

## PERFECTING HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF GOD

Paul says a lot in one short verse, the first verse of **2 Corinthians 7**. First, he mentions the promises that God Himself made to us if we would separate ourselves from those who are practicing things that defile (**2 Cor. 6:16-18**). The grace of God as expressed in these promises should motivate us to do what He says—break fellowship with the false teachers, the unfaithful, the disobedient, and the licentious.

It is not easy to end earthly relationships. However, Paul warns us that *“evil companions corrupt good morals”* (**1 Cor. 15:33**). We must take a stand by not participating in worldly things. Peter says that they will ridicule you when you stop doing what you used to do with them (**1 Peter 4:1-5**).

Of course, if we do not change our behavior, worldly friends will continue to feel comfortable around us as we approve of their drinking and other activities mentioned in **1 Peter 4**. To have the mind of Christ is to cease from sin (**v.1**). We must repent of our self-willed past (or it may be our efforts to please worldly friends—**Galatians 1:10**). We are also cleansed by the blood of Christ (**1 John 1:7-2:2**) and the word of Christ (**Ephesians 5:26**). The Spirit, the water, and the blood (**1 John 5:8**) all meet in the command to be baptized into the body of Christ. Then, as part of the body, we have constant contact with the blood of Christ.

We must attack filthiness on two fronts: the flesh and the spirit. This reality dispels once for all the Gnostic idea that one can sin with the body and the spirit not be tainted. John says if we think that way, then we lie and the truth is not in us (**1 John 1:8-10**). James also tells us how to cleanse ourselves from filthiness of both flesh and spirit. He said in **James 4:8**, *“Cleanse your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, you double-minded.”* Jesus said that sin begins in the heart (**Matthew 15:18-20**). Sin defiles both flesh and spirit of a person.

Over and over again, we also notice that God has given us the responsibility to cleanse ourselves. We have a part in the sanctification process. That does not mean we save ourselves in the sense that we can earn salvation, but it does mean that we are responsible for our spiritual condition. By obeying God in this process, we *“perfect holiness in the fear of God.”*

Holiness is a goal for which we must strive, since Hebrews 12 says that no man can see the Lord without it. Are you pursuing holiness in your life?