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## Saints

Saints. We all have heard about them. We start with St. Paul, St. Peter, and the other apostles and go on from them. But who are they? What are the qualifications for being a *saint*?

Let's back up a bit. The word saint means holy or pure. The word *holy* occurs around 600 times in the Bible, and is used to describe God, things and people. The word saint occurs 68 times, seven times in the Old Testament and 61 in the New Testament. These uses alone tell us holiness is important.



God is pure, He is holy. That is essential to who He is and all that He does. Saints are people who are pure, who are holy, and that is not what we naturally are. We become holy only by God's grace through Jesus Christ.

Here is where it can be a bit confusing. Some traditions recognize that all believers are saints, but there also are people who have been especially designated or recognized as saints. The Catholic church states that one use of saint refers to those who have preceded us into the kingdom of heaven and have their virtues publicly recognized and proclaimed when they are canonized as *saints*. The number of their canonized saints cannot be determined exactly. It is sometimes estimated to be between 8-10,000. Additionally, the Catholic church teaches that while their doctrine rejects the worship of anyone but God, the Church allows praying to the saints asking for their intercession with God. Praying to saints to intercede for us is something we do not believe can be supported from Scripture, and in fact runs contrary to it.

Now let's think about what the Bible says about *saints*, *holy ones*. You may not think of yourself, see yourself as being a saint. In his letters the apostle Paul frequently refers to, describes Christians as saints. Recall just three instances.

- He addresses his letter to the church at Rome "to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:7).
- He addresses his first letter to the church in Corinth "To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours" (1:2).

- He addresses his letter to the church in Colossae “to the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father” (1:2).

If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, God gave you a new nature. You are a new creation. As Paul wrote, “if anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The holiness of Christ is part of your new nature. Every believer is a saint, one chosen by God, set apart by Him for fellowship and service. We are works in progress. We are to grow in being holy as God is holy. We are to, as the writer of Hebrews tells us, to “pursue peace with all people, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (12:14).

We grow as saints as we “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to desire and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13). We work out our salvation as we read, apply and live the truth of the Scriptures, as we stay in close fellowship with God, as we keep our sights on the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Being a saint, being chosen by God to be holy should lead us to not only rejoice in what God has made us and is making us, but to be very intentional, very serious about our responsibility to live as saints, as the holy people of God.

Pastor Lyle