



"May your character be not a writing upon the sand, but an inscription upon the rock."
—Charles H. Spurgeon

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Called To Be Saints (Part Two)

At the beginning of our spiritual lives, [God](#) declares us holy or saints, as we saw in Part One, then we have to continue in that [holiness](#) and make it complete. Paul tells the Corinthians in [II Corinthians 7:1](#), "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us *cleanse ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness* in the fear of God" (emphasis ours throughout).

We have to take the initial holiness that God bestows on us and *perfect it*—that is, follow it to its conclusion. He desires us to become holy ones—separate ones—in truth, and not merely in name. This is what our calling is about.

In modern parlance, the term "calling" has a synonym that takes this principle even further: "vocation." It means "purpose in life," not in the sense of something that is accomplished at the end of a life, but rather what a person devotes his life to on an ongoing basis. Our calling by God to perfect holiness is our true vocation. We may have a full-time job to pay the bills and even derive a sense of satisfaction from it, but our real job is fulfilling our calling. Everything else is a side project. Of course, it is necessary and good that we work, and God often molds and shapes us into His character image through our occupations. But our calling to be a holy one—to be a saint—is our real vocation. It is the job that truly matters.

So, as we go through our days, we must continually evaluate everything through the lens of being set apart. [Jesus Christ](#) says we are to be in [the world](#), but not of it ([John 17:11-16](#)). We are to be in the world yet separate from the things of [Satan](#), removed from the defilement of [sin](#), and detached from and against the things that are in opposition to God (see [Ephesians 2:1-2](#)).

As the epistles show, these three enemies are written about in military terms because we truly are in a war—not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual principalities ([Ephesians 6:12](#)), with their unseen influences and poisonous ideas. As one news commentator says, "There is a war on for your mind." But if we shy away from even naming the spiritual foes and dangers in our lives, we will be unable to fight them. If we are unwilling to tear down the outposts of the world in our lives, the battle may all be over but the shouting.

Our separation from the world fits into our annual observance of the Feast of Tabernacles. Among other things, the Feast looks forward to the Millennial rule of Jesus Christ on earth, when this world and its rulers have been overthrown and replaced with the [Kingdom of God](#). At that time, the saints will form part of God's government. We will be a kingdom of priests to our God, and we will [reign on the earth](#) ([Revelation 5:10](#); cf. [1 Peter 2:9](#)).

In addition, the foes and dangers that mankind will face in that time will be different than they are now. Satan will be bound for a thousand years ([Revelation 20:1-3](#)) and unable to influence, but sin will remain and individuals will have to overcome it.

But what about the third spiritual foe, the world? The old world—this world—will have been destroyed, and we will have a hand in creating a new world, a new culture and way of living that is not in opposition to God. However, God will give that opportunity only to those who have perfected holiness, because He will not allow His world to resemble the old one. He will not permit this present world to influence the new, so He will deny such a position of authority to someone who is still wrapped up in this present, evil world ([Galatians 1:4](#)).

This world is so attractive at times, but it does not work in the long run. It only causes pain and estrangement from God. We have been called, set apart, and made to be separate so we can instill the values that have their source in God and reject those that have their source in Satan.

We have been given the opportunity to be leaders of that new world. But if we "love . . . the world" ([1 John 2:15-17](#)) and become caught up in its culture, politics, entertainment, philosophies, or attitudes, we may not be a good fit for that future job! We would be fit only for the old world. This is why our present vocation—our calling to be holy—is so foundational. This world is passing away ([1 John 2:17](#); [1 Corinthians 7:31](#)), and when it does, the time will come to teach others how to live. We will be equipped to do that only if we are already separate from the things that defile and not following the path of this world.

Notice Peter's admonition to follow God in holiness:

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your [hope](#) fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, *you also be holy in all your conduct*, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." ([1 Peter 1:13-16](#))

This passage begins with "therefore," meaning it follows from what was written before it. In previous verses, Peter brings to mind many hopeful and encouraging things, such as our eternal inheritance, God's watchfulness over us, His grace, and our ultimate salvation. The apostle then admonishes us to have our minds prepared for action and to be circumspect and morally alert. He advises us to be sober, as opposed to spiritually drunk, which is what happens when we imbibe of the world ([Ephesians 5:18](#); [Revelation 17:2](#); [18:3](#)). Our hope and trust are to be in the grace that we will receive when Christ is revealed. Our hope cannot be in the plans or solutions of mankind—or in anything else that springs from his mind.

In verse 14, he exhorts us to live as children obedient to God, rather than conform to the former lusts—those things that are a part of this world's way. In concluding, Peter shows us our obligation, which is centered on being holy (verse 15). His instruction focuses on our being separate, not merely

as a designation, but as an entire way of life. God is holy, and because a holy God has called us, our obligation is to also be holy. Our duty is to be set apart in all our conduct, standing apart from the world that is passing away.

[Colossians 1:12-13](#) tells us, by implication, where our loyalty should lie: "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." God has already begun the process by separating the saints from the power of darkness and conveying them into Christ's Kingdom—the same one that He will establish over this world's kingdoms at His return. Since it is a nation of holy ones, one could say it is a kingdom of saints.

That Kingdom has far more to offer us than this present world because, just for starters, its source and Sovereign is the very Creator of the universe. As saints, then, our calling—our vocation—is to represent that Kingdom. Our calling as saints is to be separate from anything that defiles and to perfect the holiness that our King has given us.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Christian and the World \(Part 1\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Scripture uses the term "world" in numerous ways. Overall it is a negative connotation, describing the cultures of this world since Adam and Eve, directly under the influence of the prince and power of the air (Ephesians 2:2, 6:12). The entire world and its cultures are in disobedience to God because of Satan's influence. The world is in deadly antagonism against God, against the way of God, and the people of God because the spirit generated by the unseen prince of this world. It is essential that we stay awake and keep our guard up.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[This Is Not God's World](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The Amish and Mennonite peoples have built a way of life around coming out of this world. Although we commend their zeal, the proper emphasis consists of avoiding the religious, psychological and philosophical systems of this world. God promises to destroy them when Christ returns.

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