

SAINTS IN CHRIST

Colossians 1:2

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

II. TEXT

- a. **Colossians 1:1-2** “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God’s will, and Timothy our brother: 2 To the saints in Christ at Colossae, who are faithful brothers and sisters.”
- b. Colossians is a letter (epistle). The first two verses make up what is called the salutation, or the greeting. Typical greetings in that day began by identifying the sender, and then the recipient.
- c. Last week we studied the sender – “Paul.”
- d. Today we will study the recipients – “the saints in Christ at Colossae.”

III. WHO ARE THE SAINTS IN COLOSSAE?

- a. In the Roman Catholic Church, the saints are the spiritual nobility; the best of the best. To put it in sports terms, saints are not just Christian All-Stars, but the Christian hall of fame. Only a select few make the cut:
 - i. You must be dead for at least five years.
 - ii. The bishop of the diocese where you died can open an investigation on your life. If he thinks you might qualify for sainthood, then he sends your case to the department that makes sainthood recommendations to the Pope – the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.
 - iii. If the Congregation accepts the case for investigation, then you are given the title “servant of God.”
 - iv. The Congregation for the causes of Saints then closely investigates your holiness, good works, and signs that your life motivated others to prayer, and if they approve, then they send your case to the Pope.
 - v. If the Pope determines that you have lived a life of “heroic virtue,” then you are given the title “venerable.”

- vi. If there is evidence that people have prayed to you after your death and been healed, then that proves that you are already in heaven (out of purgatory), interceding with God on behalf of others. You are given the title “blessed.”
 - vii. If evidence is found of a second miracle after people prayed to you since you became blessed, then you will be canonized, given the title “saint.”
 - viii. In short, a saint is a Christian who lived an uncommonly virtuous life, has been dead for at least five years, is in heaven interceding on behalf of others, has been canonized by the Roman Catholic Church, and can be invoked for special power in prayer.
 - ix. As Protestants we don’t believe these ideas of sainthood because they are not based on the Bible.
 - x. However, many Protestants still have the wrong idea about sainthood. This is apparent from our conversation:
 - 1. “Jessica is a saint.”
 - 2. “I’m not a saint, but I try really hard to be a good Christian.”
 - xi. Both of the above statements display an ignorance of the Biblical idea of sainthood.
- b. Who are the “saints” to whom this letter was sent?
- i. It is more than one person – “saints.” At least four – “brothers and sisters.”
 - ii. It is men and women – “who are faithful brothers and sisters.”
 - iii. They are Christians. They are referred to as “brothers and sisters,” which is a reference to their spiritual family to which all believers belong.
 - iv. They are alive – Paul is writing them to them. Sainthood in the Roman Catholic Church is reserved for those who have been dead at least five years.
 - v. They are prayed for, not to.
 - 1. **Colossians 1:3** “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.”
 - 2. In the Roman Catholic Church, saints are prayed to, because it is believed that they can hear your prayers and pray to

God on your behalf, and since they are noble, God is more prone to hear their prayers.

vi. They are the church at Colossae.

1. **Colossians 4:16** “After this letter has been read at your gathering, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.”
2. This letter was to be read to the entire church in Laodicea, and the letter to Laodicea was to be read to the saints in Colossae.
3. Thus, the letter addressed to the saints applied to the entire church; and the letter written to the entire church applied to the saints.
4. Saints = the church.

vii. They are all believers.

1. **Romans 1:7** “To all who are in Rome, loved by God, called as saints.”
 2. **1 Corinthians 1:2** “To the church of God at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called as saints....”
- c. In short, all Christians are saints. If you are a Christian, then you are a saint. If you are a saint, then you are a Christian.
- d. “Saint” is the most common name for Christians in the New Testament.

IV. WHAT IS A SAINT?

- a. The word “saint” means “holy one.” Saints are God’s holy ones. That is actually how some Bible versions translate this word (i.e. NIV).
- b. The Greek term for “saint” is *hagios*, the same Greek word for holy, holiness, and sanctification.
- c. *Hagios* means set apart for a special purpose.
- d. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for “holy” is *qadosh*. It referred not only to God and his people, but to places and things.
 - i. The temple was called holy. It was set apart from all other buildings for a special purpose.
 - ii. The high priest wore a turban with the word *qadosh* inscribed on it, meaning “holiness to the Lord.” The high priest was set apart from all other people for a very special purpose.

- iii. The Sabbath was called holy because it was set apart from all other days for a special purpose – worship and rest.
 - iv. Christians are holy (saints) because they are set apart for a special purpose.
- e. **William Barclay** writes, "The temple is *hagios* because it different from other buildings; the Sabbath is *hagios* because it is different from other days; the Christian is *hagios* because he is different from other men."
(Daily Study Bible)
- f. **How are Christians set apart? Two ways:**
 - i. **In their position: They are set apart for God.**
 - 1. When you trust in Christ as Lord and Savior, God sets you apart for Himself. You no longer belong to yourself, or to Satan, or to the world. You belong to God.
 - 2. This is what Paul means by “saints in Christ.” You are automatically and immediately a saint because of your position in Christ; because of your connection to Christ; because of your relationship to Christ.
 - 3. In Christ you are set apart as...
 - a. God’s child. Jn 1:12
 - b. God’s witness. Acts 1:8
 - c. God’s temple. 1 Cor 6:19-20
 - d. God’s property. 1 Cor 6:19-20
 - e. God’s servant. 1 Cor 15:58
 - f. God’s representative. Col 3:23
 - g. The body of Christ. 1 Cor 12:27
 - ii. **In their practice: They are set apart from sin.**
 - 1. As one of God’s saints, you commanded to be holy in all your conduct.
 - 2. This is what the Bible means when it says that you are “called as saints.” Rm 1:7
 - 3. In this sense, holiness means morally blameless; perfect conformity to the holy character of God.
 - 4. **1 Peter 1:15** “But as the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct”

- g. Christians are holy in their position and their practice. In their connection (to God), and in their calling (to imitate and obey God). In their relationship (to holy God), and in their responsibility (to be holy).
- h. You are a saint by the work of God, and by your own work.
 - i. God has set you apart for Himself when you were born again by faith, and He is continuing to set you apart from sin through the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification.
 - ii. You must set apart yourself from sin and for God.

V. HOW TO GROW MORE SAINTLY

- a. **Understand the mandate of holiness.** (What does it mean to pursue holiness?)
 - i. Holiness is the imitation of the moral character of God.
 - 1. **1 Peter 1:15** "But as the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct"
 - 2. We must not measure our holiness by comparing ourselves to others, but to God.
 - ii. Holiness must characterize all your conduct.
 - 1. **1 Peter 1:15** "... be holy in all your conduct."
 - 2. We must not compartmentalize our pursuit of holiness.
 - 3. If you picture your life as a pie, with each slice representing a different arena of your life (marriage; family; finances; leisure; sexuality; words; thoughts; attitude, etc.); holiness must not only characterize one or two slices of your life; it must be the filling and flavor of every arena of your life.
 - 4. We must be saintly in our:
 - a. Words (only words that glorify God and edify others).
 - b. Attitude (thankfulness; joyfulness; humility; forgiveness; compassion; patience, etc.).
 - c. Finances (avoid stealing; bring the tithe; share with the needy).
 - d. Health and fitness (take care of your body, the temple of the Holy Spirit; eat healthy; avoid toxic substances).
 - e. Sobriety (avoid drunkenness and recreational drugs).

- f. Relationships (only date strong Christians; closest friends must only be strong Christians).
 - g. Sexuality (all sexuality should be reserved for marriage between one man and one woman; avoid pre-marital sex; adultery; pornography; the hookup and shack-up culture). 1 Thess 4:3-7
 - h. Thoughts (only meditate on holy things). Ps 19:14
 - i. Ears (only listen to holy things). Pr 17:4
 - j. Eyes (only look at holy things). Ps 101:3
 - k. Time (don't waste your time, but make the most of it for God's glory). Eph 5:15-17
- iii. Holiness means the elimination of every impurity. Every sin, no matter how small, must be destroyed.
 - 1. **2 Corinthians 7:1** "So then, dear friends, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God."
 - 2. We cannot treat some sins as little, and some as big; some as insignificant, and some as significant. All sin is impurity, and we must cleanse ourselves from every impurity.
 - 3. **1 Thessalonians 5:22** "Stay away from every kind of evil."

b. Understand the motive for holiness:

- i. For fellowship with God. **Psalms 15:1-2** "1 Lord, who can dwell in your tent? Who can live on your holy mountain? 2 The one who lives blamelessly, practices righteousness, and acknowledges the truth in his heart."
- ii. For answered prayer. **Psalms 66:18** "If I had been aware of malice in my heart, the Lord would not have listened."
- iii. To be happy. **Psalms 19:8** "The precepts of the LORD are right, making the heart glad; the command of the LORD is radiant, making the eyes light up."
 - 1. **Thomas Watson** "Happiness is nothing else but the quintessence of holiness; holiness is glory militant, and happiness holiness triumphant."

2. **Charles Spurgeon** "You can be certain that he who prays for holiness will one day praise God for happiness."
- iv. In view of the mercies of God.
 1. **Romans 12:1** "Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.
 2. We pursue holiness in gratitude for salvation, not to obtain salvation.
 - v. It is true worship.
 1. **Romans 12:1** "Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.
 2. Our worship in prayer and singing and giving is only true worship if it is matched by a holy life.
 - vi. Since we have these promises.
 1. **2 Corinthians 7:1** "So then, dear friends, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God."
 2. What promises? **2 Corinthians 6:16-18** "For we are the temple of the living God, as God said: I will dwell and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. 17 Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord; do not touch any unclean thing, and I will welcome you. 18 And I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."
 - a. 6 Promises to Motivate Holiness
 - i. We are the temple of God (we exist for worship). 2 Cor 6:16
 - ii. God dwells in us. 2 Cor 6:16
 - iii. God walks with us (we are to be friends with God). 2 Cor 6:16

- iv. We belong to God. 2 Cor 6:16
- v. God has welcomed us (He loved us in spite of our sin). 2 Cor 6:17
- vi. God is our Father. 2 Cor 6:18
- vii. In the fear of God.
 - 1. **2 Corinthians 7:1** “So then, dear friends, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.”
 - 2. What is it to fear God?
 - a. You dare not sin for fear of God’s discipline.
 - b. You dare not sin for fear of grieving God.
 - c. You dare not sin for fear of interfering with God.
 - d. You dare not sin for fear of proving yourself to be lost.
- viii. It is the reason God saved you.
 - 1. **Ephesians 1:4** “For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him.”
- ix. It is the reason Christ died for you.
 - 1. **Colossians 1:22** “But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him”
- x. To be useful to the Master.
 - 1. **2 Timothy 2:21** says, “So if anyone purifies himself from anything dishonorable, he will be a special instrument, set apart, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.”
 - 2. God must do a work in you before He can do a work through you.
- xi. Without it no one will see the Lord (eternal life).
 - 1. **Hebrews 12:14** “Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness—without it no one will see the Lord.”
 - 2. Holiness does not save; it is the evidence that you have been saved.

3. The proof that you have been saved from the punishment for sin is that you are being saved from the practice of sin.
- xii. It is commanded.

1. **1 Peter 1:16** “for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy.”

c. Understand the method for holiness.

- i. Discover God’s standard of holiness through the study of His word.
 1. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** “16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”
 2. God’s word is profitable for:
 - a. “teaching” – it shows us the path of holiness
 - b. “rebuking” – it shows us when we have gotten off the path
 - c. “correcting” – it shows us how to get back on the path
 - d. “training” – it shows us how to stay on the path
- ii. Confess your sins to God.
 1. **1 John 1:9** “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
 - a. Two benefits of confession:
 - i. Forgiveness – reconciliation with God. This means nearness to God; access to God’s resources and blessings; effective prayer.
 - ii. Cleansing – transformation of character. God gives you the will and the power to grow in holiness.
 2. 4 Parts of Confession:
 - a. Admit your sin (agree with God).
 - b. Apologize.
 - c. Affirm your commitment to obedience (repent; resolve to change).
 - d. Ask for forgiveness in Christ’s name.

- i. Forgiveness is only available to those who trust in Christ (Eph 1:7).
- iii. Pray for strength to be holy.
 - 1. Once you have confessed your sins, God will answer your prayer for help in the pursuit of holiness.
 - 2. **1 Thessalonians 3:13** “May he make your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. Amen.”
 - 3. **Charles Spurgeon** “The more a person values holiness and the more earnestly he strives after it, the more he will be driven towards God for help in this, for he will plainly perceive that his own strength is insufficient, and he will realize that he cannot even so much as live without the generous assistance of the Lord his God.”
- iv. Make every effort to be found without spot or blemish in the sight of God.
 - 1. **2 Peter 3:14** “Therefore, dear friends, while you wait for these things, make every effort to be found without spot or blemish in his sight, at peace.”
 - 2. **Charles Spurgeon** “People do not become holy by wishful thinking. There must be study, consideration, deliberation, and sincere inquiry, or the way of truth will be missed. The commands of God must be set before us like the target to aim at, the model to work by, and the road to walk in. If we put God’s judgments into the background, we will soon find ourselves going back from them.”
- v. Repeat.

VI. CONCLUSION

- a. The epistle of Colossians was written to the “saints in Christ.”
 - i. Who were the saints? All the believers in Colossae.
 - ii. If you are a Christian, then you are a saint. If you are not a saint, then you are not a Christian.
 - iii. Saints are not a spiritual nobility, or Christian upper-class; all Christians are saints.

- iv. God has set us apart for Himself.
 - v. Now we must align our practice with our position.
- b. How do you need to become more saintly? How do you need to grow in holiness?
 - i. Consider two types of sins?
 - 1. Sins of commission: Are you doing anything that God has forbidden?
 - 2. Sins of omission: Are you neglecting anything that God has commanded?
- c. **Expositor's Bible**, "We are Christians as far as we give ourselves up to God, in the surrender of our wills and the practical obedience of our lives—so far and not one inch further. We are not merely bound to this consecration if we are Christians, but we are not Christians unless we thus consecrate ourselves."
- d. I urge you to repent of all sin and turn to God in holiness today. For if you refuse to do this, then I fear you are a Christian in name only, and your eternal well-being is in grave danger.