

The Sound of *Many Waters*

Many Waters is a weekly article written by Ron Cipic, lead pastor of Grand River Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. To comment or ask a question about this piece, write to Pastor Ron at pastors@grandriverchurch.org. Related Scripture verses for further study are cited at the end of this piece.

The Saints

"...to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called **saints**..." (Ro. 1:7)

"...to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, **saints** by calling..." (1 Co. 1:2)

"To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the **saints** who are throughout Achaia..." (2 Co. 1:1)

"To the **saints** who are at Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus..." (Eph. 1:2)

"To all the **saints** in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi..." (Phil. 1:1)

"To the **saints** and faithful brethren in Christ at Colossae..." (Col. 1:2)

The Apostle Paul addressed most of his general letters to "the saints." The Greek word for saint is *hagios* which means sacred, morally blameless, or religious. It also means consecrated or set apart. The word *hagios* comes from the word *hagnos* which means clean, innocent, modest, perfect. (Strong's Concordance) Paul considered (reckoned) Christians to be saints not sinners. He commanded the saints to "consider themselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Paul wasn't asking the church to pretend it was something it was not. He was simply reminding the church of its new creation identity in Christ. Paul challenged the church to believe in Christ's power to save. To save from what, you say? To save from

sin. Christ came to "take away" the sin of the world. To take something away is to remove it, to even destroy it. Paul wrote: "Our old self (man) was crucified with Christ in order that our body of sin might be done away with (destroyed), so that we would no longer be slaves of sin."

Paul could boldly address Christians as saints, because he was not placing his confidence in man's ability to be good, but in Christ's ability to save. You say, "But what about the poor Corinthians? Aren't they proof that Christians sin?" Yes they are. But who needs biblical proof of that? Paul rebuked the Corinthians and warned them that if they continued in sin, they would not inherit the kingdom of God. Then he went on to remind them of what God had already done for them: "But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

Paul was not an enabler of sinners. He was a promoter of sainthood. For God's grace is not a license to go on sinning but to be set free from sin. What a revolutionary and liberating thought, so revolutionary and liberating that many Christians today can't believe it. When a modern-day Corinthian or Galatian first hears that sin-free living is our inheritance in Christ, he will often think: "I can't possibly do that." In a sense, no truer statement was ever thought or spoken: "I" can't save myself. "I" can't live sin-free.

But Christ can. He's already proven that He can live the life of a saint. And if He lives in the believer, then the believer can be a saint too. This is holiness by inhabitation. It is a mystery. It is our hope of glory. *RC*

Study Verses: Ro. 6:11; Mt. 1:21; Ro. 6:6; 1 Co. 6:9-11; and Col. 1:21-29

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