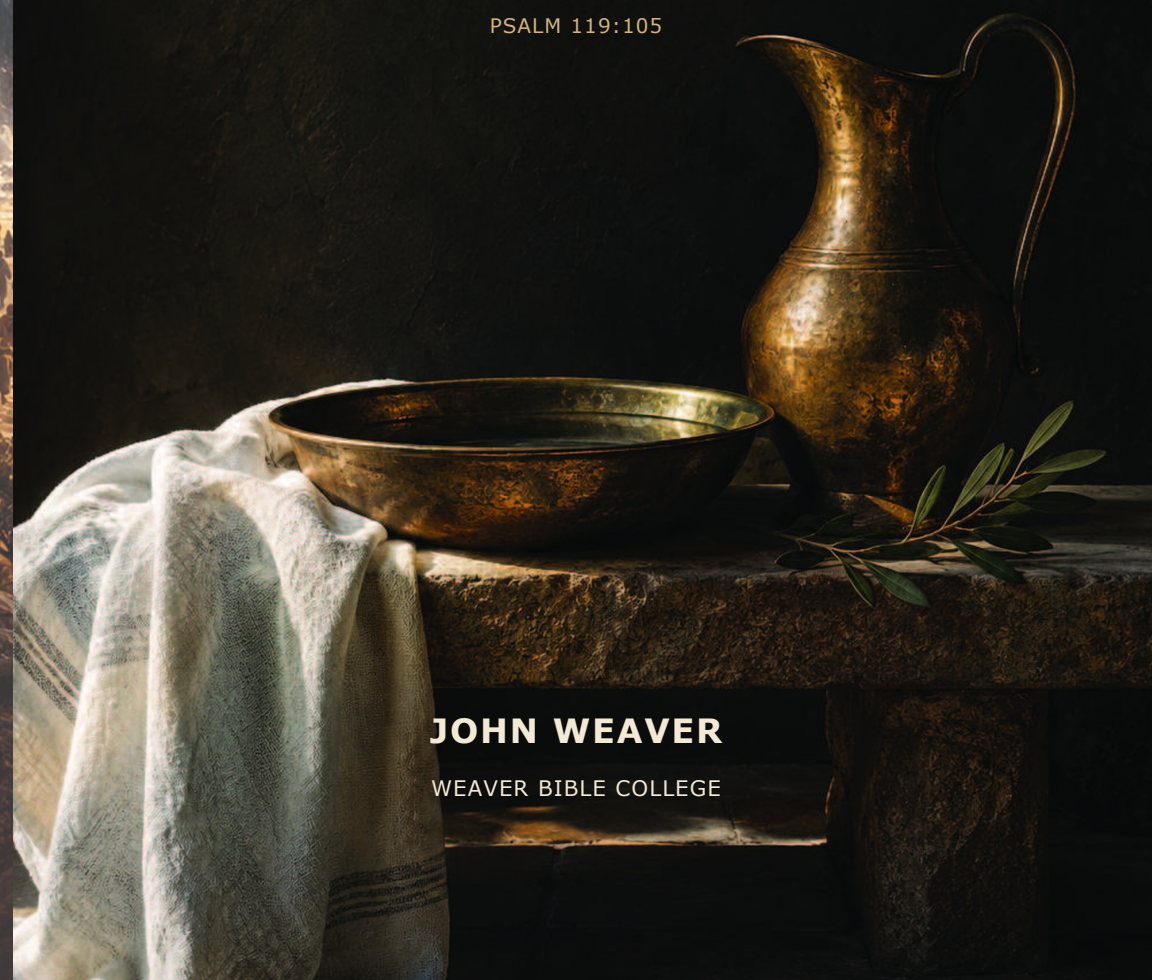
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"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

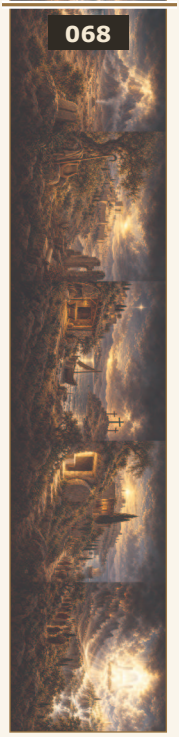
PSALM 119:105



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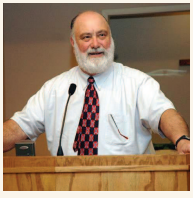
Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 CORINTHIANS 7:1, EXCERPT

Holiness concerns the inner life as well as outward conduct. John Weaver examines cleansing, bitterness, the tongue, chastening, and the believer's responsibility to act in dependence on God's help. These messages connect the promises of God with the daily work of pursuing purity in both flesh and spirit.

“God commands us to cleanse ourselves from not only the filthiness of the flesh, but of the spirit as well.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

Perfecting Holiness - 1

Perfecting Holiness

Introduction to the Series and Text

The theme of this series is “Perfecting Holiness.” It will consist of five messages, and this is the first. Today’s message and next week’s will address perfecting holiness, followed by God as Father; you will understand why. Today is essentially an introduction.

Look at 2 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.” Notice that last phrase: “perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

The Necessity of Knowing God's Word for Holiness

I believe that every true child of God genuinely desires to live a holy, godly life. I might add that if you do not desire to live a holy, godly life, there is a doubt as to whether or not you are really a true child of God. The Bible teaches very clearly and dogmatically that without holiness no man shall see the Lord—Hebrews 12:14. Even our Lord

said in Matthew 5:8, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

One of the problems that each of us encounters, one of the problems that each of us possesses in his own life, is the problem of ignorance. By that I mean this: we do not know the Word of God as we should know it. Consequently, since we do not know the Word of God, we do not know how to make application of the Word of God to our lives. We do not even know that which God demands. If you and I are going to live a holy life, we have to know the Word of God. We have to know that which God demands.

Moreover, if we understand that we are to live a holy life, we must ask ourselves: What is a holy life? What is the definition of holy? How do we discern whether or not we are holy? How do we discern whether anyone else is holy or not holy?

It was the duty of the priests in the Old Testament to teach the difference between holy and unholy, and between that which is clean and unclean. They had a responsibility to teach this to all of the people of God.

Now, I want you to hold 2 Corinthians 7, but go back in your Bibles to the book of Ezekiel chapter 22. Ezekiel 22, and look if you would please at verse 26. Without me multiplying scriptures, I do want to show you at least several right here. Look at Ezekiel 22 and verse 26, where God here condemns these priests. And look what He says specifically. Ezekiel 22 and verse 26, God says: "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them." So God is condemning the priests here because they put no difference between the holy and the unholy, the clean and the unclean, and He says they profaned My name. Now if you will turn to Ezekiel 44, here is what the true priests indeed are to do. Notice Ezekiel 44 and verse 23. God says this: "And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean."

Believers as Priests Called to Discern Holiness

So the true priest of God is to teach the difference between the unholy and that which is holy, that which is unclean and that which is clean. It was the duty and responsibility of priests in the Old Testament to teach this. It was the duty and responsibility of the priests in the New Testament to teach this. Someone may be sighing at this particular point and saying, "Well, I'm thankful I'm not a priest and I'm thankful I don't have that responsibility because that requires a great deal of study and a great deal of information." Well, before you get too thankful, I want to show you a couple of verses. First of all, I want you to turn to 1 Peter chapter 2 and look at verse 5. 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 5. And notice particularly what the Word of God says. 1 Peter 2, verse 5: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." So the Bible tells us that we are already a holy priesthood.

And if you would turn in your Bibles to the book of Revelation chapter 1, you will see how we got to be priests. Revelation chapter 1, look at verses 5 and 6. Revelation 1 verse 5: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be

The Bible tells us that we have been made priests unto God and our Father. Since we are priests, since we have been made priests, we must know and be able to discern the difference between that which is holy and that which is unholy, that which is clean and that which is unclean. In fact, Scripture is very specific. In 1 Thessalonians 4:7, God says, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." For God hath not called you unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. If we have a calling to be holy, we must know what holiness is. The word for holiness literally means to be set apart.

The Negative and Positive Aspects of Holiness

There is both a negative and a positive connotation attached to holiness. In 2 Corinthians 6:17, we see the negative aspect: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith

the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." Notice God says, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate. Touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." If we are going to be set apart, we have to be set apart from something. That something is whatever is sinful, wicked, and wrong.

There is also a positive aspect of holiness. In Romans 1:1, the apostle Paul declares, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." Separated unto the gospel of God. Here is a negative and a positive. The negative is that we are separated from sin and wickedness, that which is ungodly and unholy; and we are separated to something. We are separated to God and to His Word.

When Paul says, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ," the word servant is the Greek word doulos, which literally means a slave or a bond slave. Paul says he is now a slave to the Lord Jesus Christ and to His gospel. He is separated unto the gospel of God, and his service is not merely a general separation, but a life belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ and devoted to His gospel.

Thus, holiness refers, on the one hand, to the fact that we have been purged from our sins, repented, and turned from those sins; and, on the other hand, that we have been regenerated, converted, and renewed in our minds and souls. It means that we have turned from unrighteousness to righteousness. It means that we have turned from sin and wickedness to the Word of God, to the Lord Jesus in truth.

First Thessalonians 1:9 gives an excellent picture and summary of what holiness amounts to, both the negative and the positive. Paul says of the Thessalonians:

“So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”

There you have both the negative and the positive. They turned from idols—the negative—to God to serve Him. That is the positive. Obviously, then, holiness means simply to be set apart. You are set apart from something, and you are set apart unto something.

Positional vs. Practical Holiness

Second Corinthians 7:1 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." When Paul speaks of perfecting holiness in the fear of God, he is not referring to positional holiness. We must understand the difference between positional holiness and practical holiness.

Positional holiness is the work of God alone. It refers to the work of God the Father in Jesus Christ, placing us in the body of Christ, imputing the righteousness of Christ to us, and making us acceptable to Him in Jesus Christ alone. What is positional holiness? It is something that God alone does. We have no work in positional holiness.

Let us look at several passages showing what is known as positional holiness. First Corinthians 1:30–31 says, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Incidentally, the words holiness and sanctification are synonymous; they are the same exact word in the Greek. Thus we could read it, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." It is God the Father, then, who makes us positionally holy in Christ.

Second Corinthians 5:21 shows again that this is the work of God the Father: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." God the Father has made us righteous in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:4–6 likewise shows that this is the work of God the Father: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame

before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

But note: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." So, here is positional holiness. Positional holiness is something that God the Father does. It cannot be added to. It cannot be taken from. It is already perfect. You cannot be more holy in Christ positionally than you already are. It is perfect. It is the work of God.

But when you get to 2 Corinthians 7:1, Paul is not talking about positional holiness. He is talking about practical holiness. Look at verse 1 again: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." What the apostle Paul is talking about in 2 Corinthians 7:1 is a practical holiness in which you and I are engaged. We are actually doing something in our lives, and that something is seeking to bring our lives into greater conformity to the Word of God.

Why is it important that I learn practical holiness? Let me show you why this is so vitally important. Romans 6:19 says, "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." Before you were converted, you yielded your members—that is, your body, your mind, your heart, your limbs—to wickedness and uncleanness.

The Command to Yield to Righteousness

You did those things willingly, delightfully, premeditatedly. Now the apostle Paul says that just as, when you were unconverted, you yielded your body to all of those lustful, wicked things, now that you have been saved by the grace of God, you yield those same members as servants unto righteousness and to holiness. What is he teaching us? He is teaching us that we have a duty, a responsibility, a

privilege, and, I might add, a command to bring every area of our lives into conformity to the Word of God.

Peter teaches the same truth in a little different wording. In 1 Peter chapter 1, beginning with verse 13, he writes: “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

Notice that there is a negative in verse 14: here is what you are not to do. Then, in verse 15, he tells you what you are to do. In verse 16, he tells you why you are to do it. In holiness, then, there is obedience required. That is why he said, “as obedient children.”

Have you ever had a disobedient child? Do you know the difference? Every parent knows the difference between speaking to a child and having the child hear and instantly obey, and speaking to a child and then having to reprimand him, rebuke him, and finally chastise him just to get him to do what he was supposed to do in the first place. What is the difference? A lot. Just as we want our children to be obedient and to obey when we speak, God wants us to obey as He speaks. If we are going to be obedient children, we will not fashion ourselves according to the former lusts of our ignorance. Rather, we will be holy in all manner of conversation, as He is holy, because it is written, “Be ye holy; for I am holy,” saith the Lord.

Now, remember, I quoted Hebrews 12 and verse 14 earlier. Let me show you how important holiness is. Because in Hebrews 12 and verse 14, the Scripture says, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." So if God has saved us, He has made us positionally holy. If we have been made positionally holy, He now demands that we manifest a practical holiness in our life.

The Promises Motivating Practical Holiness

Now, let me ask that you turn back to 2 Corinthians chapter 7. And let me emphasize something right here, and it's important that you

and I understand this distinction. 2 Corinthians 7. Notice, if you would please, verse 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." So when it comes to practical holiness, that is your responsibility. However, that does not mean that you may perform practical holiness without the aid, help, and blessing of the Lord. If you and I are to be practically holy, that means we must have the power and the grace and the mercy of God in our lives in order to make us practically holy. You remember what our Lord said in John 15 and verse 5? What is it? "Without me ye can do nothing." Well, practical holiness is something. Well, yes, it is. That means you need the Lord. That means you need His grace, you need His mercy, you need His power, or without Him you can do nothing.

So let me put it like this: Ours is the responsibility. His is the ability. So once again, we need to learn to seek our Father for ability to fulfill our responsibility. OK, now, I told you today is just going to be an introduction mainly. I want you to consider one point today, just one point. I want you to consider the promises. And we're going to take up on this next week. We're still going to consider the promises next week, but only one aspect. Look, if you would, at 2 Corinthians 7 and verse 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.” Having therefore these promises—what promises? What promises? Well, verse 1 harkens back to chapter 6, verses 14 through 18. So let us go to 2 Corinthians 6 and look at verses 14 through 18. Here, the apostle writes: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and

will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." So the promises that the apostle talks about in chapter 7 and verse 1 refer back to the promises given to us in verses 17 and 18—in other words, actually, verse 16 as well.

For he says, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." So there are basically two promises here. That is why he uses the plural in verse 1. The first promise is given to us in verse 16. The second promise is given unto us in verses 17 and 18. So let us look at the first promise, found in verse 16, where God says, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." First, here is the promise: God will dwell with us, walk with us, be our God, and we will be His people.

This promise is given to us in the context of separating ourselves from idolatry, compromise, and corruption. That is why he said in verse 14, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Holiness has both a negative and a positive aspect: we must be separated from something, and we must be separated unto someone. Holiness, then, is separation from sin and separation unto God.

God is demanding in this passage that if we have been made positionally holy in Christ, there must be a corresponding resemblance of that in our lives—a practical holiness. It is this practical holiness that defines and differentiates between His possessing people and His professing people. Like the old black man said, "A lot of folks talk about heaven ain't going there." A lot of folks profess Christ, but they do not possess Christ, and their lives are absolutely, totally contrary to Scripture.

This should be plain based on verses 16 and 17: "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." Is it not plain that God's being our God and walking among us is based

upon our separation from corruption and wickedness? In other words, it is evidenced by our obedience to God. The evidence that we have taken God as our God is that we have left wickedness, idolatry, and corruption. God is not going to be identified with idolatry or wickedness in any way whatsoever.

You remember what the Bible says concerning Christ in Hebrews 7:26: He is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Do you mean to tell me that the sinless Son of God will have communion with someone full of sin and wickedness? The answer is absolutely no. Therefore, he says in verse 14, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

What are these questions? "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" What is the answer? None. "What communion hath light with darkness?" None. Light is either going to conquer the darkness or darkness is going to conquer light. "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" or the devil? None. "Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" None. "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" None.

And so what is he saying? "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." The answer to every one of these is that Christ has nothing to do with any of these things. He is telling us that we should avoid all wickedness and all sin as we would avoid the plague. We do not want to be around someone who has an extremely communicable disease. Likewise, we should not want to be around anything that will pollute our soul and our mind, just as a disease would harm our body.

These questions direct us to two passages, first Isaiah 52 and then Revelation 18. Isaiah 52:11 is specifically in view, but verse 10 is also read. "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." Isn't that amazing? He tells us to be clean. If I had time, I could take you through the New Testament and show that our bodies are the vessels of the Lord.

There is a commercial Babylon and a religious Babylon. Revelation 18:4 says, “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” Again, He says, “Come out of her.”

The promise, this first promise, is that God will dwell with us and walk with us and be our God, and He will recognize us and treat us as His people. But how can this promise—that God will dwell with us and walk with us and be our God, and we will be His people—apply to us if we are already His people?

What follows is to be an encouragement to believers. Our Lord said, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”

So what does the world do to a real, genuine believer who wants to live holy and godly and bring his life into conformity to the Word of God? What does the world do to him? They hate him. They will persecute him. Do they persecute our Lord? Yes. Do they persecute His disciples? Yes. Will they do that today? Yes.

So here is what this promise is all about. The Lord is saying to us, when the religious establishment kicks you out the way the Jews did anybody who believed on Christ in the New Testament, when the religious establishment kicks you out and when the world hates you and despises you and will have nothing to do with you because you belong to Christ, God says, “Don’t worry.”

“I will take you under my wings. I will protect you. I will preserve you. I’ll keep you as the apple of my eye. I’ll build a fire and a wall of protection round about you. And I will walk among you. And I will make sure that you are well taken care of.”

God as Father: Implications for Believers

Here is a promise that you and I have in light of our separation from the world and religious idolatry. Our Lord said, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me first.”

Since 2 Corinthians 6 speaks of coming out from among them, and promises that God will protect us and be everything that we need, consider 1 Peter 2:9: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” How can we show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness if we are still participating in darkness? How can we praise Him for His marvelous light if we do not see the light for the darkness in which we are participating? This promise—that God will be our God, that we will be His people, and that He will walk among us—is given when we separate ourselves from the world and from idolatry and become His bond slave, His personal property.

The second promise is that God will be our Father and that we will be His sons and daughters. He says in verses 17 and 18: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” Has the truth and/or the implication of God as our Father ever sunk into your soul?

The disciples came to our Lord and said, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” And our Lord said, “All right, when ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven.” Have you ever really thought that God is your Father? Turn to Romans chapter 1. I want to show you something that you probably have missed as you have read through the Scripture. Look at verse 7. Here, the apostle Paul writes, giving his salutation: “To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Note that this salutation is very common to the apostle Paul. He made it a habit of greeting all the saints this way, by referring to God our Father.

If there are so many references in the Bible, especially the New Testament, to God being our Father, undoubtedly there have to be implications of this truth. Are we not missing out on something by not recognizing, acknowledging, and confessing that God is our Father? Certainly, if God is our Father, that speaks of a relationship, a fellowship, and a communion, one of which, I am afraid, most of us

are absolutely and totally ignorant. Most of us have never really considered this fact: God is our Father. Now turn to 1 Corinthians 1. I want you to see how many times the apostles refer to God as our Father. Look at verse 3: “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” We just read that in Romans. Turn over to 2 Corinthians chapter 1 and look at verse 2.

SCRIPTURE READING - Multiple passages (KJV)

"Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," verse 3 says, but verse 2, "Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

Galatians chapter 1 and verse 3: "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 2: "Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." Philippians chapter 1 and verse 2: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." Philippians 4 and verse 20: "Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Colossians 1 and verse 2: "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Thessalonians 1, verse 1: "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 3 and verse 11: "Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you." Verse 13: "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."

2 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 1: "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Verse 2: "Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

> Chapter 2, verse 16: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace."
>
> 1 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 2: "Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord." 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 2: "To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."

In the book of Philemon, verse 3, we read: “Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

If God is mentioned as our Father so many times in the New Testament, are there not implications of that truth for our lives? There must be great significance attached to this truth for it to be repeated so often in the Bible. Every time we read about God being our Father, the Father of believers, He is mentioned as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The imagery conveyed is twofold. First, God is recognized as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is distinct from everyone else because He is uniquely the Son of God. Everyone can quote John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” The words “only begotten” are from one word in the Greek, monogenes, which means one of a kind, unique. There is only one like Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect man. He is the Son of Man and the Son of God. God the Father is called His Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But secondly, He is also called the Father of individual believers, and He is our Father by virtue of regeneration, adoption, and redemption. When our Lord spoke to His disciples, He used phrases such as “your Father,” “your Father which is in heaven,” and “your heavenly Father.” He is called the Father of mercies, the Father of glory, the Father of spirits, and the Father of lights. The fact that God is Father is mentioned repeatedly in the New Testament.

What significance does this have for our lives? How do we apply the truth that God, the sovereign, majestic, eternal, infinite, holy God of the universe, is our Father? Note that it is the Father who begets children. If you are a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ, the

Father who begat you is your heavenly Father. He begat you into His kingdom, adopted you into His family in Christ Jesus, regenerated you, converted you, and gave you faith and repentance. Children do not beget themselves, nor do they decide or determine to be born. They are begotten by the Father.

As that is true physically, it is also true spiritually. If Jesus Christ, the unique, only begotten Son of God, is the begotten Son of God in the sense that the Father begat Him and determined and ordained everything about Him, then obviously, it is the Father who begets individual believers as well. In fact, let me show you several verses. Look in your Bibles at James 1:18.

I do not know how it could be any plainer, but here it is. The Bible says concerning God; let us read verse 17, so you can see that God the Father is in view. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." Of His own will He begat us. We are begotten of the Father.

Turn right over to 1 Peter 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." But notice verse 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us."

If you would turn to 1 John 5:1, John says it like this: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." Do you realize? Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. That is what the Scripture says. It is God the Father who gives life. There is no life apart from God the Father. If you have been begotten by God the Father, you have been regenerated and converted. If you have not been begotten by God the Father, then you are not a Christian.

Now, let me show you a very simple and obvious implication. All of our physical children look like us, talk like us, and act like us. The Klingler children are not here today, but if all the Klinglers were here, and you looked at Janet and Henry and then at their children, could you tell that those children belonged to Janet and Henry? Sure you could. Could you look at Tripp and Lacey and tell they belonged to Beck and Dean? Of course you could.

I see people all the time and figure out who belongs to whom just by the way they look, act, and talk, because children look and act like their parents. There is a family resemblance—not only in their looks, but also in their attitudes and actions. I can show you children who walk exactly the way their father walks. You can look at them and tell.

Now turn to Matthew 5. Our Lord is correcting the misinterpretation and misapplication of God's law promulgated by the Pharisees. He teaches it repeatedly and corrects it. If you read Matthew 5, you will hear our Lord say, "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time... But I say unto you..." or, "Ye have heard that it hath been said... But I say unto you..."

In other words, here is what they taught, and it is wrong; here is what I am telling you is truthful and right. In Matthew 5, beginning with verse 43, you will see the last one of these: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Why?

"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." What did He say? "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." In other words, just like Henry and Janet's children look like them, walk like them, talk like them, and act like them, God says, My children should walk like Me, talk like Me, and act like Me, "that ye may be the children of your Father."

When people see you, they should know that you're a Christian by the way you speak, walk, act, and talk. The whole emphasis is that

His children act like their parents. Every young child—though I can't say this about every teenager—wants to please his father. If we are His children, if we have been begotten by Him, there should be in us a desire to please Him.

I'm working on another series on walking with the Lord, but there is a verse of Scripture that says we are to walk pleasing in His sight. Obviously, if we're His children, we're to walk pleasing unto Him. I am to be as my heavenly Father.

Let me make two applications. Unhappily, most of the time we do not think about God as our Father. Most of the time when we pray, we'll say, "Dear Lord," or "Lord Jesus." There is no problem with praying like that. People have asked me, "How should I pray? Should I pray to the Father? Should I pray in the name of the Son? Should I pray in the Holy Spirit?" The biblical way is this: Ephesians 2, I believe it is verse 18, says we are to go to the Father through Jesus in the Spirit.

Since we have one God, not three, it doesn't matter if you say, "Our Father," "Lord Jesus," or "Blessed Holy Spirit"; it's still one God. Do you understand that? But He says, "By him," or, "through him we have access unto the Father." The emphasis is on the Father.

In fact, Christ said—turn to 1 Peter 3. Let me show you a verse that just came to my mind. First Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." So, He died to bring us to the Father, unto God. Therefore, when we pray, we may lawfully and legitimately and honestly, if we've been regenerated by the grace of God, say, "Our Father."

We have a responsibility, and I might add a privilege, to acknowledge and confess God as our Father. As a child, I never had any problem asking my Father for whatever I wanted. He was my Father; I recognized him as my Father. We have an obligation, we have a responsibility to recognize, to acknowledge, and confess God as our Father.

Why do we not do so more frequently? Because if we acknowledge that we have a responsibility to confess God as our Father, then the corollary is that we have a responsibility to act like His child. If He's

my Father, I'm His child. I have a responsibility to act like His child and to bring my life into conformity to the Word of God. We need to more frequently acknowledge and confess God as our Father through the person and work of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Father, we do come to Thee and we do acknowledge today that Thou art God, indeed our Father. And Father, Thou art only our Father by grace, through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. And we glory in the fact that the sovereign, majestic God of heaven and earth is our Father. But Father, we also have a responsibility to act like and live like Thy children. Father, as we look at this doctrine of holiness, practical holiness, I pray that Thou would enable us to repent of any and all of our sins, to bring our lives into greater conformity to Thy Word. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Perfecting Holiness - 2

Review of Practical Holiness

In 2 Corinthians 7:1, the Apostle writes, "...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." These promises refer back to 2 Corinthians 6:14–18. The Apostle says, "let us" cleanse ourselves and perfect holiness in the fear of God. The word holiness literally means to be set apart. There is a negative and a positive concerning holiness.

The negative aspect appears in 2 Corinthians 6:17: "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." Thus, the negative aspect of holiness is that we are separated from sin, wickedness, and ungodliness. The positive sense of holiness is that we are separated unto God in the gospel. We are set apart from sin, and we are set apart to God.

In Romans 1:1, the Apostle Paul called himself both a slave and a servant of Jesus Christ. The word servant there literally means slave. This gives the positive sense of holiness its proper direction: we are

separated unto God as those who belong to Jesus Christ. Negatively, holiness means that we are set apart from sin; positively, we are set apart to God.

Also, 2 Corinthians 7:1 has absolutely nothing to do with what we would call positional holiness. Positional holiness is the work of God. It is something that God the Father has done when He set us in Jesus Christ. Positionally, we cannot get any more holy than we already are, because we have been clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Our position is not something we establish by our own works.

But in 2 Corinthians 7:1, the Apostle says, "having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves." Here he is referring to practical holiness, something that you and I must apply and work on in our daily lives. Romans 6:19 gives an example: "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh, for as you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now yield your servants to righteousness unto holiness."

This is the practical aspect of holiness. As you used to yield your members willingly, knowingly, and premeditatedly to sins and wickedness, now you willingly, knowingly, and premeditatedly yield your mind and the members of your body to righteousness unto holiness. The same members once yielded to uncleanness and iniquity are now to be yielded to righteousness. Likewise, 1 Peter 1 says, "as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lust of your ignorance."

On the one hand, here is the negative: if we are obedient children, we will not fashion ourselves according to the former lust of our ignorance. But here is the positive: "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation, as he is holy," because it is written, "Be ye holy, for I am holy, saith the Lord." Scripture also tells us that we are to follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

I do want to emphasize this. Although practical holiness revolves around our duty, responsibility, and obligation, that does not mean we can perform it on our own. Our Lord said, "Without me ye can do

nothing." We must have the grace, power, and mercy of God as we apply ourselves to practical holiness.

The Promise of God as Father

When we ended last week, we were considering one point: consider the promises. I was discussing the two promises revealed in 2 Corinthians 6, where he says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved." In verse 16 is the first promise: "For you are the temple of the living God. As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." We dealt with that promise thoroughly.

The second promise is found in verses 17 and 18: "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." This promise relates to God as our Father and to the fact that we are the sons and daughters of God.

The Apostle Paul emphasized this repeatedly. In practically every New Testament greeting to believers, he referred to greetings, salutations, or blessings from God our Father and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. God was not only the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ; He was our Father as well—by virtue of regeneration, adoption, and redemption.

What is the significance of having the sovereign, supreme, majestic God of heaven and earth as our Father? How should the realization that God is our Father motivate and encourage us to practical holiness?

I have covered one of the sub-points under considering the promises: if God is our Father, it means that He begat us. I took you through the Scriptures and showed you how, of His own will, He begat us with the word of truth. The whole significance is this: if God is our Father and we are His children, we must act like His children.

God as Father Means He Begat Us

Could anybody look at the Klinger children and not know that they were the children of Henry and Janet? Could anybody look at Tripp

and Lacey and not know that they were Tina and Rebecca's children? Children look like their parents. They act like their parents. They walk and talk like their parents, and their attitudes are like their parents' attitudes. If God is our Father, our attitude should be like His attitude. We should walk and talk like Him.

The reason many people do not want to address God as Father is that, by doing so, they acknowledge that they are His children. Therefore, there is a moral obligation, duty, and responsibility to act like His children. We are still considering the promise of God as our Father: if we separate ourselves from sin and wickedness and separate ourselves unto Him, He will be a Father unto us, and we shall be His sons and daughters.

God as Father Means He Provides

Secondly, if God is our Father, He is our provider. A father makes provision for the nursing, nourishment, and raising of his children. The children do not provide for themselves; the Father provides for them.

I remember, as a young man, that I could not wait to get out from my father's house so I could do what I wanted to do. When I got out, I found that I could not do what I wanted to do; I had to do what I had to do. After those first bills started coming in, I thought, What a fool I was.

Because when I lived with Dad, he paid for everything. All I had to do was obey, and now that I am out and away, I have to pay for everything, and it is not so simple anymore.

My father provided for us. The father is always responsible for the upbringing and the health of his children. In 2 Corinthians 12:14, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.” What? The children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. So God, as our Father, does indeed nourish and provide for us. The problem is, unhappily at times, even our Father’s children rebel against Him and refuse to acknowledge His provision.

You remember that passage in Isaiah 1:2, where God said, “I have nourished up children, and they rebelled against me.” That is when He went on to say, “The ox knoweth his stall, and the ass his master’s crib, but my people do not know, they do not consider.” Oftentimes, we do rebel against Him. But Acts 14:17 speaks concerning His gracious provision: “Nevertheless, he that is God left not himself without witness in that he did good and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” This is talking about God’s provision, God’s providence.

So God, our Father, has providentially provided for us in every way and in a multitude of ways. Here is a question: Have you ever thought about, or has it ever dawned upon you, exactly how much our Father provides for us? You may just need to consider the fact that if He did not provide air, food, and water, we would cease to exist. It is true that God provides the basics of life, but it is also true that He provides more than the basics of life, because oftentimes He allows us to enjoy life to the fullest by not only supplying our needs, but a multitude of our wants as well. He knows exactly what we need.

In Matthew 6, verses 7 and 8, our Lord gives an interesting passage: “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them.” For your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.

Isn’t that amazing? We do not have to be like the heathen, using vain repetitions, begging, beseeching, wailing, whining, complaining, or griping. He says we do not have to do that; we simply ask, because our Father knows what we need even before we ask. This passage clearly illustrates and demonstrates that God, our Father, is ready, willing, able, and even desirous to supply our needs.

Has it ever entered your mind that our Heavenly Father wants to provide for you? He is not only able to do so, but longs to do so. Why? He is your Father, and you are His child. We simply need to know that we should ask, because He already knows our needs and our wants as well.

I particularly love Psalm 81:10, where God told the children of Israel, "I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." It is just like little baby birds. They open their mouths wide, and their mothers and fathers stuff as many worms as they can down those little birds' beaks. I have watched them do it innumerable times.

God says, "I am your heavenly Father. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." In Matthew 7:11, He says, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, do you not give good gifts to them? You are a sinner. Yet, as evil and sinful as you and I are, we still want to give good gifts to our children and grandchildren. If a child asks for an egg, will he be given a stone? If he asks for bread, will he be given a scorpion? The answer is no.

And our Lord said, If you are evil and know how to do that, do you not believe that your Heavenly Father knows how to give good gifts to them that ask Him? One of the joys of being a father and grandfather is giving to your children and grandchildren. Alice and I have lived through times when it was impossible to give to them. Yet it is indeed a joy to give and supply their needs, sometimes even before they are aware of them. If you and I enjoy providing for our children and grandchildren and giving good things to them, is not our Heavenly Father far greater than we are?

He is without sin. He is infinitely holy and righteous. If we sinful creatures enjoy doing those things, how much more shall our Heavenly Father give to us? He is far greater than any earthly Father.

One of my favorite passages—and, of course, I guess I have so many of them. Everybody asks me sometimes, "What is your life verse?" Well, I have one passage that I kind of picked out. But when I am asked, "What is my favorite passage of Scripture?" I am dumbfounded, because I like so many of them. One of my favorites is James 1 and verse 17. Listen to this: "Every good gift and every perfect gift coming down where? From above, from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Every good gift and every perfect gift comes down from our Heavenly Father. We need to learn to acknowledge that everything that we are and everything that we have is from Him. Moreover, we need to learn to acknowledge that everything we ever shall have and everything that we ever shall be is from Him.

If you look in your Bibles to Psalm 34, there are several passages here, just showing you how God the Father provides. Look at Psalm 34, beginning with verse 8. The Bible says, “O taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man that trusted in him. O fear the Lord, you his saints. Watch, for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” In other words, God is going to revive.

Then turn right over to Psalm 37 and look at verse 25. David made this statement: “I have been young and now I am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” He had been young, and now he was old. Yet he had never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. You know why? Because in Hebrews 13 and verse 5, He said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

If you will turn right over to Isaiah 40—not Psalm, I am sorry, Isaiah 40. I want you to look at one of the prophecies concerning Christ. Look, if you would please, at verse 11. In fact, we can read verse 10 just to show you this is in reference to the one true and living God. Isaiah 40, verse 10: “Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him. Behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.” We are talking about Christ. Watch.

“He shall feed His flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” In other words, He is going literally to take care of us in every way whatsoever. He has not only provided for us in time and in history; He also provides for us in eternity. In 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 4, what do we have? “To an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled. That faith is not a way reserved in heaven for you.” What? The Father has laid up for His children. And then in Revelation 7, verse 17, we read: “For the Lamb which is in the

midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them into fountains of living water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

So if God is our Father, that means He is the one who provides for us. You know what most children do? Most children take the provision from their father and mother for granted. We get it every day, and we likewise take God's provisions for us for granted. We take it for granted that we are going to live through the night, wake up the next day, and have food and money. So often we refuse to thank our Father for His provision—our earthly father, as well as our heavenly Father. The one true and living God said, "If you will separate yourself from evil and wickedness, and you come to me, I'll be a father unto you."

"I will provide for you." There is no one who can provide like God the Father. Henry may be rich, but God owns everything. Ed may have plenty of money, but he does not have as much as God does. Who can provide like God? We need Him, and we should want Him as our Father. If we understand that God is our provision and He is our Father, then we should be very careful to do those things that please Him and not offend Him. A father is always willing to provide for an obedient child. It is only when the child becomes recalcitrant, rebellious, and mean that the father withdraws his giving hand and extends the chastening hand.

God as Father Means He Protects

Secondly—today, it is actually the third point, if you are taking notes—if God is our Father, He is not only our provider; He is our protector. A father will always protect, defend, and shield his children from hurts, injuries, and abuses. He will always vindicate their cause against all enemies, and he will make it very clear to the enemies that, as they mess with his children, it will be to their own peril.

I like what Nathan Bedford Forrest told Braxton Bragg: "If you ever interfere with me again, it will be at the peril of your own life." That is basically what God tells the enemies. Look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 32. Notice what God says concerning His people. Deuteronomy 32:9 says, "For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob

is the lot of his inheritance." He found him in a desert land, in the waste howling wilderness. He led him about and instructed him. Notice this: "He kept him as the apple of his eye."

The apple of the eye is the pupil of the eye. Since the pupil is the most sensitive area, it has to be constantly and consistently protected. You know what David prayed in Psalm 17:8: "Keep me as the apple of mine eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings." Here is David, the mighty warrior, asking God to protect him as we would protect our eyes. He wanted God to protect him. In fact, God warned the nations in Zechariah 2:8: "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, after the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which followed you: he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye."

Again, God warned them: You touch My people; I will touch you. He warned them in 1 Chronicles 16:22, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." He repeated that warning in Psalm 105:15: "Touch not mine anointed, and do my people no harm."

Have you ever called upon your heavenly Father for protection? Have you ever considered that He is big enough, strong enough, able, and willing to protect you? I remember my earthly father. I have only seen him ready to fight twice in my life, and I have never forgotten either time. Once, my sister and I went to a dentist. My sister was probably six or seven, and I was about five. Dad asked the dentist, "Do you want me to stay in here with you because they're children?" The dentist said, "No, I can take care of it." So Dad went outside and sat in the waiting room.

When Barbara got into the dentist chair as a child, she was scared, crying and wailing, and of course it scared me. Instead of trying to calm her down, the dentist pinched her nose and put his hand over her mouth, intending to smother her in a submission. When I saw that, I became frightened and started screaming. My father heard me. I thought he was going to come in and help the dentist, but when he opened the door, he saw the dentist smothering my sister. My father went over, took that man with one hand, held him against the wall, and said, "If you ever touch my children again, I'll kill you." Then he dropped him, took us, and left.

What was Dad doing? Was he wrong? I don't think so. Consequently, I never went to a dentist for a long time afterward, which pleased me well. But I am just saying, Dad did that. Fathers always protect their children. When my girls went hunting, I would put them up trees, and I might be five hundred yards from them. My instructions were these: "If any man comes to this tree and tries to bother you, you shoot him, and I'll question him when I get there." Why? I wanted my children protected.

Have you ever thought that God protects us? Did you know the Bible says in Proverbs 18:10, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe"? Have you ever thought about that? God delivered the children of Israel from Pharaoh and drowned Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. Look at what the children of Israel did after they were protected by God. In Exodus 15:1, Moses and the children of Israel sang this song unto the LORD: "I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song, and is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him."

"The Lord is a man of war. The Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host have been cast into the sea. His chosen captains are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them. They sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power. Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy, and in the greatness of Thine excellency Thou hast overthrown them that rose up against Thee. Thou sentest forth Thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with a blast of thine nostrils the waters were gathered together, the flood stood upright as a heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them, I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them, they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is likened to Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is likened to Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

In other words, here is absolute praise and worship for God's protection. How many times have you thanked God for His protection in your life? Alice and I recently were coming home from Alabama, traveling through Henry's old stomping grounds. Right before we reached Henry's home area, we were traveling down the road at sixty miles an hour when we saw a car shoot across the road in front of us, probably doing seventy miles an hour. He had run the stop sign, and we were probably one hundred yards back. My mouth fell open, and I looked at Alice. “Did you see that? That man just ran through the stop sign, probably seventy miles an hour.”

When we got there, I slowed down and we looked to the right. He was about one hundred yards down the road, standing beside it. Perhaps it had scared him too; I do not know, but it scared me. I told Alice, “We need to be thankful that God protected us.” I do not know how. Maybe that red light was just thirty seconds longer or something. But we were not there to be hit when that man ran the stop sign. God has protected us so many times, and we do not even acknowledge it. We do not even think about it.

Our heavenly father is the protector, he is the defender and the preserver of his people. I want you to turn to Psalm 7 and very quickly follow with me. I want to take you through several Psalms and just show you how David makes this truth very prominent. Notice Psalm 7 and verse 10. Then Psalm 18. But look at Psalm 7 and verse 10. Look what David says: “My defense is of God who saveth the upright in heart.” Look in Psalm 18, if you would, at verse 2. Look how David ascribes this greatness and this power to God. He said in Psalm 18, verse 2, “The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my strength in whom I will trust, my buckler and the horn of my salvation and my high tower.”

All of those things are objects of protection. In Psalm 27:1, David says, “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the

days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord in the choir of His temple." Notice what he is saying: God is my protection.

In Psalm 31:2, David prays, "Bow down thou in ear to me, deliver me speedily, be thou my strong rock and a house of defense to save me." Look in Psalm 59:9: "Because of His strength will I wait upon thee, for God is my strength and my defense." God is my defense. In Psalm 89:18 he uses the plural: "For the Lord is our defense, and the Holy One of Israel is our King." In Psalm 94:22 he says, "But the Lord is my defense, And my God is the rock of my refuge."

And I want to show you at least three more. Psalm 140 is a wonderful psalm. In verse 6 he says, "I said unto the Lord, thou art my God. Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord. O Lord, the Lord, the strength of my salvation. Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle." What was God doing? Protecting and preserving.

I want to quote Isaiah 12:2: "Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." Notice what he said: "Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid."

I remember when Wendy, our oldest, was two or three years old, she was afraid of the dark. I taught her this verse, and you could hear her walking down the dark hall saying, "I will trust and not be afraid. I will trust and not be afraid," until she got to the light switch. But this is exactly what God says: "I will trust and not be afraid."

Look at Isaiah 33, beginning in verse 14: "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure."

If I had time today to multiply these passages, I could show you practically in every book of the Bible where God is our defense. He is our protector. If God does not protect us, then we are not protected. It is just that simple. If he does not defend us, we are not defended.

If we obey him, he has not only promised to keep us safe from harm and from our enemies; he has promised us victory over our enemies.

In Deuteronomy 28:7, he said, “The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways.” In other words, if we obey and trust in him, when our enemies attack, our Lord will give us the victory and make it short and sweet. There is no victory that can be had apart from God fighting for us. The passage in Leviticus 26:8 is imported as well.

He says, and five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight, and your enemy shall fall by the sword. You just stop and think, five chasing a hundred, and a hundred chasing ten thousand. And Joshua told his people in Joshua 23 and verse 10, for one man of you shall chase a thousand for the Lord your God. He is it.

He it is that fighted for you as he promised. So when God fights. When God fights for us, one man is able to chase a thousand. Why? Because God is not only our provider. He's our protector. I do not care what weaponry the enemy has. I do not care how advanced their technology is. They cannot overcome the sovereign God of heaven and earth. And they cannot succeed in their rebellion against Him when He fights to protect His children. Here's the fourth thing today, but the third thing I'm giving you If God is our father, he not only beget us, he not only provides for us, he not only protects us. Are you listening? He is our portion.

God as Father Means He Is Our Portion

He is all that we need. And he is able to satisfy every heart and every desire. We are to find our solace and our satisfaction and security in him.

Now, very quickly, I want you to just go back to Psalm 16. I want to show you about five or six verses, and then I want to start making some applications. I want you to watch this. Look in Psalm 16. I just read the passage from Deuteronomy 7. But look, if you would, in Psalm 16. And watch, if you would please, verse 5. Psalm 16, verse 5.

David said, The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup. Thou maintainest my lot. Note, the Lord is the portion of mine inheritance. Turn right over to Psalm 73. Psalm 73. Look in verse 26.

Psalm 73, verse 26. David says, My flesh in my heart faileth, but God is a strength of my heart and my portion forever. I want you to notice now how many times he refers to God as his portion. Look in Psalm 119 and verse 57. Psalm 119 and verse 57.

Psalm 119, verse 57. Thou art my portion, O Lord. I have said that I would keep thy words. Wow. Thou art my portion, O Lord. Look in Psalm 142 and verse 5. Psalm 142 and verse 5. David says, I cried unto thee, O Lord, I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living. Wow. It's not just David who understood that the Lord is our portion. If you would turn to Jeremiah 10 and look at verse 16, Jeremiah 10, verse 16.

Look what Jeremiah says about the false gods: “The portion of Jacob is not like them.” The true portion of Jacob is “the former of all things,” and Israel is “the rod of his inheritance. The Lord of hosts is his name.” Once again, God is called the portion. In Lamentations 3:24, we read, “The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.” All through Scripture, God is called our portion.

What does it imply when the Bible says that God is our portion? We understand that He is our provider, our begetter, and our protector. But what does it mean when He says that God is our portion? David specifically says that He is our portion in this life. First of all, with God as our portion, it implies intimacy with God.

Stop and think about your earthly father for a moment. Do you remember special times, special things, episodes, events, or personal moments with him that were intimate in the sense that they would not have happened with anyone else? I could probably tell you many things, but I will tell you one that has stuck in my mind forever.

When I was a little boy, one of my favorite television shows was The Lone Ranger—Clayton Moore, with Jay Silverheels as Tonto. I do not know whether you remember it or not. The Lone Ranger came on, I believe, at seven o'clock at night, once a week. The program always began with the William Tell Overture. At that time of night, my father was lying on the couch. When the program came

on and the overture started playing, I would always start running and dive onto him, jumping on his chest, because the music and the program excited me.

We would wrestle until the program actually started. Why would something like that stand out in your mind? Because it was an intimate time. He was hugging me, I was hugging him, and we were laughing and playing.

All I am trying to show you is this: if God is our portion, it means that there are times of intimacy in our lives, special times that we have with our heavenly Father.

Turn to John 17. Do you know what eternal life is? Listen carefully. Eternal life is not merely living forever. Does that shock you? If eternal life means only living forever, then the unsaved would have it as well, because they will live forever in torment. Eternal life is intimacy with God the Father.

In John 17, verses 1–3, we read the high priestly prayer of our Lord: "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Our Lord defines eternal life as personal, intimate fellowship with our Heavenly Father. Knowing Him is life, for He is life. Would you say that there was intimacy between God the Father and God the Son?

Look in your Bibles at Mark 14:36. Our Lord is in the garden praying, and notice what He prays: "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." The Hebrew word Abba can be translated "Papa." Papa is a term of intimacy and endearment. Our Lord called His heavenly Father Papa; it is a familiar term that shows familiarity and intimacy.

Now look at Romans 8:15: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Just as our Lord referred to His heavenly Father as Papa, we have received the Spirit whereby we cry,

Papa, Father. Galatians 4:4–7 says, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

The word Abba means Papa; it is a term of intimacy and endearment. Notice what the apostle John wrote to these Christians: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” What is eternal life? It is intimate fellowship with the Father through Jesus Christ. One does not receive eternal life when he dies; he has it now.

If you do not have it now, you probably will not have it when you die either, because eternal life is intimate fellowship with the Father through Jesus Christ. If you disliked fellowship with the Father now, you surely would not like it in eternity. If God is our portion, it signifies that we have intimacy with Him. Secondly, if God is our portion, it signifies paternal care.

How many of you have left your little children by themselves? You just leave them alone. Nobody does that, at least not anybody who has an ounce of sense and could care for their children. By the way, if you have not read it, Greece is so bad—I just read this week—that parents are dumping their children in the streets because they are unable to provide for them and take care of them, just leaving them.

But a loving father does not leave his child alone. A loving father will rebuke, chasten, and discipline his child. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 2:11, “As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children.” Do you realize that when exhortation fails, there is always the rod? Do you realize that if we would listen to our Father, we would not be chastened? One of those passages in 1 Corinthians 11:31–32 ought to be glued into your mind: “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

So God said that if we would look to our own sins, rectify them, and repent of them, we would not be judged by Him. But when we

fail to repent, He chastens us that we might not be condemned with the world. That is why it says in Micah 6:9, “Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.” Just like a father, when he exhorts, if the child listens, nothing else is needed. When he does not listen, then the rod comes out.

Hebrews 12:5–8 says: “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

Our Heavenly Father is going to make sure that we are brought up right. He will discipline us. That is why, in Revelation 3:19, our Lord said, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” If you can sin and get by without being rebuked and chastised, something is wrong in your life, because the Father chastens all of His children.

Thirdly, since God is our portion, it implies that we shall most certainly be victorious and inherit all that He has for us. In light of all the discouragement, despondency, and downheartedness that prevails in Christendom today, I have news for you. The Bible says in Luke 12:32, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” And we are going to get it. It does not matter.

Consider what we are going to receive. According to Galatians 3:29, who is the true seed of Abraham? Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:16 says the same. God gave Abraham that little piece of land, but He did not give him only that little piece of land. He gave everything to the true Seed, who is Jesus Christ, just as Abraham gave everything to Isaac and sent the others away. First Corinthians 3:21 says, “Therefore let no man glory in men; for all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.”

How much do we have? Everything. In Romans chapter 8, verses 14 through 17, we read: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” We are the children of God. God is our Father. He is also the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

What do we get as the sons and daughters of God? He says, if children, then we are heirs, heirs of God; that is, God is our portion. We get everything about Him. Then he says that we are joint-heirs with Christ. How much did God the Father give Jesus Christ? Everything. You know what a joint-heir is? If Dean left a will and said that he gave everything to Tripp and Lacy jointly, what does that mean? It means they both have everything. It is all theirs. If we are joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, that means everything that Jesus Christ has, we have. What God gave to Christ, He gave to us as well.

No wonder the Apostle Paul says that we are more than conquerors through Christ who loved. How can we fail to conquer when we have everything? We have already won the victories in Jesus Christ. Our portion, then, is our God. He is the portion of His people. We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

Application: Pursue Holiness Because God Is Our Father

How are we to apply this? If God is my Father, if He begat me, if He provides for me, if He protects me, and if He is my portion, everything I have and everything I am is in Him. That means I must please Him and do as He commands, for He is my all in all. What else would I need? Nothing. I urge you to consider the promise.

In 2 Corinthians 6:18, He said, “And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters.” I desperately want God to be my Father. By that, I mean I want Him to be everything to me that He wants to be as my Heavenly Father. If I want Him to be everything He could be and should be as my Heavenly Father, it

must also mean that I want to be, and should be, and could be, everything to Him that I can be as His son.

My life is to be one of practical holiness because God is my Father. I separate myself from sin and separate myself to Him, and find out what it means to have God as my Father.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We ask Thy protection, Thy blessing, and Thy provision. Lord, that Thou wouldst be our portion, that Thou wouldst be everything to us. And Lord, help us to be everything to Thee. May we, Father, be as holy and as godly and as righteous as we can be by Thy grace and mercy. May we give Thee the honor and the glory. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Perfecting Holiness - 3

Review of the Promises

"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." When the Apostle says, "having therefore these promises," he is referring to the promises mentioned in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, especially verses 16 through 18. God promised, first of all, that if we would separate ourselves from sin and wickedness, He would not only be our God, but we would be His people. More specifically, He would be our Father, and we would be sons and daughters unto Him.

These promises involve a very intimate relationship. If God is our Father, He is the one that begat us. James 1:18 says, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." If God is our Father, that also means He is our provider and our protector. He is our portion in this life, the one that sustains us and nourishes us and protects us. He is the one that gives us victory in time and history as well.

Our Lord told us exactly what eternal life really was. He said in John 17:3, “And this is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true and living God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” Eternal life, then, as defined by our Lord, is a personal, intimate knowledge of and a relationship with God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Connection Between Promises and Holiness

There is a connection between these promises and the precept, and this connection is an encouragement to holiness in our personal lives. If God is going to be our God and He dwells among us and with us, then, since He is holy, we are to be holy, and we are to have everything around us holy as well. In light of these promises, we are to abstain from any and everything that is offensive in His sight. If we want God to be our Father, we should want to be His sons. If we want God to be everything to us that He can be and wants to be as Father, then we should want to be everything to Him that we can be as sons and daughters.

The Apostle said, “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.” Do not be alarmed by the word “perfecting.” I am not teaching sinless perfection.

Clarification on Sinless Perfection

There is a theory that some man or some woman could be sinlessly perfect in this life. It is absolutely contrary to Scripture. Harry A. Ironsides used to believe in the doctrine of sinless perfection, and he thought everybody else was sinlessly perfect but himself. Literally, it drove him insane. He spent months in a sanatorium. Therefore, he began to study the Scripture and found out that sinless perfection was not true. Harry Ironsides went on to become a very great preacher, but he had to get over this concept. Being sinlessly perfect in this life is not attainable.

Years ago, I went into a cleaning establishment. I knew the owner was a professing Christian, and I was carrying some suits to be cleaned. I said to him, “Isn’t it wonderful to be forgiven of your sins?” His reply was, “I don’t know, I haven’t sinned in years.”

When I picked my jaw up off the floor and regained my composure, I said, “Well, you just did.” He said, “What?” Then I quoted these verses. First John 1:8 says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” Verse 10 says, “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.”

Anytime you try to deny the sin nature or deny sinful acts, God says you are lying and the truth is not in you. You are trying to make God a liar. It is unbiblical, impractical, and a downright lie to deny that we are sinners, that we have sinned, and that we have a sinful nature. We cannot escape the reality that we are sinners. I am not trying to teach sinless perfection.

We're still in 1 John. If sinless perfection is a heresy, and it is, then the opposite is also a heresy: that we have to sin. We do not have to sin. I want you to hold 1 John 2. I'm coming right back there. Turn in your Bibles to Romans 6. Some years ago, I preached an entire series through Romans chapter 6, and I would encourage you to go back and listen to that series—ten or eighteen messages, something like that.

Freedom from Sin's Dominion

Romans chapter 6 deals with the fact that we as Christians have been delivered from the dominion and lordship of sin. Look at Romans 6, beginning with verse 11. The Apostle writes, “Likewise, reckon” or count or impute “yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you.” Why? “For we are not under the law”—that is, a means of justification—“but under grace.”

Now listen to what he said: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body.” He did not say, “Let not sin therefore be in your mortal body.” It is there. But you are not to let sin reign in your mortal body. Sin is not Lord for the Christian. When sin speaks and

says, “Do this,” you can say, “I don’t have to obey you. I’m not going to do that. That’s wicked. That’s wrong. That’s contrary to God. I’m not going to do that.” We owe no obedience to sin.

Then he gives an illustration: “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members”—your body—“as instruments of righteousness unto God.” In Jesus Christ we have been freed from the dominion of sin. It is not to reign in our bodies. We owe it no obedience. We do not have to obey it.

The truth is, we do at times sin, but we do not have to. In 1 John 2:1, John says, “My little children, these things I write unto you that ye sin not.” The purpose of John's writing this epistle was that we not sin.

The Purpose of Scripture and Overcoming Sin

He went on to say, “If any man does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Sin, then, is not to reign in our mortal bodies. It is not to hold sway, and it is not our lord. We are no longer obligated to obey sin because we are not under its dominion.

Remember Colossians 1:12–13: “Giving thanks unto the Father, who has made us meet,” or suitable, “to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” We have been taken out of the kingdom of sin and placed into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Therefore, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies.” These things were written so that we would not sin.

Yet we are sinners by nature. We have a sinful inclination, a sinful propensity. What, then, is to keep us from sinning? David answered that for us in Psalm 119:9–11: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee, O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.” Though David said “a young man,” this is true

of a middle-aged man and an old man as well. Old men have sins just like middle-aged men and young men.

David is saying that we are to be so absorbed in the Word of God that it is in our heart. When sinful temptations occur, the Word comes up and says, “No, you're not going to do that if you please God. If you please God, you're going to do the opposite of that.” We cleanse ourselves by taking heed to His Word.

The Purging Described

We have seen in the last two messages the promises declared. I want to start my second point today, and that is the purging described. Since we are not under the lordship of sin, and since the Bible was written, especially 1 John, that we not sin against God, because we know His law, His Word, and what He demands, I want you to see the purging described in 2 Corinthians 7:1: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.”

The Purging Described: Agency and Meaning

Note what the Apostle Paul said as he started this passage: “Having therefore these promises,” what are the next two words? “Dearly beloved.” Paul is writing Christians. Christians are dearly beloved because Christ gave His life for us. And we have a commandment that we should love one another. Therefore, our brothers and sisters should be dearly beloved by us. So the Apostle is saying, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved.”

Now look what he said: “Let us cleanse ourselves.” Here is the agency that the Word of God declares we are to use in cleansing ourselves, and that is us: “Let us cleanse ourselves.” The word “cleanse” literally means to purge, to purify, or to make clean. This is what the Word of God commands us to do: cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

There is a parallel passage in 2 Timothy, chapter 2. The Apostle Paul, who wrote 2 Corinthians, also wrote 1 and 2 Timothy. Look at what he tells Timothy, beginning with verse 20: “But in a great house

there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, some to honor and some to dishonor."

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." In every great house there are vessels of gold and silver, some of wood and earth, some to honor, some to dishonor. The Apostle is showing us that a man may purge himself from these and become a vessel unto honor, sanctified and prepared unto every good work.

To understand what the Apostle Paul is saying, consider the vessels in a household. Some sit on a mantle or shelf, gold-plated or gold-painted, beautiful and expensive. They are not used for anything; they simply sit there and look pretty. Other vessels are used for cooking every day, while some cooking items are used less often. Those vessels may be a little more expensive, but they are still used in the household.

Not so much today, but in latter years, most every family had a honeypot. It was kept in the house and used as a bathroom vessel when it was cold, then taken out the next morning. The point is this: there are some vessels to honor and there are some vessels to dishonor. Nobody displays their honeypot on the mantle.

If we would purge ourselves from those dishonorable things, we would be a vessel fit for the Master's use. By the way, the word "purge" in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and the word "cleanse" in 2 Corinthians 7 verse 1 are identically the same Greek word.

Cleansing and purging are synonymous. The Apostle Paul is saying that we are to cleanse, wash away, and purge our sinfulness, our iniquity, our uncleanness, and the compromise in our lives. In other words, these things are not to be found with us, in us, around us, or before us. We are to be separate from all of them. That is why He said, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord. Touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you unto Myself, and I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and My daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty."

Filthiness of the Flesh: Definition and Scope

What then are we to cleanse ourselves from? What is it that we are to purge out of our lives? What kind of vessels are we to throw away? First of all, if you look in 2 Corinthians 7 verse 1, this is the only thought I am going to cover today: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh." The very first thing from which we are to cleanse ourselves is the filthiness of the flesh.

The word "flesh" is used in a number of different ways in the Bible. It can refer to mankind in general. You will find that in Matthew 16 and verse 17, Matthew 24:22, and 1 Peter 1:24: "All flesh is as grass." It can also refer to marriage. In Matthew 19, God made the man and the woman one flesh, so it can refer to marriage.

It can refer to the frailty of human nature, because we do all fade as the flowers of the field. It can refer to the human body, as in John 3 and verse 6 and John 6 verse 52, among other passages. In fact, the word "flesh" can simply refer to our mortal life. You remember Galatians 2 and verse 20, where the Apostle Paul said, "I'm crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me and the life which I now live in the flesh.

“I live by faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.” There the word “flesh” refers just to our mortal life. In Philippians 1:24 Paul said, “Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.” He is referring there to mortal life. When you look at the word “flesh,” you must understand that it has many different meanings, and you have to depend upon the context to tell you what the meaning is.

Here the word “flesh” in 2 Corinthians 7:1 refers to our sinful nature, our sinful inclinations, our sinful propensities. For instance, if I came up, opened my hand, and slapped you upside the head, what would be your first response? You would either knock me out or cuss me out—or want to, if you did. That is a normal, natural response. Most of us would never consider turning the other cheek. We have been insulted, but we have not really been hurt, and our life is not in danger. He is talking, then, about this propensity.

When you look at the word “filthiness”—“let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh”—it is used to demonstrate anything that is defiling, filthy, or unclean, and it is to be purged out of our lives. The word “filthiness” literally means the stain that defiles and pollutes. It is used as polluting a garment. When you spill your hot chocolate on your nice shirt or dress, that garment is stained and polluted. It is going to have to be purged; it is going to have to be cleaned. This is what he is saying: “Let us cleanse ourselves,” or “let us purge ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh.”

When we talk about filthiness of the flesh, there is more than what you and I would call the gross and corrupt appetites of the body. I have been in places—New Orleans for one, New York for another—where I literally had to step over drunks lying on the sidewalks, one in a parking lot, sleeping in his own vomit. They were not dead; they were just passed dead out drunk.

You and I would say that is gross, filthy, wicked, and wrong—and it is. But when God talks about the filthiness of the flesh, he is not just talking about the passed-out drunk. He is not just talking about the adulterer and the whoremonger, or the murderer and the thief. There are other bodily appetites that are just as wicked and just as wrong.

Let me show you how the Apostle Paul used this in Romans, chapter 7. Look first at verse 5 and then at verse 18. Paul says, "For when we were in the flesh." Wow. Are we not in the flesh now? Yes. But when he says "when we were in the flesh," he is using the word "flesh" to refer to our unconverted state, our unsaved state.

Our interpretation has to depend upon the context. He says, "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." When you were unsaved, the motions of sin—that is, your inclinations and propensities, whatever you did—worked in your members to bring forth death.

Skip down to verse 18: "For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. For the will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." That is, he does not find it in

himself. In our flesh, in our mortal life, there is no good thing, period.

Sometimes there may be the will to do better, but you do not have the power or ability. That is just like dieting: you decide to go on a diet and will do so for a day or two, until you get hungry or your body starts craving that ice cream; then you go right back. That is what he said: "I know that in me, that in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."

Now, admittedly, we are sinners, and we must confess with the Apostle Paul that by nature no good thing dwells within us. We may be saved, but our flesh is still flesh. What did our Lord say? “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” That is why you are going to get a resurrected body, and why you will have a new body.

Look in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 5, verse 17: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” The word “lusteth” means to fight against. The flesh fights against the Spirit, and the Spirit fights against the flesh. These are contrary one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would.

The Battle Between Flesh and Spirit

When you were unsaved, if you were short of money, stealing was an option. Defrauding was an option. Corruption was an option. Now that you are saved, stealing is not an option because God says, “Thou shalt not steal.” Fraud is not an option. Corruption is not an option. You cannot do those things. Your flesh will say, “Here is the easy way. Go take it,” and the Spirit says, “No, you cannot do that.” That is a violation of God’s law.

Here you have the flesh and the Spirit fighting against one another. The inclinations and desires of our flesh are contrary to the inclinations and desires of the Holy Spirit; they draw us in opposite directions. While the Spirit of God would lead us into obedience to the Word of God, our flesh draws us away into disobedience and to fulfill its nature. In our regenerate state, we want to please our Heavenly Father, yet we are in the flesh, and we must understand

that there are things in our flesh that are contrary to God. We should know what the fulfilling of the flesh is.

Turn to Ephesians 2, and look at verses 2 and 3. Paul is talking about the time when we were unconverted: "Wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation," that is, our conduct, "in times past, in the lusts of our flesh," watch, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

Now, what in the world did he just say? When we were unsaved, what did we do? What we wanted to do—what our flesh wanted to do. We thought nothing of it. It was natural. That pleased us and satisfied us, and that is what we did.

Now God is saying, You cannot fulfill the lusts of the flesh; they are contrary to Me. Remember 1 John 2:16: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world." The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are not of the Father.

The truth is that when we were unsaved, we probably knew these things were sinful. We probably knew that the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life were sinful. It did not matter. That is what we wanted, and that is what we did. Now look in your Bibles at 2 Peter 2. Let me show you a danger. Peter is writing to Christians as well. Begin with verse 1.

Allurement and the Need for Self-Discipline

He says, "Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." I am reading these verses just to show you that he is warning Christians.

Now look in 2 Peter 2, verse 18. He is still writing to Christians, by the way. He says, "For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in

error." He is talking here about alluring through the lusts of the flesh. He is talking about the wicked and the false prophets. They speak great swelling words of vanity, and they allure through the lusts of the flesh. Through much wantonness, they allure those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. Alluring.

You know what that means? It means to draw someone to something. You can put out lures when you are hunting or when you are fishing, and that lure is supposed to draw the animal or the fish to where you are. A lot of people may not do certain acts themselves, but they enjoy watching others do those acts. What are you talking about? Soap operas, for one. Most people, when they watch television and all these soap operas and all this stuff, it is a vicarious experience for them. They are not going to do it, but they are going to watch somebody else in adultery or fornication. They want to see somebody else do this or somebody else do that. It is allurement.

Think of the state fairs. What do all those bright, blinking lights and beautiful things do? They allure you and draw you there so they can get your money. It is just that simple. He is talking very clearly about being lured through our flesh. Unhappily, even as Christians, some have indulged their desires, wants, and lusts, even though at times they knew they were violating the Word of God. And we were chastised and whipped for it.

Do you remember how Abraham took Isaac? God had told Abraham to slay his only son. As they walked to the place of sacrifice, Isaac said, "Father, here is the wood for the burnt offering." Abraham himself had the fire. But Isaac asked, "Where's the lamb for the sacrifice?" Abraham took his son and bound him to the altar.

Our flesh will not lie as silently and obediently on the altar as Isaac did. Our flesh will cry and scream for fulfillment. It wants what it wants, and oftentimes we are lured. The Bible says in Galatians 5:24, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." They that are Christ's—that is what he meant when he said to reckon, or count, yourself dead indeed unto sin.

When you are tempted—and it is not a sin to be tempted, for our Lord was tempted—the sin comes when we yield to that temptation.

We are to reckon, or count, ourselves dead indeed unto sin, and we are not to be lured through our flesh.

If you are going to live a holy, godly life, it will be a fight and a struggle, because your flesh is going to want this and the Spirit is going to want that, and they are opposite. In 1 Corinthians 15:31, the Apostle Paul said, “I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die.” “Daily.” “I die daily.” Paul was talking about reckoning himself dead, indeed, unto sin. He said, “I die daily.” Now consider what the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9, beginning in verse 24.

He gives you an illustration: "Know you not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth a prize? So run that you may obtain." If you are going to be in the race, you need to run to win. "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now, they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." He says, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air."

"But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I preach to others, I myself should be cast away." If you are going to run in a race, you ought to run to win; and if you are going to win, you have to learn to be temperate in all things. If there were a foot race between Joe and myself, looking at Joe's lean and mean body and my pleasingly, pleasantly plump body, who do you think would win? Joe. He is probably more temperate in some things than I am. I like the second helping every now and then.

This is what he is saying: if you are going to win this incorruptible crown, you have to learn to be temperate in all things. He says, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." You know what a shadow boxer is? He boxes against himself, with a shadow on the wall. He cannot win anything; he is just beating the air. He may get a little practice and training, but there is no contest.

So here is what he is saying: I am not running as somebody fighting the air. He says, "But I keep under my body and I bring it into subjection, lest, by any means, when I preach to others, I myself should be cast away." What is he saying? I have to die daily. I have to

reckon myself dead indeed unto sin. I have to purge myself. I have to cleanse myself from all filthiness of the flesh.

Whatever pleases our flesh is usually contrary to God—ninety-nine percent of the time, probably one hundred percent. Have you ever noticed that many foods really good for you do not taste good, while those bad for you are wonderful and delicious? The same principle applies. The flesh says, "Oh, man, this is good. This is great."

Christian Liberty and the Works of the Flesh

But it ends in death. When you are being led by the Spirit, you say, "Man, I have to deny this. I cannot do that. I am not going to do that." But it leads to life.

In Galatians 5:13, the Word of God says, "For brethren, you've been called unto liberty. Only use not liberty for an occasion of the flesh, but by love serve one another." I may have liberty to do certain things, but I never have liberty to violate the law of God. There are a lot of people who will sin against God, violate His law, and then claim they are exercising their Christian liberty. No. Christian liberty is not licentiousness. Christian liberty means we are free to obey God and do that which is right. It does not mean that we are free to fulfill the lust of our flesh. So if God tells us that we are not to fulfill the lust of our flesh, how do we avoid doing that?

Galatians 5:16 says, "This I say then, walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." If you are fulfilling the lust of the flesh, you are not walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. If you are walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, you are not going to be fulfilling the lust of the flesh.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 13:14, "But put you on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof." Make no provision. If I know something is going to tempt me or entice me, I need to stay away from that. I do not even need to go near it. "Put you on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof." It is impossible to walk in the flesh if you are walking in the Spirit. It is impossible to walk in the

Spirit and walk in the flesh at the same time. It is impossible to walk in the flesh if you have put on the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

We have to, hourly sometimes—not just daily—fight against our flesh. Sometimes hourly, sometimes minute by minute and moment by moment. You remember that passage I quoted earlier? Let me quote it again: Psalm 119, verses 9 through 11.

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee, O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Since we are in Galatians 5, look at verses 19–21, because we have been told to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh. Many of us do not even know what the filthiness of the flesh really is. God gives us the answer and tells us what our flesh really enjoys. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these." What is the work of the flesh?

"Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like, of the which I tell you before, and as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

One of our problems is that we tend to blame many of our sins and lusts upon the devil. You remember Flip Wilson, the black comedian, used to make that common saying: "the devil made me do it." Or, "the devil tempted me."

Let me give you two observations. First, most Christians are not powerful enough, not godly enough, or important enough for the devil even to concentrate upon them. If you study the Scriptures, he only attacked three individuals directly: Job, Peter, and Christ. It is true that he is our adversary. It is true that he walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. But most of us are not important enough, powerful enough, or godly enough for him to try to deal with us. His minions are sufficient to take care of most Christians.

Secondly, the devil does not have to tempt us when it comes to the lust of the flesh. Our flesh is sufficient to do the tempting in and of

itself. What does the flesh enjoy? Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, nakedness, lasciviousness, wantonness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, and strife. I know people who live to fuss and fight, who are not happy unless they are fighting with someone and mad at someone. As flesh, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like—all these things are the works of the flesh. If we are going to cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh, we have to understand the implication of each work of the lusts of the flesh. He mentions idolatry.

Now, you're going to sit here and tell me, “Brother Weaver, I am not an idolater. I'm not bound down to any image. I'm not bound down to any idol.” We have a very limited view of idolatry. We tend to think it is bowing down to an idol somewhere, but the Apostle Paul in Colossians 3:5 says this: “Mortify”—that is, make dead; that is where we get the word “mortician” from—“therefore your members, which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” What? Covetousness is idolatry. Covetousness is idolatry.

So that means if I say, “Man, I sure would like to have Lacey's car. I want that car,” I am coveting it. That's idolatry. In Ephesians 5:3, he says it like this: “But fornication, and all uncleanness or covetousness”—remember, that is idolatry—“let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.”

Do you realize that any time we set our will, our wants, or our desires above God, that's idolatry? Covetousness is idolatry. When you know what God's Word says and disobey it, that's idolatry. You're denying God as the chief good, and you're denying God as the sovereign, setting yourself up above God and saying, “I know what I want, and I know what's best for me.” Idolatry is a work of the flesh. The work of the flesh can be a work of the flesh without the flesh actually doing anything. I will get into this a little more next week.

Remember what our Lord said in Matthew 5:28: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, that whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already” where? “In his heart.” It doesn't mean you've committed the actual physical act. But if you've lusted

after a woman, then God says you've committed it in your heart. So, the point I'm trying to make is this.

Responsibility and Divine Enablement

When we are cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, it is not just those outward grosser sins. I do not know anybody here who is a drunkard, adulterer, or murderer. If you are such, you have hidden it from me very well, but you understand what I am saying. I do not know anybody like that in here, and I am sure that you do not do that. I understand that. Yet that does not mean you do not have sins of the flesh. You may have evil thoughts, wicked desires, wrong motives, pride, and arrogancy. It is not just the physical act that God condemns, but the attitude and disposition that lead to those acts. When God forbids any act, He also forbids any thought or attitude that would lead up to it. So if God forbids adultery, He forbids me from lusting in my heart.

It would also forbid me looking intently, which would create a lust in my heart. When God forbids any act, at the same time He forbids anything and everything, every attitude that would lead up to that act. So he says, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” If we want God as our Father, and want Him to be our protector, provider, and portion, then at the same time we should want to be the sons and daughters He would have us to be: “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts of your ignorance. But, as obedient children, be holy in all manner of conversation, as I am holy, because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy, saith the Lord.”

The first application is this: the Apostle Paul said, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves.” We have a responsibility to cleanse ourselves. Albert Barnes says, “Paul was not afraid to bring into view the agency of the Christians themselves in the work of salvation or sanctification. He therefore says, ‘let us purify ourselves’ as if Christians had much to do, as if their own agency was to be employed, and as if their purifying was dependent upon their own efforts. While it is true that all purifying influences and holiness proceed from God, it is also true that the effect of all the influences of the Holy Spirit is to excite us to

diligence, to purify our own hearts, to urge us to make strenuous efforts to overcome our own sins. He who expects to be made pure without any effort of his own will never become pure. And he who ever becomes holy will become so in consequence of strenuous efforts to resist evil of his own heart and become like God."

The argument goes further: we have the promises of God to aid us. The responsibility is ours—"Let us cleanse ourselves"—but the ability is God's. We have a responsibility, but we do not have the ability. Therefore, we must seek Him for His grace, mercy, and power. Our Lord told the disciples, "The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." We need divine help. Our Lord Himself said, "Without me, you can do nothing." Ours is responsibility, and, as the Apostle Paul said, we have to die daily.

We have to fight hourly to bring our body into subjection: "No, I will not do that. No, I will not think that. No, that will not be in my mind." Yes, it is a daily fight. What would be advantageous for each of us is to look in Galatians 5, take each of the works of the flesh, run them down through Scripture, and see the implications of all these things in our lives, so that we may turn from them and purge ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh.

Let me close with this statement: I prefer to cleanse myself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit and have God as my Father, than not to do so and have God as my adversary.

Closing Exhortation

"Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord. Touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you unto myself, and I will be a Father unto you. And you shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty." Ours is the responsibility. His is the ability.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We ask you to enable us, to empower us, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh—not just the grosser, viler acts, but, Lord, even the attitudes, the dispositions, the thoughts, the pride, the arrogancy, and everything that is contrary to thy Word. Make us holy

and enable us to live as thy sons and thy daughters. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Perfecting Holiness - 4

Introduction and Review of the Promises

In 2 Corinthians 7, verse 1, we read: "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." When the Apostle said, "having therefore these promises, dearly beloved," he was referring to the promises revealed in 2 Corinthians 6, verses 16–18. The first promise is that God would be our God and we would be His people. The second is that God would be our Father and we would be His sons and His daughters.

In the first two messages, I pointed out the implication of God as our Father. If He is indeed our Father, then He is the One who has begotten us. James 1:18 says, "...of His own will begotten us with the word of truth." Further, if God is our Father, He is also our provider, our protector, and our portion. He is the One who sustains us, defends us, protects us, and gives us victory in time and in history as well as in eternity.

It is important to remember what eternal life is, because our Lord Himself said in John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they may

know Thee, the only true and living God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Eternal life is not simply living forever. It is the personal, intimate relationship we are enabled to have with God our Father through the merits and work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is the connection between these promises and the encouragement to holiness, for our God also said, "Be ye holy as I am holy." We first looked at the declaration of the promises, and then began looking at the description of the purging, because verse 1 says, "...having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh."

The Purging Described: Filthiness of the Flesh Reviewed

The flesh here refers to our sinful inclinations and our sinful propensities. The word filthiness denotes anything defiling or unclean, anything that needs to be purged from our lives. Galatians chapter 5 tells us about the works of the flesh and how we are to consistently avoid them. In Galatians 5:16, the Apostle Paul said, “Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” In Romans 13:14, we were commanded to “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof.” He is telling us, then, that this is to be purged from our lives.

There is something else that must be purged. “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.” Under the purging described, we are not only dealing with the filthiness of the flesh, which we have dealt with, but there is also a connection. Now there is the filthiness of the spirit. God commands us to cleanse ourselves from not only the filthiness of the flesh, but of the spirit as well.

The Purging Described: Filthiness of the Spirit Introduced

We must understand that the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit were never designed as a substitute for our discharge of duty. It is true that we have the responsibility to cleanse ourselves from the

filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, but we must rely totally and completely upon the Holy Spirit. Yet relying upon the Holy Spirit does not diminish our obligations or our duty at all. It is our responsibility, but it is His ability. The command remains, "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

I have preached for forty-six years. After the first year or two of preaching, from personal observations, I began saying this and am still saying it: There is nothing meaner or nastier in this entire world than a Christian who is not right with God.

We may boast that we are not guilty of murder, drunkenness, thievery, adultery, fornication, and a thousand other filthy, fleshly acts. However, as long as we possess a mean, vindictive, bitter, resentful, and hateful spirit, we are nowhere close to biblical holiness. There are so many people in this world today who will make all kinds of efforts to make sure the outside is just right and clean.

The Pharisees as an Example of External-Only Righteousness

But on the inside, they are a seething mass of sin and rebellion. It is kind of like the story I heard years ago about a mother who had her little girl in the car. This was before seatbelts, and the little girl kept standing up. The mother kept telling her to sit down, but the little girl would sit down and spring right back up. The mother said, "I said, sit down," and the little girl just remained standing. Finally, the mother said again, "I said, sit down." She reached over, grabbed the little girl, and sat her in the seat. The little girl folded her arms, looked at her mother, and said, "I may be sitting down on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside."

That is exactly the way a lot of people are. They have the outside clean, but on the inside they are still in rebellion. Our Lord tells us about people like this, and He especially nails the Pharisees. In Matthew 23:27, He says, "Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, for you are likened to whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness."

Our Lord likened the Pharisees to a beautiful, whited tombstone—clean and beautiful, but on the inside absolutely full of corruption and filth. In Luke 11:39, He uses the same illustration, but just a little differently: “And the Lord said unto him, Now do you Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.”

So very obviously, these Pharisees were outwardly moral but inwardly totally corrupt. They believed, the Pharisees believed, that simply because they refrained from certain physical acts, they would fulfill the law and be pure. Their outward conduct did not change the rebellion and corruption that remained within.

It is true that we must be externally, outwardly clean and pure. But it is equally true that we must be internally clean and pure. It does you no good to be externally clean and pure unless you are internally clean and pure.

For instance, look at Matthew 5:20 and what our Lord said concerning the Pharisees. Do you realize that the average church would be absolutely happy and delighted to have a church full of Pharisees? Why? They were always on time and never late. They would always pray and tithe, making a show of all these things. In other words, they would be the perfect church member. You would never have to get on to them for anything. Yet look at what our Lord said to His disciples:

"Verily I say unto thee, watch now, verse 20, for I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Our Lord said that we must have something more than external purity, more than externals. The Pharisees did have a righteousness, but it was a righteousness of their own making, not the righteousness of God. We must have something more than that.

We must be clean without and within. But listen carefully: our external purity must proceed from internal purity. We must cleanse ourselves not only from the filthiness of the flesh, but of the spirit. If we deny this simple truth, we are no better than the Pharisees. In fact, that is what we will become: Pharisees. We will have the

attitude, "I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't chew, I don't go with the girls that do." Well, fine. But why do you not do those things? Is it because of the internal holiness that makes you pure externally, or are you merely claiming an external holiness?

The Spirit Dictates Actions

Look at Psalm 32, verse 2, at what David says. David is talking about the blessed man. In verse 1 he says, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Then, in verse 2, he tells another aspect of the blessed man: "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

The word guile refers to deceitfulness, hypocrisy, treachery, slothfulness, or anything that is untrue and false. But notice where he says it is: "Blessed is the man in whose spirit there is no guile." It is not in his body; it is in his spirit. In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul wrote to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth. But be thou an example of believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and purity."

Everything is referring to the internal. Consider another passage, 1 Peter 3, verse 4, which declares what holiness is in women. First Timothy 2 is an excellent passage as well, but look at this in its context, beginning with verse 1: "Likewise, you wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation or the conduct of the wives. While they, that is the husbands, behold your chaste conversation or pure conduct coupled with fear."

Now watch: "Whose adorning? Let it not be that outward adorning of the plaiting of the hair, or wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel." Verse 4 says, "But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God a great price."

Many people take verse 3 out of context and say that women should not plait their hair or wear gold. If that interpretation is applied consistently, since the verse says, "let it not be the putting on of apparel," would women have to go around naked? Of course not.

The Lord is saying that a woman is not dependent upon her hair, gold, or apparel for her beauty. Her beauty comes from an inward, meek, and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God a great price.

Why are there so many verses in the Bible that refer to the Spirit? Why is there so much emphasis upon the Spirit? It is because ultimately it is our spirit that dictates our actions. For instance, do not answer this out loud: If you have ever physically struck out at someone, or physically hit someone or tried to hit someone, it was because you were angry first. Your spirit dictated your actions.

Have you ever said something you wished you had never said? It is because your spirit dictated first. You were angry, you were upset, and you said it. Your spirit—are you listening?—was out of control. You were not controlling your spirit; your spirit was controlling you. There is a spirit in man, and the Word of God tells us that we should control our spirits rather than allow our spirits or our passions to control us.

Look at two verses in Proverbs. In Proverbs chapter 16, verse 32, the Scripture says, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty. And he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." God said, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty." Then He says, "He that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." The man who has control over his own spirit, according to God, is greater than the greatest warrior, greater than the greatest fighter, because he can indeed control himself.

Proverbs chapter 25, verse 28, says, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls."

"He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls." If we are not in control of our spirit, we are not in control. A city that is broken down and without walls is very easily assaulted, entered, and looted. If you are able to control your spirit, I cannot make you angry. I cannot upset you, make you jealous, make you envious, or make you bitter. If you control your spirit, I cannot manipulate or intimidate you. We often say, "That person just makes me so angry." No, the person is not making you angry. Your losing control of your own spirit is what is making you angry.

Sins of the Spirit: Evil Thoughts and Secret Sins

I saw a movie many years ago, and I remember very little about it. When I call the title, you will know it is very old: Cool Hand Luke, starring Paul Newman. He was in prison, though I have no earthly idea why. He would always try to escape and do things that would upset the warden and the people in charge. They would beat him, torture him, and do all kinds of inhumane things to him. Yet, even while they were doing it, he always had a sly smile, which infuriated them. When they finished tormenting and torturing him, he still had that smile. Nothing upset him, and that infuriated the people who were torturing him. It has often been said that if you really want to infuriate your enemies, just smile, be sweet, and be kind, because they cannot literally stand it.

Very obviously, it does not matter how obnoxious or contentious someone is. If you can control your spirit, they cannot upset or manipulate you, and they cannot make you angry. God said, "he that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city."

Our Lord illustrates this in Matthew 15. We are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Why should we pay attention to our spirits? Matthew 15:16 says, "And Jesus said, Are you also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand that whatsoever enters into the mouth goes into the belly, and is cast out of the draught?"

“But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts and murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.”

Note what our Lord is saying. The very first thing that proceeds from the heart, or from the mind or spirit, is evil thoughts. Evil thoughts. Indeed, everything else that follows may be described as evil thoughts. Whether murders, adultery, fornication, thefts, false witness, or blasphemies, if I am merely thinking about stealing from Ed, that is an evil thought. If I am merely thinking about committing adultery or fornication, that is an evil thought. If I am merely thinking about lying about Clay, that is an evil thought. Every one of

these things that we ascribe to the flesh, which Galatians 5 says are of the flesh, proceeds from our hearts. Sins of the Spirit are sins that come from our heart and from our mind. Often, they are our secret sins.

Let me explain that. In one sense, they are secret because no one knows them and no one suspects them. No one knows what we are entertaining in our minds. No one knows what we are really longing after in our hearts. Usually, the only way outsiders get to know what is really in a person's mind is when it comes forth in actions, when it manifests itself. It will eventually demonstrate and manifest itself, for as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Eventually, you are going to do that.

But these sins are secret in another way as well, because sometimes we may have secret sins and not even know we have them. They can be secret to us. Who can ascertain the first rising of pride? None of us. How can there be sin in my mind, heart, or life without my realizing it? I want to show you two passages: Jeremiah 17, verse 9, and Psalm 19. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?" You do not know your heart.

You do not know everything in your heart. There have been times in my life when I genuinely thought I was doing something for God's honor and glory. God opened my eyes, and I found that He was not in it at all; I was doing it for myself. That was a secret sin until God showed it to me. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?

So look in Psalm 19 and verse 12. David prayed, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." Certainly, we should pray this prayer as well: "Cleanse thou me from secret faults," or from secret sins. Many individuals, many Christians, have honestly believed that they had dealt with the sin of the spirit. They thought they had it taken care of, under wraps, and then, in a moment of tension, pressure, or stress, it came out. Our hearts are deceitful and, above all things, desperately wicked. We need to learn to pray with David, "Cleanse us from secret faults," or from secret sins.

Specific Sins of the Spirit: Bitterness, Wrath, Anger, Clamor, Evil Speaking

Now turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4. Before I read this passage, consider this question: Do you think the sin of adultery would grieve the heart of God? What about murder? Theft? Idolatry? Of course, all these are works of the flesh. But the sins of the spirit grieve God just as much.

Ephesians 4, verse 30, says, “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” Then it says, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.” After saying, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,” Paul lists things that would grieve the Holy Spirit and tells us that, since they grieve Him, we need to put them out of our lives: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking. Do you know what clamor is? Clamor.

When I was a boy, my cousins would come over, and because we lived on a farm, we would have corn cob wars. We would fling corn cobs at each other. You do not throw them; you fling them. But we would always cheat. We had a two-story barn, and my cousin and I would be up in the upper story while Ned, the big, strong cousin, was down below. We would soak corn cobs overnight in water. Have you ever been hit with a wet corn cob? It is like getting hit with a brick bat.

Ned was so big and strong that my cousin and I would stay in the loft of the barn. For a minute, no corn cobs had been thrown. My cousin looked at me and said, “Where is he?” I said, “I do not know. I do not hear him.” There was a knothole, no bigger than that. I said, “Look through that knothole and see if you can see.” My cousin got on his knees and looked down through it. The Lord is my witness: Ned was right under that knothole with a wet corncob. When he saw my cousin kneel down and look, he threw that corn cob, and that thing came up in first, right through the middle of the knothole. It hit my cousin in the middle of the eye and knocked him out cold as a cucumber.

He went flat on the floor. I jumped out of the second-story window and went to sing, “You killed him! You killed him! You killed him!” I hollered to my dad that my cousin was dead. That was clamor—useless noise—because he was not dead; he was just knocked out. We got him revived momentarily. That is what clamor is: useless noise. That is like Henry saying, “Well, I don't know have the answer to the problem, but I don't put my two cents worth anyhow.” That is clamor.

I have been in so many meetings where people say things that are totally, absolutely unrelated to what is going on. I could conduct the average business meeting that lasts eight hours and conclude it in an hour if you just cut out the clamor. That is what clamor is: useless noise. Look what God says. He says that bitterness, wrath, anger, useless noise, and evil speaking are to be put away from you.

Now you know what evil speaking is. Let me put it like this. Suppose Clay came up and said, “You know, I really like Robert.” I look at Clay and say, “You would not say that if you knew what I knew.” Have I said anything bad about Robert? No. I did not say anything bad about him, but I implied that I knew something bad about him. That is evil speaking. It is cutting someone down or implying that there is something wrong with someone when it is not true. So God says all that evil speaking is to be put away.

It is to be put away from you with all malice. There is to be no malice in your heart. Then he says you need to be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you.

God says bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking are all sins of the spirit. How many people are bitter? I have known bitter people. I have known Christians who are so absolutely bitter, it is unbelievable. One of the failings of husbands is to be bitter against their wives. We would not strike our wives or curse our wives, but we will get bitter against them. God says in Colossians 3 and verse 19, “Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them.” Not only can husbands be bitter against wives; wives can be bitter against husbands. In fact, we can be bitter against anyone. Look in the book of Hebrews, chapter 12 and verse 15.

Bitterness and Unforgiveness as Root Sins

You have heard the old expression that a rotten apple will spoil the bushel, or whatever container you have your apples in. Let one rotten apple remain, and soon all the other apples are spoiled as well.

Watch what God says about bitterness. Hebrews 12:15 says, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." One root of bitterness that troubles you, according to Scripture, will defile many. If one becomes bitter, that bitterness will spread and defile a multitude of people. Bitterness is therefore a sin of the spirit.

What about an unforgiving spirit? I have heard many people say, "Well, I'll never forgive him," or, "I'll never forgive her." Why do we have such an unforgiving spirit? The answer is that we have a bitter, vindictive heart, which is a sin of the spirit. Someone says, "But you don't understand; the sin that person committed against me is so great. I could never forgive that person." Was the sin against you any greater than your sin against Christ? Yet He forgave you.

I want you to turn to Matthew 18 and see this in light of what I have just said. I want to begin reading in verse 21, and we will read down through verse 35. I am going to tell you the point of this entire lesson. Matthew 18 makes this clear. Peter asked, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven"—four hundred and ninety times, which basically means unlimited. This is a lesson on bitterness and unforgiveness.

SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 18:23-35 (KJV)

> Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a certain king which would take account of his servants. And when he began to reckon, one was brought unto him who owed him ten thousand talents. But for as much as he had not to pay, his Lord commanded him to be sold and his wife and children and all that he had in payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me

and I will pay thee all. Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion and loosed him and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him a hundred pence, an insignificant amount, and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou ow'st. And the fellow servant fell down at his feet and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I'll pay thee all. And he would not. And when he cast him into the prison till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry and came and told unto their Lord all that was done. Then their Lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that thou didst, because thou desirest me. Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on my fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due him. So likewise, shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if you from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses?

Here is the simple point. If we have been the recipients of mercy, we should show mercy. If we have been the recipients of forgiveness, we should learn to forgive. If we have been forgiven, we should have a thankful, tender spirit, so that we can forgive others as well. Not only bitterness and unforgiveness are sins of the Spirit, but also pride and haughtiness are sins of the Spirit. Most of you can quote Proverbs 16 and verse 18, where the Bible said, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Pride, Haughtiness, and Unfaithfulness as Sins of the Spirit

If we were truthful, we would have to wrestle with pride every day, for there is pride in everything that we do. There is a difference between taking pride in your work and doing everything for God's honor and God's glory, and being proud of your work. Most of us want to think that we're self-sufficient, that we can take care of ourselves, and that everyone should

> agree with us. It is pride that causes us to stumble and fall, especially when we become very arrogant and puffed up and haughty.

And if that's true, why do you understand? That's probably one of the reasons we're always in trouble. Do you realize that the Bible says that God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble? The word resist literally means that God fights against the proud.

Pride is at the bottom of a hardened spirit and a stiff neck. In Daniel 5:20, speaking of Nebuchadnezzar, we read, “But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne and they took his glory from him.” When his heart was lifted up, that is pride, that is arrogancy. “And his mind hardened in pride.”

Have you ever noticed that there are some people who are so hard, so stiff-necked, when it comes to the Word of God? They will not listen. They do not want to listen. They will not repent. They refuse to entertain the fact that Jesus Christ is God, that He is Lord, and that He demands their repentance and faith. Why are they so hardened and adamant? The answer is pride. Strip away all their excuses and reasonings, and at the root of everything, you will find pride.

Listen carefully. Pride is a root sin. Bitterness is a root sin. It is the root from which the tree grows and produces all kinds of sinful fruits. Another sin of the spirit is unfaithfulness. We certainly see how unfaithfulness can be the sin of a spirit when we are talking about an unfaithful husband or an unfaithful wife. But we do not see that same unfaithfulness in our relationship to our Lord and His work.

Have you noticed that in most churches, pastors have to plead, beg, exhort, beseech, and coerce professing Christians to be faithful to the Lord and the Lord’s work? Why? What is the matter with us? How is it that we cannot be faithful and steadfast with the Lord?

I know when Sunday morning comes around. I know where I am supposed to be and what I am supposed to do, and you should know the same thing. But let me show you how unfaithfulness is a sin of the spirit. Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 78.

God is speaking and telling these people not to be as their fathers. In verse 8, He says, “And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.” The next verse says, “The children of Ephraim being armed and carrying bows turned back in the day of battle.”

One reason they turned back was that their spirit was not steadfast with God. Israel did not maintain a firm trust in God. They yielded to every impulse and every passion, even when those impulses tended to draw them wholly, totally, and completely away from God. They were so easily led into idolatry. In Galatians 5:20, idolatry is listed as a work of the flesh.

But idolatry first starts in the mind. It starts in the spirit. When the spirit is not steadfast with God, you are going to wander. You are going to entertain thoughts that you should never entertain. The one area in which Old Testament Israel was consistent was their inconsistency with God. They were consistently inconsistent.

The Remedy: Walk in the Spirit

Unhappily, that is where a lot of Christians are today. They are consistently inconsistent. So the question comes back: if we have to cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, how do we avoid sins of the spirit? Look in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 5, beginning in verse 22. We are told that the fruit of the Spirit is “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

"Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." If we do not want to have the sins of the Spirit in our spirit, we should learn to walk in the Holy Spirit. Lord willing, I am going to bring a short series in the not too distant future on what it means to walk in the Spirit. But right here, God says this is the answer.

Look at Romans chapter 8, beginning with verse 10: "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is alive

because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

If we are walking in the Spirit and being led by the Spirit, it is the Holy Spirit of God who will lead us to mortify—that is, to make dead—the deeds of the flesh and of the spirit. He will lead us into obedience to the Word of God.

Here is how this works. Ed makes me angry. I am just about ready to cuss him out and tell him off, and then I think, Wait. God said to cleanse myself from filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. Lord, I have just had anger, and that anger is wrong and wicked. I am not going to cuss out Ed. I am not going to fuss at Ed. I refuse to do that. I will talk to him, and we can resolve the problem together.

You see what I am saying? If you think for a minute, here is what God says; here is what I want. You have to cancel out what you want and go with what God says. Here is what I like to do; here is what God says. I have to cancel out what I would like to do and be obedient to what God says.

The Tongue as a Sin of the Spirit

Walking in the Spirit, if we're walking in the Spirit, he's leading us, he's guiding us into obedience. If you are living an unholy life, an ungodly life, I have no doubt in my mind that there is not a spirit leading you, but it is not the Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit will always lead us into obedience.

Now, let me point one other thing out. I want you to turn to Proverbs chapter 15, and then we're going to the book of James. Just trying to show you very quickly one other sin of the Spirit. We never think of this as being a sin of the Spirit, and yet it really truly is. Look in the book of Proverbs 15 and look at verse 4. Proverbs 15 and verse

4. In fact, we probably ought to read verse 1 in light of this, but look at verse 1, Proverbs 15, verse 1.

"A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." Watch verse 4. God says "a wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit." What? Perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit. Here's what he's saying. A sharp, sarcastic, biting, hateful tongue is a sin of the spirit. Isn't that amazing? A sharp, biting, sarcastic, hateful tongue is a sin of the Spirit.

Now, turn over in your Bibles to the book of James chapter 1 and look at verse 26 first. James chapter 1, verse 26. Hebrews, James, and James 1 in verse 26. Look at this. God says in James 1 in verse 26, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Isn't that amazing? You have to control your spirit in order to control your tongue. Look in James 3, beginning there with verse 5. James 3, verse 5. He says, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. So is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and set on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire out of hell."

"For every kind of beast, and of birds, and of serpents, and things of the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed, watch, but the tongue can no man tame. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Wow. I heard one preacher say one time, the tongue is like an automatic sewing machine set on fire out of hell. Have you ever noticed how fast those sewing machines can go? One preacher, he's now dead, but he did this.

There was a lady in the church who was known for her gossiping. He preached that night very powerfully and included gossip. After the service was over, while a song was being sung, the woman came up to him and said, “Pastor, I want to lay my tongue on the altar.” He said, “Bless God.” He said, “There’s 40 feet of it here. Put what you can on it and throw the rest in the corner.”

Well, that's exactly what the Scripture is saying. The tongue is an unruly evil. It is indeed a sin of the spirit. First Peter 3:10 says, "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that speak no guile." God said that if you want to love life and see good days, refrain your tongue from evil, and make sure that your lips speak no guile. The tongue must be brought under control. This is not merely an outward matter; it reveals what is within the spirit. The same truth will be seen in Proverbs 13:3.

I have quoted these verses so many times, not only to myself but to others. Look in Proverbs 13:3. Here is a verse you should memorize, or at least write in the flyleaf of your Bible: "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life, but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction." He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life. Proverbs 21:23 is one of my favorite verses: "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles." You will avoid trouble. God says, keep your mouth and keep your tongue.

Applications and Conclusion

Now think about this with me. God said that we are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. If we cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh, we must know what the filthiness of the flesh is. If we cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of the spirit, we must know what a filthy spirit is. This leads me to the first application: We must learn to pray with David in Psalm 51:10, "Create within me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Why should we pray that? Because we have secret sins and secret faults, some we do not even know about.

You remember 1 Corinthians 6:20: "For you're bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." It is not just your body that belongs to Him; it is your spirit. You are to glorify Him in body and spirit, and one way we must do that is by cleansing ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit.

Now look at 1 Thessalonians 5:23. You will understand why I am dealing with the filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly." That is W-H-O-L-L-Y—totally, completely. "And the very God of peace sanctify you totally,

completely. I pray, God, your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

A Prayer

"Faithful is he who calleth you who also will do it." So Paul prayed that God would sanctify us totally and completely. And that should be our prayer as well, that God would sanctify us and enable us to cleanse ourselves from filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Let's pray. Father, we do ask you in the name of Jesus Christ for your grace and for your mercy. And pray, Father, that you would enable us to indeed cleanse ourselves from filthiness of the flesh and Spirit. Enable us to be holy on the inside as well as the outside. Give us grace, Lord, that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear, recognizing the fact that our body and our spirits are Yours. Help us, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

Perfecting Holiness - 5

Review of the Series and Text

This whole series has been about perfecting holiness, and I trust that the Lord will help us do exactly that. Let me take a few minutes to review. Look in 2 Corinthians 7 and verse 1, which has been our text for the last four messages. Today I try to finish this brief series with this fifth message.

"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." You will remember that when the Apostle Paul said, "having therefore these promises," he was talking about the promises in chapter 6, verses 16 and 17. First of all, God promised that He would be our God, that we would be His people, and that He would walk among us.

The second promise is that God would be our Father and we would be His sons and His daughters if we would come out, be separate, and touch not the unclean thing: "and I will receive you." The first two messages in this series basically dealt with God as Father, showing the implications of the fatherhood of God toward

His own and our sonship toward our Father. There are so many benefits and blessings in experiencing this father-son relationship. We looked at our first point, the promises declared. Then we came to the second point, the purging described, because he said, “having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves.”

There is a vast difference between what you and I would call positional holiness and practical holiness. Positional holiness is that which we have in Christ. It is perfect; it cannot be increased or decreased, thankfully. But practical holiness is something for which we are responsible. That is why he said, “let us cleanse ourselves.” Although we are responsible to cleanse ourselves, we do not have the power or the ability in and of ourselves; that comes from God alone. He therefore talks about the purging, cleansing ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh and spirit. One whole message dealt with the filthiness of the flesh, showing what it was, and last week we looked at the filthiness of the spirit.

The Perfection Demanded

We must be pure, or holy, both internally and externally. Spiritual defilement is just as bad and just as wicked as fleshly defilement. Either one will hinder our relationship with our Heavenly Father. Sin sweeps with a desolating influence throughout the whole frame, and usually it leaves no part unaffected, though some parts may be more deeply corrupted than others.

When we are talking about cleansing ourselves from filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, the question that should enter our mind is, how do we perform this needed and necessary purging? Obviously, it does not come naturally or easily, and such work is not a stop-start action. If you and I are going to be purging ourselves, it has to be something done constantly and continuously.

The Perfection Demanded: Understanding 'Perfecting'

You remember how the Apostle Paul said, “I die daily.” So it has to be a daily thing, and sometimes an hourly thing, sometimes minute by minute. This brings us to our third and final point: the perfection demanded. We have seen the promises declared, the purging

described, and now the perfection demanded. He says in verse 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.”

Allow me first to deal with the word “perfecting.” The Greek word is *epiteleo*, and it literally means to bring to an end, to accomplish, to perfect, to finish, to execute, and complete. He is encouraging us to finish, or to bring to completion, holiness in our lives. Before anyone gets bent out of shape and says, “But wait a minute, perfection is impossible,” let me show you a few verses that relate to this.

Look first to Matthew 5:48. The Word of God demands, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” That is perfect, isn’t it? Look also in Romans 12, verses 1 and 2.

In Romans 12:1–2, the Apostle Paul says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." So we are not only to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect, we are to prove the perfect will of God in our lives.

In Philippians 3:15, Paul says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." So it begins, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." James 1:4 says, "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." We have been commanded to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, to prove the perfect will of God, and as many as are perfect should be thus minded. We have also been commanded to let patience have her perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. These passages set before us perfection in our conduct, our minds, the will of God, and the work of patience.

The interesting thing is that, out of these four passages, the word "perfect" is translated from one Greek word. The word is *teleios*,

and it literally means to be perfect, mature, lacking nothing in completeness, a full-grown adult, or one who is of full age. It refers to that which has been brought to its end and is finished.

Now look back at 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness." Although the other words just given from Matthew 5, Romans 12, Philippians 3, and James 1 come from one Greek word, that word is not exactly the same as the one in 2 Corinthians 7:1.

It is, however, very closely connected to it. But when you get to 2 Corinthians 7, verse 1, the Greek word there is a present active participle. What does that mean? It means that you are presently and actively engaged in doing something: “Perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” You are in the process of becoming perfect, or becoming mature, or becoming complete.

Commentators on Perfecting Holiness

It does not state that you have reached that goal, but it does state that you are headed for that goal. Albert Barnes explains the phrase “perfecting holiness” this way: The word means properly to bring to an end, to finish, complete. The idea here is that of carrying it out to its completion. Holiness had been commenced in the heart, and the exhortation of the Apostle is that they should make every effort that it might be complete in all of its parts.

He does not say that this work of perfection has ever been accomplished. Nor does he say that it had not been. He only urges the obligation to make an effort to be entirely holy. And this obligation is not affected by the inquiry whether one has been or has not been perfect. It is an obligation which results from the nature of the law of God and His unchangeable claims upon the soul.

The fact that no one has been perfect does not relax the claim. The fact that no one will be in this life does not weaken the obligation. It proves only the deep and dreadful depravity of the human heart and should humble us under the stubbornness of guilt. The obligation to be perfect is one that is unchangeable and eternal. Tyndale, that is

William Tyndale, renders it: “and grew up into full holiness in the fear of God.”

The unceasing and steady aim of every Christian should be perfection: perfection in all things—in the love of God, of Christ, and of man; perfection of heart, feeling, and emotion; perfection in words, plans, and dealings with men; perfection in prayers and submission to the will of God.

No man can be a Christian who does not sincerely desire it and constantly aim at it. No man is a friend of God who can acquiesce in a state of sin, satisfied and contented that he is not as holy as God is holy. Any man who has no desire to be perfect as God is, and who does not make it his daily and constant aim to be perfect as God, may set it down as demonstrably certain that he has no true religion. How can a man be a Christian who is willing to acquiesce in a state of sin and who does not desire to be just like his Master and Lord?

John Gill takes it a little farther in explaining the term “perfecting holiness”: “Perfecting holiness in the fear of God: by holiness is not meant the work of sanctification upon the heart, for that is wholly the work of the Spirit of God and not of man. He begins it, carries it on, and perfects it of himself. But he is speaking of holiness of life and conversation, as here designed, which in conversion the people of God are called unto, and which highly become them, and this they are to be perfecting—not that a believer is able to live a life of holiness without sin being in him, or committed by him. This is impossible and impractical in the present life.

“But the sense of the word is that he is carrying on a life of righteousness and holiness to the end, to the end of his life. He is to persevere as in faith, so in holiness. As he is to go on believing in Christ, so he is to go on to live soberly, righteously, and godly to the end of his days, which requires divine power to preserve him from sin and keep him from falling, and the grace of God, the strength of Christ, and the assistance of the Spirit to enable him to perform acts of holiness and the several duties of religion, and to continue in well-doing, all which is to be done in

So what both Gill and Barnes are saying is that when Paul talks about “perfecting holiness,” he is saying that there is in your life an

ongoing, consistent, and continual growth whereby you are progressing in holiness and righteousness. Perfecting holiness means that we are constantly and continually progressing more and more in our lives, conforming our lives more and more to the Word of God.

Perfecting Holiness Means Progress, Not Regression

Now, let us turn to Hebrews, chapter 5, and see what the Apostle Paul does not mean by perfecting holiness. Paul had been writing to these Hebrews. Most folks say Paul wrote the book of Hebrews. I really don't know for sure, but possibly he did. Look in Hebrews 5, beginning with verse 12:

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe."

What the Apostle is dealing with in Hebrews 5 is regression. That is not perfecting holiness. He said that when, for the time, they ought to be teachers, they needed someone to teach them again the first principles of the oracles of God. They were reverting to babyhood; they needed milk instead of meat. When we are talking about perfecting holiness, we are not talking about regression, going backwards, or becoming a babe again. No, we are talking about going forward. In Psalm 84 and verse 7, the Word of God says this.

"They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." They go from strength to strength. If we are perfecting holiness, we are gaining ground; we are not losing ground. We are going from strength to strength, from faith to faith, and from glory to glory. In other words, there is no backing up in our lives, no backing down, and no turning around. We are increasing in spiritual adulthood and in conformity to the Word of God.

The Apostle Paul wrote this concerning himself. If I were to ask you who was the greatest apostle, probably most of you would say Paul. But notice what the greatest apostle wrote of himself: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one

thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

What did Paul say? Paul said, "I count not myself to have arrived. I haven't gotten where I want to be. But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind." Would it not be the grace of God if we could forget a lot of things in our past? They may enter our minds every now and then, but we are not dwelling on them. We are reaching forth and pressing toward the mark for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

That is exactly what perfecting holiness is. It is increasing and becoming more and more conformable to Jesus Christ. We should be more holy this year than we were last year, more holy this month than we were last month, and more holy this week than we were last week. Practically speaking, we should be more holy today than we were yesterday. That is perfecting holiness: maturing and bringing completeness and totality into your life.

The Goal: Maturity in Christ

God gave pastor-teachers to the church. Ephesians 4:11 says, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Pastor-teachers are actually one word. A real pastor teaches.

Why did God give pastor-teachers? "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

This is why you should listen to the Word of God being taught: that we might all come into the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man—that is, a mature, complete man—unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. In other words, we become like Christ, so that we are no more children.

I find it absolutely amazing that in most churches the pastor still has to stand around and burp everybody, beg them to come to church, beg them to be faithful, and beg them to give. There is something wrong if the pastor has to spend his time burping so-called adult Christians. You should have come to those conclusions and principles a long time ago on your own.

The Bible says that this is exactly our goal. We are to become a perfect man in Christ. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Arm yourselves with the mind of Christ. That means bringing every thought and every imagination into subjection and conformity to Jesus Christ.

This is what is meant by perfecting holiness: we are constantly and continually climbing upward and onward. Every day we are gaining knowledge, gaining ground, and becoming more and more holy. Our goal is to become perfect. We may not be perfect in this life, but that is our goal. I would still like every thought brought into subjection to Jesus Christ. I can say like David, "I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love." I hate it when things pop into my mind that I know should not be there.

I'm not dwelling on vain thoughts. They just pop in there, and I have to fight to get them out, just like everybody else. I can't waste my time thinking about vain, stupid, useless, worthless, fleshly thoughts. We have to continue to work every day. Since we know that we are perfecting holiness and that we should be perfecting holiness, what is the sphere in which we are to do our work?

The Sphere of Perfecting: The Fear of God

He tells us this: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness”—where?—“in the fear of God.” The only sphere in which we're going to be able to perfect holiness is in the fear of God. You cannot perfect holiness outside of that sphere and that realm. We're to be constantly and continually perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Earlier I quoted from John Gill on the phrase “perfecting holiness,” but I did not finish the quote. Gill explains the sphere just

mentioned, the fear of God: perfecting holiness should be accomplished "in the fear of God, but not in a servile, slavish fear, a fear of hell and damnation, but in a filial fear, a reverential affection for God and humble trust in Him and dependence on Him for grace and strength. It is that fear which has God for its author, is a blessing of the new covenant, is implanted in regeneration, and is increased by discoveries of pardoning grace. It has God for its object, not His wrath and vindictive justice, but His goodness, grace, and mercy. This shows from what principle and upon what views believers act in the course of righteousness and holiness, not from a fear of hell, nor from the fear of man or with a view to gain their applause, but as in the sight of God from a reverential affection to him, a childlike fear of him with a view to his glory."

If we're going to perfect holiness, it must be in the fear of God. It is not a fear of damnation and hell, but a filial fear or reverential fear. There are different kinds of fear mentioned in the Bible in reference to God. Turn back, first of all, to Jeremiah 5 and verse 22. Let me show you what God says before I try to distinguish fear for you. Notice what God asks: "Fear ye not me? saith the LORD:

The Fear of God and Obedience

"Will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" "Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence?" God speaks of His act of creation, of how He has placed the sand on the seashore. No matter how the waves toss themselves, they cannot pass over. And God is saying, "Are you not going to fear me?" Look at the power that He has.

It is true that we do not serve God out of a fear of hell and damnation. I do not preach and I do not live merely because I am afraid of going to hell or damnation. In fact, I am not afraid at all because of Jesus Christ. He is my salvation. But let me show you something. Look in your Bibles to Exodus 20 and verse 20. Moses is getting, or has just received, the law of God. He has been up on the mountain. Exodus 20:20 says, "And Moses said unto the people,

Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not."

Isn't that amazing? On the one hand, he says, "Fear not." On the other hand, he says, "The fear of God needs to be in you lest ye sin against him." When we talk about the fear of God, we must understand that there is indeed an awesome power in God, and we must come to grips with the reality of that power. Even in a reverential fear of God, or a filial fear of God, there remains an understanding of God's awesome power. God chastises, and God disciplines.

My earthly father was around six foot two and weighed over 200 pounds. To be truthful, I never really enjoyed being whipped by him. He could not only hurt while he whipped; he could make it hurt a long time after he finished whipping. If I respected my earthly father's power and ability to discipline, shall I not much more respect my heavenly Father's power and ability to discipline? I want you to turn to Hebrews chapter 12.

Hebrews 12:9 says, "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" This is the same argument that I just gave you. If I respected the power of my father to discipline, to whip, and to chastise—and I did, because I did not want to be whipped by him—how much more shall I respect my heavenly Father's power and ability to discipline? I believe there is a proper sense in which we respect that power and ability to chastise and to discipline. In another sense of the word, respecting that power prompts us to obedience. Because I did not want to get whipped by my earthly father, I obeyed him. He only whipped me when I disobeyed. The same thing is true of our Heavenly Father.

In 1 Peter 1:13–16, the Lord says through the Apostle Peter, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

Look again at verse 14: “As obedient children.” He tells you what obedient children do not do. Obedient children do not fashion themselves according to the former lusts of their ignorance. In other words, obedient children do not live the way they used to live. They do not think the way they used to think. They do not act the way they used to act. What does an obedient child do, according to 1 Peter 1:15? An obedient child becomes holy in all manner of conversation—that is, all manner of conduct—as He is holy.

Why does Peter differentiate between obedient children and disobedient children? What happens to disobedient children? They get what? Whipped, spanked, disciplined, chastised. So basically what he is saying here is this: If you do not want to be chastised, be an obedient child. That is why he says, “perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” You cannot be holy and be disobedient. You cannot be biblical and be disobedient. The disobedient child is the one that gets the punishment.

Chastening for Our Profit

When God does discipline us, it is for our benefit and blessing. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.”

Notice what he said. Our earthly fathers chastened us, oftentimes, after their own pleasure. God the Father does not chasten us that way. Sometimes I think my father chastised me, whipped me, just because he was angry at me, not because I had done anything particularly wrong. Of course, I have whipped the wrong daughter before, too. We have identical twins, and I would grab ahold of one and start to whip, but she would say, “I’m Leah! I’m Leah!” I would

answer, “I know who you are,” only to find out that I had whipped the wrong one. I would say, “Well, I did that one on credit.” But God knows exactly what He is doing.

He whips us when He does. Notice what the Bible says: “that we might be partakers of his holiness.” He chastises us to make us obedient, to make us holy. And we must not despise God’s chastening. Hebrews 12:5 says, “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.” God’s chastening is for our benefit and blessing.

In 1 Corinthians 11:31–32, the Bible says, “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” God’s chastening is not only to make us holy; it is also to keep us from becoming more rebellious and being condemned with the world. Therefore, God’s chastening is always a blessing.

That's why Peter said, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." What is an obedient child? When the Father speaks, we obey. An obedient child is one who does not need to be admonished, rebuked, or coerced. He does what's right because it's right to do what's right. An obedient child is one that obeys. He's willing to obey. He's ready to obey.

And if we're going to perfect holiness in the fear of God, we have to understand that we have a Heavenly Father who is holy and who wants us to be holy. Out of a filial fear and a reverential trust in God, and dependence upon Him, we look to Him as our Heavenly Father.

That's why He said back in 2 Corinthians 6, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." This filial fear of God respects God as Father, acknowledges His authority and power, loves His person, trusts His judgment and His word, and enables us to continue to purge ourselves from filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. It restrains us from committing sin and indulging the flesh. This filial fear, this

fatherly fear, motivates us to be holy as He is holy. It inspires us to worship Him and Him alone, because we recognize that He is our Father.

The Fear of the Lord in Scripture

He deserves all honor and all praise and all glory. Notice Deuteronomy 6 and verse 13: "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name."

Deuteronomy 10 and verse 20 says, "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen." Notice again: "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name."

Proverbs 8:13 says, “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.” The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. If you fear the Lord, you are going to hate everything that is contrary to Him.

Proverbs 16:6 tells us why we should be perfecting holiness in the fear of God: “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.” You will never, ever depart from evil unless you fear the Lord. It is just that simple. If you fear the Lord, you will cease and desist from evil. When you find out that something is sinful and wicked and contrary to Him, you will stop, or you will never enter into it. You will never engage in it. It is only as you fear the Lord that you depart from evil.

Job 28:28 says, “And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.” The fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.

Now return to 2 Corinthians 7:1: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved”—the promises revealed in verses 16 through 18 of chapter 6—“having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting, maturing, completing holiness in the fear of God.” The sphere in which we are to perfect or complete holiness is the fear of God.

It is impossible to make progress in holiness or in the Christian life without a biblical fear of God. If you remember the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 3, when he spoke of all the wickedness in the world, the climax was, “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” That is why people are wicked: they do not fear God.

If we understand that God is our Father, we understand that He loves us, protects us, provides for us, and preserves us. But as a Father, He also disciplines and chastises us. If we do not want to be chastised, then we must be obedient, because the Scripture says, “If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”

"But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." God only disciplines His own. If a person can sin, commit blatant ungodly acts, and never be disciplined or chastised, it is probably because he does not belong to God. God chastens His own. If we do not want chastening, we must be obedient.

Applications from J.C. Ryle on Holiness

I want to make some applications. The first is from *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots*, written by J.C. Ryle. He quotes Hebrews 12:14: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Then he asks, "Are we holy? Shall we see the Lord?" In this hurrying, bustling world, let us stand still for a few minutes and consider the matter of holiness. It is a solemn thing to hear the Word of God saying, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

A man may go great lengths in religion and yet never reach true holiness. What is true practical holiness? It is not knowledge—Balaam had that. It is not a great profession—Judas Iscariot had that. It is not doing many things—Herod had that. It is not a zeal for certain matters in religion—Jehu had that. It is not morality and outward respectable conduct—the rich young ruler had that. It is not taking pleasure in hearing the preachers—the Jews in Ezekiel's time had that. It is not keeping company with godly people—Joab, Gehazi, and Demas had that. Yet none of these people were holy. These things alone are not holiness. A man may have any one of them and yet never see the Lord.

Let me draw a picture of biblical holiness, that we may see clearly with the eyes of our minds. He gives twelve things. First, holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God, according as we find His mind described in the Scripture. Secondly, a holy man will endeavor to shun every known sin and to keep every known commandment. Thirdly, a holy man will strive to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fourthly, a holy man will follow after meekness, patience, gentleness, kind tempers, and government of his tongue. Fifthly, he will follow after temperance and self-denial. Sixthly, after love and brotherly kindness. Seventhly, after a spirit of mercy and benevolence toward others. Eighthly, after purity of heart. Ninthly, after the fear of God. Tenthly, after humility. Eleventhly, after faithfulness in all the duties and relations of his life. Twelfthly, last but not least, after spiritual mindedness.

You may live through this life without a lot of things, and you may live through it doing a lot of things, but one thing is certain: without holiness, no man will see the Lord. It is not enough to be positionally holy in Christ; we want to be practically holy in every avenue of our life. The promise of God as our Father should induce us to holiness and sanctification and encourage us to abstain from all the fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

If we understand that our Father is holy, it should make us want to be like Him. We must live in righteousness and holiness. We must be partakers of His holiness and have practical holiness in our lives. If you genuinely want to be holy, you cannot be content with any sin in your life, no matter how small or insignificant it is. It must be abhorred, repented of, turned from, and forsaken. We must depart from sin and wickedness, lasciviousness, bitterness, wrath, anger, evil speaking, and malice.

Remember, it was Solomon who said, "Little foxes spoil the vines." When Lot was escaping Sodom, he wanted to go to this town and said, "Oh, is it not a little one?" The little foxes spoil the vines. "Be ye holy; for I am holy," saith the Lord. We must persevere and continue in holiness in the sphere of fearing the Lord. If we truly fear Him, we will be holy, and we will endeavor to perfect, mature, and complete that holiness in our lives.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. And Lord, we do indeed ask for holiness. We ask, Father, that You would renew our minds, that You would enable us to see that Thou art holy and we are under duty and obligation to be holy as Thou art holy. Give us grace. Give us the power of the Spirit that we may be holy in every area of our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

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