

HIDE!

Joe Slater

“A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished” (Proverbs 22:3).

Oftentimes, especially in the Old Testament, the word “evil” means adversity or hardship, as opposed to wickedness. For example, when Jacob told Pharaoh, *“Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life”* (Genesis 47:9), he meant simply that his life had been characterized by adversity and trials, not that his behavior had been morally corrupt.

In the proverb quoted above, however, evil refers to wickedness. This is evident in that the simpleton who falls victim to it is “punished.” Hardship doesn’t call for punishment; sinful behavior does.

A prudent person can often see evil coming. An alcoholic can see it coming when the waiter at the restaurant offers wine. He can hide himself simply by declining the offer, but if the temptation is too strong, he should leave! Joseph saw evil coming when Mrs. Potiphar propositioned him; he prudently removed himself from her presence (Genesis 39:12).

We have nothing to gain by deliberately subjecting ourselves to temptation. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, *“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”* (Matthew 6:13). Satan and his minions may lead us into temptation, but we don’t have to follow him; and if we find ourselves in a tempting situation, we can walk away (or run)! There is no shame in hiding!

The alternative is to “pass on and be punished.” Depending on what the evil is, you might be punished here and now. But regardless, God will certainly punish in eternity. So don’t be a simpleton! Hide!

Repent And Believe the Gospel

It is popular to say that Christians should live by moral standards, but that we have no right to call others to moral living. There is sliver of truth in this position, but also a thick slab of falsehood.

Some of the finer details of biblical morality are just for believers. Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount to his disciples, not to the world at large (Matthew 5:1-2). The prophets did not quote the Mosaic Law to foreign nations. The Law of Moses was for God’s chosen people, not for others.

But, both Jesus and the prophets did condemn sin in the nations. The prophet Amos is a good example of this. He condemned all of the nations that surrounded Israel. What he condemned them for was not for violations of the Mosaic Law, but for violations of more basic moral principles that any ought to be able to see. He quoted the Law only to Judah and Israel. But he condemned the sins of the nations as well. Certain moral principles are so basic, so much a part of nature, that no one has any excuse to ignore them.

A basic principle like the sanctity of human life is demanded of all people in all nations at all times. This principle is enshrined in the covenant with Noah as well as in all the other biblical covenants. It applies to all nations, not just to Israel. It applies to all people, not just Christians.

While Christians should not seek needless conflict with the world, we have no choice but to speak out on certain fundamental moral principles. As A. B. Bruce put it long ago, **“If an ordinary prophet could not shirk the duty of censure, still less could the Christ. He must come with the fan of moral criticism in his hand, separating wheat from chaff.”** (*The Kingdom of God*, p 188)

And what the Christ must do, his disciples must follow him in doing.

Some would ask, “Why can’t we always give positive messages? Why must we condemn sin?” As disciples of Jesus, as his spokesmen to the 21st century, we offer the good news of the gospel. But our version of the gospel must begin as his began, with a demand for repentance (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:14-15). If the demand for repentance is not prominent in our message, then we are not proclaiming his message; we are not really his disciples.

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)

Servant Leadership

There are several leadership styles. Likely the first to come to mind is positional, authoritative leadership. An officer in the armed forces, an employer, a foreman, a supervisor or CEO gives an order; underlings unquestioningly obey.

Church leaders, however, at Jesus’ direction, use a leadership style which is neither positional nor authoritative. Here is what Jesus says:

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).

Jesus clearly calls for servant leadership. The Bible applies the same words to elders:

“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow-elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ . . . shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight . . . not as being lords over those entrusted to you . . .” (1 Peter 5:1-3).

[To be continued next week with “three practical ways to exercise servant leadership”]

--Cecil May, Jr. (via *Preacher Talk*)