i) We must put everything to the test of the Word to know and weed out what is evil and retain that which is good. Examine all things carefully.
- ii) This is not talking about going out there and try all sin and evil to know if it is evil. That would be dumb. This is referring to discerning and proving what is good based on the Word of God.
- iii) Again, this is not advocating testing or trying out evil things to see if they are good. It is already clear that they are evil. These verses are not telling us to participate.

b) Hold fast that which is good.

- i) Hold fast is to retain, to keep, to hold on to (Not let go). Many people are holding fast on that which is evil, bad or ungodly. This verse teaches differently.

c) Abstain

- i) It means to refrain, hold oneself off (Strong's Concordance). It is staying away, keeping away, turning away, but mainly to run away from or to flee from (1 Corinthians 6:8 and 1 Thessalonians 4:4:3)
- ii) If we can take steps to avoid all kinds, forms, and appearance of evil, we can abstain from it.

- Avoiding is key to refraining. We can't successfully and continuously refrain from what we do not avoid.
 - This is a choice you have to make. No one can make it for you. We have to abstain from evil and all the appearances of it.
- iii) We can't overcome what we are **continually exposed to**.
- There must come a time when we separate ourselves from certain things to have a continual victory and build a momentum of success.
- iv) We need to create an environment that will enable us to live out our victory and minimize temptation.
- d) All (any, every, whole)
- i) This is not talking about avoiding or abstaining from *some forms* of evil but **ALL**. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, He empowers to avoid the appearance of all evil.
- e) Appearance of evil.
- i) This is talking about any view, form, kind. Have nothing to do with evil.
- ii) **Evil has an appearance.** Once we see that appearance, we need to start separating ourselves from it. Sometimes evil is veiled, but once we see anything that looks like it, we better separate ourselves lest we are led into it.
- iii) We are to abstain not just from **evil**—but from the **appearance** of all evil.
- iv) If we will truly avoid the appearance of evil, we must prove all things through and by the Word of God. Anything that does not pass the litmus test of the Word of God must be trashed and shredded.
- v) Proverbs 22:3 and 27:12 *“A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.”*

- We can foresee evil. Evil doesn't just occur. It can be foreseen by the prudent. It has an appearance that we can see.
- We need to flee from the appearance of evil, not evil itself. If we want to flee from evil itself, but do not flee from its appearance, we have been deceived.

How can we avoid evil and all its appearances?

A. Enter not, Go not, Avoid it, Pass not by it, Turn from it, and pass away.

Proverbs 4:14-15 Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

- a) **Enter not** into the path of the wicked
 - b) **Go not** in the way of the evil men
 - c) **Avoid it**- Dismiss it
 - d) **Pass not** by it
 - e) **Turn from it**: Deviate, do not go near.
 - f) **Pass away**: - Stay away.
- i) This passage of scripture said the same thing in multiple ways repeatedly so that we do not miss it. Which part of this verse do we not understand?
 - ii) This verse is instructing us not to **enter into the path of the wicked, nor go in the way of evil men.**
 - We are instructed to avoid it like a plague. We should endeavor not to even pass close to it, **but rather turn from it and go a different direction.**
 - iii) If we do not heed these instructions, we will **fall prey** to these very things that we are being advised and given wisdom against.

B. Remove thy Way

Proverbs 5:8-14 "Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: Lest thou give thine honor unto others, and thy years unto the cruel: Lest strangers be filled with

thy wealth; and thy labors be in the house of a stranger; And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.”

a) We should not flirt with sin. That is not removing ourselves from it. Toying with sin is not a good idea. Those who toy and flirt with it will fall to it soon or later.

i) We will get burnt. Proverbs 6:27-28.

ii) Sin is not for entertainment. We Should not entertain ourselves with sin and ungodly stuff.

We need to turn off and refute all this junk and garbage. Our heads ad hearts are not garbage cans. We should not allow garbage dumping.

b) A little leaven leavens the whole lump. (Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 1 Corinthians 5:6) and (A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Galatians 5:9)

c) **Do not put yourself in compromising and tempting situations—Remove yourself.**

C. From such turn away

Sometimes avoiding the appearance of evil is synonymous to avoiding people that could seduce us into evil ways. We are instructed to avoid them and turn away.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”

a) Turn away: - Avoid, keep away, stay clear.

b) Romans 16:17 “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”

- c) 1 Corinthians 5:9 “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:”
- d) Act 15:1, 5 “And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”
- e) 2 Timothy 3:5 “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”
- f) 1 Corinthians 15:33 “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”
- g) 2 Corinthians 6:14 “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”

D. Behave wisely—Set no wicked thing before your eyes.

Psalm 101:2-4 “I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.”

- a) Rather than behaving himself foolishly, David purposed to behave himself wisely. This was a decision he had to make.
- b) “*Perfect*” comes from a Hebrew word that means *entire, integrity, truth*.
 - i) David made a decision to behave himself in a godly manner with integrity and truth, without blemish, complete, sincerely, sound, upright.
- c) This can be achieved by removing wicked and ungodly things before him, hatred of the ways of the wicked, a forward heart, and not knowing the wicked.
 - i) Some people attempt to learn and know the wicked and ungodly things, not David!

- ii) He made a decision not to know nor gain knowledge of evil and wickedness.
- d) We should have nothing to do with evil—and its appearance.
- e) “*Set*” means to “place” David was saying that he was not going to *place* or put anything wicked before his eyes.

E. What do we think upon? —Watch your thoughts!

- a) Philippians 4:8 “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.
- b) Job 31:1 I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?
 - i) Notice that “eyes” and “think” are used interchangeably. This shows that what we look at we will think upon. This underscores the reason we should not put any wicked thing before our eyes (Psalms 101:2-4). We can't be tempted on things we don't think upon.
 - We need to be careful not to allow evil and its appearance to creep in through what we watch and finally our thoughts.
 - ii) Proverbs 23:6-7 Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.
 - Our life and actions will go in the direction of what we think upon specifically in the direction of our predominant thought.
 - To control our actions, we must control what we hear, see and finally what we think upon.

F. Be ye separate

2 Corinthians 6:14-17 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darknes? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

- a) This is not talking about **isolation but separation** and removing ourselves from the ungodly and the appearance of all sins. There is an enormous difference!
- b) Come out from among them.

G. Make no provision for the flesh

Romans 13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfill* the lusts thereof.

- a) The word "*provision*" means "*forethought*". It is through *forethought* that we supply the flesh to fulfill its desires.
- b) For the flesh to fulfill its lust, it has to be **fed and provided** for. If we do not feed it or provide for it, we will not fulfill its lust.
- c) This further underscores the importance of avoiding and fleeing all appearance, shape, or form of evil.
 - i) We need to watch for what we expose ourselves to lest we make provision for the flesh.

H. Deny ungodliness and live a godly life.

Titus 2:11-14 "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, **denying ungodliness and worldly lusts**, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Emphasis mine)

- a) If we do not deny (*contradict, reject and disavow, abnegate*) this ungodliness and worldly lust, we can't live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.
- b) Denying (*contradict, reject and disavow, abnegate*) this ungodliness helps us to remove all appearance of evil. We should not accept it.
 - ii) Denying ungodliness is also a way of abstaining from all appearances of evil.
- c) Notice that God wants us to live godly and righteous in this PRESENT WORLD! Not just the world to come.
 - iii) One of the best ways to live godly in this present world is by abstaining from the appearance of all evil.

I. Watch out for the ungodly

Psalm 1:1-3 "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

- a) Walk not in the counsel of the ungodly.
 - i) One way we can avoid the counsel of the ungodly, standing not in the way of sinners and not joining with sinners in their pursuits, and sit not in the seat of the scornful (proud people) is by avoiding and abstaining from the appearance of evil.
 - ii) The counsel of the ungodly refers to the wisdom of this world that is opposed and is contrary to the Word of God. It is the opinions, ideas, advice and consultations of the world.
- b) We should have our delight in the Word of God instead of the things and counsel of this world.

J. Purify yourself.

1 John 3:3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

- a) Which hope? The hope of seeing Him as He is (Verse 2).
- b) The word "*Purifieth*" here means to Sanctify (make clean—Strong's Concordance) which literally means to separate oneself from sin unto God.
 - i) When we sanctify (separate) ourselves, we are abstaining from the appearance of all evil.
 - ii) This purification is referring to our soulish man. Our spirit man is already purified, perfected forever, and sanctified (1 Corinthians 1:30; Hebrews 10:14).
- c) Who is pure?
 - i) Jesus is pure
 - ii) Our Spirit man is also pure.

K. Not conforming to this world.

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

- a) One way to avoid the appearance of evil is not to be conformed or fashion ourselves alike as this world, it's systems and way of life. One of the primary ways we do that is by taking heed to the word of God and renewing our minds through it.
- b) The other way is by presenting your bodies a living sacrifice

L. Set boundaries:

- a) As a leader or pastor set boundaries for yourself so you do not fall or compromise!
 - i) A lack of boundaries is one reason for F3—**fall, faint, and fail (F3)**.

- b) We must establish boundaries within our personal life and ministry that would ensure our longevity.
 - i) We need to take serious necessary preventive measures to avoid the traps of success. Success or failure in ministry comes down to heart issues.
- c) Your associations are one of the most important choices you will ever make.
- d) Build godly relationships. Relationships will get you where God wants you to go.

M. Guard your heart and mind

- a) There are certain things I won't do, places I won't go, and people I wouldn't have as close friends.
- b) Excuse yourself from things that compromise your godly values.
- c) The devil will try to lay a trap for you. Be sensitive to the Lord's leading.
- d) God has been good to me; how then can I do such a terrible thing and sin against my God (*Genesis 39:9*). I'm not doing it. I'm not sinning.
- e) You don't have to do something ungodly because it's legal.
- f) Have a good attitude/ Excellent Spirit.