

FLEE THE APPEARANCE OF EVIL 2-26-25

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In the last chapter of first Thessalonians Paul instructs us about a few line items. He mentions to rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, don't quench the spirit, and don't despise prophesying, prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. But then he comes to this last point of advice: "*Abstain from all appearance of evil*" (1 Thess. 5:16-22).

Now this is an important consideration. Especially, since we live in such an evil time and are surrounded by so much nefarious activity. This Greek word translated into "abstain" means to hold oneself off, to refrain, be distant, or to keep yourself away. Clearly, Paul is telling us to keep your distance and stay away from anything that "looks" (the appearance) like evil. Now why do you think this would be important to a "Christian" person?

To answer this question is to know your purpose as a Christian. For some of us, this is a hard thing to do because we don't take our "*Christian purpose*" seriously. Consider Paul's perspective on what it means to be a Christian. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). Grasping this concept is *vital to our motivation* as Christians. If we understand the gravity of what it means to be an "ambassador for Christ," then, and only then, can we appreciate "he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Do we even know what that means? The scope of this relationship we have—that He should take on our sin so that we may acquire the righteousness of God through Him—is *amazingly awesome* and hard to wrap our minds around the *enormous value* of this blessing. Clearly, knowing this responsibility—that of representing this Being here, on earth, in this present time of our lives—should present all of us that claim the name of Jesus Christ as our Savior, inspiration to protect the image we portray in our attitudes and lifestyles.

Undoubtably, this is exactly what Paul was getting at. His focus on "*protecting*" the *reputation of Jesus Christ*, obviously concerns itself with how we, who claimed to be followers of Him, would display the kind of behavior and/or lifestyle that would appropriately reflect His values, standards, and attributes. This is why Paul appealed to stay away from, distance yourself from, or abstain from even the (Grk) "eidos"—the look, fashion, sight, or shape of evil. To just be connected with the *appearance of evil* was unacceptable, as far as Paul was concerned!

So, how does this apply to the 21st century Christian? What is it we should be aware of so we don't get caught up in something that could be disparaging to the ambassadorship we represent?

As an example, former President Biden granted pardons to his siblings, spouses and his son going back to 2014. Why, we may ask? The very nature of an action like this implies there was "evil" involved, otherwise, what is the purpose of the insurance of a pardon? Especially, since there has been no formal charge of any wrong doing?

However, the House Oversight Committee has produced documents with Bank memoranda, outlining payments to the Biden family from foreign entities such as Romania, China, Ukraine

and Russia that totaled some \$20 million dollars. This is unacceptable **“if”** our leaders are using their public service office to enrich themselves.

And that’s the problem, because we just don’t know. It *“appears”* there could be evil here by the circumstances that exist, due to the fact the Biden family has no expertise in the areas that allegedly they were being paid for, from these companies—other than positions of political influence. This is a perfect example of allowing yourself, *while in a position of trust*, to be involved with activity that *“appears”* to be suspect.

This example illustrates the bigger application of the appearance of *“compromise.”* As Christians, this is the risk we carry throughout our lives. We must “abstain,” stay away from, distance ourselves from the *appearance of compromise*. If we are viewed to be compromised we run the risk of *forfeiting the trust* with those we love, work with, and/or depend on. And therein lies, or at least should be, the objective of every Christian—distance yourself from compromising situations, circumstances, and conditions. Do your best to stay away from anything that might be viewed as disparaging the reputation of what Jesus Christ represents. And that would include fashion, piercings, marking our bodies, career opportunities, friendships—anything that may distract from, or be interpreted as risqué, and discredit, or depreciate and defame *“Christ in us.”* These are some of the things to watch out for!

Another perfect example of fleeing the “appearance” of evil was the way Joseph handled Mary after he realized she was pregnant (with Jesus), while espoused to him. He was a just and good man and was concerned about Mary’s reputation—he wanted to protect her from any ridicule, criticism, and perhaps even death, for committing, what he thought to be, a sexual impropriety. He knew this *“appeared”* to be an evil act, until of course, he was set straight by the angel that explained to him in a dream, just what was really going on (Matt. 1:18-25).

Yes, when considering abstaining from the appearance of evil, we should also keep in mind the reputations of those that may be affected by the event we involve them in as well. Especially, when considering women and children. In the ministry we always recommend to have another person with a minister when counseling a women, child, or in some cases, an elderly person. For the protection of those involved, it’s important to keep everything **“above board and in the open”—transparent**—to *minimize and/or eliminate* any gossip, or unnecessary accusations that might give cause to rumors about those involved.

Yes, Paul’s advice about abstaining, distancing yourself from the appearance of evil, is **extremely good advice** for maintaining a healthy lifestyle, relationships, and environments at work, school, or at church. It protects us from many awkward situations and temptations that may just lead us to *compromising the values, standards, and character* of Christ in us (Col. 1:25-29). And that is something we need to protect ourselves from doing.

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