PERFECTING HOLINESS Part 3

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.

Again, the Apostle Paul is pointing out how it's possible to be defiled by FLESH and SPIRIT. Moreover, to perfect holiness we must cleanse ourselves from BOTH.

When it comes to being defiled by 'flesh' Paul is talking about being defiled by our EVIL DESIRES.

Matthew 15:19–20
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.

We *cleanse* ourselves of the flesh when we ABSTAIN from our evil desires.

1 Thessalonians 4:3
3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

This is VERY different from how many view 'holiness' today! Today men view holiness by the restrictions and regulations they place on themselves.

Colossians 2:20–23
20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, 21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not; 22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

Observing 'holy days' and other restrictions has no value in crucifying our flesh. In fact, they can actually *strengthen* the flesh by giving it a reason to feel proud!

When it comes to being defiled by 'spirit' Paul is talking about being defiled by EVIL SPIRITS. Someone may ask, "Can Christians really have evil spirits?" YES.

There are several ways a Christian can receive evil spirits.

THROUGH PERSISTENT OR UNREPENTANT SIN

Ephesians 4:26–27
26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 Neither give place to the devil.

When we persist in sin AND go long periods without repenting from sin, we can potentially give 'place' (opportunity) for evil spirits to enter us. When they do, they will complicate things and possibly bring us into bondage.

Matthew 12:43–45
43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. 44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. 45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

Christians can ALSO receive evil spirits…

THROUGH FALSE DOCTRINE OR FALSE KNOWLEDGE

2 Corinthians 11:3
3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Satan tries to beguile men today the SAME way he beguiled Eve—corrupting their minds to the truth! Satan knows that if he can convince men to question God's word, they will be more likely to accept *another* gospel.

2 Corinthians 11:4
4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

Whenever a person receives another gospel, they *also* receive another spirit! Again, when this happens these evil spirits will begin to complicate things!

2 Corinthians 10:4
4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

A ***stronghold*** is a defensive fortification used to strengthen or reinforce an enemy's position! Strongholds are formed by false doctrine or knowledge.

2 Corinthians 10:5
5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Notice, the goal of strongholds is to oppose the truth of God (i.e. to position error above the knowledge of God).

Now, it's important to understand that false doctrine (or knowledge) can corrupt in TWO DIFFERENT directions:

1. First, it can corrupt by convincing men to FORBID what God PERMITS.

   1 Timothy 4:1–4
   1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

2. Second, it can corrupt by convincing men to PERMIT what God FORBIDS.

   Jude 4
   4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

   Notice that these false teachers weren't just introducing sin (lasciviousness). They were convincing men that their lasciviousness was permitted by God! As a result, they were essentially *denying the Lord* (displacing His authority)!

   2 Peter 2:1
   1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

   Notice, heresies (false doctrine) "denies the Lord" the authority to govern and direct His people.

2 Peter 2:18–19
[18] 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. [19] While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

First, false prophets are notorious for targeting newly converted Christians. They *allure* them by appealing to their carnal desires. Second, they regularly promise people liberty, when in reality they are bringing them into bondage. In other words, the very thing God's people are supposed to be crucifying, false prophets tell them it's okay to desire it!

So, false doctrine is NOT just about encouraging people to sin. It's actually about justifying sin OR making it look like righteousness.