

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 Commentary

1Thessalonians 5:21 But **examine everything** carefully; **hold fast** to that **which** is **good** (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: **panta de dokimazete, (2PPAM) to kalon katechete, (2PPAM)**

Amplified: But test and prove all things [until you can recognize] what is good; [to that] hold fast. (Amplified Bible - Lockman)

Barclay: Test everything, hold fast to the fine thing. (Westminster Press)

NLT: but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. (NLT - Tyndale House)

Phillips: By all means use your judgement, and hold on to whatever is really good (Phillips: Touchstone)

Wuest: but be putting all things to the test for the purpose of approving them, and finding that they meet the requirements, put your approval upon them. Be constantly holding fast that which is good. (Eerdmans)

Young's Literal: all things prove; that which is good hold fast;

BUT EXAMINE EVERYTHING: **panta de dokimazete (2PPAM):** (Isa 8:20; Mt 7:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20; Mk 7:14, 15, 16; Lk 12:57; Acts 17:11; Ro 12:2; 1Co 2:11,14,15; 14:28; Eph 5:10; Php 1:10;; 1Jn 4:1; Re 2:2)

Young's Literal preserves the original Greek word order...

all things prove; that which is good hold fast

But (de) introduces a contrasting command which serves to counterbalance the preceding injunctions.

As **Hiebert** says...

The missionaries are not advocating credulity toward all that claim to be a message from the Spirit. They need to realize that a false supernatural report may mimic the true. "The simple fact of a supernatural inspiration is not enough to establish the claims of a spirit to be heard. There are inspirations from below as well as from above." (Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996)

Milligan comments that this...

the whole clause stands in a certain limiting relation to the foregoing precepts: important as 'gifts' and 'prophesyings' are, they cannot be accepted unhesitatingly, but must be put to the test (cf. 1 Jo. 4:1). Nothing is said as to how this *diakrisis pneumatou* (1 Cor. 12:10, 14:29) is to be effected, but it can only be by a 'spiritual' standard (cf. 1 Cor. 2:13) (St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians. 1908. London: Macmillan and Co., limited)

Everything (pas) in context refers primarily to the **prophetic utterances** just mentioned. On the other hand, this command clearly has a general application, extending in principle to all things that impact our spiritual life (which in fact is *everything!*).

Examine (1381)(**dokimazo** from **dokimos** = tested, proved or approved, tried as metals by fire and thus purified from **dechomai** = to accept, receive) means to assay, to test, to prove, to put to the test, to make a trial of, to verify, to discern to approve. It means to test in order to verify the character of something. John uses the same verb to inform his readers that they should put the content of prophetic speech to the test (see **1John 4** below).

Spiritual discernment is the ability to distinguish divine truth from error and half-truth, right from wrong or good from bad, an ability which is vital to assure a healthy Christian life. Test everything to see if it is the "real thing"... to see if it is authentic Christianity.

Examine is in the **present imperative** where the **present tense** denotes that the testing demanded is not an isolated action, but is rather to be the settled rule and continuing practice. Williams paraphrases it...

but continue to approve all things until you can approve them

Dokimazo involves not only testing but determining the genuineness or value of an event or object. That which has been tested is demonstrated to be genuine and trustworthy. **Dokimazo** was used in classic Greek to describe the assaying of precious metals (especially gold or silver coins), usually by fire, to prove the whether they were authentic and whether they measured up to the stated worth. That which endures the test was called **dokimos** and that which fails is called **adokimos**.

Dokimazo - 22x in 20v - Luke 12:56; 14:19; Rom 1:28; 2:18; 12:2; 14:22; 1 Cor 3:13; 11:28; 16:3; 2 Cor 8:8, 22; 13:5; Gal 6:4; Eph 5:10; Phil 1:10; 1 Thess 2:4; 5:21; 1 Tim 3:10; 1 Pet 1:7; 1 John 4:1. **NAS** = analyze(2), approve(3), approved(1), approves(1), examine(4), examines(1), prove(1), proving(1), see fit(1), test(2), tested(3), try(1), trying to learn(1).

C H Spurgeon adds a note of caution on the command to **examine everything carefully**...

"Oh," says a man "but you must prove all things." Yes, bo I will; but if one should set a joint of meat on his table, and it smell rather high, I would cut a slice, and if I put one bit of it in my mouth, and found it far gone, I should not feel it necessary to eat the whole round of beef to test its sweetness. Some people seem to think that they must read a bad book through; and they must go and hear a bad preacher often before they can be sure of his quality. Why, you can judge many teachings in five minutes. You say to yourself, "No, sir, no, no, no, this is good meat—for dogs. Let them have it, but it is not good meat for me, and I do not intend to poison myself with it." (Barbed Arrows from the Quiver of C. H. Spurgeon)

Dokimazo means to put to the test for the purpose of approving, and finding that the person tested meets the specifications prescribed, to put one's approval upon him. For example Paul writes that unregenerate mankind "did not **approve** (**dokimazo**) of having God in knowledge, God gave them up to a disapproved mind, to do the things not seemly." (Young's literal translation see **note** Romans 1:28) In this incredible verse fallen men presumptuously put God to the test for the purpose of approving Him to see He if He would meet the specifications which they laid down for a God who would be to their liking! But sinful man did not stop there, for finding that He did not meet their specifications, they refused to **approve** (**dokimazo**) Him as the God to be worshipped or have Him in its knowledge! They tested the infinitely precious God as they would a mere coin, and chose to turn aside from Him!

Dokimazo means to make a critical examination of something to determine its genuineness. **Dokimazo** was used in a manuscript of 140AD which contains a plea for the exemption of physicians, and especially of those who have **passed the examination** (**dokimazo**). **Dokimazo** was thus used as a technical expression referring to the action of an examining board putting its approval upon those who had successfully passed the examinations for the degree of Doctor of Medicine. **Dokimazo** was also used to describe the passing of a candidate as fit for election to public office.

On the basis of the truth in **Romans 1-11**, in **Romans 12:2** Paul charges believers to

"not be conformed (assuming an outward expression not reflective of Christ Who is really inside you) to this world (the beliefs, values, moral atmosphere, etc of this present evil age which is ruled by Satan), but be transformed (daily, continually be undergoing a metamorphosis or change in your outward appearance which manifests your new, inner redeemed nature) by the renewing (re-programming your mind, as the Spirit changes your thinking as you saturate your mind with Scripture allowing it to control and guide your steps) of your mind, that you **may prove** (**dokimazo**) what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." (see **note** Romans 12:2)

In a similar exhortation to the **Ephesians** who were formerly in spiritual darkness but now were light in the Lord, because of who they were in Christ, they should walk as children of light continually

trying to learn (**dokimazo** - continually putting every thought, word and deed to the test in order to prove) what is pleasing to the Lord (The one point of all moral investigation is, does it please God?). (see **note** Ephesians 5:10)

Walking in the light, in the Spirit (see note Galatians 5:16), according to the Word and the revealed will of God is a sure way to test and approve what pleases our Lord. To be sure Paul says that certain individuals in the body did have the special Spirit giftedness to allow them to discern the spirits (cf, 1Cor 12:10 "*the distinguishing of spirits*" - i.e., ability to distinguish between what came from the Holy Spirit, what was a satanic counterfeit, and/or what was simply of the flesh - not physical flesh but our sin nature). Nevertheless, it is clear that every saint has the responsibility and the ability (the indwelling Holy Spirit) to be discerning in all matters that affect their spiritual life.

MacDonald says that one way to **examine everything carefully** is to ask...

What does the Lord think about this? How does it appear in His presence? Every area of life comes under the searchlight (what a picture of "**dokimazo**")—conversation, standard of living, clothes, books, business, pleasures, entertainments, furniture, friendships, vacations, cars, and sports. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson or Logos](#))

Paul prays for the saints at **Philippi** (and a good model prayer for us today)

"that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that **you may**

approve (dokimazo) (continually like a "spiritual metallurgist" assaying the things in their lives that were of real value, as to discern that which was true and genuine) the things that are excellent (some things are good and others are better - the good is often the enemy of the best. Dokimazo speaks of investigating to determine which is the best), in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ." (see notes Philippians 1:9; 1:10)

Note that in context we are to sift and test **prophetic utterances**. **Dokimazo** conveys the idea of proving a thing whether it is worthy or not, whether genuine or not. In the present context all prophetic utterances need to be tested to avoid erroneous teaching or false doctrine from entering into the assembly.

In the church, one of the chief functions of the elders or overseers is to be continually...

holding fast (present tense = continually holding himself face to face as it were with the trustworthy Word of God!) the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. (see note Titus 1:9)

If you are an elder, you will be held accountable for whether or not you fulfilled this function and examined everything (every Sunday School teacher, every video series no matter whose ministry it is from, every seminar speaker, every Bible study, every song the worship leader holds forth as Scripturally sound and edifying, etc) carefully, for as Paul warned the Ephesian elders (truth practical to all elders) "savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. (Acts 20:29-20).

Holding fast the faithful word is vital if one is going to be equipped to test everything carefully!

Isaiah speaks to the importance of the plumbline of God's Word declaring...

To the law and to the testimony! (that is, the written Word of God, the only absolute and trustworthy standard which provides all the counsel and guidance we need) If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. (Isaiah 8:20)

John MacArthur writes that...

It is failure in the area of **holding fast the faithful word** that is largely responsible for the superficial, self-elevating preaching and teaching in many evangelical churches... the weak, shallow, insipid sermonettes for Christianettes" Here is the real villain that has led so many to be converted to what they consider relevancy and therefore to preach a pampering psychology or become standup comics, storytellers, clever speechmakers or entertainers who turn churches into what John Piper in his most excellent book [The Supremacy of God in Preaching](#) has called "the slapstick of evangelical worship" (Baker, 1990, p 21). Preaching and teaching are the primary responsibilities of elders. ([MacArthur. Titus: Moody Press](#))

Paul's point in his injunction to the Thessalonian church (the command to examine is plural) is for all the saints to exercise discernment. So also in our day, when "new" teachings are being proposed (even if they are popular and widely accepted by other churches), believers must continually test them to determine whether or not they have their origin in God and have as their chief goal to edify the body, make disciples like Christ and glorify God their Father. There is a caution needed here for this command does not mean we are to invoke rationalism (or pragmatism - the philosophical system that assumes that every truth or idea has practical consequences and that these practical consequences are a critical test of its truthfulness) as the criterion by which we test spiritual realities. Such reasoning might go something like this - "*If it 'works', it must be of God so let's adopt it into our church's programs*". In the arena of spiritual truth, mere intellectual acumen is simply not able to make this test. The corollary is that if we rely on our intellect to "discern" the spiritual efficacy or veracity of a new program or method (e.g., "*all the churches in California are doing it and their memberships are growing*") we are entertaining a prescription which will quite likely lead to spiritual frustration and give no supernatural sense of God's "seal of approval".

Howard Marshall (in the New Century Commentary) writes that...

It is spiritual discernment rather than intellectual sagacity that is required.

Hiebert adds that...

The Thessalonians are not told how this testing is to be effected, but dearly it must proceed upon a spiritual standard. The Bereans tested the apostolic teaching on the basis of its agreement with the Scriptures (Acts 17:11-note).

The Scriptures are our sole and sufficient criterion for the testing of all teachings that claim to have divine origin and authority. It is the function of the Holy Spirit to quicken the spiritual perception of the believer so

that he is enabled to detect spiritual error in the light of the Word of God (see John 14:26; 16:13; 1Jn 2:20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27).

The acuteness of the believer's spiritual perception is dependent upon the spirituality of his daily walk (2Pe 1:8, 9-note, 2Pe 1:10, 11-note). (Ibid)

Ray Stedman feels that in light of possible problems with prophetic utterances Paul adds another command to...

test it. It is easy to imitate this. Anyone can stand up and say in a deep tone of voice, "This is the word of the Lord." We must learn to test what is said from what has already been revealed. Paul commended the Bereans for this, saying they were more noble than those in Thessalonica because they

received the word with all readiness of heart and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so (Acts 17:11-note)

Test it, is what Paul is saying. F. F. Bruce says there was a saying attributed to Jesus that was often quoted by early Christian writers. It is not in the gospels, but it was a commonly attributed saying that urged, "become approved money-changers." The money-changers in the temple were occupied in changing various currencies and were constantly looking out for counterfeit coins. That is what Paul tells us to do about prophesying. People on every side are telling us what God wants us to do, but there is much that is counterfeit in that today. Become approved money-changers. Test what is said. ([Loving Christianly](#)) (Bolding added)

Barnes writes that the idea of **examine everything** is to...

Subject everything submitted to you to be believed to the proper test. The word here used (dokimazo) is one that is properly applicable to metals, referring to the art of the assayer by which the true nature and value of the metal is tested. See [1Cor 3:13]. This trial was usually made by fire.

The meaning here is, that they were carefully to examine everything proposed for their belief. They were not to receive it on trust; to take it on assertion; to believe it because it was urged with vehemence, zeal, or plausibility. In the various opinions and doctrines which were submitted to them for adoption, they were to apply the appropriate tests from reason and the word of God; and what they found to be true they were to embrace; what was false they were to reject.

Christianity does not require men to disregard their reason, or to be credulous. It does not expect them to believe anything because others say it is so. It does not make it a duty to receive as undoubted truth all that synods and councils have decreed; or all that is advanced by the ministers of religion. It is, more than any other form of religion, the friend of free inquiry, and would lead men everywhere to understand the reason of the opinions which they entertain. Cp. Ac 17:11,12; 1Pe 3:15-note. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

Calvin writes that...

As rash men and deceiving spirits frequently pass off their trifles under the name of prophecy, prophecy might by this means be rendered suspicious or even odious, just as many in the present day feel almost disgusted with the very name of preaching, as there are so many foolish and ignorant persons that from the pulpit blab out their worthless contrivances, while there are others, also, that are wicked and sacrilegious persons, who babble forth execrable blasphemies. ([1 Thessalonians 5](#))

Vine explains that...

While "discerning" or "proving" is itself a "spiritual gift," 1 Corinthians 12:10, all spiritual persons are responsible to form judgments on spiritual things, see note at v. 11, and for this provision is made in the "anointing from the Holy One" which is given to the children in the family of God, 1Jn 2:18, 20, 27, cp. 2Ti 2:7-note. Spiritual perception, however, like spiritual power, depends on the walk of the believer, the slothful and evildoers are blind, only the godly have discernment in the truth, Proverbs 28:5; Daniel 9:13; 2Pe 1:9-note. Moreover, the desire to be impressed, to have the feelings wrought upon, rather than to be instructed in the ways of the Lord, is a common snare to the saints, (see 2Ti 3:6, 7-note, 2Ti 4:3, 4-note).

The completed Scriptures, i.e., the Old Testament and New Testament, became later the sole and sufficient standard by which all teaching, oral or written, could be tested, but long before that time, believers and churches had multiplied widely. During the intervening period, in the case of revelations for the testing of which the Old Testament was not available, such as that referred to in Colossians 1:26 (note), e.g., believers were encouraged by the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, Jn 16:13, to compare utterances claiming to be

spiritual, 1Corinthians 2:13, and so to test the prophecy and the spirit that prompted it, 1Corinthians 14:29; 1John 4:6; Revelation 2:2 ([note](#)).

In early days a saying "**be ye tried money changers**" (which means "*accustom yourselves to distinguish between the true and false*" cp. Php 1:10-note, was commonly connected with these words (cp. 1Kings 3:9; Jer 15:19; He 5:14-note). (**Ed Note:** The phrase "be ye tried money changers" depicts a moneychanger testing the genuineness of a coin - remembering that the verb *dokimazo* means to test something to determine its authenticity). By some ancient writers this saying ("*be ye tried money changers*") was credited to the apostle Paul, by others to the Lord Himself but it does not occur in the New Testament. ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

James Denney adds that...

When the Apostle Paul claimed respect for the Christian preacher, he did not claim infallibility. That is plain from what follows, for all the words are connected. **Despise not prophesyings, but put all things to the test**, that is, all the contents of the prophesying, all the utterances of the Christian man whose spiritual ardour has urged him to speak.

We may remark in passing that this injunction prohibits all passive listening to the word. Many people prefer this. They come to church, not to be taught, not to exercise any faculty of discernment or testing at all, but to be impressed. They like to be played upon, and to have their feelings moved by a tender or vehement address; it is an easy way of coming into apparent contact with good. But the Apostle here counsels a different attitude. We are to put to the proof all that the preacher says...

No man is perfect, not the most devout and enthusiastic of Christians. In his most spiritual utterances something of himself will very naturally mingle; there will be chaff among the wheat; wood, hay, and stubble in the material he brings to build up the Church, as well as gold, silver, and precious stones. That is not a reason for refusing to listen; it is a reason for listening earnestly, conscientiously, and with much forbearance. There is a responsibility laid upon each of us, a responsibility laid upon the Christian conscience of every congregation and of the Church at large, to put prophesyings to the proof. Words that are spiritually unsound, that are out of tune with the revelation of God in Christ Jesus, ought to be discovered when they are spoken in the Church. No man with any idea of modesty, to say nothing of humility, could wish it otherwise. And here, again, we have to regret the quenching of the Spirit. We have all heard the sermon criticized when the preacher could not get the benefit; but have we often heard it spiritually judged, so that he, as well as those who listened to him, is edified, comforted, and encouraged? The preacher has as much need of the word as his hearers; if there is a service which God enables him to do for them, in enlightening their minds or fortifying their wills, there is a corresponding service when they can do for him. An open meeting, a liberty of prophesying, a gathering in which any one could speak as the Spirit gave him utterance, is one of the crying needs of the modern Church. ([1 Thessalonians 5 Commentary](#))

Two good tests to enable the exercise of spiritual discernment are

(1). Will it make you or others stumble? (Mk 9:42, 43, 45, 47; Lk 17:2)

(2) Will I be ashamed if Jesus should return? (1Jn 2:28, 1Jn 3:2-note, 1Jn 3:3-note, 1Jn 3:21; 4:17)

Clarke offers this suggestion...

Whatever in these prophesyings has a tendency to increase your faith, love, holiness, and usefulness, that receive and hold fast. (Clarke's Commentary: First Thessalonians)

Another way, and ultimately the best way, to test **prophetic utterances** is by comparing the utterances with the standard of previously given divine revelation, in the first century church the most readily available revelation being the Old Testament Scriptures. For example, Moses called for a similar "testing" writing to Israel that...

If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 "You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. 5 "But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which

the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you. (Deut. 13:1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Later **Moses** added that...

the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. (Deut 18:20)

John gave similar advice in the New Testament ...

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test** (same verb **dokimazo**, here in the aorist imperative = issued almost like a military command - do this now, don't delay, do it effectively) the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. (1John 4:1, 2, 3).

In **John's** gospel **Jesus** gave an excellent principle which will increase one's ability to discern truth from error...

"If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself. (**Comment:** A Spirit inspired willingness and enablement to carry out God's will is the first prerequisite to ascertaining God's leading in some matter or the truth about some doctrinal question).

Matthew Henry adds that...

Corrupt affections indulged in the heart, and evil practices allowed in the life, will greatly tend to promote fatal errors in the mind; whereas purity of heart, and integrity of life, will dispose men to receive the truth in the love of it.

In short, believers should retain everything that passes the test of Scripture. And what does not pass the test is to be rejected along with all other kinds of evil.

About fifty years after Paul's letter, in one of the writings of apostolic fathers the Didache (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) instructed the church to evaluate the character of those who put themselves forward as prophets within the church writing that...

not everyone who speaks in a spirit is a prophet, except he have the behavior of the Lord (Did. 11.8 and vv. 9-12).

In another place in Didache we read

My child, flee from evil of every kind, and from everything resembling it. (Didache 3.1)

The charge to **examine... carefully** both the character and content of prophetic utterances resonates in the stern warning by Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount...

Beware (**present imperative** = continually guard against) of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits. (See **notes** Matthew 7:15; 16; 17; 18; 19; 20)

Ben Patterson wrote that

The American Banking Association once sponsored a two-week training program to help tellers detect counterfeit bills. The program was unique--never during the two-week training did the tellers even look at a counterfeit bill, not did they listen to any lectures concerning the characteristics of counterfeit bills... All they did for two weeks was handle authentic currency, hour after hour and day after day, until they were so familiar with the true that they could not possibly be fooled by the false." (Ben Patterson, Waiting: InterVarsity Press, 1989)

**To avoid being pulled into error,
keep a firm grip on the truth.**

Application: Today we have a veritable plethora of "Christianized" literature and music and Paul would echo Jesus' words that we

be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves (Mt 10:16), that we be like Bereans (Acts 17:11-note) who daily went to the Scriptures to check out whether Paul was proclaiming Truth! Why is this so critical in these last days when even Christianity has for most part succumbed to the deceptive, numbing, dumbing down intoxications of this futile world system which is passing away? Because ONLY God's pure unadulterated Truth will achieve eternal results (cp Acts 17:12, Col 1:5-note, Col 1:6-note; 1Pe 1:23; 24-note Jn 17:17).

HOLD FAST TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD: to kalon katechete (2PPAM): (Deuteronomy 11:6, 7, 8, 9; 32:46,47; Pr 3:1,21, 22, 23, 24; 4:13; 6:21, 22, 23; 23:23; Song 3:4; Jn 8:31; 15:4; Acts 11:23; 14:22; Ro 12:9; 1Co 15:58; Php 3:16; 4:8; 2Th 2:15; 2Ti 1:15; 3:6; 4:14; He 10:23; Re 2:25; 3:3,11)

**To avoid being pulled into error
Keep a firm grip on the truth**

Hold fast (2722)(**katecho** from **katá** = intensifies or gives added force to the compound verb; **kata** also means "down" + **écho** = have, hold) means to hold firmly, to hold fast or to hold down (to suppress). **Katecho** means to hold so as to avoid relinquishing something.

Hold fast is in the **present imperative** where the **present tense** denotes that the holding fast Paul commands is not an isolated action, but is rather to be the believer's settled rule and continuing practice. Keep clinging to what is good! Embrace it wholeheartedly. Take possession of it! And keep doing this all your Christian life.

In some contexts **katecho** means to prevent the doing of something or cause to be ineffective. The idea can be to hold back, suppress or restrain as in (Ro 1:18-note) In 2Th 2:6, 7 the **Antichrist** is actively being prevented from exercising power and so he is restrained or checked.

Katecho can mean to keep in one's possession and so to possess (1Cor 7:30, 2Cor 6:10)**Katecho** was legal jargon for "taking possession of property".

Katecho is used in nautical circles with the meaning of "holding one's course toward" as in Acts 27:40 where the storm-tossed ship held its course toward shore.

Katecho mean to keep within limits in a confining manner (Genesis 39:20, Romans 7:6-note)

Katecho was a technical term used to emphasize the necessity of adhering or holding firmly to beliefs, convictions, tradition or sound doctrine (See these uses below - Luke 8:15 [seed = word], 1 Cor. 11:2, 1Cor 15:2 [the gospel]; Heb 3:6, 3:14; 10:23-see notes Heb 3:6, 3:14; 10:23).

Katecho is used 17 times in the NT...

Luke 4:42 And when day came, He departed and went to a lonely place; and the multitudes were searching for Him, and came to Him, and tried to **keep** (to detain, to hold Him back, to retain) Him from going away from them.

Luke 8:15 "And the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and **hold** it **fast**, (present tense = continually) and bear fruit with perseverance.

Luke 14:9 and he who invited you both shall come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to **occupy** the last place. (**Comment:** Here **katecho** means to have a place as one's own, to take into one's possession, or to occupy.)

Acts 27:40 And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders, and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they **were heading** for the beach. (**Comment:** Here **katecho** is used by Luke as a nautical technical term to hold one's course toward, to head for, or to steer for - "they began to hold the ship steadily for the beach")

Romans 1:18 (note) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (unrighteous men restrain the spread of truth by their unrighteousness), who **suppress** (present tense = continually) the truth in unrighteousness (**Comment:** Unregenerate men, at enmity with God, always going astray from His will, **actively suppress** the fact that there is a supreme Being with divine attributes to Whom worship and obedience are due, truth which all men can discern by observing Creation, which demands a Creator to answer for its existence. They continually **hold** this truth **down** in the sense that they refuse to acknowledge its moral implications, and consequently continue on in their sin.)

Romans 7:6 (note) But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which **wewere**

bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

1 Corinthians 7:30 and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not **possess**; (**Comment:** What the believer owns is a trust, not a property.)

1 Corinthians 11:2 Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and **hold firmly** to the traditions (paradosis = a giving over came to refer to the content of instruction which was handed down), just as I delivered them to you.

1 Corinthians 15:2 (note) by which also you are saved, if you **hold fast** the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

2 Corinthians 6:10 as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet **possessing** all things. (Though materially Paul had nothing, in spiritual terms he was possessing everything - a good perspective for all of us alien believers and short timers to have!)

1 Thessalonians 5:21 (note) But **examine** everything carefully; **hold fast** to that which is good;

2 Thessalonians 2:6 And you know what **restrains** him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. **7** For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now **restrains** will do so until he is taken out of the way.

Philemon 1:13 whom I wished to **keep** with me, that in your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel;

Hebrews 3:6 (note) but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we **hold fast** our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

Hebrews 3:14 (note) For we have become partakers of Christ, if we **hold fast** the beginning of our assurance firm until the end (**Comment:** The nautical use of holding fast to one's course gives us a vivid picture of what the writer of Hebrews is saying in Heb 3:6 and this passage. The point is that If the Hebrews would hold their course "like a ship", steadfastly along the lines of their present profession, that would demonstrate that they were saved. If they veered away from that course, that would show that they never had been saved, but that their profession of Messiah had been, not one of the heart but of the head. Be careful! This does not in any way say they merited or earned their salvation by their own efforts to hold fast. True believers hold fast only because of the One Who holds them on course! It is all of grace!)

Hebrews 10:23 (note) Let us **hold fast** the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful (**Comment:** **Katecho** speaks here of a firm hold which masters that which is held)

Katecho - 53x in the non-apocryphal Septuagint (LXX) - Ge 22:13; 24:56; 39:20; 42:19; Ex 32:13; Jos. 1:11; Jdg. 13:15f; 19:4; Ruth 1:13; 2 Sam. 1:9; 2:21; 4:10; 6:6; 1 Ki. 1:51; 2:28f; 2 Ki. 12:12; 1 Chr. 13:9; 2 Chr. 15:8; Neh. 3:4f; Job 15:24; 23:9; 27:17; 34:14; Ps. 69:36; 73:12; 119:53; 139:10; Prov. 18:22; 19:15; Song 3:8; Isa. 40:22; Jer. 6:24; 13:21; 30:6; 50:16; Ezek. 33:24; Dan. 7:18, 22

Genesis 22:13 Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram **caught** (Hebrew = 'achaz = take hold, caught; Lxx = katecho) in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.

Genesis 39:20 So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were **confined** (Hebrew = asar = tie, bind, imprison; Lxx = katecho); and he was there in the jail.

Joshua 1:11 "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to **possess** (Hebrew = yarash; = to take possession of, inherit, dispossess; Lxx = katecho) the land which the LORD your God is giving you, to possess it.'"

Judges 13:15 Then Manoah said to the **Angel of the LORD**, "Please let us **detain** (Hebrew = 'atsar; = to restrain, retain; Lxx = katecho) you so that we may prepare a kid for you."

Psalms 119:53 Burning indignation has seized (Hebrew = achaz = take hold, grasp, taken possession; Lxx = katecho) me because of the wicked, Who forsake Thy law. ([Spurgeon's note](#))

In this passage Paul is saying

"keep on laying hold of, holding fast to, taking possession of the beautiful (noble, morally beautiful)."

Barnes comments hold fast to that...

Which is in accordance with reason and the word of God; which is adapted to promote the salvation of the soul and the welfare of society. This is just as much a duty as it is to "prove all things."

A man who has applied the proper tests, and has found out what is truth, is bound to embrace it and to hold it fast. He is not at liberty to throw it away, as if it were valueless; or to treat truth and falsehood alike. It is a duty which he owes to himself and to God, to adhere to it firmly, and to suffer the loss of all things rather than to abandon it.

There are few more important rules in the New Testament than the one in this passage. It shows what is the true nature of Christianity, and it is a rule whose practical value cannot but be felt constantly in our lives.

Other religions require their votaries to receive everything upon trust; Christianity asks us to examine everything. Error, superstition, bigotry, and fanaticism attempt to repress free discussion, by saying that there are certain things which are too sacred in their nature, or which have been too long held, or which are sanctioned by too many great and holy names, to permit their being subjected to the scrutiny of common eyes, or to be handled by common hands.

In opposition to all this, Christianity requires us to **examine everything**--no matter by whom held; by what councils ordained; by what venerableness of antiquity sustained; or by what sacredness it may be invested. We are to receive no opinion: until we are convinced that it is true; we are to be subjected to no pains or penalties for not believing what we do not perceive to be true; we are to be prohibited from examining no opinion which our fellow-men regard as true, and which they seek to make others believe. No popular current in favour of any doctrine; no influence which name and rank and learning can give it, is to commend it to us as certainly worthy of our belief. By whomsoever held, we are to examine it freely before we embrace it; but when we are convinced that it is true, it is to be held, no matter what current or popular opinion or prejudice may be against it; no matter what ridicule may be poured upon it; and no matter though the belief of it may require us to die a martyr's death. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

That which is good - Henry Morris comments that...

The Christian's faith is not based on credulity, but on sound evidence (see note 1 Peter 3:15). This exhortation applies to both doctrine and practice, especially as taught and tested by Scripture.

Good (2570) (**kalos**) does not refer to that which is superficial or cosmetic but to what is genuinely and inherently good, righteous, noble, and excellent. **Kalos** then describes that which is inherently excellent or intrinsically good, providing some special or superior benefit. **Kalos** is good with emphasis on that which is beautiful, handsome, excellent, surpassing, precious, commendable, admirable.

Milligan writes that **kalos** is used of genuine as opposed to counterfeit coin "and is very appropriate here to denote the goodness which passes muster in view of the testing process just spoken of". The idea of good is that it denotes the intrinsic value of what has been tested and is to be accepted like a coin that is found to be genuine.

In **classical Greek kalos** was originally used to describe that which outwardly beautiful. Other secular uses of **kalos** referred to the usefulness of something such as a **fair** haven, a **fair** wind or that which was auspicious such as sacrifices. **Kalos** referred to that which was "morally beautiful" or noble and hence virtue was called "the good" (to kalon).

The New Testament uses of **kalos** are similar to the secular Greek -- outwardly fair, as the stones of the temple (Lk 21:5); well adapted to its purpose, as salt ("salt is **good**" Mk 9:50); competent for an office, as deacons ("**good** servant of Christ Jesus" 1Ti 4:6); a steward ("serving one another, as **good** stewards of the manifold grace of God", 1Peter 4:10-note); a **good** soldier (2Ti 2:3-note); expedient, wholesome ("it is **better** for you to enter life crippled" Mk 9:43, 45, 47); morally good, noble, as works ("Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your **good** works" Mt 5:16-note); conscience ("we are sure that we have a **good** conscience", He 13:18-note). The phrase *it is good*, i.e., a good or proper thing ("It is **good** not to eat meat or to drink wine", Ro 14:21-note). In the Septuagint (LXX) **kalos** is the most commonly used word for **good** as opposed to **evil** (e.g., see Ge 2:17; 24:50; Isa 5:20). **Kalos** describes good fruit (Mt 3:10), a good tree (Mt 12:33) and good ground (Mt 13:8).

This command to examine and hold fast to the good is in the context of not despising prophetic utterances. One is never to downgrade the proclamation of God's Word, but to examine the preached word carefully (cf. Acts 17:11-note). What is found to be "good" is to be wholeheartedly embraced. What is "evil" or unbiblical is to be shunned.

In **Romans 12** Paul charges believers to...

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor (present tense - as your habitual practice) what is evil; cling (present tense - as your habitual practice) to what is **good**. (see **note** Romans 12:9)

In the context of Romans 12, the key to finding and following what is **good** is in not being...

conformed (present imperative) to this world, but [being] **transformed** (present imperative) by the renewing of [our] mind, that [we] may prove (**dokimazo**) what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (see note Romans 12:2).

As we separate ourselves from the things of the world and saturate ourselves with the Word of God, the things that are **good** will more and more replace the things that are **evil**. This is same principle the writer of Hebrews alluded to when he wrote that...

solid food (.the equivalent of Biblical "health" food which builds strong, healthy believers - Sermons are good, but they are not to be compared with personal Spirit illuminated Bible study as soul food. Songs and hymns are excellent, but let us not become "songbook Christians". Men wrote the songs but God wrote the Bible. A maturing Christian must be a Biblically saturated Christian.) is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. (see note Hebrews 5:14)

Comment: To avoid being pulled into error, keep a firm grip on the truth.

G. K. Chesterton wisely wrote...

Merely having an open mind is nothing. The object of opening the mind, as of opening the mouth, is to shut it again on something solid.

Spurgeon added that believers are to...

Beware! Error often rides to its deadly work on the back of truth!

><> ><> ><>

Our Daily Bread - Part of the training to be a US Secret Service agent includes learning to detect counterfeit money. Agents-in-training make a thorough study of the genuine bills--not the phonies--so that they can spot the fake currency immediately because of its contrast to the real thing. The child of God can learn a lesson from this. While it is helpful to study false religions and be fully aware of their dangerous dogmas, the best defense against such error is to be so familiar with God's Word that whenever we encounter error, we will spot it at once and won't fall for it. Today many are being led astray because they don't recognize how they are being deceived. For example, if a person isn't solidly grounded in the teaching of salvation by grace, he may swallow the line of the legalists who inject human works into the matter of being saved. If he is not well instructed about the person of Christ, he might accept the error of those who deny the Savior's deity. A thorough knowledge of essential biblical doctrines is the only way to detect counterfeits. Let's be diligent in our study of the Word of God. Then, instead of falling into error, we will stand firmly on the truth. --R W De Haan

Lord, grant us wisdom to discern
The truth You have made known,
And may we not believe one word
Beyond what You have shown. --DJD

1Thessalonians 5:22 **abstain** from **every form** of **evil**. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [apo pantos eidous ponerou apechesthe](#). (2PPMM)

Amplified: Abstain from evil [shrink from it and keep aloof from it] in whatever form or whatever kind it may be. [Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Barclay: Keep yourselves well away from every kind of evil. ([Westminster Press](#))

NLT: Keep away from every kind of evil. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: Steer clear of evil in any form. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: Be holding yourselves back from every form of perniciousness. ([Eerdmans](#))

Young's Literal: all things prove; that which is good hold fast

ABSTAIN FROM EVERY FORM OF EVIL: [apo pantos eidous ponerou apechesthe \(2PPMM\)](#); (1Th 4:12; Ex 23:7; Isa 33:15; Mt

17:26,27; Ro 12:17; 1Cor 8:13; 10:31, 32, 33; 2Cor 6:3; 8:20,21; Php 4:8; Jude 1:23)

When the testing determines that the utterance is spurious or from another spirit, we are commanded to steer clear of the evil.

Darby renders it...

hold fast the right; hold aloof from every form of wickedness.

Abstain (568) (**apechomai** [word study] from **apó** = away from - conveys the idea of putting some distance between; serves as a marker of dissociation, implying a rupture from a former association + **écho** = have) means to be away or be at a distance and here means to keep oneself from.

John MacArthur writes that...

The emphasis is on the believer's complete avoidance of any evil teaching or behavior. Nowhere does Scripture permit believers to expose themselves to the influences of what is false or evil; instead, they are to abstain from such things, even flee them (1Cor. 6:18; 10:14; 1Ti 6:11; 2Ti 2:22-note; cf. Ps 34:14; Ps 37:27; Ps 97:10; Pr 3:7; 8:13; 14:16; 22:3) ([MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press](#))

Paul is saying **Keep holding yourself** (middle voice conveys the idea that this is something the subject must initiate and then participate in the results thereof - it is a continuing personal obligation) **away from every form or "species" of harmful evil**

The first use of **apechomai** in this same letter was designed to produce greater holiness is abstinence from sexual immorality (1Th 4:3-note). Paul called his readers to avoid it, implying the need for exercising self-discipline enabled by God's Spirit.

Here are the other NT uses of **apechomai**...

(The Jerusalem council concluded) that we write to them (Gentile converts to Christianity) that they **abstain** from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood... 29 that you **abstain** from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell." (Acts 15:20, 29)

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you **abstain** from sexual immorality (see note 1Thessalonians 4:3)

(Context is that in later times some will fall away from the faith paying attention of deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, among whom are) men who forbid marriage and advocate **abstaining** from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. (1Ti 4:3)

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to **abstain** from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul. (see note 1 Peter 2:11)

Paul is saying in context, that after the testing is made, any and every aspect of evil must be rejected. And this rejection is not the result of a spirit of legalism, for as one person has written...

Good men avoid sin from the love of virtue (2Cor 5:9-note, Gal 1:10) whereas wicked men avoid sin from a fear of punishment.

Webster's defines "**abstain**" as to refrain deliberately and often with an effort of self-denial from an action or practice. This is a good definition except that self denial is the world's way. Believers have access to the fruit of the Spirit, self-control (Ga 5:23-note) and yet we do have to make the choices and take actions that cultivate the character trait of self control (2Pe 1:6-note).

Job is an excellent OT example of one who **abstained** from evil.

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and **turning away from** (Hebrew = sur = to turn aside; Lxx = apechomai) evil. (Job 1:1, cp Job 1:8) (Comment: Look back at this verse [and the following one] and see if you can discern what it was that motivated Job to turn away from evil. Clue - check the context).

And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and **turning away** (Lxx = apechomai present tense = continually) from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause." (Job 2:3)

Vincent has an interesting historical note...

Paul wrote from **Corinth**, where sensuality in the guise of religion was rife. In **Thessalonica**, besides the

ordinary licentious customs of the Gentiles, immorality was fostered by the Cabeiric worship. About the time of Paul, a political sanction was given to this worship by deifying the Emperor as Cabeirus.

Form ([1491](#))(**eidōs** from **eido** = see) literally means that which is seen or what is visible and then the external appearance (shape and structure) of something as it appears to someone.

The KJV rendering is a bit misleading...

Abstain from all **appearance** of evil.

Note that no other version uses appearance which could lead to a misinterpretation of the passage (see [notes below](#)).

The **UBS Handbook** comments that...

If KJV interpretation is chosen (and it is not impossible), the translator should guard against the misunderstanding that Paul is warning only against *apparent*, and not against *real*, evil. ([The United Bible Societies' New Testament Handbook Series](#))

Every **kind** of evil is the way in which almost all translations understand the text as exemplified by the versions listed above and below...

Avoid every **kind** of evil (Good News Translation)

Stay away from **everything** that is evil (New Century Version)

Stay away from every **form** of evil (NET)

Avoid every **kind** of evil (NIV)

Hold yourselves aloof from every form of evil (Weymouth)

In Greek writing **eidōs** referred to a class, kind, sort, or species. This is somewhat the nuance in this verse - so we might say something like "every species of evil" implying (correctly) that there are many "species" of evil, just as there are many *species* in a given *genus*.

Friberg writes that **eidōs** means...

(1) with a passive sense, as what is visible to the eye form, (external) appearance (Lu 3:22)

(2) with an active sense sight, what one sees (2Cor 5:7)

(3) (particular) kind, sort (1Th 5:22) ([Friberg, T., Friberg, B., & Miller, N. F. Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament. Baker Academic](#))

It is interesting to note that a word derived from **eidōs** is **eidōlon** the Greek word for an idol!

Green notes that **eidōs**

appears in other contexts with the meaning "appearance," but only in the sense of external appearance that reflects internal reality (Green, G. L. The Pillar New Testament Commentary)

Hiebert adds that...

While the Greek term **eidōs** can mean outward appearance, it can also mean "sort, kind, species." This gives the best meaning here. We may then render "from every sort of evil" (Williams). Evil presents itself in many forms. "The essence of evil does not change, but ever seeks new and attractive forms through that it may embody itself." These must be recognized and resisted. Evil has a complexity that stands in striking contrast to the simplicity of the good. (Ibid)

There are only 5 uses of **eidōs** in the NT...

Luke 3:22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily **form** like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased."

Luke 9:29 And while He was praying, the **appearance** of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming.

John 5:37 "And the Father who sent Me, He has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His **form**.

2 Corinthians 5:7 for we walk by faith, not by **sight**-- (Comment: Believers are guided in their behavior not by what they can behold naturally, but by what they know to be true though unseen)

1 Thessalonians 5:22 **abstain** from every **form** of evil.

There are 40 uses in the Septuagint (LXX) (Gen. 29:17; 32:30f; 39:6; 41:2ff, 18f; Exod. 24:10, 17; 26:30; 28:33; Lev. 13:43; Num. 8:4; 9:15f; 11:7; 12:8; Deut. 21:11; Jdg. 13:6; 1 Sam. 16:18; 25:3; 2 Sam. 11:2; 13:1; Est. 2:2f, 7; Job 33:16; 41:18; Prov. 7:10; Song. 5:15; Isa. 52:14; 53:2f; Jer. 11:16; 15:3; Lam. 4:8; Ezek. 1:16, 26) Here are some representative uses...

Genesis 29:17 And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of **form** (Hebrew = toar = outline, form; Lxx = eidos) and face.

Exodus 26:30 "Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to its **plan** (Lxx = eidos) which you have been shown in the mountain.

Numbers 9:15 Now on the day that the tabernacle was erected the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony, and in the evening it was like the **appearance** (Hebrew = mareh = sight, appearance, vision; Lxx = eidos) of fire over the tabernacle, until morning.

Numbers 12:8 With him I speak mouth to mouth (without any special mediation), even openly, and not in dark sayings, and he beholds the **form** (Hebrew = temunah; Lxx = eidos) of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant, against Moses?" (The meaning is that Moses saw some visible manifestation of Jehovah, although from John 1:18 [cp Ex 33:18ff] he did not see the LORD in all His unveiled glory and essential nature. cp Ex 24:10, 33:23)

Isaiah 52:14 Just as many were astonished at you, My people, So His **appearance** (Hebrew = mareh = sight, appearance, vision; Lxx = eidos) was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men.

Isaiah 53:2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor **appearance** (Hebrew = mareh = sight, appearance, vision; Lxx = eidos) that we should be attracted to Him.

Jeremiah 15:3 "And I shall appoint over them four **kinds** (Lxx = eidos) of doom," declares the LORD: "the sword to slay, the dogs to drag off, and the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy.

Ezekiel 1:16 (note) The **appearance** (Hebrew = mareh = sight, appearance, vision; Lxx = eidos) of the wheels and their workmanship was like sparkling beryl, and all four of them had the same form, their appearance and workmanship being as if one wheel were within another.

Every form of evil - This phrase stresses the all inclusive nature of this command and the manifold manifestations (different "species") that **evil** is capable of - lies, distortions of truth, moral perversions, etc. In Romans Paul says the unregenerate are "*inventors of evil*." (see note Romans 1:30) It follows that **evil** may take on ostensibly "new" forms, but it remains the same "old" destructive, corrupting force! Avoid evil of every kind and of every species.

Hiebert adds a qualifying thought writing that...

the rendering "*all appearance of evil*" (KJV) must not be interpreted to mean that they are to avoid that which looks wicked to those who see it, although in itself it may not be so. The term does not denote semblance as opposed to reality. Such a dictum might enable them to shun some unpleasant duty. "*It is a poor heart that is much afraid of seeming evil in a good cause.*" While believers should abstain from actions that will knowingly offend others, it is not always possible to abstain from everything that may appear evil to a narrow and foolish judgment. (Ibid)

Spurgeon writes that Paul does not mean...

from that which other people choose to think evil, but from all real evil whatever it is — even from the very shadow that it casts and the shape which it assumes.

Vincent offers a similar thought writing that...

As commonly explained, *abstain from everything that even looks like evil*. But the word (eidos) signifies **form** or **kind**. Cp Luke 3:22; John 5:37... It never has the sense of *semblance*. Moreover, it is impossible to abstain from everything that **looks like** evil. ([1 Thessalonians 5](#))

Morris adds that...

The meaning will be '*evil which can be seen*' and not '*that which appears to be evil*'.

The **Amplified Version** more accurately conveys the meaning than the KJV rendering it...

Abstain from evil [shrink from it and keep aloof from it] **in whatever form or whatever kind** it may be.

Jamieson amplifies this idea writing that...

In many cases the Christian should not abstain from what has the *semblance* ("**appearance**") of evil, though really good. Jesus healed on the Sabbath, and ate with publicans and sinners, acts which wore the **appearance** of evil, but which were not to be abstained from on that account, being really good. (Critical and Explanatory Commentary)

Evil ([4190](#))(**poneros** from **pónos** = labor, sorrow, pain) refers to evil in active opposition to good.

Poneros - 78x in 72v - Matt 5:11, 37, 39, 45; 6:13, 23; 7:11, 17f; 9:4; 12:34f, 39, 45; 13:19, 38, 49; 15:19; 16:4; 18:32; 20:15; 22:10; 25:26; Mark 7:22f; Luke 3:19; 6:22, 35, 45; 7:21; 8:2; 11:13, 26, 29, 34; 19:22; John 3:19; 7:7; 17:15; Acts 17:5; 18:14; 19:12f, 15f; 25:18; 28:21; Rom 12:9; 1 Cor 5:13; Gal 1:4; Eph 5:16; 6:13, 16; Col 1:21; 1 Thess 5:22; 2 Thess 3:2f; 1 Tim 6:4; 2 Tim 3:13; 4:18; Heb 3:12; 10:22; Jas 2:4; 4:16; 1 John 2:13f; 3:12; 5:18f; 2 John 1:11; 3 John 1:10; Rev 16:2. **NAS** = bad(5), crimes(1), envious(1), envy*(1), evil(50), evil one(5), evil things(1), malignant(1), more evil(1), more wicked(1), vicious(1), wicked(6), wicked man(1), wicked things(1), worthless(1).

Hiebert writes that **evil** (poneros)...

is a strong term and is properly distinguished from kakos. The latter term points to the base nature of a thing; its lack of those qualities and conditions that would make it worthy of the claim that it makes. The former term is active and denotes that which is destructive, injurious, and evil in its effect." It is malignant evil, blasting and destroying what it touches. It includes the doctrinal as well as the moral.

Lenski adds that...

The worst forms of wickedness consist of perversions of the truth, of spiritual lies (The Interpretation of Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon).

Jesus described Satan as poneros or actively harmful. So if something even has the appearance that suggests it might be actively harmful, we are to keep holding ourselves away from it. Be diligent, sober minded.

John MacArthur rightly observes that...

Believers who yield to the Holy Spirit's complete control will appreciate Scripture's character, allow its power to sanctify their lives, and examine everything by its standards. Thus they will fulfill three more vital responsibilities all believers have to Jesus Christ—to honor His Spirit, obey His Word, and exercise spiritual discernment. ([MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press](#))

Hiebert adds that...

These two commands (**abstain... hold fast**) must not be separated in Christian experience. Both are necessary for the development of true Christian character. Christian growth requires not only the assimilation of the good but also the rejection of the evil. The intensity of our adherence to the good will be measured by the strength of our rejection of the evil. (Ibid)

Spurgeon wrote...

The old naturalist, Ulysses Androvaldus, tell us that a dove is so afraid of a hawk, that she will be frightened at the sight of one of its feathers. Whether it be so or not, I cannot tell; but this I know, that when a man has had a thorough shaking over the jaws of hell, he will be so afraid of sin, that even one of its feathers — any one sin — will alarm and send a thrill of fear through his soul This is a part of the way by which the Lord turns us when we are turned indeed.

(Spurgeon quotes) Manton says: "A man that would keep out the cold in winter shutteth all his doors and windows, yet the wind will creep in, though he doth not leave any open hole for it." We must leave no inlet for sin, but stop up every hole and cranny by which it can enter. There is need of great care in doing this, for when our very best is done sin will find an entrance. During the bitter cold weather we list the doors, put sandbags on the windows, draw curtains, and arrange screens, and yet we are made to feel that we live in a northern climate: in the same way must we be diligent to shut out sin, and we shall find abundant need to

guard every point, for after we have done all, we shall, in one way or another, be made to feel that we live in a sinful world. Well, what must we do? We must follow the measures which common prudence teaches us in earthly matters. We must drive out the cold by keeping up a good fire within. The presence of the Lord Jesus in the soul can so warm the heart that worldliness and sin will be expelled, and we shall be both holy and happy. The Lord grant, it for Jesus' sake.