



"Holiness is characteristic of every Christian. If we are not holy, our profession of Christ is valueless."

—Martyn Lloyd-Jones

12-Jun-15

Called To Be Saints (Part One)

One of the greatest blessings we have been given as [Christians](#) is our calling by [God](#). At this time, this divine summons is not directed to mankind at large but only to those to whom God has determined to reveal Himself. When God calls us, He performs a miracle in our minds that results in our becoming more aware of spiritual truth, of our sinfulness, and of God and His claim on our lives.

In [John 6:44](#), though [Jesus Christ](#) does not specifically use the words "calling" or "call," He describes God's work to bring us to Him—and the exclusivity involved: "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day." A few verses later, He reiterates that the Father determines who is allowed to enter into a relationship with the Messiah: "And He said, 'Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father'" ([John 6:65](#)).

This calling by God is so rare and valuable that Paul beseeches the Christians at Ephesus to "walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" ([Ephesians 4:1](#)). In other words, this heavenly calling sets the bar quite high

with regard to the conduct of our lives—our Christian "walk." Similarly, the apostle Paul tells the Thessalonians that he and his companions "[pray always](#) for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling" ([II Thessalonians 1:11](#)). Clearly, this call by God is not only to be treasured but also properly responded to.

To what, though, are we called? What does this call entail? How do we "walk worthy" of this divine summons?

In [I Corinthians 1:1-2](#), Paul gives us insight into both his calling and ours:

Paul, *called to be an apostle* of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, *called to be saints*, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: (emphasis ours throughout)

Paul received a specific calling as an apostle, and those who are sanctified in Christ likewise received a calling as saints. Paul was called, and his calling was an apostle's calling. It is not that he would become an apostle in the future; he already *was* an apostle. In the *New King James Bible*, the words "to be" are in italics to identify the fact that they are not in the original—it literally says, "Paul, called an apostle" and "to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints."

The sanctified brethren in Corinth had a saint's calling. They were *already* saints. That is our calling as well—we are called saints, right now. Paul opens his letter to the Romans in the same way, writing that he was called as an apostle, and those who were beloved of God were called as saints:

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, *called to be an apostle*, separated to [the gospel](#) of God. . . . To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, *called to be saints*: Grace to you and [peace](#) from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ([Romans 1:1](#), 7)

To really understand our calling, however, we have to understand what it means to be a saint. The word *saint* simply means "a holy one." It is translated from the Greek word *hagios*, a word that is most often translated

as "holy." *The New International Version* employs that meaning, rendering "called to be saints" in [I Corinthians 1:2](#) as "called to be holy." [II Timothy 1:9](#) also shows that God "called us with a *holy* calling." Therefore, our calling is to be a person who is holy—simply meaning one who is separate and set apart, or one who is different.

The common concept of a saint is someone who is super-righteous or perhaps a person who gives all his worldly possessions to the poor. In Catholicism, an individual has to die and go through a posthumous approval process before he or she can become a saint. Once that happens, the saint is worshipped, and even receives a special day to be honored each year. Yet, this is not how the Bible uses the term "saint" or "holy one." Scripture utilizes this word primarily in the sense of *one who has been set apart*, regardless of his moral quality at the time of his separation.

These Corinthians, then, could be called "saints" even while they were exhibiting a great deal of carnality. After He called them, God *declared* them to be holy, and they had responded, but they had not yet fully conformed their lives to His superior standard. He considered them to be saints—to be holy—because of their *position* before Him, rather than because of any kind of personal [goodness](#) or character. As we will see, though, saints are expected to grow beyond merely being declared to be holy.

If saints are set apart individuals, called to be separate and different, it begs the question of exactly what they are to be separate from. We can find the answer in [Ephesians 2:1-2](#), where we are explicitly told what God has separated us from:

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of [this world](#), according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.

Paul mentions three things God has separated us from: our trespasses and sins, the course of this world, and [Satan](#) the Devil.

But our calling does not end there. Yes, God set us apart, but He then requires that we *remain* apart from those things. If we have been redeemed

from Satan, we have to remain separate from him and not open the door to his influence or fall back under his sway. We have to remain free from the defilement of [sin](#) and continue to walk according to the course of God rather than the course of this world.

In Part Two, we will see how imperative it is that our calling becomes our vocation, because we need to learn and grow a great deal to prepare for our responsibilities in God's Kingdom.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[God's Calling and Election](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Greed seems to be the primary driving force for lotteries, getting a big prize for a relatively cheap 'chance.' When people do win the lottery, their lives are often drastically changed for the worse. We have been given something far more valuable than the lottery, namely our calling. We are obligated not to squander this valuable opportunity. God the Father alone has called us; it is impossible to become a Christian by one's own choice or actions. God generally calls ordinary people without exceptional gifts in order that no human glories in his or her accomplishments. We did nothing to deserve the calling; it was completely due to God's grace. The terms "call," "called," or "calling" have two uses: (1) a general summons to draw near and hear God's truth (available to multiple millions of people), and (2) a narrowed-down choice by the Father, available to a few (the Elect or Chosen). The calling of God is essentially the same as salvation. "The called" refers to those who are in the process of being saved, the "apple of God's eye." God was able to know beforehand whom He would choose. God's calling indicates a process, involving incremental steps-justification, sanctification (requiring overcoming carnal human nature and producing spiritual fruit), and ultimate glorification.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Our Calling - The Work of God](#)

by Staff

Herbert Armstrong wrote that his work was finished, but the work of the church continues. What is our work today? What is God's Work? This article discusses where the church's energies need to be focused now.

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