I. **A definition of terms.**

A. As we begin this study, we need to understand the words the Holy Spirit had Paul use in this phrase.

B. The word “perfecting” means to bring to an end, to finish to complete something.
   1. There is some work that needs to be completed.
   2. It indicates that the work under consideration has been started but not yet completed.

C. The word “holiness” denotes sanctity and comes from the Greek word “hagios” which means holy.
   1. The ideas of sanctification and consecration are in this word.
   2. The basic ideas are separation from the world and devotion to God with a desire to be like Him morally.

D. Thus the first part of this phrase says that we are to complete the work of being sanctified, or separate, from the world.

E. The word “in” means remaining, taking place within some definite place or limit.

F. The word “fear” carries the idea of terror, and depending on the setting it can have a good connotation, which in our case it does, of reverence or awe for something.
   1. We revere or have awe for something good.
   2. In this case it is God.

G. The entire phrase means that we are to complete the task of separation from the world within the area of reverence for God.

H. Some translations have “perfecting holiness out of fear of God” or “through fear of God.”

II. **A determination to fear God.**

A. God has always commanded His people to fear or reverence Him.
   1. In Leviticus 19, the Hebrews were given several commands about respecting parents and the aged along with the command each time to fear God (vs. 3, 14, 32).
   2. In chapter 25, commands were given about usury, oppression of others and rule over others with the command each time to fear God (vs. 17, 36, 43).
   3. God told them to do those things out of a reverence for God.

B. God required of the Israelites that they fear Him (Deuteronomy 10:12).

C. Ultimately, this is the conclusion to which Solomon came after conducting his life experiments (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

D. Fear of the Lord is beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7).

E. You and I are to have great reverence for God based on Who He is, what He has done and what He is going to do.
   1. Our God is the Creator of all life (Genesis 1:1).
      a. As the great hymn says, God holds the germ within His
hand.

b. He does so because He gave breath and life to man.

2. He developed the plan of salvation (2 Timothy 1:9).
3. He is the giver of every good and every perfect gift.
4. He sent His Son.
5. He gave us a kingdom (Hebrews 12:28).
6. Upon the destruction of the earth, He is going to receive this kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:24).

F. Because of these things we are moved to serve God in an acceptable way.

G. Reverence or fear of God leads us to action just as reverence for or fear of parents leads us to action.
1. It begins with a true fear of God.
2. It evolves into reverence for God.
3. Initially, I do what God says because He scares me.
4. As I get to know Him, I do what He says because I revere Him.

III. A description of holiness.
A. The process of becoming holy begins with baptism.
1. It is at that point that one has his/her sins washed away by the blood of Christ (Revelation 1:5).
2. When one has his sins removed, that person becomes holy.

B. However, the holiness or sanctification process does not end there, it is just the beginning.
1. We are still in possession of passions that lead to sin and the ability to be tempted.
2. We have to work to remove those things in our lives that lead us toward sin.
3. This is the idea of perfecting or completing holiness.

C. We are told that as Christians we are a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9).
1. The challenge is to remain holy (Romans 12:1).
2. To do this there must be transformation (Romans 12:2).

D. Our job is to be holy people (1 Peter 2:5).

E. Paul tells us how to do that in the verses previous to our text.

F. Paul has asked them to accept Him as God's ambassador.
1. In order to do that the Corinthians needed to separate themselves from those who would bring them down.
2. Paul asked five rhetorical questions in verses 14-16.
3. The answer to each is none, therefore the answer for them to accept Paul as God's ambassador was to separate themselves from ungodly people.

G. If they would do that God would dwell in them, He would receive them, and be their spiritual Father.

H. The description of holiness is to be separate from the world.

I. Ezra gives us a great illustration of this in 8:28.
1. He told the priests that they were holy.
2. Notice how they were made holy in verse 24 - they were separated
from the common people.

J. The Psalmist asked who would stand in God’s holy place (24:3).
1. The answer found in the next verse says the one who had clean hands and a pure heart.
2. In general, the one who is holy, different from the world.

K. As Christians, if we want to be holy, we have to cut off ties with worldly things that tempt us or others to sin.
1. I may need to get rid of some earthly friendships.
2. I may need to get rid of an ungodly dating partner.
3. I may need to get rid of an ungodly business partner.
4. I may need to quit going to certain places or doing certain things or wearing certain things.

L. One writer stated, “Holiness does not consist in mystic speculations, enthusiastic fervors, or un-commanded austerities; it consists in thinking as God thinks and willing as God wills.”

M. We should strive to be holy because God is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16).

N. We learn how to be holy or separate in God’s word (John 17:17), this is why it is said that we are sanctified through the Spirit of God (1 Peter 1:2) - we are set apart by obedience to the teaching of the Holy Spirit found in God’s word.