

Pleasing God by Perfecting Holiness

Student Guides

Daily Bible Reading

Day 1	2 Cor. 7: 1-16
Day 2	2 Cor. 7: 1-16
Day 3	2 Cor. 7: 1-16
Day 4	2 Cor. 7: 1-16
Day 5	2 Cor. 7: 1-16
Day 6	2 Cor. 7: 1-16
Day 7	2 Cor. 7: 1-16

Oswald Chambers noted in his devotional, "Sanctification means intense concentration on God's point of view. It means every power of body, soul, and spirit is chained and kept for God's purpose only. It will cause an intense narrowing of all our interests on earth, and an immense broadening of all our interests in God." Is it your life's goal to please God? If you are a Christian, your goal cannot be less.

Today's lesson will assist us in living so in tune with Jesus Christ, our wants will be His wants, our goals will be His goals. After all, that is precisely what it means to be sanctified, to be holy.

1. The Negative Dimension to Sanctification: Separation (v.1a)

Salvation is revealed in Scripture as having three dimensions: justification (Christians have been saved); glorification (Christians will be saved); sanctification (Christians are being saved). Sanctification is sandwiched between what happened the moment we received Christ as Savior and what will happen when we meet Christ as Savior in the afterlife.

Sanctification may be seen in three dimensions, the first of which is the *negative* dimension. And, the heart of the negative dimension is *separation (v.1)*. The negative side of sanctification begins with "cleansing ourselves." The closer we walk with Jesus, the more potent guilt feels in our hearts. Why?

First, sin becomes more evident because of the way sin is characterized. Paul calls sin "filthiness." The fact is, until we see sin as God sees sin, our progress in our walk with Christ will remain at a standstill. According to Scripture, sin is dirty, vile, and filthy (cp. Ps. 51: 1-2). Sin contaminates every sphere in our lives. It stains, corrodes, and destroys.

Second, sin becomes more evident because of the way sin is catalogued. Paul exhorts us to cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of "flesh and spirit." When Paul speaks of sins of the "flesh," he primarily means sins committed with our eyes, ears, lips, and body. Being the embodiment of God's presence, there is no excusing the litter in God's temple.

2. The Positive Dimension to Sanctification: Consecration (v.1b)

Now let us move on to the positive dimension of sanctification, *consecration*. Moral filthiness backs down when holiness stands up. Holiness and moral impurity cannot stay long together in the same container. In fact, holiness pushes moral impurity out the back door as it comes in the front door. Scripture reveals much about holiness.

First, there is the pattern of holiness (Heb. 12:14). The term "holiness" is the Greek word which means "pure." Holiness has to do with consecration. It is being set apart to Jesus Christ. Our goal is to be like Jesus while He was here on the earth. We live as He lived and behave as He behaved. Becoming like Christ is becoming holy.

Second, there is the promise of holiness. Paul expects one day to be like Christ completely (1 Thess. 3:13). Between now and then we must progress toward the goal of the high calling in Christ (Phil. 3:14).

Third, there is the process of holiness. Since sanctification is a process, so is holiness. We “follow holiness” (Heb. 12:14). We are moving toward holiness at the same time we are holy. Our motivation for moving toward holiness is twofold: love and fear. Our desire is to please Him.

3. The Corporate Dimension to Sanctification: Reconciliation (vv.2-16)

Thus far we have noted both the positive and negative dimensions to sanctification. Now let us consider the third dimension to sanctification, the corporate dimension: *reconciliation*. It may come as a shock to new believers, but even Christians face conflicts within their faith community. Indeed, Paul was having problems with the very ones he was writing to at Corinth (2 Cor. 7:2-4)

First, observe Paul’s loving intention. He desires nothing more but to deal with any conflict between believers with their highest edification in mind without sacrificing glory to the Father. He wants *reconciliation* between those who have broken fellowship with one another. He pleads with them to make room in their hearts for him for they surely know his heart has room for them.

Second, observe Paul’s painful confrontation (vv. 8-11). There are times doing God’s work when tough calls must be made. All the facts may not be known but decision time appears and the Christian leader must decide. For Paul, it was time to confront. Even so, the painful decision gave Paul much remorse (v.8). A true leader never enjoys causing pain to other people. Paul had a moment when he questioned whether his decision was the right one. He had second thoughts whether the letter would edify the church and glorify God. The results, however, were magnificent. The Corinthians repented of their passive neglect of God’s church (vv. 9-10).

Finally, observe Paul’s delightful solution (vv. 12-16). To be reconciled to the church of God is the ultimate earthly event for a wayward believer. No one can be truly sanctified apart from God’s church. Therefore, reconciliation was paramount to the repentant man’s spiritual health.

WRAP UP

In 2 Corinthians 7, sanctification plays a vital role in understanding the dynamic between Paul and the Corinthians. We noted three dimensions to sanctification: separation, consecration, and reconciliation. The first is negative telling us what our boundaries are. The second is positive, informing us of our duty to holiness. And the third is corporate, and is key to continued church health.