

Sainthood: Inside & Out

CORY WADDELL HIGHLAND HEIGHTS
CHURCH OF CHRIST
LEBANON, TN 37087

Cory Waddell
MICROSOFT | [COMPANY ADDRESS]

Sainthood: Inside and Out

I. Introduction

Go ahead, if you would, and be opening your Bibles to the book of Ephesians.

A. Fill in the blanks...

- 1) The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow gave the luster of midday to objects below. When what to my wondering eyes should appear, but a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer, with a little ole driver so lively and quick, I knew in a moment it must be _____.
- 2) Up on the housetop, CLICK – CLICK – CLICK, down through the chimney with good _____.
- 3) Jolly old _____ lean your ear this way. Don't you tell a single soul what I'm going to say.

B. In just a few days the little old man will be soaring around the world, fulfilling the dreams and wishes of boys and girls everywhere

- 1) And having a 3-year-old running around, St. Nick (a.k.a. Santa Claus) has been a constant topic of conversation for about a month.
- 2) So maybe it's not entirely surprising that I've been pondering a little bit about saints.

C. Saints

- 1) For those who take it seriously it's a pretty heavy word in today's religious culture.
- 2) Quoting from the Encyclopedia Britannica:

"In Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, saints are publicly recognized by the church and are considered intercessors with God for the living. They are honored on special feast days, and their remains and personal effects are venerated as relics. Often Christian saints perform miracles in their lifetime, or miracles occur in their names after their death."

- 3) Such influence has resulted in the word "saint" being used as more of a title reserved for persons of "exceptional" holiness."
 - a) People who have lived such lives that we must hold way up high on a pedestal as though we could never emulate them.
- 4) But when you look at the scriptures we see a rather different picture painted.

D. "Saint in the Bible"

- 1) The word translated as "saints" means "holy ones."

- 2) It appears 58 times in the New Testament.
 - a) And out of all of these references, it never refers to a single person of exceptional holiness.
 - b) It ALWAYS refers to the complete sum of God's people.
- E. What that means is that, contrary to the contemporary understanding, sainthood is NOT reserved solely as a title for persons of exceptional holiness.
 - 1) You and I, as common everyday folks, can in fact be called saints.
- F. To tell you the truth, I even have suspicions that God never intended for it to be used as a title, but rather as an adjective describing ALL the members of His church.
 - 1) I say that because in Ephesians, where we'll spend most of our time today, Paul spends a lot of his time laying out for us some characteristics that are encompassed in the idea of being a saint.
 - 2) Characteristics that each and every one of us in this room are capable of demonstrating.
- G. So this morning I want us to study and see what it means to be a truly be a saint by the grace of God.

II. Change in Status

- A. One of the worst feelings a person can experience is the feeling that you don't belong.
 - 1) It's even worse when you KNOW that you don't belong.
 - 2) There's something about it that's just depressing.
 - a) And it leaves us with a void that we long to fill.
 - 3) Sometimes we find ourselves in a place or situation that we can change.
 - 4) But other times, no matter how hard we try, reality hits us right between the eyes and we have to admit that we'll never belong as we are.
 - a) And if we want it bad enough, we begin to look for the means to change our status so that we finally can belong.
- B. Perhaps the most despairing condition is to realize that we are spiritually alienated.
 - 1) The Bible describes 2 categories of existence...those in God...and those in sin.
 - a) To be in God results in peace, eternal life, and sainthood.
 - b) To be in sin results in torment and death.
 - 2) Scripture makes it abundantly clear that you cannot exist in both realms. You belong to one or the other.

- a) But the scriptures also make it unavoidably clear that we ALL are sinners, lost because we have given in to our fleshly desires.
- 3) Paul gives further description of our plight in **Ephesians 2:12.**
 - a) We were stranded out there with nothing to hold on to.
 - b) We wanted God, but we didn't belong with Him. We weren't worthy to be at His table or enjoy the riches of His love.
- 4) And if we were EVER going to be more than slaves, our status in God's eyes was going to have to change.
 - a) So we tried a little harder to change who we were.
 - 1) Clean ourselves up a bit.
 - 2) Get a little discipline.
 - b) But try as we may, we just weren't strong enough, creative enough, GOOD enough to earn a spot at the King's table.
- 5) READ Gal. 4:4-6/Eph. 2:13-19/Gal. 4:7
 - a) What we could not do, what we could not fix or change...**GOD DID.**
 - b) Paul would say in Col. 1:12 that God "qualified" to receive the inheritance.
- 6) We are called saints because our status has changed.
 - a) We have gone from being in sin to being in God.
- 7) But it's not because of our exceptional goodness.
- 8) The status changes due to HIS exceptional love.

III. Change in Knowledge

- A. Have you ever known someone, a co-worker or perhaps even a family member, who just flat out didn't understand "this whole God thing"?
 - 1) It makes no sense that we would take a perfectly good off-day to wake up early and be here.
 - 2) Or why we walk through life with fewer worries & cares than the average person.
- B. Why do we live this way? Why DO we buy into "the whole God thing?"
 - 1) Because we know something now that we didn't know before.
 - 2) We have had a change in our knowledge.
- C. You know, it's amazing how much of a difference **one** piece of information can make in your life.
 - 1) In Ephesians, Paul actually gives us 2.

- a) The Mystery
 - 1) He speaks of it several times in this letter, but in **3:4-6** he says...**(READ)**
 - 2) One thing we now know is that God is offering salvation from our sins, regardless of who you are or where you come from.
 - b) His Love
 - 1) **Eph. 3:16a, 18-19**
 - 2) We actually comprehend it, not just possess some knowledge of it.
- D. Such comprehension makes a difference because I'm experiencing it.
- 1) Have you ever heard someone say, "I was a great parent before I had kids"?
 - a) You can never really understand something until you go through it.
 - 2) In Ephesians 3:19, Paul says that the love of Christ "surpasses" the world's knowledge.
 - a) In Romans 8:5-8 he'll further explain that Christ's love surpasses worldly knowledge because a mind that is not set on spiritual things CANNOT understand what we know.
 - 3) And I have to say that this fact saddens me.
 - a) There are so many friends whose status is still with sin, and they have such a difficult time going through life because they can't comprehend God's love for them.
 - b) And gathering here week after week with such a wonderful group of saints is one way that we come to comprehend God's mystery and love.
 - 4) We experience on a regular basis what the world cannot experience.
 - a) Not because God doesn't want them to experience it,
 - b) But because we know something they don't know.
- E. And we who are in Christ are ALL saints in part because we have had a change in our knowledge.

IV. Change in Our Character

- A. We've alluded to the fact that the most visible characteristic of a saint is his/her good character.
- B. Paul echoes strongly in Ephesians that the character of saints is one that is marked by 2 qualities.
 - 1) They are moral
 - 2) They are hard workers

C. Concerning morality, he emphasizes in **5:1-5**

- 1) Filthiness – Obscenity
- 2) Silly Talk – literally “dumb words”
- 3) Coarse Jestings – crude joking
- 4) In 4:17-32 he'll run a lengthy description of morality
 - a) laying aside the old self
 - b) don't steal
 - c) use wholesome and encouraging language
 - d) getting rid of bitterness, anger, malice, and the like
- 5) And the truth is, any person can refrain from certain immoralities at times.
 - a) We call it, “taking the high road” or “being the bigger man.”
- 6) But the key in the lives of saints is in verse 1...BE IMITATORS
 - a) MIMETES (mimic) – It is almost always used in a continuous sense.
 - b) Meaning that saints continually mimic God. We are trying to be like Him.
 - c) We're not just taking the high road from time to time, but all the time.
- 7) And the truth is, when we're continuously striving to imitate our Father, we don't have enough time to waste on immorality.
 - a) Thus we find that morality result in us being hard workers.

D. Hard Workers

- 1) Have you ever noticed how much time/energy it takes to live an immoral life?

***Maybe I'm overstating a bit. But in general...**

- a) Coarse jesting shifts our focus away from the task at hand.
 - b) Dishonesty/Stealing lead to laziness and apathy toward other people.
 - c) Immoral Indulgences lead to addictions.
- 2) But to live a moral lifestyle produces good workers.
 - a) To be an encourager, you must engage people AND the job itself.
 - b) Refraining from sinful indulgences produces Moms & Dads who are active in their children's lives, thus producing stronger families.
 - c) Paul adds in Ephesians **4:11-13**...
 - 1) As hard workers we are preparing one another for God's service, and we are building the unity that He desires among His church here at Woodland Oaks.

E. And all of this takes place because as saints we have a change in our character.

V. Conclusion

A. But remember sainthood, as we have previously stated, is not a title reserved for those of exceptional holiness.

1) Rather it is an adjective describing ALL who are made such by God's grace.

B. And lest we become too proud of our abilities and works going on here, let us remind ourselves that even our good character/works are products of that grace.

1) Paul says in **Ephesians 2:10**...

2) You've heard the question before..."Why does a bird fly? To prove he's a bird, or because he IS a bird?"

3) We do our good works, because God created us to do them.

C. Ephesians 4:1 says, "Therefore I implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

D. And so as saints we...

1) Change Our Character

a) We do the work which God has created us for.

b) Our character is changed because...

2) We Have a Change in Knowledge

a) We know something the world cannot know...God's love.

b) And we experience that love daily because...

3) We Have a Change in Status

a) Through God's grace we are no longer slaves and aliens, for He has qualified us to be heirs of the inheritance of eternal life in Heaven.

E. So this morning we ask, "Can you be called a saint?"

1) Is your life accurately described in this way?

2) It's not an unattainable goal. You just have to know WHO can make it a reality for you.

a) And it all begins right there in the waters of baptism, where God will wash away your sins, seal you with His Holy Spirit, and add you to the saints in His church.

3) And if you have not been walking in a manner worthy of your calling, God is still here for you to once again trust in Him and Him alone for your salvation.

Won't you come...