

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:1

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”

“To The Faithful Saints”

It time for us to begin our study of the text found in the Epistle to the Ephesians. As I mentioned we will be moving quite slowly through these treasures but as we do so, I do not want us to miss the forest for the trees... That is why I asked you to read through this letter in a single sitting, and yes I did say I would hold you accountable... Show of hands!

I also mentioned that I would be drawing heavily from the work of Martin Lloyd-Jones on this profound book and I will begin this morning with his comments on the importance of the opening verses that we read:

“We tend to feel that introductions are more or less unnecessary, and that we can skip over them in order that we may hurry on to the great message that follows. In the reading of childhood we wanted to get to the heart of the story, and were often impatient with all the preliminaries; we wanted the excitement of the end of the story. That habit tends to persist, so that when we come even to the New Testament Epistles we feel that the preliminary verses and salutations are unimportant and have nothing to do with the truth and doctrine. So we tend to read them very quickly and to rush on to what we regard as the essential teaching. But that is a profound error, not only with respect to Scripture, but also to anything that is worth reading. It is always good to pay attention to what an author at the outset deems to be necessary and important, for obviously he would not have introduced it if he had not had some object in mind. If that is true in general it is particularly true with regard to these New Testament Epistles, because in these preliminary salutations we find aspects of truth which are vital and essential.”

- **Thus I want us to spend our time this morning considering how the Apostle Paul addresses those in Ephesus in those opening verses:**
- **It is addressed to the Saints.**

While we can see sharing the Gospels or the sermons found in the Book of Acts as good tools for evangelism to be shared with the lost, these Epistles of Paul apply ONLY to the Saints!

- **That is why it is addressed to the Saints and why we should consider the impact of that word or title.**

Let me begin with a bit of an experiment... I would like you all to take a moment and look around the sanctuary... [perhaps standing]

Who do you see? Well mostly the same folks who are here each week.

How should we see them? Well, they are friends and family, they can be husbands and wives, brothers or sisters right?

Going a bit deeper, most of us are members of Church of the King...

- **We would usually refer to each other as Christians, right?**

So when was the last time you looked around here or at lunch and thought about your fellow Saints?

- **Why, there is Saint Fredrich or over there I see Saint Patrick or Saint John in the back!**

Now sadly I think we are hesitant to do so because of many abuses in the church down through the ages which I will discuss in a moment, but there can also be a theological problem as well. So let me take us on a quick journey to see why the Apostle Paul thought it was important to address the believers in Ephesus in such a way in his introduction.

In our New Testament age, we might be tempted to think it was an endearing term that this Apostle came up with, but it actually has a long history of usage in the Scriptures.

- **In fact, ‘Saint’ or ‘Saints’ is used almost a hundred times in the Bible and fully one third of them are found in the Old Testament!**

It is interesting to note that the term Christian which we use all the time in referring to believers is used only three times in all of the New Testament!

So what does “Saint” mean and why is it used so often? At bottom it simply means holy or set apart. And as we will focus on over and over again here in Ephesians we begin with God and not ourselves.

- **Being a Saint is not something that we earn, but rather something that God bestows on His people!**

We stand in the righteousness of Jesus and not our own and the Apostle Paul is reminding those in Ephesus of this important truth right up front!

They were in a long line of people who had been set apart or made holy by God and it continues down to our day. The first time we see the term Saint used is when Moses is preparing the people to enter the promised land in Deuteronomy chapter 33:

“Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. 2 And he said: “Jehovah came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came with ten thousands of saints; From His right hand Came a fiery law for them. 3 Yes, He loves the people; All His saints are in Your hand; They sit down at Your feet; Everyone receives Your words.”

Now we should all know the history of Israel well enough to know that these folks were often not acting very saintly.

- **But again, that is not what made them Saints, those set apart by God.**

They were God’s chosen people and He referred to them as His Saints.

The next occurrence comes in the song of Hannah as God begins to establish the Kingdom age for His people:

I Samuel 2:6 “Jehovah kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up. 7 Jehovah makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. 8 He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the beggar from the ash heap, To set them among princes And make them inherit the throne of glory. “For the pillars of the earth are Jehovah’s and He has set the world upon them. 9 He will guard the feet of His saints, But the wicked shall be silent in darkness. “For by strength no man shall prevail.”

- **This certainly affirms the theme we will see here in Ephesians of God being in control and we should rejoice that His control guards the feet of His Saints!**

Next, we come to the prayer of King Solomon at the dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem:

II Chronicles 6: “40 Now, my God, I pray, let Your eyes be open and let Your ears be attentive to the prayer made in this place.

41 “Now therefore, Arise, O Jehovah God, to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength. Let Your priests, O Jehovah God, be clothed with salvation, And let Your saints rejoice in goodness. 42 “O Jehovah God, do not turn away the face of Your Anointed; Remember the mercies of Your servant David.”

- God refers to His Saints often in the Book of Psalms and one of them came with our reading for Friday in Psalm 16:

“Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust. 2 O my soul, you have said to Jehovah, “You are my Lord, My goodness is nothing apart from You.” 3 As for the saints who are on the earth, “They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.”” [your homework can be to note the other twenty uses in Psalms as we read through them over the next four months! ☺]

We also saw it in the Book of Proverbs last month in a passage that not only speaks of the Saints, but speaks wisdom to the pain and sorrow our nation is feeling once again as children were slaughtered on a Florida campus...

Proverbs 2: “He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; 8 He guards the paths of justice, And preserves the way of His saints. 9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice, Equity and every good path.”

Daniel chapter 5 refers to Saints in the Kingdom five times, but that would require an entire sermon to cover!

There is only one reference to Saints in the Gospels and it comes in one of the most obscure passages in the Bible...

- But certainly confirms that there were Saints in the OT times!

Matthew 28: “51 Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, 52 and the graves were opened;

and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”

- Then we come to over sixty uses in the New Testament where Saints is the most common title given to those who are in Christ!

I think that our little exercise earlier demonstrated that we usually refer to each other as church members, fellow Christians, believers brothers and sisters in Christ?

- The use of those terms are much more common than saying I am here with the Saints.

Or how often do I think of myself as a Saint? I am much more likely to say that I am no Saint because...

- I believe the source of this problem is two-fold: One practical and the other theological.

On the practical front, the term Saint has been abused so much in Church history that we shy away from it or only use it in the wrong way that these abuses created.

Rather than seeing all those who are baptized into Christ as His Saints the way the New Testament does, over time the Church began to use the term for only those who led exceptional lives.

- In other words, Sainthood was something to be earned rather than something that is bestowed by our gracious God.

So it is not wrong to refer to Saint Augustine or Saint Nicholas as long as we realize that I can also say Saint Katie or Saint Kim or Saint Claire.

I would argue that the best way to confront, and Lord willing end these abuses, is by using Saint far more often as it was in the Scriptures!

The other problem is theological and is perhaps the most important lesson to learn as we begin our journey into this Epistle: We must remember the admonition that we always begin with God and come down to us!

- We are to see ourselves as God sees us and not as we see ourselves or each other.
- Again, I am a Saint and you are Saints not because of the good things we have done, but because God has set us apart to do good things!

We stand in the righteousness of Jesus and not our own and this is why our time of confession and absolution each week in worship is so important!

- It reminds us about who we are!

We are called Saints and then the Apostle calls us the faithful in Christ Jesus.

Here Dr. Lloyd Jones says it well:

“All that the Lord Jesus Christ has done becomes true of us. Again, in the sixth chapter of Romans Paul works it out and say that when Christ was crucified we were crucified with Him; when he died, we died with Him; when He was buried we were buried with Him; when He rose again we rose with Him. He is seated in the heavenly places. Paul says in the second chapter of this Ephesian Epistle, ‘God hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ’. We are seated in the heavenly places with Christ at this moment because we are ‘in Christ.’ What a tremendous, staggering, overwhelming truth – I am a part of Christ, I belong to Him, I am a member of the body of Christ! I am not my own, I have been ‘bought [purchased] with a price,’ I am in Christ. He is the Head, I am one of the members. There is a vital, organic mystical union between us. All the blessings we enjoy as Christians come to us because we are in Christ.”

- So, what are the practical implications of knowing that we are Saints; knowing that we are the faithful who are in Christ Jesus?

IF we believe this is true... It must change how we see ourselves and others...

It must change how we live and it must give us a great contentment!

- We must begin to see ourselves and others in the Body of Christ as the called out ones, the holy ones, the Saints!

Thus, when a child is in need of discipline we do NOT pull out the rod to punish that little sinner who lives in our house... But rather the rod of correction is administered in love reminding our little ones of who they are in Christ and telling them that because of this they must repent and obey:

As they grow older we do not simply tell them NO over and over again, but gently, or firmly depending on the situation, show them how such behavior is not fitting for one who is in Christ.

- They are Saints and so they should live as Saints would live!

I should not have to remind you of the importance of instructing them in these Godly ways with Godly examples:

- Yes, dear Saints we have to practice what we preach!
- The bottom line should be that we strive to live as who we are in Christ, rather than striving to be something we have not yet attained!

It is so important that we see the difference here:

- One is toil and bondage while the other is life and liberty!

And brothers and sisters, when we get that right it becomes the source of the contentment we are to have in Christ... It is why our Master said to any who would listen...

“28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

And finally, Pastor Lloyd Jones reminds us that as we grow in our confidence about what God has done for us, it will give us greater boldness to share the Good News with others as we are commissioned & sent out as those beautiful feet that bring glad tidings:

I want to close with his words as we think about those God has placed in our lives who are not saved, among our families & friends; among our neighbors, & co-workers...

“Are you a Christian who is feeling rather hopeless about a husband or wife or child or some other relative? Do you feel that because of their intellectualism, or their training, or their surroundings, their conversion to Christ is altogether hopeless and cannot be attempted? Remember the saints at Ephesus, yes, and at Corinth and in Galatia. The Gospel is the power of God; it has accomplished mighty things and is still the same. It can take hold of the most hopeless individual and turn him into a saint. That is its primary function, that is the thing for which God has sent it forth.”

Communion Meditation: Matthew 11

“27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”