

Grace Evangelical Free Church
Issues & Answers: Practical Holiness

Romans 1:21: “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

We live in the cultural personification of **Romans 1:21** with the manifestation of vain imaginations resulting in **Romans 1:22: “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.”** What is the remedy? God has a two-tiered approach: spiritual understanding coupled with personal obedience. Spiritually, just as familiar to Paul as to ourselves, a state of untruth pervades our culture resulting in wrong assessments, decisions and outcomes evidenced by legal/governmental/personal duplicity; bold factual misrepresentation; and worst, physical, emotional, psychological and ultimately spiritual harm even to the culture’s most vulnerable.

This being our situation, how is it possible to walk in the light of God’s glory and grace in the midst of such virulent cultural unbelief? God doesn’t require the impossible, only obedience based upon the guidance and conviction from His Word. We must admit that the Lord does make demands on us as His children and servants: He requires us to set our minds on heavenly things (**Colossians 3:1-2**), to seek first His kingdom and righteousness (**Matthew 6:33**) as well as to live out our lives as a devoted husband or wife, father or mother (**Colossians 3:18-20; Ephesians 5:22-33**). He also says to have contact with the ungodly people around us (**Mark 16:15**), living in a world manifesting vain imaginations. How does one meet this expectation? Four categories with points in a quest for practical holiness in your life:

1. Live a Holy life (2 Peter 3:10-12)

- Live a life of faith in God and the Lord Jesus Christ (**John 14:1; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 1:17**).
- Be filled with the Spirit of God and produce the fruit of the Spirit (**Ephesians 3:16; 5:18**); The Spirit produces His fruit in our lives that will make our character far different from the evil nature of unbelievers (contrast **Galatians 5:19-21** with **vv. 22-24**).
- Read the Word of God regularly and know it thoroughly – be fortified in your spirit (**Matthew 4:4; John 12:48; Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 3:15-17**).
- Obey God as He reveals His will through His Word – seek God’s strength and wisdom (**John 14:15, 21-24; 1 John 2:3-6, 17; 3:22, 24; 5:2-3**).
- Surrender your will, deny yourself, and lay down your life to follow Jesus (**Mark 8:34-38; John 12:25-26; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15**).
- Resist Satan and flee from his temptations (**1 Corinthians 10:13; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9; 1 John 5:19**). Keep innocent in your spirit and do not partake of the evil around you (**Romans 16:19, 1 Corinthians 14:20**); be uncontaminated by the perverse and perverted world around us (cf. **Acts 2:40; Matthew 17:17**).
- Remember that you are a soldier of Christ in a deadly-serious spiritual war that you must win! (**Ephesians 6:10-18**).

2. Establish a healthy home (Deuteronomy 6:5-7)

- Avoid evil companions that would drag you down spiritually (**1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; Proverbs 13:20; 22:24-25**).
 - Be separate from the wicked ways of the world. The Christian who aspires to holiness must distance himself from all sin in whatever form it manifests itself. God made certain requirements “**to make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean**” (**Leviticus 10:10; 11:47**). The conviction is that God indeed wants us to make distinctions between the evil ways of the world and the righteous ways of God.
 - Cultivate relationships with good and faithful brothers and sisters in the Lord (**Romans 1:8-12; 12:10; 2 Timothy 2:22; Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25; Psalm 119:63**).
 - Always place God and His will above and beyond every other relationship, including family and friends (**Matthew 12:46-50; 10:34-38; Luke 14:26-27**).
 - Arrange your living situation and physical surroundings to make them the most conducive to live a devoted life of service to the Lord and to avoid evil influences (**1 Corinthians 10:13, 31; 1 Thessalonians 5:22**).
 - Continually set your mind and heart on heavenly, eternal things rather than earthly, temporal things (**Matthew 6:33; Colossians 3:1-4; Philippians 3:19-21; 4:8**).
 - Do not be bound together with unbelievers. The power of influence is great! Paul would emphasize the importance of being separated from close and intimate relationships in the world (**2 Corinthians 6:14-15**).
 - You may need to physically distance yourself from some friends and family members who are in sin (**Psalm 101:7**); if not, there are consequences (**Proverbs 14:7**).
3. Take a strong stance (**2 Timothy 1:12**)
- Never allow another person to pressure you to disobey God and sin. The believer must be willing to “**refuse evil and choose good**” (**Isaiah 7:15**).
 - Replace the evil around you with transformation from God (**Romans 12:2**).
 - Be willing to lose your job if it requires you to sin in some way or be around overpowering worldly influences (**Philippians 3:7-10; Luke 9:9; James 4:4**).
 - Be prepared to lose money and material things to follow the Lord fully (**Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 10:21-27, 28-30**).
 - Never forget that the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is your bitter enemy and you must choose to love God rather than the world (**1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4; Romans 12:1-2**).
4. Maintain a tender heart (**Jude 22-23**)
- Make a distinction between those who sincerely "doubt," as opposed to those who are rebellious and arrogant: the "scoffers" who are not really seeking truth (**Jude 1:10**).
 - Strong believers should deal with doubters patiently and with love (**Ephesians 4:2**).
 - Answer concerns of sincere seekers (**1 Peter 3:15-16**).