



This week we continue in our expository verse-by-verse study through the book of 1 Corinthians. This week we explore Part 1 of Sainthood: Your Calling.

God calls us saints, even though we probably would ask "How can I be a saint? I don't live up to that standard?"

The Scriptures give us 6 reasons God calls us saints.

The pulpit study guide is written weekly by the pastoral staff of Crossroads Community Church. It is designed for small group leaders to use as a discussion facilitation tool during small group meetings. If you would like to join a small group at Crossroads, drop us an email to smallgroups@crossroadswired.com or give us a call at 419-529-0750 – Ext. 109.

Group Study Questions

Greeting / Thanksgiving

1 Corinthians 1:2-9

² To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— ⁶ even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:2-9
- Notice from verse 2 “*called to be saints.*” What do you think of when you hear someone called a saint?

The Catholic Church has a number of requirements for individuals of exceptional holiness canonized by the Church. Requirements for Catholic Sainthood include:

- Being dead
- Nominated by Congregation for the Cause of Saints
- Lived an exemplary life
- Have miracle[s] attributed to your intercession
- Have supernatural influence over events on earth from heaven
- Be canonized by the Pope and granted sainthood

Scripture differs from the popular concept of sainthood, which has been significantly influenced by the Catholic Church process.

What is a Biblical Saint?

1. Notice from verse 2 “*To the church of God that is in Corinth.*” If Paul was writing today to Crossroads, he would write to the church *in* Mansfield, *the church of God.*

What does it mean to be the church of God?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Not only is the church *of* God; but we are owned by God. Because we are owned by God, He determines our position. Our **position** is not based on our merit, but on God's ownership.

- Saints are owned by God

What does it mean to you to be owned by God? How should this affect our actions?

2. God sees us as holy [positionally], even if we don't always act like a saint. Yet he has also set us apart practically. He has empowered us to be holy.

Read Colossians 3:1-14. Discuss some of the behaviors we should strive to practice.

- Saints are sanctified in Christ Jesus

“Sanctification, to be set apart to be holy, has a dual implication. You are set apart practically and you are set apart positionally.”

- Tim Armstrong

3. God calls believers to himself. He calls us to salvation. The Corinthians were far from saints, but God called the Corinthians saints just as they were. Just as we are saved by grace, not by works, we also become saints, not by works. We are called to be saints. Discuss the difference between working to be a saint or being called a saint.

➤ Saints are called to be saints

4. Read 1 Corinthians 1:4. When was grace given to us? [future/past/present]

Read 1 Corinthians 1:6. When was grace given to us?

What is grace? [refer Colossians 2:14]

➤ Saints are given grace

5. Read 1 Corinthians 1:5-7a. Paul tells the believers, the church, that they *were* enriched. What does he mean to be enriched?

Read 2 Peter 1:3

Enriched: (*πλουτίζω*) *polutizo* – “to make rich, supply abundantly, richly supply”

➤ Saints are “enriched”

6. Read 1 Corinthians 1:7b-9. As saints, we “wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We wait for His return. And while we wait, he “sustains us.”

And what is the end result? [refer 1 Corinthians 1:8b]

➤ Saints are guaranteed eternity with Christ

For Further Study Gromacki Commentary on 1 Corinthians.¹

In his epistles, Paul exhorted believers about proper behavior only after he explained the wealth of their spiritual position in Christ (Rom. 12:1; Eph. 4:1). Thus, Paul wanted the Corinthians to see who they were before he criticized them for their faulty deportment. He described them in six ways. First, he called them “the church of God.” They were members of the one true church which Christ built and purchased through His redemptive death and resurrection (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25). The church, as the mystical body of Christ, has an organic unity which cannot be divided by warring, imperfect members (12:12; cf. John 17:21; Eph. 4:4–6). Second, he located them at Corinth.

Third, they were sanctified positionally in Christ. The phrase, “to them that are sanctified,” is the translation of one Greek word *hēgiasmenois*. Grammatically, it means that they had been sanctified or set apart by God from the world for Himself in a decisive event in the past and that they were remaining and would continue to remain in a sanctified position or standing. Such a position was only possible because they were judicially accepted in the beloved Christ (Eph. 1:6).

Fourth, he designated them as “called saints.” Just as Paul was an apostle by divine calling, they were saints by that same calling. Sainthood was not part of their future destiny, a goal that might not be realized because of their sin; rather, it expressed their present standing. The big problem was that they were not saintly in their practice, although they had experienced the effectual call of God who was working out His sovereign purpose in their lives (Rom. 8:28–30).

Fifth, they shared the same position as believers in every place. How does one become a saint? By calling upon the name of Christ. The Corinthians had done this, and so had believers in other localities. In fact, this is the simplest definition of the procedure to secure personal salvation (Acts 2:21; 9:14, 21; Rom. 10:13). Some take this phrase to mean that the epistle was addressed not only to the Corinthian church, but also to all Christians throughout the Roman world. However, the specific problems resolved in the book refer to a definite church.

Sixth, they had the same Lord as other believers.

In these opening verses, Paul definitely emphasized the authoritative lordship of Jesus Christ over believers' lives. All nine verses refer to Him. The Corinthians needed to recognize that their divisive spirit was a sign of spiritual disobedience.

For Further Study MacArthur Commentary on 1 Corinthians²

SAINTHOOD

The church to whom Paul was writing was not the church of the Corinthians but **the church of God** which was located at Corinth. The church is a body of people who belong not to themselves or to any leader or group but to God. Believers, whether pastors, officers, or ordinary members in the church, together compose Christ's earthly Body and all are called to be stewards of it (Eph. 4:11–13). We are not our own, individually or collectively, but have all been bought with the price of Christ's blood (1 Cor. 6:20).

POSITION AND PRACTICE

All believers **have been sanctified in Christ Jesus** and are **saints by calling**. A saint, as the term is used in the New Testament, is not a specially pious or self-sacrificing Christian who has been canonized by an ecclesiastical council. The Greek word translated **saint** is *hagios*, meaning “set apart one,” or “holy one.” The Corinthian believers *were* holy in God's sight, regardless of their sinful living and distorted doctrine. They were saints because they had **been sanctified** (from *hagiazō*), set apart from sin, **made holy in Christ Jesus**. According to Scripture, every true believer in Jesus Christ—whether faithful or unfaithful, well known or unknown, leader or follower—is a set apart person, a holy person, a saint. In the biblical sense, the most obscure believer today is just as much a saint as the apostle Paul. This is the believer's position in Christ.

Holiness, in that positional sense, is not a matter of good works, of holy living. As Christians we should live holy lives, but holy living does not make us holy. To the extent our living is holy, it is because, in Christ, we already *are* holy and have the counsel and power of His Holy Spirit. We are holy because the Sanctifier (the One who makes holy) has already sanctified us in response to our trust in Him (Heb. 2:11). Christ's work, not our own, makes us holy. We are “saints by calling.” That refers to the efficacious call of God to salvation (1:24, 26).

Like all believers, the Corinthians were **saints** because God called them to be saints (cf. Gal. 1:6; Eph. 4:1, 4; Col. 3:15; 1 Tim. 6:12; 1 Pet. 2:9, 21; 3:9; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 1).

“We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10; cf. v. 14). By His own sacrificial work on the cross, Jesus Christ sanctifies those who believe in Him. He sets them apart (the root meaning of *hagiazō*)

¹ Gromacki, R., Dr. (2002). *Called to Be Saints: An Exposition of I Corinthians* (3–8). The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications.

² MacArthur, J. (1996). *1 Corinthians* (5–7). Chicago: Moody Press.

for Himself, cleanses them, and perfects them. God provides holiness through His Son. Man's part is to claim holiness, to claim sainthood, by faith in the Son (Acts 26:18). We have a new nature, the divine nature, and have escaped the corruptions of the world, possessing all things related to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3–4).

Paul's declaring all the Corinthian believers to be saints was quite a declaration in light of the things—very evident from the rest of this letter—that characterized their living. The Corinthian church was far from being saintly in the sense in which the term is often used. They were particularly worldly and immoral, yet in his opening words Paul stressed that every one of them who had truly believed in Jesus Christ was saved and was a saint. Not only are all saints saved, but all the saved are saints. Every believer has the right to call himself a saint. None of us is worthy of the title, but God has declared us to be saints because of our trust in His Son. Our practice, our behavior in our humanness, needs to be conformed to our "saintly" new divine nature.

Paul seems to have been especially determined to make that truth clear to the Corinthians. Virtually the entire letter of 1 Corinthians, beginning with 1:10, deals with wrong doctrine and wrong behavior. It seems that nearly every serious doctrinal and moral error imaginable could be found within that congregation. Yet Paul begins the letter by calling them saints. In practice they were gross sinners, but in position they were pure saints. We should note that there were, no doubt, some in the church who were not saints at all, who were unbelievers (16:22).

It is important for every Christian to keep in mind the great difference between his position and his practice, his standing and his state. God sees us as righteous, because He sees us through His righteous Son, who has taken our place, and because He has planted in us a righteous new nature. Without keeping this important and encouraging truth in mind, it is impossible to clearly understand 1 Corinthians or any other part of the New Testament.

Presidents do not always act presidentially, diplomats do not always act diplomatically, kings do not always act kingly—but they are still presidents, diplomats, and kings. Christians do not always act like Christians, but they are still Christians.

Some years ago a young boy, whose father was a pastor, was put in jail for stealing some merchandise from a department store. His father happened to be playing golf with some of the church leaders at the time and received a call while on the golf course to come down to the jail to get his son. Thinking it was a mistake, the pastor took the other men with him to the police station, where embarrassment abounded. The deepest impression of the incident left on the boy's mind was made by the repeated reminders he received from those men, and from many others afterward, about who his father was. "Having a father like yours," they would ask, "how could you have done what you did?" Yet as humiliating and painful as the experience was, the boy knew he was still his father's son. He had not acted like a son of his father should have acted, but he was still a son.

As Christians one of the strongest rebukes we can have when we sin is to be reminded of who our Father is. And reminding ourselves of whose we are should be one of our strongest deterrents to sin. Remembering our position can compel us to improve our practice.

Further, Paul increased the Corinthians' sense of responsibility by reminding them that they were linked in spiritual life to **all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours**. This is added to heighten their sense of identity and responsibility with all "who have received a faith of the same kind as ours" (2 Pet. 1:1).

Before Paul took the Corinthians to task for their failures as Christians, he carefully and lovingly reminded them that they *were* Christians. They belonged to God and to each other in a far-reaching fellowship. That in itself should have been a rebuke to them and no doubt pierced the consciences of those who were at all spiritually sensitive. In 1:2–9 he summarizes their position and their blessings as believers in Jesus Christ, as children of God, as saints. "Look at what you are! Look at what you have!" Only then does he say, "Now I exhort you, brethren" (1:10).

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (1:3)

Paul used a common form of Christian greeting (cf. Rom. 1:7; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 John 3; Rev. 1:4; etc.). **Grace** is favor, and **peace** is one of its fruits. Peace (Greek *eirēnē*) was used as the equivalent of the Hebrew *shālôm*, still the most common Jewish greeting today. The peace of which Paul speaks here is "the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension" (Phil. 4:7). It is the peace that only Christians can have, for only Christ can give it (John 14:27). The world does not have and cannot give that kind of peace. The greeting "grace and peace" is appropriate only for believer to believer, because it speaks of blessings that only they possess.