

Perfecting Holiness

2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1

14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.” 17 “Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” 18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” 1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1

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1. The Command (Verses 14-16a)

1 King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. 2 They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. 3 He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. 4 As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. 5 He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. 6 So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done.

1 Kings 11:1–6

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	Believers	Unbelievers
Participation, common	Righteousness	Lawlessness
Fellowship	Light	Darkness
Harmony	Christ	Belial
Agreement	Temple of God (us)	Idols

Light vs darkness

John 3:19–21 “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.””

1 John 1:7 “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”



2. The Elaboration (Verses 16b-18)



I will walk among you and be your God,
and you will be my people.

Leviticus 26:12


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They will be my people, and I will be
their God.

Jeremiah 32:38

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As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

The New International Version (1984)

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Psalm 1:1–3

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1 Corinthians 5:9–10 “I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—¹⁰ not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.”

1 Corinthians 7:31 "... those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away."

2 Timothy 2:4 "No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life—he wants to please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."

2 I will be careful to lead a blameless life— when will you come to me? I will walk in my house with blameless heart.
3 I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me.

Psalm 101:2–3

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3. The Goal (2 Cor 7:1)

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

2 Corinthians 7:1

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“... so that you will not sin.”

1 John 2.1 (NIV1984)

The apostle John said, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin" (1 John 2:1). The whole purpose of John's letter, he says, is that we not sin. One day as I was studying this chapter I realized that my personal life's objective regarding holiness was less than that of John's. He was saying, in effect, "Make it your aim not to sin." As I thought about this, I realized that deep within my heart my real aim was not to sin very much. I found it difficult to say, "Yes, Lord, from here on I will make it my aim not to sin." I realized God was calling me that day to a deeper level of commitment to holiness than I had previously been willing to make.

Can you imagine a soldier going into battle with the aim of "not getting hit very much"? The very suggestion is ridiculous. His aim is not to get hit at all! Yet if we have not made a commitment to holiness without exception, we are like a soldier going into battle with the aim of not getting hit very much. We can be sure if that is our aim, we will be hit - not with bullets, but with temptation over and over again.

Jonathan Edwards, one of the great preachers of early American history, used to make resolutions. One of his was, "Resolved, never to do anything which I would be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life." Dare we modern-day Christians make such a resolution? Are we willing to commit ourselves to the practice of holiness without exceptions? There is no point in praying for victory over temptation if we are not willing to make a commitment to say no to it.

— The Pursuit of Holiness (Jerry Bridges)

14 Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men.
15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way.

Proverbs 4:14–15

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Satan often tempts me to go as near to temptations as possible without committing the sin. This is fearful—tempting God and grieving the Holy Ghost. It is a deep-laid plot of Satan.

(M'Cheyne's *Personal Reformation*)



4. The Driving Force (2 Cor 7:1)

That is, the fear of God is the animating and invigorating principle of a godly life. It is the wellspring of all godly desires and aspirations. Do you desire to be a godly person? Then you must understand and grow in the fear of God.

Bridges, Jerry. *The Joy of Fearing God* (p 25)

There are only four other times in the NT when φόβος, “fear,” is followed by one of the persons of the Godhead as an objective genitive....In all of these examples, the softer term “respect” is not adequate. The first passage is in the context of the church that was walking in the fear of the Lord, that is, fear in the sense of awe and reverence. The other three references are in the context of judgment where “fear, reverence, and awe” are well suited to the context. Käsemann states, “The fear of the Lord is no empty rhetorical phrase here.” Ernst Käsemann, “Ministry and Community in the New Testament,” in *Essays on New Testament Themes*

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 9:10

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Do not let your heart envy sinners, But
live in the fear of the Lord always.

Proverbs 23:17

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Applications