

“Called to be Saints!”

Romans 1:1-7

Intro. – On the campus of Notre Dame near South Bend, Indiana is the second most visited attraction in the state of Indiana. It is the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. As a young boy I remember visiting the campus going to this building several times. At the very entrance years ago was a box prominently displayed... The plaque said: “The bones of Severa martyr of the Third Century, soon to be named ‘Saint Severa.’” Throughout the building you will find the “remains” of several others who were declared to be “saints.” I thought then and would ask you now, what is a saint? Who determines what or who a saint is? What’s so special about being a saint?

I “googled” the term “saint” and this is what I turned up... Here’s my point. The ideas as to what a saint is, are about as diverse as Heinz and its 57 varieties. Our text brings light and clarity to this matter. The term “saint” is frequently misapplied and misunderstood. As servants of the most High God, it is more than helpful in understanding this term and knowing how it applies to each of our lives. It enables you and me to be defenders of the faith and doers of *sound doctrine*.

Purpose: to better understand how our being called to be saints is significant in our quest to live for Christ

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul said he was “called to be an apostle” (1:1). In other words, he was summoned by the Lord to be an apostle for a specific purpose. That purpose involved the gospel. Likewise, all Christians have their “calling.” We are the “called of Jesus Christ (1:6) – we are “called to be saints” (1:7)!...

I The DEFINITION of a Saint

A. One Set Apart (Consecrated, Holy One...)

1. The New Testament word for saint is *αγιος* (*hagios*) and when used as a noun usually refers to those who have been added to the Body of Christ, the Church.
2. Thayer in his Lexicon – “Set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively His... This appellation is very often in the N.T. transferred to Christians, as those whom God has selected out of the world.”
3. Vine in his N.T. Words Studies – “It is used of men and things in so far as they are devoted to God. These are called *hagioi*, saints, i.e. ‘sanctified’ or ‘holy ones.’ This sainthood is not an attainment, it is a state in which God in grace calls men.

B. It is Applied to All Christians

1. Summarizing what the above sources say, a *saint* is:
 - a. a Christian – a member of the Body of Christ...
 - b. because of this, Christians are considered by God to be: set apart, holy and consecrated to His holy will and purposes
2. A quick review of the N.T. confirms this definition and the proper use of the term *saint*
 - a. those in local congregations were called *saints* – Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2...
 - b. describing those who are the subjects of brotherly love – Ephesians 1:15 “*For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints.*” Colossians 1:4, Philemon 4-7 say the exact same thing.
3. Note: a “saint” is not some super-Christian...(more faithful than your ole’ dog and able to pray long prayers without going to sleep...)
 - a. a “saint” NOT someone who is now dead and has been canonized/venerated as object worship
 - b. every Christian is a “saint” according to God’s Word!

II The BEGINNING of a Saint

A. Called Through the Gospel

1. We become saints by being “called” – Romans 1:7
 - a. the idea of being “called” is one of being “summoned” – summoned by God

- b. note: this doesn't mean we are summoned by a sign, wonder or miracle – don't expect lightening or a handwriting across the sky...
- 2. We are “called” by or through the Gospel – 2 Thessalonians 2:14 *“It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
 - a. God calls you and me and everyone through the Gospel *that you may gain the glory of Christ!*
 - b. simply means that you and I can realize *restored fellowship and peace* with God!!

B. Restored By Christ

- 1. The Gospel reveals God's plan for restoring you, me and whosoever will from their sins:
 - a. *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* – Romans 3:23 etc.
 - b. *“The wages of sin is death...”* – Romans 6:23a
 - c. *“...but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* – Romans 6:23b
- 2. When people respond, receive this free gift on God's terms (faith, repentance, confession, immersion into Christ) = saved BY grace, THROUGH faith, AT baptism, FOR good works.
- 3. Every time the gospel is preached and taught, God is calling people to become saints, to remain saints and to grow as saints.
- 4. Here then in summary is what is meant by the beginning of a saint – the moment one becomes a Christian, they become a saint of God, one who is set apart and consecrated for God's purpose!

III The LIFE of a Saint

- we all are living testimonies that Christians don't always behave like saints...
- the epistles of the N.T. were written to saints – from them we learn how saints are to live:

A. As Revealed in Ephesians

- 1. Saints must always live in a manner becoming of their “calling” (Ephesians 4:1)
 - a. walk in unity – Ephesians 4:1-16
 - b. walk in truth – Ephesians 4:17-32
 - c. walk in love – Ephesians 5:1-7
 - d. walk in the light – Ephesians 5:8-14
 - e. walk in wisdom – Ephesians 5:15-17
- 2. Saints ought to avoid anything not becoming of their calling
 - a. Ephesians 5:3-4 *“But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”*
 - b. through the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives, saints are *enabled* to live this way – when we quench the Spirit is when we get into trouble and live not as saints.

B. As Revealed in Colossians

- 1. Colossians 1:9 *“For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”* - saints are to be filled with the knowledge of God's will – i.e. know the Word!
- 2. Colossians 1:10 *“So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”* -- we are called to be *Christians* as well as *saints* -- our behavior should properly reflect the One whose name we wear!
 - is your life reflecting Christ? Are your attitude and actions becoming of His name?...
- 3. Colossians 1:11 *“Strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience.”* -- fruit of the spirit certainly ought to be evident in our lives...
- 4. Colossians 1:12 *“Giving thanks to the Father, Who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.”* Only in Christ is there the promise of the inheritance of the saints. Only in Christ is there hope!

Conclusion: The Scriptural idea of sainthood can be seen in the following account. A little girl, the child of parents who practiced saved by works religion was taken by an aunt to a grand cathedral. Since this was the first time the little girl had ever visited such a magnificent building, she sat in utter wonder gazing at the sunlit beauty of the large stained-glass windows. “Auntie,” the little girl finally spoke, “Who are those people in the windows?” “They are saints,” replied the aunt. After a long pause the little girl said in a loud whisper that could be heard by all, “Now I know what saints are. They’re not people who wear strange clothes and always frown. They are people who let the light shine through!”

A man by the name of Houseman said, “A saint is one who makes goodness attractive.” Christians have the high and holy calling of being set apart unto God. Because of this, they need to let the glory of His Son shine through their lives.

Romans 1:5, the key verse of this first chapter has Paul making clear that he was called to be an apostle *not* just to lead the Gentiles to faith as an end in itself, but to lead them to the kind of faith that produces *obedience*. God wants obedience, yes; but He wants obedience that comes or results from faith in Jesus Christ! This is the intended outcome of Paul’s gospel, just as it should be for us. The purpose of preaching and teaching the gospel is to bring about obedience that springs from faith rather than from legalistic requirements. God wants obedience, but He wants *the obedience of faith* or *faith that works*. In reality, true faith and heartfelt obedience cannot be separated. Abraham’s example makes this clear as we read in Hebrews 11:8 “*By faith Abraham... obeyed.*” We cannot truly “accept Christ” without accepting Him as both Savior AND Lord. We accept Him as Savior by trusting in His redeeming work; we accept Him as Lord by committing ourselves to obey His will. In summary to all of this – we are *Called to be Saints!*