

EPHESIANS RESEARCH

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HOMILETICAL TIPS

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1. Ephesians 1:1-2 & Acts 19

Big Idea: Intro the “Saints in Ephesus”

Word Studies

- “Saints” (1:1)
 - “The identification of the readers as ‘saints’ (lit. ‘holy ones’) is Paul’s regular description of Christians (cf. 1 Cor. 1:1, 2; 2 Cor. 1:1; rom. 1:1; Phil 1:1). The antecedents of the term are to be found in the Old Testament. Israel was God’s holy people (Exod. 19:6), chosen by him and appointed to his service... Christians are ‘saints’, not in the sense that they are very pious people, but because of the new relationship they have been brought into by God. It is not because of their own doing or good works but on account of what Christ has done.”¹⁴⁶
 - “He gives the name of saints to those whom he afterwards denominates faithful in Christ Jesus. No man, therefore, is a believer who is not also a saint; and, on the other hand, no man is a saint who is not a believer.”¹⁴⁷

Background Info

- The City of Ephesus
 - “Originally a Greek colony, Ephesus was now the capital of the Roman province of Asia and a busy commercial port (long since silted up). It was also the headquarters of the cult of the goddess Diana (or Artemis) whose temple, after being destroyed in the middle of the fourth century BC, had gradually been rebuilt to become one of the seven wonders of the world. Indeed, the success of Paul’s mission in Ephesus had so threatened the sale of silver models of her temple that the silversmiths had stirred up a public outcry.”¹⁴⁸
- The Riot in Acts 19
 - “The riot of Ephesus was triggered by Paul’s teaching that ‘man-made gods are no gods at all’. Christianity makes no peace with idolatry. The scene at Ephesus was that of the triumph of the gospel over pagan idolatry. The temple of Diana was once one of the seven wonders of the world. Today it has no members. Diana was not so great after all.”¹⁴⁹

Theological Meaning

- Martyn Lloyd-Jones: High Doctrine for Ordinary People
 - “Let me emphasize also that this is not a letter addressed to some unusual and exceptional Christian people...but a letter to ordinary church members. That is from every standpoint a most important observation, and for this reason that everything the Apostle says here about Christians and members of churches must therefore be equally true of us. All the

¹⁴⁶ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 87.

¹⁴⁷ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, ed. Joseph Haroutunian, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958), Comment on Eph 1:2.

¹⁴⁸ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians: God's New Society*, Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1986), 23.

¹⁴⁹ R. C. Sproul, *The Purpose of God: An Exposition of Ephesians* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 1994), 14.

high doctrine which we have in this Epistle is something that you and I are meant to receive.”¹⁵⁰

Notables

- Jesus Christ (or Christ Jesus) mentioned three times in the first sentence.

Illustrations

- **Biblical**
 - What do you think of when you think of a saint? Paintings of biblical figures with halos over their heads? Mother Teresa serving the needy in Kolkata, India? The apostle Paul did not think of saints this way. He thought of Christian men and women like those in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2) who were abusing spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 14:23), getting drunk on Communion wine (1 Cor. 11:21), and entangled in sexual sin (1 Cor. 5:1; 6:12-20). He calls *these* men and women saints. For Paul, sainthood is not derived from something wonderful you’ve accomplished nor are you eliminated from it by something horrible you’ve done. *Anyone* who is connected to Jesus by faith in his person and work is a saint. God’s saints are your average sinful person who loves Jesus in cities like Ephesus and Corinth—and yours.
- **Christian Classics**
 - God can make even serial killers saints. If the testimony of the convicted cannibalistic killer Jeffrey Dahmer’s conversion to Christ is authentic, God has made him a saint. In *Dark Journey Deep Grace: Jeffrey Dahmer’s Story of Faith*, church minister Roy Ratcliff tells the story of how Dahmer came to faith in Jesus.¹⁵¹ The sins of a mass murderer are no match for the saving grace of Jesus. God’s great grace can save any sinner and make them holy saints.

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¹⁵⁰ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God’s Ultimate Purpose: An Exposition of Ephesians 1:1-23* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979), 23.

¹⁵¹ Roy Ratcliff, *Dark Journey Deep Grace: Jeffrey Dahmer’s Story of Faith* (Abilene, TX: Leafwood, 2006).

I AM A SAINT / *Ephesians 1:1-2*

Introduction

Paul begins the book of Ephesians the same way he begins many of his letters: his name, the recipients, and a greeting.³¹⁹ His epistle openings follow the common form of his day, but Paul often adds variation and “pours theological content into his greetings.”³²⁰ In Ephesians, for example, he doesn’t just say, “Paul, to my friends in Ephesus.” He says, “Paul, an *apostle* of Jesus Christ *by the will of God*, to the *saints* in Ephesus.” This is followed by another phrase, “and are faithful [or ‘believing’] in Christ Jesus,” which further describes the recipients of the letter.³²¹ What we want to look at, however, is the word “saints.” Why does Paul use this term? What is a “saint” for him?

Origin of the Word

The word “saints” (*hagioi*) that Paul uses in his letters is really just the plural form of the word “holy” (*hagios*). The Greek lexicon BDAG says that the word was “[originally] a cultic concept, of the quality possessed by things and persons that could approach divinity . . . used as a pure [substance] . . . the holy (thing, [person]).”³²² In the Greek translation of the OT (the Septuagint), the word *hagios* regularly translates the Hebrew word *qādōš*, the basic idea of which is “separation unto God.”³²³ Thus, in the NT the *hagioi* are “believers, loyal followers, saints”—“Christians consecrated to God.”³²⁴ Beyond this, though, we need to look at the usage of the word throughout the Bible, first in the OT, then in Paul and the NT.

Israel and the OT

The idea of the people of God as “holy ones” or “saints” is rooted in the concept of Israel as a holy nation, a people consecrated for God. In Exodus 19:5-6 God says to Israel, “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a *kingdom of priests and a holy nation*.” Beyond this general idea, the specific use of the word *hagioi* to denote “saints” in the Septuagint is found in several places in the OT, the most common being Psalms and Daniel. Below are three examples:

As for the *saints* in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight. (Psa 16:3)

³¹⁹ Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 83.

³²⁰ Ibid. See also Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 34-35.

³²¹ Ernest Best, *Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 101. Some want to see this second phrase as describing a different group of people, but this is unlikely. They are “saints” who are also “faithful” (or “believing”) in Christ Jesus.

³²² Walter Bauer, Frederick William Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilber Gingrich, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. [BDAG] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 10-11.

³²³ Everett F. Harrison, “Saint, Saintliness,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 1049.

³²⁴ BDAG, 11.

Oh, fear the LORD, you his *saints*, for those who fear him have no lack! (Psa 34:9)

But the *saints* of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever. (Dan 7:18)³²⁵

Additionally, sometimes we find “saints” in English for a different Greek word meaning “holy” (*hosios*), as in Psalm 37:28: “For the LORD loves justice; he will not forsake his saints [*hosious*]. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.” Thus, the basic idea is that the OT used the word “holy” to describe things that were consecrated and set apart for God, and this idea came to describe people, as in the examples from Psalms and Daniel. This, then, carries over into the NT, where believers are said to be the temple of God, a holy people, and a royal priesthood. The language of the OT cult is applied to the church, which is made up of the “holy ones,” the “saints” With this in mind, we look more closely at Paul, who uses the term most often in the NT.

Paul’s Usage

Though in our culture there are a lot of notions as to what makes someone a saint, whether an official saint of the church or our “saint of a friend,” most of these do not reflect Paul’s usage. When Paul calls believers “saints,” he does so within the biblical line that stretches back to the Old Testament, moves through the NT, and closes out in the book of Revelation. Paul seems to be especially fond of using the term in his greetings, as he does here in Ephesians 1:1. We find it also at the beginning of Romans (1:7), 1 Corinthians (1:2), 2 Corinthians (1:1), Philippians (1:1), and Colossians (1:2). But he uses it in many other places, too.³²⁶ Below are his uses in Ephesians:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the *saints* who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus. (1:1)

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the *saints*. (1:15)

Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the *saints*. (1:18)

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the *saints* and members of the household of God. (2:19)

To me, though I am the very least of all the *saints*, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. (3:8)

[So that you] may have strength to comprehend with all the *saints* what is the breadth and length and height and depth. (3:18)

To equip the *saints* for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. (4:12)

³²⁵ Daniel’s use is especially interesting when compared with the book of Revelation (more on this below).

³²⁶ Here is the master list: Rom 1:7; 8:27; 12:13; 15:25-26, 31; 16:2, 15; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:1-2; 14:33; 16:1, 15; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:4; 9:1, 12; 13:12; Eph 1:1, 15, 18; 2:19; 3:8, 18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18; Phil 1:1; 4:22; Col 1:2, 4, 12, 26; 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 1:10; 1 Tim 5:10; Phlm 1:5, 7.

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among *saints*. (5:3)
Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the *saints*. (6:18)

In addition to these examples in Ephesians, below are some representative examples from Paul's other letters:

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be *saints*. (Rom 1:7)

And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the *saints* according to the will of God. (Rom 8:27)

At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the *saints*. (Rom 15:25)

When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the *saints*? (1 Cor 6:1)

Or do you not know that the *saints* will judge the world? (1 Cor 6:2)

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the *saints* greet you. (2 Cor 13:12-13)

All the *saints* greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. (Phil 4:22)

Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the *saints* in light. (Col 1:12)

The mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his *saints*. (Col 1:26)

So that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his *saints*. (1 Thess 3:13)

Because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the *saints*. (Phlm 5)

So, while the term "saints" gets its meaning from its root word ("holy") and its use in the OT, within Paul it is usually used without explanation or fanfare. It is simply his term for the people of God who are in Christ. It is an assumed given that this is who the church is.

Elsewhere in the NT

Outside of Paul, we see the idea in a few other NT books. First, Peter explicitly connects the idea of Israel as God's holy nation in Exodus 19:5-6 with the church in 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." Besides this more general idea, the actual term "saints" is used a few times outside of Paul. Its only use in the Gospels is Matthew 27:52, when Jesus dies:

The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the *saints* who had fallen asleep were raised.

In Acts it is used within the context of the Jewish believers (see 9:13, 32, 41; 26:10). For example,

But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your *saints* at Jerusalem.” (9:32)

It is also found in Hebrews 6:10 (also 13:24):

For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the *saints*, as you still do.

And, finally, Jude 3:

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the *saints*.

A Word on Daniel and Revelation

While not a Pauline usage, the use of “saints” in Daniel and Revelation is worth a mention, as it informs a broader biblical theology of sainthood. The word is used often throughout the book of Revelation to describe the people of God as they are persecuted and martyred by the enemy, over whom they eventually have victory (see 5:8; 8:3-4; 11:18; 13:7, 10; 14:12; 16:6; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:8; 20:9). This usage is the last we have in the Bible of the term. Everett Harrison writes,

The next stage of development appears in the book of Revelation, where separation unto the Lord, which characterized *saints*, leads to Satan-inspired persecution from the world (Rev. 13:7; 14:12) and even to martyrdom (16:6; 17:6). Here are the seeds for the Roman Catholic concept of saints as a peculiarly holy or self-sacrificing person who is worthy of veneration.³²⁷

While interpretation of both Daniel and Revelation is difficult, it is still interesting to compare the use of the word in the scene Daniel paints and the one John paints in Revelation. Compare the passages below:

Daniel 7:17-27: ““These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. But the *saints* of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.’ Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions. As I looked, this horn made war with the *saints* and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the *saints* of the Most High, and the time came when the *saints* possessed the kingdom. Thus he said: ‘As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the *saints* of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the *saints* of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.’”

³²⁷ Harrison, “Saint,” 1049.

Revelation 13:5-10: And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. Also it was allowed to make war on the *saints* and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear: If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the *saints*.

Revelation 20:7-9: And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the *saints* and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them.

Thus, the saints as a whole are those set apart for God who stand against the Satanic influence in the world, many of whom suffer violently and are killed for their testimony about Jesus. But they are also the ones who are given ultimate, eternal victory over Satan, the beast, and their minions.

Scholarly Comment

Below is a compilation of scholarly comment from dictionaries and Ephesians commentaries on the subject of “saints” both in Ephesians and throughout Scripture.

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

“There thus arises a new people of God within the old In the powerful historical sweep of Paul the concept of the people of God has burst its national limits and come to be equated with the Church of Christ. On the holy stump of the OT people of God the new branches from the Gentile world have been engrafted (R. 11:17), and they are sanctified by the stump. The stump is obviously Christ . . . (R. 15:12) ordained to rule over the Gentiles. . . . Originally contained in Jewish Christianity, with which the [*hagioi*] are often equated even in Acts (9:13, 32, 41; 26:10), the holy people of God now extends to the Gentile world. . . . As [*hagioi*] they are members of a cultic circle grounded in the sacrifice of Christ.”³²⁸

New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology

“In the Pauline Epistles . . . [‘the saints’] was primarily not an ethical expression but a parallel to concepts like ‘called’ (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1), ‘elect’ (Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12) and ‘faithful’ (Col 1:2). It implies association with the Holy Spirit. Christ is their sanctification as well as their righteousness and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30), and thus the One in whom they become holy to the true God.”³²⁹

Harold Hoehner

OT use of the Hebrew word for “holy”: “Both the substantive and adjective can be used to denote God’s unique character, but they can also be used of things, places, and persons. When the term is used to refer

³²⁸ Otto Procksch, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 106-07.

³²⁹ Horst Seebass, in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 229-30.

to things, places, and persons, it does not in itself connote any inherent holiness Thus, the basic idea is that which is consecrated to God or to God's service."³³⁰

NT use of "saints": "The reason that saints are to abstain from the sins of the ungodly is because their bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:15-20) and because of their position as saints (Eph 5:3), not because they were inherently holy in themselves. The idea, then, is that they had the position of saints and thus were to act saintly. They obtained this position because they had appropriated Christ's work to their lives (1 Cor 6:11) rather than gained it by acting saintly. Therefore, in the context of the Bible and of the NT in particular, the term 'saint' does not have the cultic concept nor does the saint possess a quality that allows him or her to claim divinity. The term is applied to all believers. The believer can approach God only because he or she has obtained a righteous standing or position on the basis of Christ's work by means of faith. Paul addresses his letters to these people."³³¹

Ernest Best

"[*Hagioi*] is a term frequently used of all Christians . . . especially in the addresses of letters It derives from the OT where God is often termed the Holy One; his people are then also holy or saints. . . . Since the words saints and believers are linked in Col 1.2 [as in Eph 1:1] . . . they may have been an accepted description of Christians in the Pauline school."³³²

Peter O'Brien

"The antecedents of the term are to be found in the Old Testament. Israel was God's holy people (Exod. 19:6), chosen by him and appointed to his service. Since the one who had brought them into a covenant relationship was holy, Israel herself was to be a holy nation (Lev. 11:44; 19:2, etc.). Christians are 'saints', not in the sense that they are very pious people, but because of the new relationship they have been brought into by God. It is not because of their own doing or good works but on account of what Christ has done. They are set apart for him and his service; as the people of his own possession they are the elect community of the end time whose lives are to be characterized by godly behaviour. Paul will expand on the implications of this term at 1:4, where holiness is the intended result of God's election, and at 5:26, 27, where it is viewed as the effect of Christ's death on behalf of his church."³³³

Andrew Lincoln

"The readers, then, are described in the light of their relationship to God, not primarily, of course, in terms of their actual moral condition, but as his holy people in continuity with the OT designation of Israel [cf. Exod 19:6]. The writer will expand on the implications of this term [*hagioi*] in 1:4 where he sees holiness as the result of God's election and in 5:26, 27 where he views it as an effect of Christ's death on behalf of the Church."³³⁴

Frank Thielman

"The term [*hagioi*, saints] takes its meaning from the OT, which speaks of God choosing his people from among all peoples of the earth to be 'a royal priesthood and a holy [*hagion*] nation' [Exod 19:5-6]. Because of this status, Israel should 'be holy' [*hagioi*] as God is 'holy' ([*hagios*]; Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7). Israel's holy status, given to it by God, should be lived out in holy conduct: those whom God has separated as his special people should live in a way that is separate from the surrounding environment. In

³³⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 138.

³³¹ Ibid., 139-40

³³² Best, *Ephesians*, 101.

³³³ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 87.

³³⁴ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1990), 5-6.

Ephesians, Paul's use of [*hagios*] and related words follows the same pattern. Christ has made believers holy [*hagiazō*] through the cleansing bath of the gospel (5:26), and so they have this status as a gift from God. Yet they must live in a way that is consistent with this status—they should be 'holy [*hagios*] and blameless before him in love' (1:4), and their conduct should be what is 'proper for holy people [*hagiois*]' (5:3).³³⁵

Further Considerations

Two additional comments should be made before concluding. First, Paul's use of "saints" has a very corporate nature. "Except for Philippians 4:21, it is not used in the singular, and even there it reflects the corporate idea—'every saint.'"³³⁶ This probably explains why Paul uses it so much in Ephesians, since Ephesians has such a strong focus on the church, the body of Christ made up of both Jews and Gentiles. All are saints in him. As Harrison notes, "In Ephesians, where there is strong emphasis on the unity of the church, 'all the saints' becomes almost a refrain [1:15; 3:8, 18; 6:18]."³³⁷

Second, being a saint is both a gift and a calling. We are already saints. It is not something we work up to. It is a gift from God. In fact, if you are a Gentile, based on Romans 11, it is almost like a double-gift. You were a "wild olive shoot" grafted into the promises of grace already given to Abraham (Rom 11:17). As one scholar writes, "Although Gentile Christians are saints, too, because they were given access to the faith of Abraham and the people of the old Testament, when redemptive history is discussed the Jews are specially designated the 'saints' while the Gentiles are considered believers who were later admitted into this 'holy' Jewish nucleus."³³⁸ It is astounding that pagans who didn't know God and were going their own way with regard to the work of God through the promise of Abraham in the world can now participate in those promises. Language that was reserved for the holiest of elements in the religion of Israel is now applied to those who had no idea who this God was and were living in the passions of their flesh as "children of wrath" (Eph 2:3). These are now the "holy ones," the saints.

So while Calvinists emphasize the doctrine of total depravity—and the Bible certainly makes it clear that we are sinful and in need of redemption—the use of "saints" to describe us shows that depravity is not the whole story. Depravity is part of the old order. Saints are who we *really* are if we are in Christ. Because of the already/not yet tension, of course, we are still sinful and always will be until Christ returns for us. But in a very real sense, the old has passed, and the new has come. In Christ, who is our life, we are *saints*. And our sainthood does not depend upon us. It depends on Jesus, and who we are *in him*. We are *his* holy ones.

Thus, being called a saint is a gift. But it is also something we are being called *to*. Since we are not home yet, we must continually fight to press into our identity and make it more and more our own. God says, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet 1:16, quoting Lev 11:44). We are saints, and we must *be* who we are. One scholar writes, "Saints acquire their status by divine call (Rom. 1:7)," but "doubtless there is latent in the use of this term the idea that relationship to God involves conformity to his will and character," as we see in Ephesians 5:3: "But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper *among saints*." So knowing we are saints impels us forward to take hold more and more of what we actually are.

³³⁵ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 34.

³³⁶ Harrison, "Saint," 1049.

³³⁷ Ibid. On the corporate nature of being "saints," he also notes that the "Apostles' Creed enshrines this significance of the word in the statement, 'I believe . . . in the communion of saints.'"

³³⁸ John McRay, "Saints," in *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 701.

Conclusion

Though we hear all kinds of uses of the word “saint” within our culture, for Paul, the fundamental usage is to describe all believers—every follower of Jesus Christ is a saint. The root of the word relates to the fact that they are set apart, consecrated, holy to God. Becoming a saint for Paul did not require any kind of working up to it. It only required belief that Jesus was the Christ, the son of the living God. Those who follow Jesus are the “holy ones,” not because of anything they have done, but because of the person *in which* they live—Jesus. They are his chosen people, his royal priesthood, his saints and holy ones. This is me. This is you.

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