

“The Action in Sanctification”

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So, how many have been blessed by the first two messages in this series on Sanctification, the one that Chris Ulrich brought and the one that Parrish brought? I've been thankful for it, and, we continue this series on Sanctification. And, of course, the lead Scripture is found in 1 Chronicles 13:14. Parrish expounded on that in a message. So, I prayed for wisdom on what God would have me to share today, and I feel like God's given me something to share, that I pray would be worthy of your time. And, I want to talk to you, today, as we continue this study of sanctification, and, of course, when you look at sanctification, you have to look at what the meaning is, and it means to be holy. The root word, in Greek, means to make holy, to make holy. So, if we're talking about the process of sanctification, it's to make something holy. And, in one sense, only God is holy. And we could reference Isaiah 6:3, God is holy, and really, we could say that's not our job to be holy, but, before we do that, we should really look and see if the Scriptures support that. And, I would say that it doesn't, because, as human beings, we're called to be holy as He is holy. In First Peter we read that, in chapter one, verses fifteen and sixteen, and it reads:

1 Peter 1:15-16 *But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

“Be ye holy, for I am holy.” And that's a reference to Leviticus, chapter eleven and verse forty-four, and, what we realize is that we are called to be Christ-like. They were first called Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:26), and that is to be like Christ. They were identified with Christ, because they acted like Christ. They were identified with Christ, not just because they followed Him, but they did as He did, they thought as He thought, they acted as He acted, they lived as he lived. So, we want to be identified with that, today. As we talk about sanctification, we want to be identified as being holy.

Another word for holy is saint. Saint means sanctified one. And, so, I'm asking you today, are you a Saint? Are you a sanctified one? And the opposite of saint is profane. Sometimes it really puts a lot of illumination on a word if you look up what the opposite is. And the opposite of saint is to be profane, and it's real easy for all of us to understand that we don't want to be profane, right? But we do want to be set aside for God's purpose in life? So, let's talk about sanctification, today, in terms of being set aside, being holy, so God can use us for His intended purpose. The general meaning of sanctification is, “a state of proper functioning.” And I'm going to preach in a few moments; I'm just laying a foundation. A state of proper functioning. To sanctify someone or something is to set it aside, and to be apart, so that you can be used for your intended purpose. A pen is sanctified, when it's used to write. Eyeglasses are sanctified—in this context—eyeglasses are sanctified when they are used to improve sight. So, when something is sanctified, it is being used for its intended purpose. In a theological sense, things are sanctified when they are used for the purpose that God intends. So, the question today is, are you being used for the purpose that God intends you to be used for? And, if the answer to that's yes, then you can say that you're sanctified. If the answer to that is yes, then you can say that you're set aside, as holy; you can say that, “God made me for this purpose, and this is the purpose that I'm fulfilling in my life.” As a human being, we're sanctified when we're living according to God's purpose, God's design. And each of are specially gifted. We read Paul's words to the church in Corinth, and he talks about the body of Christ, doesn't he? And he talks about how we all are different parts, the eye, the ear, the nose (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). We all do something different, but, together, we make up the body of Christ. We're talking about sanctification this month, and I really am hoping that you will consider this idea of challenging

yourself with the question, “Am I sanctified? Am I set aside for the purpose that God intended me to be set aside for?” Debbie made a very, very powerful point—several powerful points, but, one I want to illuminate on for a moment is that, in our lives we’ll have different seasons. You know, there were times in my life when I was more of an evangelist than a teacher. There were times in my life when I was more of a teacher than a preacher. There were times in my life when I’ve been more a preacher than a teacher. There were times in my life when, now, I’m more of a mentor. We have different seasons in our life, don’t we? And we need to be careful not to get stuck in last season. I want to talk to you just for a moment about getting things out of season and out of context.

And, just in case you’re not listening, and you’re taking a nap, let’s talk about sex for a minute—that’ll get your attention—let’s talk about sex. And, if you understand God’s plan for sex, you understand that it’s not intended to take place outside of marriage. And it’s not because God didn’t want people to have sex, obviously he did, that’s how children come into the world. If He had made Adam and Eve and there was no intention for sex, there would be no procreation—“Don’t talk like that, there’s children here!” Well, they’re going to hear it here or in school, or at home... I’d rather they hear it in Biblical perspective. And it’s not vulgar to talk about God’s intention for life, it’s proper. But, what the devil has done is, he’s taken that and he’s caused it to be used out of season, he’s caused it to be used in a wrong way, and that takes the glory away from God on it.

When you look at Luke chapter fifteen—I’m just visiting for a moment; I’m going to preach a message, here, in a few minutes—in Luke fifteen, there’s three parables in that fifteenth chapter. There’s the parable of the coins, there’s the parable of the lamb, and, then, I’m going to talk for a moment on the prodigal son in Luke fifteen. And, you know, it wasn’t wrong that the son wanted his father’s inheritance. When my father died, he left an inheritance for his children. And, so, it wasn’t wrong for me to want my portion, whatever it was. And, the good news is, there was a lot of peace in our family, there was no fight for it. But, I mean, if my brothers had called me and said, “Hey, Pete, do you want your portion of dad’s inheritance?” I’d have said, “Sure I do.” Does that make sense? I wouldn’t have said, “No, no, I’m too modest for that. Just take my portion and divide it among the rest of you.” No, I said, “Cut me a check. I’ll take it.” Does that make sense? There was nothing wrong with the prodigal son wanting his portion of the inheritance. I did a little study on that, because I was thinking, “Wouldn’t the older brother get all of the inheritance?” And, it was a Jewish custom at the time that the older brother would have got a double portion; that’s my understanding of the right chronology of when that younger brother asked for it. So, he would have got a portion, though it would have been smaller than his older brother’s portion. But, he would have got a portion, and, it’s okay that he wanted it, he just wanted it out of season. He wanted it out of season. So, I’m asking you today, are you sanctified in the season of your life that you’re living in now? Don’t tell me about what you did twenty years ago, although that’s good. There’s nothing wrong with looking back, and being thankful for what you did twenty years ago, but, you know, there’s a real powerful point to be made here—Debbie, you really paved the way well for it, thank you for helping me preach today—we need to be sanctified in the season of life that we’re in right now. We need to be sanctified in the season of life that we’re in right now. So, today’s message title is, “The Action in Sanctification.” I played with the word sanctification a little bit in preparation for this message, and I thought I could maybe spell it where the last part of sanctification was written ‘action,’ but I didn’t quite make it work. But, I’d like to talk to you today about the action in sanctification: It’s a verb. You see, the idea that we could do the work that we’re called to do; that we could be about our Father’s business, that we could do something that makes a difference. And, so, I have a few points I’d like to share with you, today, from the Scriptures, on how we can do that. And, the first comes to us in the Book of James. And, in the Book of James, it says that if we draw nigh to God, He’ll draw nigh to us.

James 4:8 *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*

You see, we have to make that decision. We have to take that first step. And, I heard someone say once that Jesus is a gentleman. The Scripture says he stands at the door and he knocks; it's up to us to open (Revelation 3:20). He gives us free will; He gives us a choice, and here in James, it says if we draw nigh to God, He will what? draw nigh to you. Have you ever felt separated from God? Have you ever been in a moment or a time in your life where you felt like, "God, where are you?" Well, when we feel like that, here's our challenge: Draw nigh to God! How do you do that? through songs, through His Word, through prayer, through focus, and shunning the things of the world, and embracing the things of God, and we put our focus on God. And, then, when we're doing that, the devil will tell you, "Look what you did yesterday! Look what you did last month, last year! Look what you did then—and now you want to draw nigh to God!" Yes, I want to draw nigh to God! He shed His blood at Calvary for sinners like me! Amen? Of course I want to draw nigh to God! Where else would I go? Who else has the words of eternal life? Amen? The first thing I would suggest that we do, if we're going live sanctified, if we're going to live a life of sanctification, is draw nigh to God. And, then, I would talk to you a little bit about this, I would talk to you about resisting temptation. In First Corinthians ten, and verse number thirteen, the Apostle Paul is writing, and he tells us a very powerful lesson on how we resist temptation. In First Corinthians ten thirteen, he says three things. First, he says:

1 Corinthians 10:13 *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man...*

In today's vernacular, we would say, "We all go through it." "We all go through it." Say it with me. I'll say it first, and then you say it. "We all go through it." One more time: "We all go through it." You know what? You might have a different temptation, you might have a different challenge than I do. Hello? Hello? I had a man say to me one time, he says, "You don't understand, Pastor; I'm gay! I have to have sex with..." I said, "You don't understand; I like women!" He said, "What's that mean?" I said, "I don't get to have sex with any woman I want to, just because I like them!" He said, "That's not fair!" I said, "Life's not fair!" Was that too plain?

1 Corinthians 10:13 *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man...*

We all go through it, don't we? We all go through something. We all go through something, but, what does he go on to say?

1 Corinthians 10:13 *...but God is faithful...*

That means God is always on duty. We never get His answering machine. Come on, somebody say amen. God is faithful; God is always faithful. I heard somebody say, "And the devil's faithful, too." You know what? that's why we've got to fight the good fight of faith! That's why we've got to be armed, 24-7-365. God's faithful. He's never asleep! He's never unable to minister to your needs. Amen? He doesn't turn you away and say, "Take two aspirin and call Me in the morning." God is faithful! That means He's always available! Paul goes on to say:

1 Corinthians 10:13 *...who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able...*

That word, 'suffer,' means allow. He will not allow you to be tempted above that which ye are able. Isn't it awesome to know that, if you're an eight ounce glass, God won't allow nine ounces of temptation to be dumped into your life? Are you aware of the fact that you're protected? That you will

never have an excuse to say, “This is too big for me?” Because, when the temptation’ bigger than you, God’s bigger than the temptation, and He won’t allow you to be tempted above that which ye are able.

1 Corinthians 10:13 ...but will with the temptation also make a way to escape...

Do you understand these things are tied together? When the temptation comes, God’s given us a promise that, Paul’s pointing it out to us—Can I preach today?—Paul’s pointing it out to us, that, every time the devil gives a temptation—by the way, if you’re wondering, the Bible is clear on this, it says, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God...” (James 1:13) So, if you’re wondering, “How do you know it’s the devil?” because he’s the one who tempts. I’m going to throw something in for free, today; it’s not in my notes: God tries, He tests, but the devil tempts. Let me—wait, wait, because somebody needs to hear this: You’re going to have trials, you’re going to have tribulations, that may be of God. Are you listening? What do you think of? Do you think of Job, maybe? Was that of God? Well, the devil brought it; God allowed it. It was consistent with—it wasn’t above that which he was able to bear. Amen? I’m quite sure there were times when Job was saying, “Lord, I know this is happening because I love You and that You love me, but I wish You didn’t love me quite so much right now. Hello? Hello? When Joseph was falsely accused, in prison (Genesis 3:11-20), he had been sold by his family (Genesis 37:26-28). Hello? Brotherly love, let it continue (Hebrews 13:1), yeah. You know, you don’t want brothers like that. All right? See, God will test us, but that’s always for victory, it’s always for growth, it’s always for testimony. “Why was this child born blind?” the disciples asked. Jesus said, “That I would be glorified.” (John 9:1-3) Amen? Sometimes life isn’t fair. Sometimes there are problems, but that’s not temptation, that’s a trial or a test. You’ve got to distinguish that, Saints, or we’ll get sideways, and we’ll not know the source. The reason it’s so important to distinguish between a trial or a test and a temptation is because we need to know the source, because, if you’re going to have a cure, you need to know the source. Somebody say amen. If you’re going to have a cure, you need to know the source, amen? Amen? You don’t give antibiotics for a broken arm, unless there’s a risk for infection, right? You cast a broken arm, right? So that it’s set properly. You’ve got to know the source of the problem before you know how to treat it. And He said that He won’t allow us to be tempted above that which ye are able, but:

1 Corinthians 10:13 ...will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

There’s been times I’ve been painted in the corner of temptation, I mean, right in the corner. Don’t see a door, don’t see a window, don’t see a way out. I touch the ceiling; it looks like it’s solid; I don’t know how to get through. I don’t know how to get around, don’t know how to get over, but I know the One who does, and I know the One who gave me the promise: There’s a way to escape, that I might be able to bear it. So, we’ve got to stop yielding to temptation, stop saying, “The devil made me do it,” and start saying, “God made a way where there was no way!” Can the church say amen?

So, the first thing was draw nigh to God, and the second thing was resist temptation, and the third thing is stay humble. Stay humble. Good God Almighty. Somebody said, “Stay humble? I’m the most humble person you ever met, Pastor.” Well, good. Stay that way. I like humble people, I really do, but, come with me, if you would, to Galatians chapter six, and, in Galatians chapter six, I’m going to read all nine verses, I think. I don’t know, I might stop part way. If you’re writing notes, go ahead and write Galatians six, one through nine. I’m going to read these words:

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault...

Boy, the easiest thing is to find fault. I mean, it's the easiest thing to find, isn't it? I mean, it's not hard to find fault. There's a Gospel song, I don't know who sings it—someone will probably shout out his name—but the first line is, "I won't deny the worst thing you can say about me." You know, it's easy to find fault. I'm full of faults. Debbie got up here, sang my praises; made me feel pretty good. I liked it. Woo! She could have told you my faults, she'd still be talking. It only took her about five seconds to tell you how great I am. She'd be here 'til next Sunday telling you all my faults. Thank you for not going there.

Galatians 6:1 *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual...*

Say, "I'm spiritual." You don't want to say it. I get it; I get it.

Galatians 6:1 *...ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of...*

...haughtiness. In the spirit of self-righteousness. In the spirit of I'm-better-than-you-ness. That's not a word. I know that. I don't know much, but I know that. In the spirit of, "I go to church every Sunday. I give twenty percent." Come on. Start again:

Galatians 6:1-3 *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something...*

I'm talking about sanctification today. And this is how—you ever somebody that, you know, you don't along with real well, and they sort of grate on you? That's God, sanding off the rough edges. You see, sometimes, when things happen in life, and we have to deal with a brother or a sister, that's not doing right, that's God filing off our rough edges.

Galatians 6:1-8 *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption...*

Do you realize that, if you sow to the flesh, you're going to reap corruption? If you sow to the flesh—we're talking about being sanctified today, amen? If you sow to your flesh, you're going to reap corruption. If you sow to the spirit, God can bless that. If you sow to the flesh, you're going to reap corruption. What do you want to reap? Does anybody here—raise your hands, this is an I.Q. test—anybody here want to reap corruption? Hmmm? Of course we don't. So, here's how to stay sanctified, Saints. Here's what we do to live it out. And, so, he says—we're in verse seven, now:

Galatians 6:7 *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

That shall we also reap. We're going to reap what we sow. We plant corn; we get corn. Don't plant corn and look for tomatoes. Don't plant judgment and look for mercy. Don't plant negative and look for positive. Don't plant hurt and look for help. Come on, Saints, work with me. We're talking about sanctification today. And, it's our, sanctification—Do you believe sanctification is a verb, or do you think it's something that's dropped on you? You see, my first name is Peter. I didn't get to choose that; my

parents did. You know? But, if I want to be sanctified, I have a choice. I'm known as Peter, because that's what my parents called me. I suppose I could go to—That analogy's not perfect, because I could go to court and change it, or I could have you call me Jay or Ray or J.J. or... I go by Pete. If I want to be known as sanctified, I've got to do something. And, if I want to be known as sanctified, I've got to live it. I've got to do it; I've got to be it. Amen? How many baseball players we got here? You ever hear, "Be the ball?" Be the ball, huh? You can't just watch the ball, you've got to be the ball. I'm not a baseball player, I don't know exactly what that means, but I know it's more than watching the ball. Hello? Somebody tell me that you know what I'm talking about. So, sin separates. Come down to verse nine.

Galatians 6:9 *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, [if what?] if we faint not.*

Saints, it's our job not to faint. It's our job not to give up. Have you seen the Nyquil commercial for moms and dads? They're peeking their head in the door, and you get the impression they're talking to their boss or somebody, "I need to take the day off," and then the camera pans back, and it's the baby. It says, "Moms don't take a day off." Amen? Read verse nine again:

Galatians 6:9 *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap...*

...if we don't take a day off. If we stay in the race. If we don't quit too soon. Good God Almighty, some of you are complaining, and you haven't done anything yet. "He didn't do that. He didn't come here to insult me like..." I'm trying to encourage you to realize that we want to finish well, Saints. We want to stay sanctified. We don't want to have a few good days and quit. Amen? I don't want to be sixty years old and telling you what I did in high school. "Oh, man, and then, I tell you, the whole—everybody in the bleachers was standing, just cheering me on! Man, it was awesome! I was seventeen years old. I was in the twelfth grade! Aw, man, it was the best day of my life!" I'm glad you had a good day in high school, but, are you having a good day right now?

Can I preach? Isaiah 59:1-2 says what? His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, His hand is not shortened that it cannot save, right? But what separates us from God? Our sins and our iniquities. And, by the way, it's real easy to find fault in others, it's a little harder to find fault in ourselves. You know what? It's not your sin and iniquity that separates me from God, it's mine. Let the church say amen. It's not your sin that separates me from God, it's mine. Everybody like that? Well, it's not my sin that separates you from God, it's yours. Everybody like that? Here's the reality: We have to take personal responsibility for it. You can like that or not like it, but it's a fact. It says our sin and our iniquity separates us from God, and I don't want to be separated from God. I want to avoid sin, because sin separates. Amen? Amen?

Some of you, you've got sins; you think they don't matter, because society does them so regularly. Hello? Hello? You ought to drive between here and O'Hare airport, and look at some of the billboards. Some of it is as near to pornography as it is to anything else. Sin's all around us. Sin's all around us. And we're in this world, but we're not what? of it. So, we've got to make a decision. We've got to make a decision what we look at. And I'm not talking about first glance—you might not be able to avoid that, but you can, you have a responsibility for the second look. Hit the brakes, slow down, say, "I'd better—what does that say?" Back up. Some of you laughing at me, some of you laughing with me. Hello? Sin separates. Sin separates, and we make a choice, many times a day, whether to yield to sin or to say no to it. Say, "Get thee hence, Satan! Get thee hence!" It didn't make my notes, but, if you're writing notes, write Matthew chapter four, and look at the Temptation of Christ, and how He dealt with Satan when he came to Him. And, what happened right before He got tempted? I mean, it was right after His baptism he got

tempted. You think that's a coincidence? No, when you're doing good, the devil's going to come and he's going to—and I believe, I'm one of those that believes that chapter four of Matthew is all about Christ showing us, saying, "Watch, I'm going to show you how you deal with the devil." I really believe that's what Matthew four is about, the temptations of Christ. I don't believe Satan thought he could take Christ out, and theologians might argue with me about that point. I believe it was Christ saying, "Come on, Satan, we're going to show people how we do this. We're going in the ring, and I'm going to beat you." And the devil said, "Hmmm. Maybe this is my chance." But the Lord won, because the Lord wins. Amen?

Okay, back on point, here: We've got to stay focused. We've got to stay focused if we're going to be sanctified. We can't be here today and gone tomorrow. We can't say, "Oh, Hallelujah, God bless you. What was that dirty joke you told me the other day, because I want to repeat it to somebody." We've got to stay focused and stay on course. We've got to stay on task, amen? Amen? I was with a group of guys not too long ago, and one of them told a joke that I thought was entirely inappropriate. And I chose—I was praying for wisdom, because I could sort of tell where it was going, and I couldn't excuse myself from the group, it was just a setting where there I was, and that joke was going to be told whether I was there or not, and I know, that, as he gets to know me better, if I'm ever in that group again, he won't do it again. But, the joke completed, and I chose just to remain without facial expression. And, then, he said to me, right in front of everybody, "What's the matter, Pete, didn't you think that was funny?" And I said, "What?" I'm not even going there, man. You know what? That's not even worthy of my discussion. I said, "What?" and he looked at me like, "Well, if I have to explain it, I guess..." I don't want you to explain it. I don't want to hear anything about it. I've got nothing to say about it. Amen? Because I know sin separates, and I'm not going to indulge in it. Amen?

There's a time for us to stay focused. When I was getting my pilot's license, my flight instructor did something that, I found out later, all flight instructors do this, it's part of the training, it's part of what they're taught to do, and that is, during your training, when you're getting close to your solo, they'll do something very distracting in the cockpit. It could be that they'll spill coffee, it could be that they'll drop an orange, and it'll be rolling around on the floor of the airplane, it could be—whatever it is, it doesn't matter, they get to pick it, but they'll do something very distracting. And they hope what will happen is the student will get distracted enough that he forgets what he's doing—it'll happen in the middle of a turn, or, you know, you're in the middle of a maneuver, and then, this distracting thing happens, and then you tend to the distracting thing, and, when you get back to flying the airplane, you're not where you're supposed to be. Does that make sense? Even if it only takes a few seconds, you're no longer in the pattern you were supposed to be in, you're no longer at the place you were supposed to be, and then, the instructor can take that as a teaching moment, and say, "Fly the plane. When something distracting happens, remember what you're there for. Don't worry about the coffee spilled on the floor, worry about flying the plane, worry about staying on course, worry about staying where you're supposed to be." And, a lot of times, life is just like that. The devil will throw distractions at us, and, it's not so much what the distraction is, it's what it's designed to keep us from seeing. Does that make sense? Does that make sense? So, we've got to stay focused. We've got to make sure we don't lose track of what it is we're supposed to be doing. We've got to make sure we don't lose sight of what it is we're supposed to be doing at that moment, because the devil will throw all kinds of distraction at us.

And the other thing I want to talk to you about today is, avoid ungodly counsel. I could have taken my whole sermon on these words: Avoid ungodly counsel. Because sometimes it's clothed as godly counsel. And, sometimes it comes in the context of flattery. And, if you're familiar with the story in Daniel chapter six. It's a very powerful story about King—I'm not going to take the time to flesh it all out, but, in Daniel chapter six, we get a story of Daniel and King Darius. Now, King Darius had three presidents, and he had lots of people that he had given a lot of responsibility to. And, so, what happens in Daniel chapter six is, God has really given favor of Daniel to Darius, but, the other people that are in charge and are

responsible—his peers, if you will—they don't like Daniel. And the reason they don't is because they're jealous. So, they all come to, they all come to Darius, and they say, (I'm just paraphrasing) "Let's make a decree in the land, that, if anybody under your rule, should petition any god, or any person, other than you, that they'd be thrown in the lion's den." Now, Darius is puffed up with a little bit of ego, and he says, "Well, that sounds good. You mean, if anyone asks anything of anybody but me, they ask anyone to bless them, that they're going to have to be in the lion's den? Reminding people that I'm the king? I'm in charge! This is my kingdom! Great God Almighty, don't be talking to anyone else; I'm the king! You want something, talk to me!" Right? And, so, Darius signs it, and it's a formal contract. The Medes and the Persians, you know, it's the kind of contract that can't be changed or undone. And, so, what happens is, Darius signs this, because he doesn't even realize he's received ungodly counsel. He doesn't even realize that he's been tricked, he's been duped, he's been hoodwinked. And people that he has trusted with large responsibility in his kingdom have come to him, and they've flattered him... Are you hearing the message here? Are you realizing that we could fall victim to this if we're not careful? I like to hear people say good things about me? Do you like to hear people say good things about you? Be careful that it's godly. Be careful that you're not hearing someone else's flattery, and you're going to fall into someone else's trap. That's what Darius did. And, so, he signed the decree, and, of course, Daniel, he prayed three times a day, facing Jerusalem, windows open. Now, these men, who had set the trap for him, they went and they observed it, and then they went and told Darius. They said, "Daniel's praying, and he's asking God to bless him." As soon as those words were spoken, Darius knew exactly what happened. The trap had been set, the trigger had been pulled, and now, the king's decree, which could not be broken, had to be enacted. And the king went with Daniel to the lion's den, and he said, "Your God's going to protect you. God's going to protect you." Now, I want to ask you something: When we were talking earlier about trials, tribulations, and temptations, now this was not a temptation, this was a trial or a tribulation. Daniel in the lion's den; the king had to do it, because he'd been tricked. He didn't have godly counsel, and he didn't recognize it. We've got to be careful when we're getting counsel that isn't godly. Can the church say amen? Just because everybody says it's right, doesn't make it right. Amen? If everybody makes—you know, my mom asked me, she said, "If everybody jumps off the cliff, are you going to jump off the cliff?" I said, "No, I'll probably film it." If they're all jumping, somebody go to... Darius didn't get godly advice, and he didn't know it until it was too late. But, then, God still had an opportunity to bless, and to show Himself. So, you know the story, Daniel went through the night; the lions were quiet. The next morning, the king came, and he said, "Did your God save you?" and Daniel was able to say, "Of course He did. Of course He did. Yeah, of course He did." So, we've got to avoid ungodly counsel, and, then we've got to continue to seek, and continue to serve. Continue to seek, and continue to serve. Isaiah chapter forty and verse thirty-one, there's a verse that most of us are very familiar with, and it says:

Isaiah 40:31 *But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

Amen? Well, what does that word, 'wait,' mean? I looked it up, I spent a little time with it; wait, in this context, is a verb. It's a verb; it's an action word. And it means that we should look eagerly for. That 'waiting,' that the prophet's talking about there is that we need to be looking eagerly for God's place in this situation. Looking eagerly for the returning of the Lord. Looking eagerly for His direction in our life. Looking eagerly—when we're waiting on the Lord, we're in an action mode. We're doing—think about waiting on tables: You know, if you're in a restaurant, and you're looking for some service, and you look over, and you see your waiter, sitting in the corner, talking with other people, you're thinking, "He's not doing a very good job waiting." Right? Because waiting means coming to your table, asking what you need, going and getting it, asking if you need anything else, right? Are you waiting on the Lord? Are you waiting on the Lord, or are you sitting around, 'waiting,' doing nothing? They that wait upon the Lord...

“I’ll take a nap. Yeah, I’ll do that. I’ll just wait upon the Lord. (Snoring noises) Whenever You’re ready, Lord, I’ll be right here. I’m waiting on You, Lord. (Snoring noises) Whenever You’re ready.” That’s not the kind of waiting he’s talking about, there, Saints.

And, so, I’m going to wrap it up like this, and remind you that, in a theological sense—many of you know I’m not a real noted speaker, I don’t usually speak this much from notes, but I wanted to today, because I really wanted to stay on task. I want to wrap it up by saying to you, don’t major on the minors. Don’t major on the minors. Many of us go through our life, and our day, and we deal with things that really don’t have eternal significance. Don’t major on the minors, Saints. Many of us go through our day and we do things that don’t have any eternal significance, and I’m going to give you a tool for your toolbox. Those of you who know me, you know sometimes I like to use that when I’m preaching, to give you a tool for your toolbox. Here’s a challenge to know whether you’re majoring on the majors or you’re majoring on the minors: Are you doing that which is most important, or are you doing something as a time-waster? Have you ever gone through—let me make sure you don’t miss this point: Have you ever watched the evening news, and, when it was all done, you couldn’t tell me a single thing that they talked about? I have. And I could say, “Well, there wasn’t much there.” They talked for thirty minutes! You know, they gave the weather report, they talked about different traffic issues on the highways, they talked about different people that were arrested for different crimes, maybe they gave an interesting community story—I don’t remember any of it. You know why? because I wasn’t there, mentally; I was just tuned out. Some of us go through our days sort of tuned out, we’re going on autopilot. So, here’s a test for your toolbox, to see if you’re majoring on the majors, if you’re dealing with important things, or you’re dealing with things that won’t really matter. What’s it going to matter in two days? This thing I’m worrying about right now, this thing I’m doing right now, what will it matter—really, think about it: What I’m doing right now, what will it matter in two days? If you’re driving to work on Monday morning, and you’ve got to be there by eight o’clock, and you’re on time and on track to do that, and you ask the question, “What will it matter in two days?” It will matter a lot, because I’ll still have a job. There’s nothing wrong with doing the things you’re doing; I’m talking about, but what if you’re sitting there worrying about whether someone’s going to like the card you sent them? What will it matter in two days? What will it matter in two years? What will it matter in twenty years? What will it matter in two hundred years?

I am reminded of the story of two men who were spending time together, and the one man invited his friend over. They had gone to high school together, but they hadn’t stayed in touch, and they were reconnecting after many, many years. And he was showing him his great ranch; it was man, many, many acres. And he was showing him around his ranch, and he said, “You know, I’ve really been successful since high school. God has really blessed me. I own all the land you see, and every animal you see, all the cattle, all the goats, the sheep, those are all mine.” He said, “As far as you can see from this point, where I parked my pick-up truck right now, as far as you can see to the east, as far as you can see to the west, as far as you can see to the north and the south, I own it all. It’s all mine.” His high school friend said, “I don’t think so, Bob; I really don’t think so.” He said, “Are you calling me a liar?” He said, “No, I’m not calling you a liar, I’m just saying I don’t think you own it the way you think you own it.” He said, “What are you talking about? I’ll take you back to the ranch I’ll show you the deed. I own it all!” He said, “Bob, let’s talk about that in a hundred years.” See, a hundred years from now, Bob won’t be around. That land might still be there, but Bob will be long gone.

So, in closing today, I’m asking, are you majoring on the majors? Are you dealing with what really matters? Are you making an eternal difference by being sanctified, every day of your life, every step of the way? Are you living a life that’s pleasing to God, and productive for God? Or, are you living a life that’s just pleasing you? Maybe, even worse, you’re living a life that’s pleasing the devil, because he’s got you angry and he keeps you that way. Now, I’m not saying that to be mean; you know me better than that. I’m saying that because you might have been getting ungodly counsel and not even have known it. Well, today’ the day to call the devil a liar. Today’s the day to say, “Lord, I want to draw nigh to you.”

Today is the day to remember that you want to do what God has for you to do, and you don't want to do what man has for you to do. Today's the day for you to begin a habit of resisting temptation. Today's the day for you to create a habit of staying humble, and avoiding sin, and staying focused, avoiding ungodly counsel. Today's the day for you to make a change in your life, and say, "I'm going to be set aside for God. I'm going to be sanctified, not just here at church, but everywhere I go."

I'm going to close with these words: Apostle Paul said these words:

2 Timothy 4:5-8 *But watch thou in [some things. Watch thou in some things. Come on, church, help me out. Watch thou in what?] all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of [whose ministry?] thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. [This is the last words that Paul wrote. He realizes he's finishing his course. He's done what he was called to do. He's stayed sanctified. He was useful for the glory of God. He'd done all the things that God had told him to do, and he was finishing well. And he says,] I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only [and not to me only. He's writing to Timothy, and he's teaching Timothy, "Come on, Timothy, keep it going; keep it going." He says], but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

Be sanctified, Saints. Stay sanctified, and help others be sanctified. God bless you.

