

Subject: *Called to Be Saints*
Scripture: *1 Corinthians 1:1-9*

There was a little boy who was always getting into trouble and having to be disciplined for it. Someone asked the boy, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” He said, “I want to be alive.” What do you want to be? A better question is what does God want me to be? We know the answer to that question. God has told us what He wants us to be. The Bible is clear about our identity. Christians are new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). We are disciples for Christ. We are servants of Christ. We are saints of God. All of these describe our identity as believers in Christ. All of these should concern us as Christians.

One of the proofs that we are true Christians and not just Christians in name only is that we want to know who we are in Christ and then we want to live in a way that reflects our identity and calling. That’s why the Bible refers so many times to our identity. There’s a word we find many times in Paul’s letters, usually in the introduction and greeting of his letters. It is a word found in Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. It is the word “saints.” Look at 1 Corinthians 1:2. God’s people are called to be saints. Let’s look at what that means to our lives.

1. Saints have a holy position in Christ

The word “saints” means holy ones, people who have been set apart or separated for the exclusive ownership and use of God. The word “saints” is related to the words “sanctified” and “holy.” It is a word found in the plural “saints” and found only once as “saint” (Phil. 4:21, “Greet every saint in Christ Jesus”). The word “saint” has either been neglected as a term that nobody uses or it is used to mean something much different than what the Bible teaches. Many people think that a saint is a kind of super-Christian who is only officially recognized as a saint after he or she dies.

But what does the Bible say? Verse 2 identifies believers as the church of God, those who are sanctified, and saints. All three of those are related. The “church” is a called out people. We have been “sanctified” or set apart as holy, and therefore we are “saints” holy ones. Whenever anything or anyone is holy it means it has been set apart for the exclusive ownership of God and His purpose. The tabernacle and the temple were holy. All of their furnishings were holy. The priests were holy. The prophets and apostles were holy. When God saves us we are separated for Him and His use, and from that moment in time we are called to be saints. Spurgeon warns us not to think of New Testament saints as being different from us and other Christians:

“We have the same light that they (NT saints) had, the same grace is accessible to us, and why should we rest satisfied until we have equaled them in heavenly character? They lived *with* Jesus, they lived *for* Jesus, and therefore they grew *like* Jesus.” – C. H. Spurgeon

1 Corinthians 6:9-11⁹ *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,*¹⁰ *Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*¹¹ *And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

Salvation is the most amazing thing because God takes filthy people and makes them clean. He takes dead people and makes them alive. He takes sinners and makes them saints. And it's all by the grace of God. Paul said, "By the grace of God, I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). Paul was a madman and God's grace made him a missionary. He was a persecutor and God's grace made him a preacher of the gospel. Every saint has a past and by grace every sinner has a future. We are saints only because of God's grace in salvation. All believers are called saints. Some are weak saints, some are strong saints, some are rich saints and some are poor saints, but all are God's saints.

2. Saints live a holy life in Christ

- A holy life is only possible by God's grace

As saints we have a holy position, and we are going in a holy direction.

Titus 2:11-12 ¹¹ *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,* ¹² *Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.*

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

- A holy life is separated and different from the world

What does it mean to live as a saint? It means to be careful about what do and say. Some voices in the church tell us that Christians need to be more relevant, but God says we need to be more different.

2 Corinthians 6:17 - 7:1 ¹⁷ *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,* ¹⁸ *And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* ¹ *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.*

I had an experience a few years ago that I will never forget. I was with a family in a waiting area at Holston Valley Hospital in Kingsport and someone who worked there asked me if I wanted to see their brand new cath lab. I had a cup of coffee and when I walked into the cath lab I was very careful not to spill a drop because the room was spotless. Holding the coffee in the waiting area was one thing, but holding the coffee in the cath lab was another. We get used to being careless and spilling things and we get used to sin. We need to be careful wherever we go and whatever we do.

- A holy life is not an easy life

It's never been easy to live as a saint in this world. But it's harder now than ever because sin is more available and accessible. It used to be that you would have to go out of your way to sin, but now it comes right into your home and into your lap by way of TV and the internet. Sin is available 24/7 at the click of a button. So to live holy we have to set up our defense very close. It starts with our heart and mind.

Proverbs 4:23 *Keep (guard) thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

Romans 12:1-2¹ *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.* ² *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

We can live a holy life because we have the Holy Spirit inside us. He is able to separate us, sanctify us, and make us more like Christ. We can live a holy life because we have the Holy Bible to guide us and we have fellowship with like-minded saints to encourage us and hold us accountable.

- A holy life is not an option for a true believer

Matthew 5:8 *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*

Hebrews 12:14 *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

3. Saints have a holy future with Christ

Because of Christ we have become saints in our spiritual position.
Because of Christ we are becoming saints in our spiritual progress.
Because of Christ we will be saints in our spiritual perfection.

Psalms 116:15 *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.* The death of God's saints will bring our salvation to its ultimate completion. We will be made perfect for our perfect home to live forever with our perfect Savior. We know God will finish His work in us.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24²³ *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ²⁴ Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

Colossians 1:12 *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet (fit) to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.* One day we will be with the saints in the glorious light of heaven because God made us fit for that perfect place.

It's easy to spot fans of their favorite football team or NASCAR driver. They wear a cap, shirt, jacket, or maybe they wear it all. People love to identify themselves as fans. It's a part of who they are. It is their identity. How can you tell if someone is a Christian? You can tell by how they live, by what they do and what they say, by how they act and react. Christian people are not perfect, but they are different and they are separate. They are the saints.

The Bible tells us to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith. But what should we look for? Look for holiness. Is there a love of holiness, a desire for holiness, growth in holiness, and a frustration and sadness because there is not more holiness? Don't look for perfection, but look for direction.