

Called to Be Saints

1 Corinthians 1:2 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 the Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

Sunday, January 8, 2023 at the First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- Introduction: Hebrew national hot dogs-dedicated to a higher calling.

I remember trying a hotdog years ago that had the brand name of "Hebrew National" They were "dedicated to a higher calling." They were kosher hotdogs with a higher price, but people who would normally get sick eating regular hotdogs could eat Hebrew National without any ill effects. It was set aside for sacred use, which is the root definition for "saint," someone who is set aside for sacred use. I find that "saint" evokes images of 15th century artwork of saints, usually at the occasion of their martyrdom, subjected to some barbaric form of execution, all looking bored. Culture says that few people are true saints, yet the Bible says that "saint" is the default life of the Christian. We are all called to be saints.

- Set the Stage

To begin, let's not that the letter is sent to the church in Corinth, a city reputed to be the most decadent city in the Roman Empire. There was a temple of Aphrodite staffed with 1,000 professional prostitutes, and of all the churches founded by the Apostle Paul, the one in Corinth gave him the most trouble. Yet he begins the letter calling them "saints". He later scolds them for not acting like saints, but he still calls them "saints" nonetheless. So how does being a "saint" fit into the Christian life?

- Main Point: Being a saint is a work of God with evidence in how we view life, prayer and each other. The word "sanctified" in 1 Corinthians 1:2 is a perfect passive participle. It refers to an event that happened in the past and still holds force in the present and we did not do it. It was done to us. But we can look at ourselves for evidence that the Holy Spirit is growing us into the role, so to speak. It involves the importance of respect, dependence and prayer.
- Application: Someone growing in sainthood takes everyday life seriously, and is acutely aware that we are dependent upon the Lord, in every way and in every day.

importance of respect and dependence.

Respect for God, respect for everyday life.

The Apostle Peter wrote these words about respecting our lives and the time we have on earth.

1 Peter 1:13-19 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." (Leviticus 19:2) And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct receive by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Conducting our time with fear involves a sense of the holiness of God and that our lives, every day of them, are serious business.

The importance of knowing our dependence

At the same time there is a recognition that for all our seriousness, we can do nothing without the Holy Spirit. We have an utter dependence upon the Lord and a strong sense of that is a sign that a person has grown in their roles as a saint.

A writer, Stuart Strachan Jr. had this insight about the sense of dependence that typifies a saint.

"One man like this was Nicholas Herman. His life seemed much like our own. Nicolas had a number of jobs in his life, starting out in the military and then in the transportation industry. After that, he found work in the food service industry, serving as a short-order cook and bottle-washer. Eventually Nicholas became deeply discouraged by his life. He spent a lot of time, like us, thinking about himself. "Am I saved" was a particular question that burrowed deep into his soul. He struggled deeply with worry, until one day when everything changed. On that day, he was looking at a tree, not the most thrilling exercise, but something occurred to him: what makes a tree flourish is not its self-reliance, but it's rootedness in something other than and deeper than itself.

With this in mind, Nick began an experiment to have a habitual, silent, secret conversation of the soul with God. Today we know Nick as Brother Lawrence, whose book, [*The Practice of the Presence of God*](#) has become a spiritual classic, continuing to beckon readers to a deeper, more intimate relationship with God 300 years after it was first written."*

- Conclusion

There is much to be considered about being a saint, but we do the Lord, and ourselves, a disservice if we relegate sainthood to the lives of medieval martyrs. Saints are people in whom the Holy Spirit has, and is, working. There is evidence of this in your approach to life, and in your sense of dependence upon the Holy Spirit. If you take life very seriously and you are very conscious that you are dependent on the Almighty for everything, those are good signs. We are all called to be saints, it is not the office of merely a few.

*<https://thepastorsworkshop.com/sermon-illustrations-on-saints/>