

ABSTINENCE FROM EVIL

1 Thessalonians 5:22

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INTRODUCTION

Christians are called out of the evil world, the power of darkness, into the kingdom of Christ, light, holiness or righteousness, to do good or live righteously always like our Master Jesus Christ (**2 Thessalonians 2:14; Colossians 1:13; Acts 10:38; 1 Peter 2:9b, 22**).

They are therefore expected to be zealous for good works as the word of God equips and enables them to do so (**Titus 2:14; 2 Timothy 3:16-17**).

In Paul's epistle to the church at Thessalonica, the Holy Spirit instructed all Christians to prove all things, hold fast to that which is good and abstain from all appearance of evil so as to be able to achieve the purpose of their calling in Christ (**1 Thessalonians 5:21-22; 1 Peter 2:9b; 1 Peter 1:15**).

DEFINITION

Let's define abstinence and evil.

Merriam Webster's Dictionary defines *abstinence* as the practice of not doing or having something that is wanted or enjoyable, the practice of abstaining from something.

The Greek word **anesru** denotes *to hold oneself from, to abstain or keep away from*, (**Acts 15:20, 29; 1 Thessalonians 4:3**).

Evil means morally bad, causing harm or injury to someone, morally reprehensive, sinful, wicked [Merriam Webster's Dictionary].

The Greek word *kakos* for bad is also translated evil in **Mark 7:21, 1 Corinthians 15:33, 1 Timothy 6:10, 1 Peter 3:9** meaning bad, evil or sinful.

Thus, our topic is simply avoiding or refraining from any sinful act.

DISCUSSION

Christianity is about the lifestyle of Christ on earth which is devoid of **all** evil - **1 Peter 2:22**.

This lifestyle requires that all Christians must avoid anything that will lead them to sin or anything that has a negative influence **semilarly** - all appearances of evil.

It is obvious that the lifestyle of sin is of the devil and for this cause we must have abstinence from evil.

Many factors influence abstinence from evil but we are going to discuss a few of them.

CHOICES

God created man as a free moral agent, with the freedom to make choice between good and bad (*life and death*) but He admonished man to choose good that it may be well with him - **Deuteronomy 30:19**.

So the choices we make affect abstinence from evil either positively or negatively.

Realistically speaking, having obeyed the gospel as Christians, we have made the choice of doing good or living righteously always and here the Holy Spirit is encouraging us to remain steadfast with that choice while which will lead us to life eternal (**Mark 16:16; Romans 6:1,2; Titus 2:14**).

CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD

Christians must be conscious that God knows and sees everything we think and do and that He rewards good deeds and punishes evil deeds severely (**Hebrews 4:13; Romans 11:22; Hebrews 12:29**).

This awareness brings about the fear of God that makes us to avoid evil (**Proverbs 16:6**).

THE HEART

The essence of the in heart in abstinence from evil cannot be overstressed for it is the center of our worship and relationship with God (**1 Samuel 16:7**;

Jeremiah 17:10;
Hebrews 4:12,
1 Corinthians 3:16).

The heart is said to think evil continually, deceitfully, desperately wicked and from it proceeds all kinds of evil (**Genesis 6:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21**).

Also, as a man thinks in his heart so he is (**Proverbs 23:7**).

Consequently, Christians must maintain and control the purified hearts they had at baptism in order to abstain from all appearances of evil (**Acts 2:38; Hebrews 10:22; Revelation 2:23**).

VALUE FOR INTEGRITY

The value one places on Christian integrity influences his or her being involved in an evil activity.

If I do this evil, what value will it add to me, my family and the church?

If we have high value for Christian integrity as salt and light of the world, we will abstain from every evil deed [**Matthew 5:13-16;**

Eph. 5:8-11 - *For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them].*

SOCIETAL VALUE FOR MORALITY

The company we keep and the society we live in, affect abstinence from evil.

If any society or association has little or no value for morality or doing good, abstinence from evil will be affected negatively (**Proverbs 14:34; 1 Corinthians 15:33**).

In such a situation, Christians must hold on strongly to doing good and avoid evil companionship not allowing societal decadence to prevent them from avoiding evil (**Ephesians 6:19; James 4:7; Revelation 2:13**).

EXAMPLES OF BIBLICAL ABSTINENCE FROM EVIL

King David sinned, repented genuinely and abstained from evil **[Psalm 51]**.

Joseph abstained from the evil of fornication **[Genesis 39:7-12]**.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego avoided the evil of worshipping idols or other gods **(Daniel 3:17-19)**.

Jesus **(Luke 23:34)**, Stephen **[Acts 7:60]** abstained from evil at the point of death.

CONCLUSION

Brethren, there are so many factors that are militating against abstinence from evil.

If we have faith firmly in the Father through Christ and with the Holy Spirit in us, we will certainly be able to abstain from all appearances of evil for with God all things are possible **(Matthew 17:20; 19:26; Luke 1:37)**.