

Psalms 34:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

Analysis

Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. David continues practical instruction on fearing LORD with three imperatives addressing behavior. This moves from speech (v. 13) to conduct, establishing that godliness requires both negative separation (depart from evil) and positive action (do good, pursue peace).

Depart from evil commands separation. Depart (sur) means turn aside, turn away, remove oneself. Evil (ra') means bad, wicked, harmful, morally wrong. This is active rejection, not passive avoidance. Requires identifying what God calls evil then decisively turning away. Reformed sanctification includes mortification—putting to death sinful patterns, habits, desires. Cannot fear God while embracing evil; must intentionally, repeatedly, decisively depart from it.

And do good provides positive counterpart. Do ('asah) means make, produce, perform, accomplish. Good (tov) means beneficial, righteous, morally right. Sanctification isn't merely avoiding bad but actively pursuing good. Ephesians 4:22-24 commands: Put off old man...put on new man created in righteousness and true holiness. Romans 12:21: Be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good. Christian life requires positive godliness, not merely negative abstinence.

Seek peace, and pursue it addresses relationships. Seek (baqash) means search for, inquire after, desire. Peace (shalom) means wholeness, harmony, well-being, reconciliation. And pursue (radaph) intensifies—chase after, follow hard, persistently hunt. Seeking initiates; pursuing persists. Peace requires active effort—initiating reconciliation, maintaining harmony, resolving conflicts, promoting

unity. Romans 12:18: If possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all. Hebrews 12:14: Pursue peace with all, and holiness without which no one will see Lord.

These three imperatives (depart, do, pursue) summarize practical godliness. Turn from sin, practice righteousness, maintain peace. This is comprehensive sanctification—ethical (depart from evil), moral (do good), relational (pursue peace). Fearing LORD manifests in transformed behavior affecting self, neighbors, God.

Historical Context

This verse echoes fundamental biblical ethics. Amos 5:14-15 commands: Seek good, not evil, that you may live...Hate evil, love good, establish judgment in gate. Isaiah 1:16-17 calls: Cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek judgment, relieve oppressed. Micah 6:8 summarizes: What does LORD require? To do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.

Jesus continued this teaching. Love your enemies, do good to those hating you (Luke 6:27). Blessed are peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). Paul commanded: Abhor what is evil, cling to what is good (Romans 12:9). 1 Thessalonians 5:15: See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. 1 Peter 3:11 quotes this verse directly as Christian ethic.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What specific evils do you need to depart from, and what practical steps will you take to turn away?
2. How does actively doing good differ from merely not doing evil?

3. Why does David command both seeking and pursuing peace—what's difference between initiating and persisting in peacemaking?
4. In what relationships do you need to actively pursue peace rather than passively avoiding conflict?
5. How do these three imperatives (depart, do, pursue) provide comprehensive framework for sanctification?

Interlinear Text

וּרְכָדָהוּ:	שָׁלֹוּ	בְּקִשׁ	טוֹב	וַעֲשֵׂה	מִרָע	סוּר
	peace	seek	good	and do	from evil	Depart
	H7965	H1245	H2896	H6213	H7451	H5493
	and pursue					
	H7291					

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 37:27 (Evil): Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.

Hebrews 12:14 (Peace): Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

1 Peter 3:11 (Peace): Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

3 John 1:11 (Evil): Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

Romans 12:18 (Peace): If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Proverbs 3:7 (Evil): Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

Romans 12:9 (Evil): Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

Romans 14:19 (Peace): Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

2 Corinthians 13:11 (Peace): Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

1 Thessalonians 4:11 (Parallel theme): And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

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