

When Does One Become a Saint?

In order to learn when one becomes a saint, we must first determine what or **who** is a saint. The answer to this question will then unmistakably direct us to an understanding as to **when** one becomes a saint.

The apostle Paul wrote an epistle “*unto the church of God...at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be **saints**, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours,*” I Cor. 1:2.

Please note the expressions used by an inspired apostle to designate the ones to whom this epistle was addressed. It was directed to “*the church of God at Corinth.*” He, then, used different expressions by which to describe those who were members of “*the church of God at Corinth.*” They were “*sanctified in Christ Jesus,*” and “*called to be saints.*”

Those who have been “*sanctified in Christ Jesus,*” like the disciples of our Lord during His earthly ministry, are **in** the world, but are not “*of the world,*” John 17:14-17. They have been “*sanctified*” or set apart from the world by the “*truth,*” which is the “*word*” of God, John 17:17, 19. Those at Corinth who had been “*called to be saints*” were the very ones who had been “*sanctified in Christ Jesus,*” I Cor. 1:2. The ones at Corinth, who were classified as “*saints,*” were those whom God had “*called,*” I Cor. 1:2, but in 2 Thess. 2:14 we discover that God calls people through the gospel. Hence, “*saints*” are people who have been “*called*” of God, as a result of having heard, and obeyed the gospel of Christ, and who then strive to live lives of holiness.

Let us examine I Cor. 1:2 a little more closely. Those at Corinth who constituted “*the church of God...at Corinth,*” were the ones who were “*called to be saints,*” and those who had called “*upon the name of Jesus Christ*” and those identified as “*saints*” were one and the same. This passage shows that one can not “*in Christ Jesus*” and not be a member of “*the church of God.*” To be “**in**” one is to be “**in**” the other.

In Acts 18, we read the account of “*the church of God...at Corinth*” being established. Paul went there and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ (God’s calling power, 2 Thess. 2:14)), and “*many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized.*” Acts 18:8. People today are “*sanctified*” and “*called to be saints*” in the same way, because the same gospel is to be preached and obeyed today.

Hence, when does one become a saint? Answer: When he hears the gospel of Christ, believes it, and is baptized “*into Christ Jesus*” (Acts 18:8; I Cor. 1:2; Gal. 3:27). He then becomes a saint, while he is alive and in the flesh. He is not one who performed a couple of miracles and later died. Rather, he is one who has obeyed the gospel of Christ in its original purity and simplicity. He is not one who is prayed to, but he is one who **prays**, being fully mindful that “*the Spirit himself...makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God,*” Rom. 8:26,27.

Kind reader, do you want to become a saint? By all means, do not wait until after

you are dead and hope someone can recall a supposed miracle in your life, and then takes action to have you canonized a “saint.” Obey the gospel, become a member of the Lord’s church, and you will have become a “*saint*” in Christ Jesus. Worded differently, one becomes a **saint** when he becomes a **Christian**!

*** —B. Witherington

Let the Church Be the Church!

According to the New Testament, the Lord’s church was planned by God and built by Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:10-11; Matt. 16:18). It is blood-bought, heaven-sent, and Spirit-filled (Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:8-16; I Cor. 3:16-17). It is a spiritual institution with a spiritual mission (John 18:36; Eph. 4:12). We dare not make it more, or less, than “*the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth,*” I Tim. 3:15.

As a farmer has crops which he should tend, so the church has a divinely appointed work in which it engages if it remains pleasing to the Lord. Our “pattern” for church action is not found in the carnival atmosphere of materialism, the contradictory activities of Denominationalism, the decrees of Catholicism, or even the traditional practices of brethren. We must by-pass all these and go back to the Bible, the word of God, which is “*profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,*” 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

The Scriptures inform us that the church of Christ, as described in the Bible: (1) assembled to worship God, (2) edified the saints by instructing them in the word of God, (3) relieved her own indigent saints for whom she was responsible, and (4) preached the gospel to the world’s lost (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:23-25; Acts 6:1-6; I Thess. 1:8). Dare we do less? Dare we do more?

Wholesome recreation is good and needed, but such is not the function of the church; it is the function of the home. Money is needed for carrying on the Lord’s work, but the Lord didn’t put the church in the money-making business. Indeed, the finances to support the church and her work is to come from the personal laying by in store of her members, upon “*the first day of the week,*” I Cor. 16:1-2. Jesus said “*ye have the poor with you always,*” Mark 14:7, but He did not design His church to be a glorified Salvation Army. Prejudice and racial bitterness should be uprooted, and Christians ought to be the first to “*love thy neighbor,*” Matt. 22:39, but the local church (as a collective unit) is not Scripturally authorized to directly involve itself in the passing of social legislation. The Lord “*gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers,*” Eph. 4:11, but He didn’t equip His church with lobbyists, and political pressure groups. Playing ball, camping, horseback riding, scouting, etc, is fun and wholesome, but such can not Scripturally be designated as “church-sponsored activity.”

In brief, we affirm that the church should simply **be** the church, and steer clear of those activities which were not a part of its mission in the days of the Spirit-guided apostles. In other words, **let the church be the church!** Its nature, mission, and calling is too high and noble to saddle it with any of the devices of men.

Bobby Witherington

Four Things You Can’t Recover

1. The stone ...after the throw.
2. The word...after it's said.
3. The occasion...after it's missed.
4. The time...after it's gone.

—anonymous