

"Let Us Cleanse Ourselves"

Introduction. God's promises provide powerful motivation for Christians to separate from unbelievers (2 Corinthians 7:1). The promises of which Paul spoke are the seven mentioned in 6:16-18. Those promises should elicit love, gratitude, and thankfulness for His overwhelming generosity. In fact, ingratitude characterizes unrepentant sinners (Luke 6:35; Romans 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:2). "These promises" are conditional (2 Corinthians 6:14, 17). Paul defined the appropriate act of gratitude in both negative and positive terms.

I. "Let Us Cleanse Ourselves"

- A. It is obvious from the context that this cleansing is done in a moral sense. Furthermore, the tenor of the verse indicates that this is a continual action.
 1. We "purify ourselves" (Matthew 5:8; 1 Peter 1:22-25; 1 John 3:1-3).
 2. Our Father "cleanses" us (John 15:3; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:25-27). But it does not happen apart from our effort (Philippians 2:12-13).
- B. We turn away "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."
 1. The word for "filthiness" appears only here in the New Testament. In all three of its uses in the Septuagint, however, it refers to religious defilement. Paul calls Christians not only to cleanse themselves from sin and immorality but especially, in this context, from all associations with false religion. The cleansing is to be complete.
 2. "From the flesh."
 - a) Romans 6:12-13; 8:8, 13; 12:1-2.
 - b) Galatians 5:16.
 - c) 1 Corinthians 9:27.
 3. "And spirit."
 - a) Proverbs 4:23; 16:32; 23:7; 25:28.
 - b) 2 Corinthians 10:5.
 - c) Philippians 4:8-9.
 4. Five areas of activity to cleanse.
 - a) What we see (Proverbs 4:25; Matthew 6:22-23).
 - b) What we hear (Nehemiah 8:3; Luke 8:18).
 - c) What we say (Matthew 12:34, 36-37; Ephesians 4:29).
 - d) Where we go (Proverbs 1:15-16; Ecclesiastes 5:1).
 - e) Who we go with (Psalm 106:34-35; 1 Corinthians 15:33).

II. ***"Perfecting Holiness In The Fear Of God"***

- A. "Perfecting" means "to finish, to complete, or to fulfill." Christians are to pursue the goal of holiness (Leviticus 20:26; Matthew 5:48; 1 Peter 1:16) by separating from all the lies and deceptions that would defile them, encouraged by the hope that the goal will someday will be achieved (Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 5:10).
- B. Motivating Christians' pursuit of holiness is the reverential fear of God, which is foundational to godly living (Job 28:28; Psalm 19:9; 34:11; 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 8:13; 9:10; 15:33; 16:6; 23:17; Acts 9:31; Hebrews 12:28-29).

Conclusion. False teaching defiles the whole person by pandering to sinful human appetites and corrupting the mind. Therefore, Christians must avoid both the fleshly sins and the pollution of the mind that false religion brings. The church must confront the world to fulfill the great commission. Yet we must not compromise with false religions to do so. To disobey God's explicit command to separate from unbelievers is foolish, blasphemous, ungrateful, and forfeits God's blessing.