

## **PERFECTING HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF GOD (2 Corinthians 7:1)**

### **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 were 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.