

PERFECTING HOLINESS II Corinthians 7:1

"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"

Introduction

1. Holy or Holiness is defined as, *"Living according to a strict or highly moral religious or spiritual system; saintly: a holy person; The state or quality of being holy; sanctity."* *(God calls us a sanctified, holy, peculiar people)*
2. Most people think of holiness as some quality that is reserved for a group of monks in some high place that sit all day in a circle meditating with a dreadful humming sound. *(houummm, houummm etc.)*, while they seclude themselves to a monastery and never interact with others in the world.

Illustration: *Submarines are insulated not isolated...on land they serve no purpose, while in water they serve the purpose they were made to accomplish. It must be mentioned that there are dangers of going to deep and causing the walls to collapse under pressure and yet there must be a balance between staying in the water and knowing the capabilities if that ship is ever going to be successful in battle...much like us...*

3. Many feel that others will look on them with contempt if they appear to have a **"holier than thou"** type of attitude. Believe it or not, we cannot use others as our standard and we cannot cease to excel in our endeavor to be holy, until we have completely become like our Holy Father in heaven. *(Let others mock us and say we are religious fanatics...we were told to expect it!)*
4. Some are familiar with and are turned off by the **"holiness movement"** that has been taught throughout the religious world and has simply become a checklist of do's and don'ts that are supposed to guarantee holiness. **That is not holiness...** (see illustration from a man in the holiness movement)

"Holiness is important. It's something that we must achieve...But it seems that somewhere in our growth and manifestations of the Spirit, by and large we've lost our holiness. I firmly believe that we must return to holiness. But I think that one of the biggest problems with achieving holiness is that we really don't understand what holiness is. I grew up in a church that said holiness was men not wearing shorts, long hair, or jewelry. It was women not wearing pants, makeup, jewelry, short hair, colored hair, pig tails, hair ribbons, hair clips (unless they were the same color as her hair), or red dresses. Holiness was not watching TV, going to the movies, dancing, gambling, playing pool, smoking, drinking, doing drugs, and a whole long list of other no-no's. I suppose, even though we didn't hear as much about it, that holiness also included a lot of do's, like do read your Bible, do pray, do (give to the church m.l.h.), do go to church every time the doors are open, and on and on. To sum it all up, holiness was a long list of do's and don'ts. And if you did the do's and didn't do the don'ts you were holy."

WHAT A MISCONCEPTION ABOUT HOLINESS...

5. The Bible talks about the holiness of God and when we serve Him we are called to live in such a way that we might practice the holiness of God in our lives. Holiness is not a list of do's and don'ts but an obedient life out of respect for a holy God that leads us into an eternal relationship with Him. (II Cor. 7:1; I Th. 4:7).
6. The Christian life should never be looked upon as a duty or responsibility to be maintained, but rather a wonderful privilege and an honor to be upheld each and every day of our earthly lives.
7. While all who claim to be a Christian think of themselves in some measure as being holy, we must notice that we are called to perfect that holiness in the fear of God by cleansing ourselves of any and all filthiness of the flesh and spirit in becoming like God.

I. HAVING THEREFORE THESE PROMISES...LET US CLEANSE OURSELVES..."

- A. The promises that God has given to us are dependent upon our being holy
 1. God promises to be in a relationship with us as our Father
 - a. My teachers always instructed me, *"We need to see what the 'therefore' is there for in the context of scripture"*. In this case the "therefore" refers to the previous text that shows us we can be the children of God. (See II Cor. 6:14-18)
 - b. God has called us to be holy and be separate from the world and all unrighteousness, cleansing ourselves before Him.
 - c. Paul says we need to cleanse both *"flesh and spirit"* in this effort to receive these promises of God (*outward and inwardly pure*).
 2. We are the temple of God and God only dwells in that which is the holiest
 - a. We must then purify our lives and remain holy if we want to continue to become and remain the children of a holy, Almighty God (See Gal. 3:26-27)
 - b. God would only dwell in the holy of Holies in the temple of the OT
 - c. God will only fulfill His promise to us if we remain a holy temple for Him to dwell in.

II. GOD HAS PERFECTED HOLINESS

- A. God is the standard that we are to look to for perfected holiness.
 1. No other is like our God in holiness
 - a. See Exodus 15:11-13
 - b. God is majestic and glorious in holiness, and none compares to Him (See I Samuel 2:2; also I John 1:5)
 2. Many have acknowledged the holiness of God
 - a. See Psalm 99:9
 - b. Many times in addressing God the word *"holy"* is repeated to emphasize the holiness of God. (See Isaiah 6:3).
- B. God is to be recognized as holy throughout every generation
 1. Every nation is to come and worship before God because He is holy
 - a. See Rev. 15:3-4
 - b. We praise and honor God as holy while we must try to become like Him each and every day.

III. WE MUST BE PERFECTING HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF GOD

- A. Once we have obeyed the gospel we have cleansed ourselves of sin and filthiness and we learn to respect (fear) God.
 1. Some people do not see themselves with the need or the potential to be perfectly holy like God

- a. Jesus said we must be "perfect" like God (See Matthew 5:48)
- b. This perfection in holiness can only come by learning about God and His perfect holiness so that we can apply His qualities
- 2. Throughout scripture people are called to be like God in holiness
 - a. The children of Israel were led out of Egyptian bondage and were told to be holy like the God who delivered them (See Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7)
 - b. God has helped us escape from sins bondage and we are called to be holy like the God who delivered us. (See I Peter 1:15-16)
 - c. Every day of our life we are to strive for holiness since God has been merciful in delivering us (See Luke 1:75)
 - d. One man said, "A holy life will make the deepest impression. Lighthouses blow no horns, they just shine."
 - e. How many of us are shining as examples of the good work that God has called us to in this life, that we might live holy lives and bring glory to Him?(Matthew 5:16; Mark 6:20; II Kings 4:9).
- B. We must continue to perfect how holy we are as we learn more about God.
 - 1. We are to continually grow in the Lord to the point of perfection
 - a. Paul encouraged saints to put on the new man that is created in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 2:22-24).
 - b. One is to be buried with Christ in baptism and put to death the old man while putting on the new man to live a new pure life. (Rom. 6:1-8).
 - 2. Once we are saved we must be faithful in our work and worship to God
 - a. We must offer up spiritual sacrifices to God (See I Peter 2:5; I Cor. 3:17; Eph 2:21-22)
 - b. If we are not faithful in living holy lives we will not be able to see the Lord our God (See Hebrew 12:14)
 - c. We must love one another if we are to live holy lives before a loving God who granted love to us (See I Thessalonians 3:12-13).
 - d. We need to demonstrate the qualities of holy living (See Colossians 3:12-15)
 - e. The church will one day be presented to God, hopefully holy, spotless and blameless in judgment. (See Ephesians 5:27; Colossians 1:22; Revelation 22:11-12; II Peter 3:9-18)
 - f. D.A. Carson once said, "People do not drift toward holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated."

CONCLUSION

- 1. We need to continue to learn about God and live holy lives that are in accordance with His perfect holiness.
- 2. Whatever is hindering you from being holy before God, put it away and let us take more time each day to be holy

(Song: "Take Time To Be Holy" *below verse 1*)

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word.
Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak,
Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

3. God has given us great and precious promises and we must help each other to live in such a way that we can receive them when we meet Him on the last great day.

Our text for today says:

"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"

4. If you have never obeyed the gospel consider:

Acts 22:16

"Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name."

5. If you have obeyed the gospel, but have failed to live a holy life, consider:

I Jn 1:9

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."