

# Perfecting Holiness: God's Blueprint for a Transformed Life | Break the Yoke!

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Date: 01 September 2025

[0:00] Looking at 2 Corinthians 6, a classic passage really, 2 Corinthians 6, about separation unto! our God and perfecting holiness. God calls us to live distinctively as his own people! and it talks about perfecting holiness in the fear of God. He speaks to the church at Corinth about that and really it's a timeless call for us to live holy set apart lives as his people. Take it up from 2 Corinthians 6 from verse 14. It reads, and feel free to read along with me if you like, Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers?

For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God. As God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing. And I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. 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. God calls us to be his called out people, separated unto him. And it's a solemn warning here, as well as a glorious invitation.

These words, we can live a life that we can know glad fellowship with our God. Separation, holiness, it's not a call to moralism or religious duty, it's really to know that truth of a life transformed by his grace. That our lives will bring him the glory that he is due.

And the call is clear. 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.

You look at this verse, it's really God's divine blueprint, his promise of a life that honors him. And we're called to live that kind of life. I know I've met people who have conversed with me, and in conversation they've kind of retorted with, oh, you're one of those churches.

[2:40] Come out and be separate. Well, they're kind of snarling their lips. Oh, one of them. Come out and be separate, yeah. Well, that's what it says. It is what it says.

But it's not a prideful thing, it's actually a humble thing to be his, to belong to him, to want to glorify and honor and please our God. And our motive is not dread. What moves us is that reverent awe of him, as we've already heard expressed in the devotion time.

Our mighty God is due. Honor and awe and fear, godly fear. We have a salvation in Christ, assured. And now he invites us to grow, to grow in that faith, and to be that people that live it out.

That we would be a living temple, set apart from the world and what defiles, to be a holy temple for his glory. And his promise here is that we can be his sons and daughters.

He promises to be with us, to embrace us as such, and he impacts our hearts. It's grace really right through, isn't it? He calls us to walk worthy of this one who's done so much.

[3:50] He's redeemed us by his precious blood. And here is our great privilege as the saved. And he helps us in this to be perfecting, be perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Let's look through some of these truths in this passage together. And firstly, the call to us, the call to separation. It says, be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

Be not unequally yoked. What does that mean? It's a mismatch here where there's a yoking of two different things. It's not going to work. It's like trying to yoke an ox with a donkey.

It talks about that in Deuteronomy 22 verse 10. Try to yoke an ox and a donkey, put the yoke around their necks and try to get them to drive through the fields and plough, and it's not going to happen.

It's not going to work. There's a law against that. Deuteronomy 22 verse 10. Animals with a different size and temperament, they're just not going to be able to work together.

[4:51] They've got different strength. They're not going to fit together. And yoke them together and they're going to pull unevenly. It's going to be a woeful kind of ploughing. You can imagine a zigzag kind of ploughing.

It's just not going to work. And Paul's saying here it's the same spiritually speaking too. If you try to form a partnership like that, where you're yoked together with someone who doesn't believe, we just can't join up with those whose values and goals are different.

It's not going to work. If we join up with those who are against our Lord, they're going to pull us away from God's purpose. It's going to be a wonky kind of ploughing that's going to happen. It's going to hinder us with our spiritual progress.

And the wording here is very urgent. Be ye not. Don't. Just don't. Of course, it's not saying we shun all contact with the unsaved, with unbelievers.

Our Lord himself dined with them. He had time with them. He was outreaching to them. For example, Luke 15 verse 2. He was very much reaching them. But it's telling us here about more the entanglement of alliances with those who are going to weaken our devotion to our Lord.

[6:00] It's just not going to work. It's a clash. And Paul then asks some various questions here. For example, first one. What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?

It says we can't have a communion, a partnership. We can't fellowship with that. God's righteousness, his upright character cannot unite with that which is in rebellion against him. And God's holiness and the world's sin is just, it's a mismatch. It's not going to fit together. What communion hath light? With darkness. Polar opposites, aren't they? Darkness. It's really the domain of Satan.

Of course, God's truth can't exist with darkness, with sin and error. They just don't combine. You can't combine light with darkness. When light shines, darkness departs.

It has to go. John 1 verse 5. What concordeth Christ with Belial? It's interesting the word concord here. It's literally a symphony. Now I know we've got some very able musicians and our orchestra and there's a symphony.

[7:05] There's a concord. But it's saying here, what concord, what kind of symphony would that be? Christ with Belial. There's no harmony there. It's a discord.

A clash. Imagine that. Clanging, clashing, trying to play a song together. You can't play a song together. Christ and Belial. Belial, of course, it speaks of wickedness.

It represents Satan or his domain. It's just not going to work. There's no harmony between Christ and the devil, the prince of darkness. What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

It's talking about here, this word part, it speaks of inheritance. The believer's portion. What is it? Eternal life. There's no shared portion with those who don't have eternal life in Christ.

The unbeliever has a different portion, a different destiny. And then it reads on further. What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? The temple. Now the word temple here is the very holy place where God dwells.

[8:05] It's right in the very centre of the temple. This is the very holy of holies. What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? It's the very holy place where God dwells, where God's presence is.

And God's presence cannot share space with false gods or worldly things. We know that doesn't fit. It's totally wrong, isn't it? For the holy God and his presence to dwell together with the false, the godless, the worldly things.

And we can think of that in our own life, for example. Hey, am I cherishing those ungodly things in my temple that I am? Or should they rather not be there?

Those false gods, those idols that take his place. We can't share place with the temple, the presence of God within. And the great truth is, for ye are the temple of the living God.

It reads in 1 Corinthians 6 of this word again, specifically the temple. It's the very holy of holies. This is the most sacred of spaces. And it's where God's glory came and visited and dwelt there, his very presence.

[9:15] And now, by God's spirit, it's telling us in various passages, such as this one, that his spirit dwells in every believer.

Individually and collectively, too, as we get together. It's like a picture. It's like a light to the very holy of holies in the very temple of God. When we get together, there's a sense where there's a special worship, isn't there?

There's a special sense of him, an adoration of him. But even think of it for yourself individually. Ye are, your body, is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own.

And notice, this is not a metaphor. It's not saying you're like a temple. It says you are. Think of that. When you think, when you're walking around, we've got walking temples.

You know, when your shoe leather's walking, that temple is walking. Your mobile temples. When you walk, you are a temple. Think of that. It's not a metaphor. So that's the point there.

[10:22] It's actually a spiritual reality. If we can just cotton on to that. It's our reality. It's God's own people. You are actually a temple. It's true. And the God, think of this one, the God who once filled Solomon's temple and the people fell down.

It was just glory. The one who filled Solomon's temple is filling you now. Dwelling in you, making you holy. And you are set apart for him, for his glory.

What does this truth mean for you then? Can you consider? What are the yokes in your life? Are the relationships in your life like yokes that actually may not be good for you?

Yokes to do with business associations, with ventures, with habits that pull you from Christ.

Examine your closest partnerships. What is it that you're joined up with?

Who? Do they edify your faith or erode it? We could think of that. Of course, we might have the situation where we might now be married to an unbeliever.

[11:29] So that can be something, well, you've got to be a witness there and serve and bless and minister. And you're in that. You can't leave that. But we see of those who might be contemplating marriage, get it right.

Really, it's so fundamental. It's such a fundamental thing. You've got to get that right. It's so important. That yoke is so important. Now, what are the yokes? Are they partnerships?

Are they connections that are good for you or not? Is there a compromise, a yoke? That you've got to break that yoke. It talks about breaking the yoke in the Bible. There's a compromise. If there's a yoke, that's not good.

Break that. And you carry the presence of the Almighty. We don't want to compromise. We want to dare to be distinct. Because why? You're a temple. You are a temple, actually.

So choose those connections that are going to help you to go forward in godliness, that your life can be a witness of his working in you, the holiness of that one who dwells within you.

[12:30] And so we see this wonderful truth that we have that call to separation. Secondly, we see the promise of God's presence. And you hear God's heart here for his people as it reads further.

I will dwell in them and walk in them and I will be their God. They should be my people. Isn't that beautiful? My people? That you are his and he is yours.

My God. My people. Think of that. Wherefore, come out from among them and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing. And I will receive you and will be a father unto you and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Notice here, I will dwell in them. Now, again, this connotation of the word here, he's not just saying, I will pay them a visit. He'll say, I will dwell.

I will dwell in them. He makes this permanent home within you. And by his spirit, he takes up residence. You could think of it.

[13:38] God's got multiple addresses, hasn't he? Whatever your house address is, God lives there when you're home. Because he's always at home inside of you. He's dwelling in you.

And this is not a fleeting presence. It's an abiding reality. I will walk in them. Think of that. God is walking with us, moving us, guiding us, shaping our lives, active, every day. And our God is not some distant deity, some far away kind of God. God with us. Emmanuel. That's who he is. And so think of how he's in you, with you, every day, day by day. He's going to be with you Monday too. All right? You don't have to just come and... Some people think they come and visit God when they come to church. I visited God today. And I'll wait till... I'll see you, God, next Sunday. No, it's not like that. He's with you every day. He's with us every step of our life. I will be their God and they shall be my, my people.

[14:42] That's who you are. We belong to God and he claims us as his own. And we can know all the precious privileges of that truth, of his care, his protection, of his great love. Come out from among them and be ye separate.

What's it saying here? It's telling us really it's our great joy to be distinct, to be a separated people. It's a joy. It's a privilege. It's not some morbid thing.

It's a calling. It's a blessing to be as like the priests were, consecrated for his service. Wow, that's something special. It's like how God separated the apostles when he called them to mission, like Romans 1 verse 1.

He separated them unto the gospel as it talks of Paul. This separation is not to isolate, but to dedicate, to dedicate ourselves to God. We're separated unto the gospel, unto God.

And then it reads further, touch not the unclean thing. It's telling us here the stuff to avoid. Hey, hands off. Don't touch. What's going to defile?

[15:48] Don't even touch it. Any actions or thoughts or alliances, whatever's going to grieve the Holy Spirit. Hey, back off. Don't touch it. Treat with caution.

Don't touch it. Leave it alone. We can think of those things that could damage our witness and grieve the Holy Spirit. He says, don't touch it, that which is unclean. Then he says, I will receive you. And the word here, it's like how a father embraces a child. There's a picture here of an embrace. Don't you love having a good hug? Especially when your dad hugs you. He's all over you, just embracing you.

It's like how a father embraces his child. What a joy. God delights in us. And he opens his arms wide, wide open. And he wraps us up, welcomes us warmly.

For those who will come. And I will be a father unto you. And you shall be my sons and daughters. He calls you his own. My sons. My daughters. You're mine.

[16:49] He's adopted you. Made you sons and daughters. Romans 8.15. It talks about we're adopted. I think it's almost even more special than being born. To be adopted, isn't it?

He chose me to be his. He said, yeah, come. You're mine now. And he takes us from another father. The devil.

And he becomes our father. He chooses to be our father. And he promises closeness, intimacy, inheritance. And we can be like him, our heavenly father. We are family.

It says, saith the Lord Almighty. Think of that. The creator of all. The one with sovereign power. To think with his almighty power. He should deign to visit us.

To bless us. To be our Lord. The Almighty. And he guarantees his covenant with absolute authority. He fulfills his promises. There's a promise here.

[17:44] And he's going to fulfill. He doesn't let us down. He's got absolute authority. And his promises are not based upon us, but upon him. Not on our perfection, but upon his grace.

That he gives so freely. He extends it. And we can know a closeness. The closeness of a father to a son, a daughter. And what a privilege that we have. Think of it. Our identity too.

As God's temple. As his child. Think of that. When the world tempts us to compromise. Remember the one who walks with you. Think of his fatherly love.

Don't we want to bless him, our father? And we want to draw closer to our precious Lord. This truth of separation inspires us to live in a way that honors him. The God who loves us so.

Who calls us his own. And in moments of temptation, maybe think of it, brother, sister. And you can declare, I am God's temple. I am God's child. I will not defile his dwelling place.

[18:43] Notice also, thirdly, how Paul brings it all together to call us to this pursuit, to action, to the pursuit of holiness. It says, having therefore these promises, dearly beloved.

You've got a book full of them. Having therefore these promises. There's heaps of them. You couldn't probably count all of them.

Like fully. To grasp them. To think of them. The promises of God. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved. Don't you just treasure it when someone gives you a promise. And dearly beloved, he says, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

Perfecting holiness in the fear of God. There's a pursuit here. And here's the joy of holiness right here. We're grateful for his gracious love. It motivates us to grow. Having therefore these promises. Our holiness is motivated by his indwelling, his saving, his fatherhood, his promises. So then let us cleanse ourselves. In the sense of it here, notice Paul includes himself.

[19:49] He's saying, let us. That includes me. That's the sense of the grammar here. It's a collective call to action. He says, I need this. We need this. Let us cleanse ourselves.

Let's choose purity. And God affects that. He works in us. He does the work of that cleansing. And he started it. He's going to finish it. We know it reads Philippians 2.

Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Cleanse yourselves. Cleanse yourselves. We're told to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. He's talking about immoral defilement or pollution, filthiness, flesh.

He's talking about the outward sins. Maybe greed, gossip, addiction. The flesh, greed, gossip, addiction. Then it's saying the sins of the spirit. Like the inward sins.

[20:52] They can hide. We can hide the sins of the spirit. We can hide them. The inward sins of pride, of envy, of bitterness, of unforgiveness.

We need to get cleansing there too, on the inside. And so God wants a full cleansing. It says all, all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. There's no room for compromise. And then it reads perfecting holiness.

Perfecting holiness, it means to complete, to bring to maturity. It's got that sense of that ongoing process. This perfecting holiness is something we're saved and then there's the perfecting holiness. That's after that, isn't it? That perfecting of holiness. It means the growing, the bringing to maturity, that ongoing process. Holiness, it means being set apart for God's use.

It's a growing daily in Christ's likeness. Hey, I'm saved and then there's a growing daily, a walking daily. Being cleansed daily, that perfecting, that completing, that maturing.

[21:53] It's being set apart for God's use. A growing daily. We're not called to sinless perfection in this life, but to persistent progress. He wants that. It's his will.

That lifelong journey of being made more like him every day. As Paul tells, I press toward the mark. I haven't got there yet. I haven't apprehended yet, but I press toward the mark for the prize.

The high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Notice it's in the fear of God. We cleanse ourselves, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. We recognize who he is.

This is a high calling. He's the holy one. We stand in awe of him, in reverence of him, in worshipful respect. And that's what moves us to obey. Not out of dread, this fear of God.

Not out of dread, but out of devotion. This true holiness, it's not prideful. Oh, I've arrived. I'm holy. Look at me. No, it's not a prideful thing.

[22:49] It's a humble thing. But we need him. We need him every day. We need his grace. It's not a self-righteous thing, but a God-fearing thing. And we see the fear of the Lord is the ultimate, isn't it?

The beginning of wisdom. The knowledge of the holy is understanding. What motivates us to fear God? What motivates us to holiness? We don't want to grieve our Father.

We love him too much. And he loves us too much for us to grieve him. We don't want to offend the one who we love. Our love for him evokes holiness. This fear is a loving fear.

Our text says, let us. Let us. Cleanse ourselves. Let us. Let's do this together. It's us. There's a sense where it's together. And that's why the church helps.

God calls us. We've got one another to help one another. Hey, stir up one another in a good way. Not in a bad way, please. Try to be stirrers. Good stirrers. All right. Stirring up to works of good, of love, of good works.

[23:52] Let's do that. Let's do more of that. There's too much stirring of the other kind. We want to be doing this together. To walking together. Encouraging. Exhorting. Holding each other accountable.

Hey, brother, you've got a problem here. We need you to work on that. And you tell me. Tell me the same. All right. Please, we need that. Don't we? That healthy interchange. Change. Helping one another to grow.

Hey, I need that feedback. That godly feedback. That constructive feedback. To exhort. To encourage. To admonish. There's a sense where there's some good.

Hey, come on. Lift your game, brother. Lift your game, sister. Let's get to it. May the fear of God guide our choices too. That we do this together. As a living community.

We want his glory, don't we? As a body. That he will be glorified. And we want the fear of God to guide our choices, our decisions. To encourage each other in that vein of godliness.

[24:50] And this holiness, it's not something irksome. It's our privilege. What a joy. Our father loves us so. We want to honour him. And we want to live out his truth. And so some practical steps we could think about.

Talking about the admonishing now. I'm going to start to press a few buttons and stick it into you a little bit. Just with that sharp sword. And I'm including myself here.

Examine your yokes. What are the yokes? Could be relationships, commitments. Are we unequally yoked or contemplating an unequal yoke? Don't do it.

Whether it's marriage, business, friendships. Do our entertainment choices line up with God's purposes? Or is that a yoke that's not good for us? Our social media habits?

Is it a partnership that's pulling you away from Christ? Better to release that. To not do so. To prayerfully seek God's wisdom. Examine your yokes.

[25:51] Embrace your identity. You're a temple. Not just like a temple. You are a temple. And so you're a temple of the living God. Or don't we to live like it?

That impacts our choices. That will avoid things that are like media or pursuits. That defile God's dwelling place. That we fill our life with what honours our Lord. Because we want to be that witness.

Will you trust God's promises? Know God's indwelling presence. His fatherly love. When you're tempted by the world by defilement. You'll say, hey, no, I'm a temple. That's not going to fit.

That's a clash. I want to please my father. We're going to trust in his promises. His power. And we're going to pursue that daily cleansing. Think of it as the psalmist cried David.

His words of prayer. Of praise. Of song. He says, search me, O God. And know my heart. Try me. And know my thoughts. And see if there be in me any wicked way in me.

[26:50] And lead me in the way everlasting. That's the sense of, hey, I need cleansing. And I need it daily. I need God to search me daily. And I need God to try me.

And I need God to lead me. Think of the cleansing. To pursue holiness daily. Cleanse my eyes. Cleanse. Cleanse. What am I reading? Watching. Cleanse my ears. What am I listening to?

Cleanse my heart. What am I cherishing? Cleanse my speech.

What am I saying? Search me, O God. A daily cleansing. And walk in awe of him. Cultivate that fear. That awe.

Of who he is. The mighty, almighty God. And begin each day. Again, like David. With a prayer. Like his. Create in me. O Lord. Create in me.

[27:45] A clean heart. O God. I want that. I want that heart clean. And we can think of. The sense that it's corporate too.

Let us. Hey, we're in this together. The same mission. There's a community here. Holiness is not a solo journey. That's why it's good to surround yourself. With other believers.

Don't miss that. We're here for each other. And we can't be here for each other. If we're not here. So be here. And get together. Amen. With God's people. And seek accountability too.

Provoke one another. In a good thing. And let's determine to be that people. Hey, it's the glory of God. That's what I live for. That my life will be set apart.

Unto him. And this call to perfect holiness. As in. Growing holiness. Maturing holiness. To perfecting holiness. In the fear of God. It's not a heavy yoke.

[28:41] But it's our joy. God doesn't put a heavy yoke on you. He takes the hard. Weight of the yoke. There is. A certain.

Load. As he says. Take my yoke. But it's life. And it's easy. And he fills us. With his presence. He wants you to be vessels. For his glory.

So don't blend in. Don't touch the unclean thing. Don't. Make excuses. Just don't. Don't touch it. And God calls you to stand out. Not in pride. But in purity.

Not in isolation. Hey. I've got it all together. And they haven't. But in consecration. It's unto him. Unto him. And not to compromise.

Not in legalism. But in love. It's our glad joy. To be his. So think. Again. To repeat. Of steps to grow. In this holiness.

[29:37] Break a yoke. Crack. Break it. Bang. Break it. Break that yoke. It could be. Ending a relationship. A habit. Or an entertainment choice.

That's pulling you away from God. Don't yoke together with that. Break it. Cleanse your heart. Ask God to help you. To clean up. That which is. So.

A defilement. Oh. It's only a little bit dirty. Nah. Cleanse your heart. God helping you. Walk in awe of him. And dedicate. Consecrate.

You're a living temple. Walk in awe of him. Walk closer with him. As that mobile temple. Wherever you are. Wherever you drive. Wherever you walk. You're that temple.

And encourage one another. Support one another. Let us. Let's encourage one another. To grow. And being confident. of this very thing. That he which hath begun. A good work in you.

[30:33] Will perform it. He's going to finish. What he started. He's not going to. Have half a job. If you're saved. You're going to be assured. That he's going to do. That work in you.

That needs to be done. And he's going to help you. With that. Growing in holiness. Because it's not your effort. It's really just your. Yielding.

Isn't it? Unto him. You by God's grace. Perfect holiness. In the fear of God. Not tomorrow. Not Sunday. Today. To do it today.

Think of it today. Because you are not your own. You're bought with a price. Therefore glorify God. In your body. And in your spirit. Which are God's. And for the now. I know that. You are a work in progress.

Think of that. You're a work in progress. His Holy Spirit empowers you. His word guides you. And his love sustains you. So let's decide. Brother sister. With joy.

[31:29] And resolve. To. Think of these truths. That we've talked about. Perfecting holiness. In the fear of God. It almost sounds like. That's impossible. Perfecting holiness.

He's going to do the work. He started it. And he's going to continue. That good work. And he's going to perform it. Until the day of Jesus Christ. And. In closing. Brother sister.

Now unto him. It's unto him. All the glory. It's unto him. All the praise. It's unto him. All of our holiness. It's unto him. The lamb of God. He's able. To keep you from falling.

To present your faults. Before the presence of his glory. With exceeding joy. To the only wise God. Our saviour. Be glory. And majesty. Dominion. And power.

Both now and ever. Amen. Lord we thank you. That you are the one. Who. Saves us. As your people. It's grace. Grace.

[32:25] Grace. Lord we thank you. For that wonder. Of it all. And your grace. Grace teaches us. Trains us. How to live godly. Soberly. Righteously.

In this present world. Help us Lord. To do. Our. Part. Really. Just to yield. To your work. Lord. Not to resist. Your hand. To trust your saving.

And to walk in it. Lord. To have that truth. Of that. Maturing process. That. Ongoing. Growth. That you want. For your people. That will grow in grace.

We won't just leave it. At saving grace. Will grow in grace. That grace will be. The mark. That. Feature. That. Reveals.

To the world. We're your distinct people. That you would. Be so kind. To call us. My people. Lord. We thank you.

[33:22] For that. And. What's more. My children. Lord. That you are a father. We can't. ConTEMPLATE. That you would. Adopt us. And make us your own.

We love you. Lord. Help us. Lord. To grow. We know. We cannot. Of our own strength. Because we will fail. But yet. You enable. As we fear you.

As we trust you. As we grow more. To love you. That you can do that. Ongoing work. By your spirit's power. We pray. Lord. Each one might know. This morning. What it is. To be saved.

To be assuredly saved. To know assuredly. That you died for our sin. And we trusted you. In that part. That entire part. That is your part.

To save our soul. Lord. That we can know forgiveness of our sin. As we come. In the weight of it. In the burden of it. In the heaviness of it.

[34:18] And know that you're the one who lifts it off us. Only by your grace. Lord. As we come. And yield our life. Our sin. Our unworthiness. Under your mighty hand.

Or be glorified in your church. In every life. Help us to walk in these truths. And to grow in grace. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.