

“Sanctification: Getting Closer to God”

By Brother Parrish Lee

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Thank you, thank you. You may return to your seats. Just to call it out, just to fill the sanctuary with the praises of the most High. Just to let everyone know. If they didn't know before, surely they know now. No sweeter name, the song said, than the name of Jesus. Thank you musicians, thank you so much. Oh, wait a minute, did the kids get dismissed? No? We want to thank every one of the young people that have been patient with us, and just see how the older people just get it on when they be getting it on and whom they get it on with. And we want to say at this time you're dismissed your classes, let's give the Lord a praise.

January seventeenth, 1983, I walked into a little room prepared to argue with some people about whether I was going to listen to what they said from the Word of God. January seventeenth, 1983. A bunch of people praying for that hard-hearted man, that, at one time, used to challenge anybody that said the name Jesus, and meant it as though it were a holy thing. For that little stubborn arrogant person, who just happened to be in the service at that time, was bound and determined to prove that only Allah was God. Only Allah. It was a personal mission to tell everybody. If you said you were a Christian, it was my mission to tear you down to show you that your God was no God, couldn't compare to my God. January seventeenth, 1983 I walked into a little room and a bunch of people were praying for me. A bunch of people. It didn't mean nothing to me, I knew who I was holding on to. And somebody that didn't deter away from the Word of God just gave me word after word after word. See, that's what's precious to me. That's why it is precious to me. Because if they hadn't fished and labored for my soul, I wouldn't be here, you wouldn't know me, you never would have heard of me, I would be one of the many numbers out there in the wide and broad way, on my way to a devil's Hell and not knowing, sins still attached. I used to wonder what you Christians were talking about, talking about sins could be taken away. Why are you making such a big deal about Easter? Getting all those fancy clothes on. Ain't nothing changing. And why you talk about this rapture? A bunch of stories that Christians believe. January seventeenth, 1983, somewhere around eleven o'clock at night. Yeah, that was a long night. Somewhere around eleven o'clock at night. God, thank You, Lord. God showed me who was God. The only one—the only—was the only true God. And it's never changed, it's never failed, it's never diminished, it's never been anything different, it's only been greater, it's only been more powerful, it's only been more true, and I believed it then, same Word, more powerful than ever. Now I'm just looking forward to the time—I've got plenty of do before I get there, I think, I don't know. The rapture could happen tonight. According to the Bible, according to the Bible, you think a whole lot of things is left? Read the Bible. This Gospel shall be preached to the whole world, then shall... Then shall, the Bible says. All the other things were just signs, wars and rumors of wars? Done. Pestilences? done. Nation against nation? done. The only thing that had to happen was this Gospel of the Kingdom had to be preached. That wasn't the message; that was just introduction.

You guys started singing about no sweeter name than the name of Jesus. It does something, it has to do something, when the name of Jesus is precious to you. We all started singing Jesus, Jesus, Jesus; something happens when I call. Witness, witness, witness. And, he said, the blood of Jesus shed for me. We could go home. We could stop and go home in the moment of praise. He's that good.

But we do have a bit of a message here today. We do have a bit of a message here today. We want to first give thanks and honor to that same God. We can't take anything for granted, we always must give thanks for what He's given to us. So we give thanks and honor to that same God, who's been good to us. For His kindness and His mercy, for His provision, and His protection, and, then, for His

presence. He doesn't owe us anything; He does it cause He loves us. We have to give honor to Him for all the times that He keeps our foot from going in harm's way. All the times that we mess up and He sends out a rescue mission, an angel, a way of escape. For all the times that He's been nobody but God, doing things that nobody could do but God. And He doesn't put it on TV. He doesn't throw it on the internet. He doesn't do that. He does it personally, that we might know that He is God. Giving honor to Him, Almighty God. Giving honor to all of those who have stood in the gap to make up the hedge, down through the ages. Who let the word of God be precious to them. From those in the word itself, even up to those in this ministry: our founding pastor, he and his family; our pastor, he and his family. All those who have stood in the gap to make up the hedge. And giving honor to that same God for all of y'all, who said today, "This is what's important in my life: Coming, worshipping, giving homage to that same God," didn't lie in bed. Giving honor to all of y'all.

We spent some time in Thessalonians, First and Second Thessalonians, and actually, our Scripture theme is going to come from that. And, I didn't ask him ahead of time, but I'm going to ask him right now, I'm going to ask Rob Severance—didn't give you any warning, whatsoever—if you would come and you would turn to the Book of Second Thessalonians, chapter 2, and verse number 13 and read for us today.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 *But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:*

Thank you, Brother Rob. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth.

If we could just bow our heads for just a moment. Almighty God, we thank You, Lord Jesus, our Savior. We thank You for Your love, we thank You for Your presence. We thank You for the things that just go by, and You just do it because You love us, and we don't even acknowledge it. Sometimes we thank You for being good to us, we thank You for waking us up today, and giving us a right mind to get across the floor. We thank You for opening our eyes today, for giving us nourishment today, we thank You for having air to breathe today. We thank you for all of that, God and we thank You to know Your name, today. We thank You that it is not a light thing in our minds, we thank You that You are that good to us. We thank You God. We thank You for a time of worshipping, and a time of praising. God, we give unto you, we say this, that we ask, God, that as You have blessed, and poured out, and You commune with us in a time of worship and praise, we ask, God, that You would add a blessing on Your Word as we go through it, God, that it would do as You said in Your Word, that it not return unto You void, but that it would accomplish Your purpose, that which You send it to to each one of us, You have a purpose for every one of us today. And we ask God that that is accomplished in our lives, Lord, Jesus. God You are just amazing to us. You do things, God, that just make us stutter, sometimes. When we stop to think for a second, we wonder, we wonder about it, God, how good You are to us, over and over. And, we do, we give You the thanks and the praise and the glory, our wondrous and magnificent God. And this we do pray and claim in Jesus name, and everyone said, amen.

But we are bound always to give thanks for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth. Chosen you, chosen you to salvation. Part one of our message. We actually have four parts that we're going to talk about. Part one simply is, we are bound.

Part 1: We Are Bound

We are bound, we are bound. Now, sanctification, we need to do just a little bit... We do this—we've done this the last couple of years, a time of sanctification, and sanctification has a purpose, but it also has a definition. Sanctification means to be clean, to make clean, to make holy, to make pure. And it's a word that infers a process of going from one state to another state. A process of separation, if you will. Yes, separation. Sanctification implies separation.

Wonderful men's Bible study time, yesterday. We had groups, and we talked about the how's of sanctification, we talked about the what's of sanctification is, and why we sanctify ourselves. Beautiful time, beautiful time of study, I learned so much in it, and so many of the brothers and men were there and they just shared, and they opened up. It got kind of exciting and then a little bit of—everybody got a little stymied when it was drawing to a close; they went, "I ain't finished. There's more to do." Yes, yes, yes. Yes, more to do. But sanctification implies separation. One thing separated from another. It's not really a popular word used today. It's not used very much today, because, quite frankly, the truth of the matter is the world don't want to be separated from the world. The world, according to the Lord Jesus, loves its own. It wants to stay the world. It wants to lavish and be the world. It enjoys being separated from God. And so the Lord told us we have been chosen out of the world, we are not of the world. John chapter fifteen and verse number nineteen.

John 15:19 *If ye were of the world, [if ye were, if ye were of the world] the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

Therefore the world hateth you, because you are not of the world. Now, the Scripture says we are bound to give thanks, we are bound to give thanks. And bound simply means to be under obligation. When you see the binding that people have, that means they are connected to something. Well, this connection, this binding, this being bound is under an obligation, under obligation. It also means to be owed, or to need something. We are bound, we are obligated. We need, we are owed, to give thanks unto God for what He is doing in your life. We are bound, we are obligated, we must give thanks to God for what He is doing in you. Why? because they of Thessalonica—and that was a letter written, and we still have it today for our admonition—have been chosen to be saved, have been chosen to be saved. Now, if we were to reread that chapter, we would see that earlier in that chapter it talks about the man of sin, the son of perdition, that some evil things were coming, and the mystery of iniquity was already working. And no, we're not going to reread that chapter. And no, we're not going to re-preach that message, and no, we spent some time on that. But the thought we want to dwell on is, we are bound to give thanks because we have been chosen to salvation. And those who wanted to stay in the world part, those who didn't want to participate in all this, those who didn't receive, according to the Bible, receive that love of the truth, according to the Bible. He would give them a strong delusion, simply because they didn't love the truth. Simply because, yes, we have an option. We could love the truth or not love the truth. But, according to the Bible, when we don't love the truth—there is a reward for loving it, and there is also a reward for not loving the truth. And the reward for not loving the truth is to believe a lie. You see, God's truth is a big deal to God. In fact, it is the great separator. His truth is the great separator. They who love this truth and they who do not. Chosen to salvation through the sanctification of His Spirit.

We have taken this month as this time of of purifying or cleaning, but let's be clear, let's be absolutely clear: We aren't really doing the sanctifying. Sanctification actually comes from the Lord. When the children of Israel were going to go out and meet the Lord in Exodus, chapter twenty-nine,

there was four chapters of preparation that they had to do. You see, they had to talk right. They had to walk right. They had to eat right. They had to do things and prepare the sanctuary, the temple. They had to do that, then they had to get their clothes right; they had to wash them. Four chapters, four chapters of getting ready to go out just to meet God. To sanctify themselves, four chapters of things they had to do to sanctify themselves to go out to go out and meet God, four chapters of preparation. And after all that, in Exodus, chapter twenty-nine in verse forty-four, the Bible says:

Exodus 29:44 *And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: [I, the Lord, will do it] I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office.*

In other words, you do your part and, I, the Lord, will do my part. The part that only God can do.

When the Lord Jesus, after, after he had raised Lazarus from the dead, and after they had the Last Supper, and after he took the disciples, and he washed their feet, after he did all of that, in John chapter fifteen, starting at verse number one. After he had done all of that, the Lord says to those who followed him: John, chapter fifteen, and starting at verse number one:

John 15:1-3 *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

When we followed the Lord, and when we abide in the Lord, when we listen to the Lord, and when we obey the Lord, yes, when we abide in the Lord there is a reward. "If ye abide in Me..." John chapter fifteen, and verse number seven.

John 15:7 *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

Yes, yes, yes, now we are cleaned through the words that you have spoken now it is time to abide in Him, yes, abide in the morning, abide in the evening, abide at lunchtime, abide when we eat, abide in the Lord when we drive our car, it's time to abide in the Lord that we could ask what we will and He will give it unto us. Why? because He is God. Yes, abide in Him and be sanctified of His spirit.

Part 2: There Is a Process in our Sanctification

There is a process in our sanctification. So, there is a process of sanctification. It is a process, and, if you give me a little liberty here, a process for the promotion. A process for the promotion in our sanctification. Now, when we say a process for promotion, promotion is something that means something to everybody who works *under* somebody else. Everybody who works under somebody else understands what promotion means. Promotion means more money. Promotion means more prestige. You say the word promotion? "Hey, I got a promotion," and you can almost expect, "Oh, we're gonna have a party." You say the word promotion, you know, if somebody can say they had a big promotion, you take a good look at them. People change their whole economic structure, because they got a big promotion. People move into a bigger house, drive a bigger car, because they got a big promotion. There is a process in our promotion, but there is also a process in the promotion in getting closer to God. A promotion in God is not a promotion of more money and more prestige. That ain't what being promoted or getting more in God is all about. It is about getting closer to that God. It is about getting closer to that God. And promotion, promotion, we've got to say, promotion means to go up higher. And

God is so much higher than we are, that we can understand this whole process of getting promotion. It means we too must come higher to get closer to God. So, to get higher means to come, and there are ways to get higher. And one of the ways that we talk about getting higher, that we know everybody knows, is to use steps to get higher. And, when I was younger, you would say the word steps and it was no thing. Now you say steps and I get a little fearful. I get a little angry. My knees start saying, "No! Not steps!" I used to wonder what people senior to me were talking about when they said, "I hate steps, I hate them," I used to wonder what they were talking about when I was in my teens. "Steps? that's not a problem I can take several at a time. What are you talking about? I got this." But after you get past fifty, and, after your doctor says, "You know what? you're going to have to lose some of that stuff that you've been carrying around a little too long," you look at steps, and, if there is more than three, four, or five, you're thinking, "I wish there was another way." Steps, promotion, but you know the steps have a purpose. We know that the steps have a purpose. We might, in the flesh, look at them and say, "That's going to take work," but this is the process of promotion. In Psalms, chapter thirty-seven and verse number twenty-three, the Bible says:

Psalms 37:23 *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: [The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD] and he delighteth in his way.*

The steps of a good man are ordered. So, there is an order to the steps that we take in the process in coming higher in God; there is an order to that. Now, people will tell you, "Well, okay, order doesn't just mean that." There is an order that you do when you get to the restaurant, you know you have an order, and that order, actually, is, this is what I want you to bring me. And people in the military who have been or still are, they understand that term. An order and order is something you must do. An order is a command, there is a retribution if you don't follow orders. Am I right? If you don't follow orders, there is a retribution. You do get a reward if you are in the military and you don't follow orders. Or, if you have a court order, and you don't follow it, there also is a reward for that. Well, having said that, the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. There is a structure applied to God promoting us, and there also is a command. So, God gives us a way to get there, and then He says, "This is the way that I want you to come. I want you to come to me." The steps of a good man are ordered, yes, they're structured. And, "Yes, I want you to do it. I want you to follow these, and get closer to me." The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.

Part 3: There Are Enemies to our Sanctification

There are enemies to our sanctification. First Thessalonians—you know, Thessalonians is a magnificent book. The word sanctification is used 5 times in the whole Bible, five times. Three times in Thessalonians. Three times in Thessalonians. He had a message that he was giving to the people of Thessalonica. The book of First Thessalonians, chapter four, and verse number 3. There are enemies to our sanctification. The Bible says:

1 Thessalonians 4:3 *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:*

Abstain from fornication. When Apostle Paul was writing to the church, he was writing to a younger church. He was writing to a church that hadn't been around for a long, long time; there was establishment in this church. It wasn't around super long. But he said this is the will of God, even your sanctification, to stay away from fornication. Now, nowadays, fornication is morphed into more of an

only physical meaning, only physical meaning. Now, this is kind of delicate for a Sunday morning, but it has to be covered, because, he said, this is part of the will of God for you in coming closer to him. Stay away from fornication, number one. And the people of Thessalonica knew, they knew that it not only meant all kinds of sexual immorality and impurity—they knew that—but, they knew that it also meant, not just adultery, among things, but it also meant idolatry. Not just having your body involved in something that God don't like, but having your heart involved in something that God don't like. Having your mind committed, and thoughts given to something that God don't like. Abstain, the Bible says, from fornication because that is an enemy to your sanctification and getting closer to God. The whole reason, the whole reason, no matter what people say, the whole reason behind that idolatry, fornication, that whole thing is to continue separating you from the God Who loves you. It was set up that way, it was set up that way from the very beginning by the evil one who came to take us away from the loving God that we serve.

Part 4: There Is Purpose to our Sanctification

And so there's enemies to our sanctification, and there's also a purpose to our sanctification. There is a purpose, sanctification has a purpose, and it is called relationship. Its purpose is relationship. Sanctify ourselves that we could get closer to God. God wants to talk with us and visit with us. God wants to share his joy with us. From the book of Revelation, chapter twenty-one and verse number seven:

Revelation 21:7 *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” But we look around the world today, it seems that so many things just plain flat out lost their way. If we were to even take a second, I've got forty nieces and nephews. I don't have any kids myself. With forty nieces and nephews, I'm telling you, woooo! come Christmas time, they all kind of look at the single Uncle Parish. Well, well, well, well, well, so I'll stay up here for Christmas. But when we look at our world today, and we see how, in so many different areas, it's lost its way. We can look at the school system. In the school system, they seem to not have all the answers. They try to do this and they try to do that. And they have taken out prayer. And they have taken out any kind of authority that God would have in schools and they replaced it. They've replaced it with everything from sex education, evolution. They've replaced it with things, trying to give answers for things that God has already answered. It seems they've lost their way on that. And we looked to many of our neighborhoods and stuff. And it seems like some of our neighborhoods have lost their way. You've got everything from drive-bys to people having road rage, to people doing crazy things, neighbors don't even speak to neighbors anymore. To all kinds of crazy, ungodly entertainment. And it seems that they've lost their way, when the way has already been paved for them. From the Book of Second Chronicles, chapter seven, and verse number fourteen. God has given us over and over and over the way to have these problems solved. The way that all people can come to Him, and they can find the answers. The Book of Second Chronicles, chapter seven, and verse number fourteen. It shared, it's shared so much, and it just needs to be implemented in some of our society walks.

2 Chronicles 7:14 *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

The answer from God. The answer from God: "If My people..." But you know, until things get desperate, they don't call on God. Until they exhausted everything else. Society don't want nothing to do with God's people, and God's ways, until they have exhausted every opportunity. I remember years ago, up here, around Chicago—I guess you have to have a little age on you to remember that—but they had a drought, around the land around here. Does anybody remember that? it was a really, really bad drought and they had in Chicago—what is that Center in Chicago? I don't know what that Center is. There was a Center in Chicago and down in that Center in Chicago, they called for prayer. And they had every religion they could think of come and pray, just by chance, one of them will work, and they will start to get some rain. They had everything from American Indians--they called over it, many languages they didn't understand—every denomination they could think of, of Christianity, every denomination of Judaism, every denomination of Islam, every denomination of Buddhist and Hindus. They had them all and there was a long parade. And they were just saying something to break the drought. And, all they had to do was turn to Second Chronicles, seven fourteen: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." God already gave the answers and then he said again in Matthew, chapter eleven, verses twenty-eight to thirty:

Matthew 11:28-30 *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Both times, both times. All throughout, the message has been the same, all throughout Old and New Testament, "Come on to me, turn to me, I have the answers for your life, for your work, for your home, for your society, just come and turn to me. Get closer to me. Get closer to me," the Lord says. The purpose of our sanctification.

And finally the Purpose of our Sanctification: being with God

And finally, the culmination of our purpose of sanctification. From the Book of Revelation, chapter seven, and verse number nine, starting at verse number nine. And after this, Apostle John speaks. And after this:

Revelation 7:9 *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;*

If you've been around for any length of time, if you've heard me for any length of time you've undoubtedly heard me share that Scripture, and if you've been around for a longer time you've probably heard me sure that Scripture a lot, and if you've heard me share that Scripture a lot, I will already answer a question if you've got it, no, I don't get tired of that Scripture, I never get tired of that Scripture, no, I never get tired of that number that no man can number. I never get tired of where it talks about us standing before the throne. I never get tired of them that have white robes and stand before Him with their palms in their hands. Verse number ten:

Revelation 7:10-14 *And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders [Man, can you imagine what that is going to be like? and about the elders] and the four beasts, and fell before*

the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he [being the angel] said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, [washed their robes] and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

That's our sanctification. Washing our robes and making them white, putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and the blood of the Lamb. Verse fifteen:

Revelation 7:15-17 *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, not to hunger, not to thirst any more. Sanctified to be with God forever, and ever, and ever. The purpose of our sanctification, and yes, those steps are ordered by the Lord. Could we give the Lord a praise?