

PERFECTING HOLINESS Part 1

Today, I want to begin a new topic and talk to you about *sanctification*. My title for this series is, “PERFECTING HOLINESS”.

As you know, we’ve been speaking to you on the subject of sin, specifically on our fight against sin! Now, when we talk about fighting against sin, we’re NOT talking about fighting TO BE FREE from sin. The fact is, we’re ALREADY FREE FROM SIN!

Romans 6:18

¹⁸ Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Someone might ask, “Why does it seem like sin is still reigning over me?” Well, we must understand that being free from sin (it’s dominion and power) does not mean sin won’t try to *regain* control over us.

Romans 6:9, 10, 12

⁹ Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. ¹⁰ For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. ¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

And, this is the fight—to resist sin and keep it from regaining dominion and control. This is also happens to be what we’ve been talking to you about, only we’ve been calling it “crucifying or denying the flesh.” However, both of these things (resisting sin and crucifying the flesh) are actually the same thing. The reason they are the same is because sin finds its expression in the lusts of our flesh.

James 1:14, 15

¹⁴ But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. ¹⁵ Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

How does all this relate to sanctification? Well, when we resist sin (or refusing to walk according to our flesh), we’re actually performing an act of sanctification!

1 Thessalonians 4:3

³ For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

Now, we should point out that we don’t have to wait until we’re *tempted* in order to sanctify or cleanse ourselves of the flesh. We can also sanctify ourselves of sin and the flesh by either walking in or renewing our minds by the word of God!

John 17:17

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

But, there's ANOTHER act of sanctification that's even different from this!

2 Corinthians 7:1

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.

The sanctification (holiness) Paul is describing in this verse is different from any of the other forms of sanctification that we've been talking about up until this point. Up until this point we've been talking about the kind of sanctification where we cleanse ourselves from the lusts and DESIRES OF THE FLESH. Paul is talking *here* about being cleansed from the DEFILEMENT OF THE FLESH!

Moreover, you don't cleanse yourself from the *defilement* of the flesh the same way you cleanse yourself of the desires of the flesh. You cleanse yourself from the defilement of the flesh by SEPARATING from fleshly or sinful influences. And, the reason we know this is because of the *context* of Paul's argument.

2 Corinthians 6:17

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,

2 Corinthians 7:1

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, Paul commands them to *separate* or "touch not the unclean thing". And THIS is the context that he commands them to "cleanse yourselves from all filthiness (defilement) of the flesh!" In other words, it's possible to sanctify ourselves simply by SEPARATING from things that can defile us.

Isaiah 52:11

11 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.

Notice, God is commanding Israel to "be clean" (be sanctified) by separating or "touching no unclean thing!"

We now have at least two ways to perform the act of sanctification. We can either sanctify ourselves by purifying ourselves of evil impulses, OR we can sanctify ourselves by separating from evil influences! Moreover, it's not until we do BOTH (purify ourselves of evil impulses AND separate from evil influences) that we're truly able to "perfect holiness" or bring holiness to its full completion!

Unfortunately, we tend to emphasize ONE of these forms of sanctification over the other. For example, we might resist evil impulses, but fail to separate ourselves from evil influences.

Psalm 1:1

¹ Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

- a. We'll resist evil (immoral) passions and lusts, BUT we'll watch and consume explicit content through movies, social media, internet, etc.
- b. We'll resist the temptation to consume illegal or immoral substances (drugs, narcotics, etc), BUT we'll frequent places where these things are consumed (bars, night clubs, homes of relatives/friends).
- c. We'll diligently work to be more content and not covet after material things, YET we're constantly following people on social media who glorify wealth and material possessions.

You'll never perfect holiness until you stop exposing yourself to things/people who encourage behavior you're trying to resist!

Romans 13:14

¹⁴ But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

2 Timothy 2:22

²² Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Maybe you're on the other end of the spectrum. For example, you avoid evil (sinful) influences, BUT you do a poor job resisting the evil impulses in your own heart.

Matthew 23:25, 26

²⁵ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. ²⁶ Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

Thus, cleansing (sanctifying) the inside should take priority over cleansing the outside (separating ourselves from evil influences)!

- a. Some people won't watch explicit movies, BUT they allow their minds to lust and imagine immoral things.

- b. Some people would never join a club or secret society where witchcraft or idolatry is practiced, YET they are stubborn and rebel against authority (which the Bible calls witchcraft).
- c. Some people will dress in modest apparel (dress appropriately), BUT they don't adorn themselves in meekness and walk in subjection to their own husbands.

We must understand that it's possible to be defiled by evil thoughts, just like it's possible to be defiled by evil company.

Matthew 15:18–20

¹⁸ But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. ¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: ²⁰ These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

Therefore, if we truly want to “perfect holiness” or bring it to its full completion, then we must do more than simply avoid evil communication (or company). We must separate from evil influences AND put away evil impulses and passions from our hearts!