

# Perfecting Holiness

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

## Introduction:

1. Jesus Christ has appointed me to be your servant – to perfect you now and prepare you for His coming.
  2. In a time like this – our nation suffering terrorist attacks by profane antichrists and a Bible consideration of Islam upon us – we must be sure the holiness of our own lives exceeds our passion and our rhetoric.
  3. How do we read the Word of God? More fervently than Muslims read the Quran? As if every word of God is pure? As a message from the great and dreadful God more sure than His voice from heaven? With eager expectation for whatever God might command us? With great love to please Christ more?
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- I. The TEXT – should be analyzed word by word, for it contains a beautiful conclusion for us.
    - A. **Having**, by virtue of its present tense, teaches these promises are in our possession now.
    - B. **Therefore** indicates a conclusion is being made from the things just previously written.
    - C. **These** points out a specific plurality of items previously described for our consideration.
    - D. **Promises** are commitments made by God to us, and He cannot lie or repent! What glory it is for saints to have offers, commitments, and promises from the great God!
    - E. **Dearly** is an adjective explaining the degree of something in the immediate context.
    - F. **Beloved** is our position before God as the objects of His everlasting and powerful love.
    - G. **Let** states a choice and decision we should make in response to what has been offered.
    - H. **Us** is a pronoun for focus on ourselves rather than others within or outside our church.
    - I. **Cleanse** is the verb of our verse, which is to wash thoroughly to make completely clean. Cleansing requires examining everywhere, washing everywhere, and being thorough. Soul cleansing needs examination, repentance, repudiation, restitution, and reformation.
    - J. **Ourselves** is another pronoun requiring self-cleansing rather than other-condemning. It is our nature to seek cleansing of others’ motes while we are blinded with beams. Our passion and rhetoric can go ballistic about others’ failures, while we miss our own.
    - K. **From** is a preposition indicating that we are getting rid of things rather than obtaining things. Cleansing is getting rid of dirt, so we must deny ourselves and give up sins.
    - L. **All** is used here as an adjective – despised adjective – to condemn any partial cleansing to save our favorite sins. We cannot hold on to any idol in our heart and truly be clean.
    - M. **Filthiness** is a noun describing any sin that stains, blemishes, or soils our Christian life.
    - N. **Of the** are a preposition and article showing where filth may be found in our cleansing.
    - O. **Flesh** is a noun referring to our outer person – our bodies and their appetites, which have lusts and sins galore. Our bodies crave things, which our minds must overrule.
    - P. **And** will not let us escape by cleansing merely our outward conduct like the Pharisees.
    - Q. **Spirit** is a noun referring to our inner person, where we have thoughts, desires, and fantasies that are sinful. The Lord is looking for a poor, contrite, and pure spirit.
    - R. **Perfecting** further modifies our cleansing and sets the standard for the degree of holiness we must achieve. Measuring ourselves among ourselves is not clean enough.
    - S. **Holiness** is being without sin as measured by the Holy God, for He is holy and requires our holiness. Holiness is the absence of absolutely anything that displeases our Lord.
    - T. **In the** is another preposition-article combination giving further instruction as to our motivation in this cleansing effort. Paul began with promises, but now he uses fear.
    - U. **Fear of** is consciousness of God that dreads His displeasure and craves His approval.
    - V. **God** is to be the object of our fear and dread, rather than the fear of peers, loss, or pain.

- II. The CONTEXT – provides three clear matters that lead to the glorious conclusion of our text.
- A. It gives a plain commandment from God for us to separate from unbelievers (6:14a).
    1. It is an imperative verb construction dictating something we are to do by choice.
    2. ***Unequally*** states the fact that believers and unbelievers are out of balance and truly have little in common - it is impossible to be equally yoked with them.
    3. ***Yoked*** describes various relationships and connections toward which we are tempted that involve association leading to an influence upon our lives. In a yoke, two oxen or other animals must move in tandem; and we must avoid this.
    4. ***Unbelievers*** are those not professing Christ or Christians holding heresies; for even the Corinthians were warned against their own teachers (I Cor 15:33).
    5. Our friendships should be chosen carefully with regard to this commandment.
    6. The commandment is stated again in different words a few verses later (17abc).
      - a. We are to ***come out from among them***, by ending any close associations.
      - b. We are to ***be separate***, by distancing ourselves from former companions.
      - c. We are to ***touch not the unclean thing***, by rejecting doctrines and deeds.
  - B. It gives the reasons and nature of proper separation by rhetorical questions (6:14b-16a).
    1. These five rhetorical questions all assume obvious negative answers, for true believers are incompatible with unbelievers and find no useful common ground.
    2. The reasons for separation are found in unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, infidelity, and idols. These are all things Christians should hate, fear, and avoid.
    3. The nature of the separation is found in fellowship, communion, concord, participation, and agreement. These sort of relationships must be avoided.
  - C. It explains our position relative to God and His promises to us for obedience (6:16b-18).
    1. We are the temple of God – built for His habitation (I Cor 3:16; Eph 2:21-22).
    2. Paul begins quoting Moses’ offer to Israel of blessings for obedience (Le 26:12).
    3. Paul then quotes Isaiah’s warning to Israel in the day of the gospel (Is 52:11).
    4. And then he adds his own message from the Lord with further promises.
- III. The PROMISES – are seven in number when considered carefully and offer us great riches.
- A. I will dwell in them – the LORD Himself will set up habitation and a continual Presence with us. We should understand this as a church and as individual saints.
  - B. I will walk in them – the LORD Himself will participate with us in our activities of life.
  - C. I will be their God – the LORD will perform all the desired aspects of a true God to us.
  - D. They shall be my people – the LORD will consider us to be the objects of His affection and His dear possession. He will exalt us, protect us, bless us, dote on us, and honor us.
  - E. I will receive you – the LORD will accept us and allow an affectionate union. If you want to walk with God and grow in glorious fellowship with Him, it is offered here.
  - F. I will be a Father unto you – the LORD will treat us as a perfect father does children. This is no doctrinal explanation of adoption or regeneration; it is describing how He will treat us – He will fulfill the role of a perfect father in every way toward us.
  - G. Ye shall be my sons and daughters – the LORD will display our position in Him, and He will show this kind and loving favor toward us above all other angels and men.
- IV. The APPLICATION – is how we should respond to what we read in our text and its context.
- A. What more could we want in the way of positive encouragement than these promises?
  - B. What more could we want in the way of negative reinforcement than the Lord’s terror?
  - C. Let us not make this a political application by condemning our nation’s associations.
  - D. Let us not make this a denominational application by condemning religious association.
  - E. Let us not make this a judgmental application by condemning others’ associations.

- F. Let us make this a personal application by considering our own dangerous associations.
1. Our church cannot compromise doctrine with the world for their idea of unity.
  2. We will continue to practice closed communion to fellowship only with truth.
  3. We will abstain from communing with other churches to keep ourselves pure.
  4. Believers cannot marry unbelievers, so don't even look at them or date them.
  5. Excluded brethren are belly worshippers, and we are to mark and avoid them.
  6. We cannot be members of organizations based on secrecy, paganism, or heresy.
  7. We cannot join social organizations where our truth and holiness are tempted.
  8. Our friends should be those who love the Lord and crave truth and holiness also.
- G. Let us apply this further than mere associations to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness.
1. Cleansing your spirit toward perfect holiness will aggressively avoid television.
  2. You will reject and avoid reading material that is either tempting and/or unholy.
  3. You will control your thoughts by avoiding temptations and choosing holy ones.
  4. You will guard your speech and let it be always with grace and only a little salt.
  5. You will rule your spirit so that others see a consistent and godly stability.
  6. You will measure your treatment of your spouse only by the pure word of God.
  7. You will be a father who is a living example of godliness and trains his children.
  8. You will be a mother who is known more for being like Mary than like Martha.
  9. You will be the best employee by attitude and service regardless of your ability.
  10. You will be the best student by attitude and service regardless of your ability.
  11. You will be an honest and sincere citizen who keeps all laws for the Lord's sake.
  12. You will remember that bitterness and/or envy and/or revenge are evil stains.
  13. You will remember that lacking gentleness is uncleanness, not just personality.
  14. You will remember that Christian joy is a duty rather than just a blessing.
  15. You will remember that thanksgiving is a duty and complaining is a sin.
  16. You will remember that time is a limited gift from God to be used very wisely.
  17. You will remember to despise a form of godliness lacking fellowship with God.
  18. You will remember that the greatest duty is love, and you will seek the unlovely.
  19. You will remember sexual thoughts and activities are seen by a very holy God.
  20. You will remember that anything short of Christ's character is a stain and blot.

Conclusion:

1. We rejoice in a glorious promise given to children for honoring parents, yet we have our own promises.
2. We have the most glorious promises of great riches, and we have the most awful God to fear and dread.
3. He will single us out as a church – He will single you out as a saint – if you cleanse yourself to holiness.
4. If Islamic fanatics can commit suicide for a pretend moon god and a profane dead prophet, what of us?
5. Let us turn from all our idols and sins and wait for the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven (I Thess 1:9-10).