

## Called To Be Saints 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

So, did you listen to the Old Testament lesson? God, using Moses to speak to Israelites, said, "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?" (Deut. 10:12-13) And that's just the beginning. As they know what it feels to be sojourners in a foreign land, and made into slaves, as they have come out of Egypt, they also ought to love the sojourners in their land.

Sound familiar? You have heard on numerous occasions that you are to love the Lord your God with all heart, mind, soul, and strength. As we learned last week, love is not a feeling, but an action. So, when we examine this epistle we see love defined as God's commands to you as well by declaring, "Serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, and your neighbor as yourself."

How do you serve the Lord? Did you hear the gradual today, that portion of the Psalms we read between the Old Testament and the Epistle lessons? It said, "I was glad when they said to me: Let us go into the house of the Lord." Gladness in coming to the house of the Lord.

Why do you follow God's commandments? Or maybe I should ask it this way, why do you *try* to follow God's commandments? And why do you come into God's house each week? Is it so that you can look holy and righteous before others? Are these the things that you do in the hope that God will smile upon you and bless you? Are there times you try to make deals with God? You know, "God, if you get me over this, I'll be in church every Sunday." Or maybe it isn't so much a deal with God as much as it is asking if He's noticed you, "Lord, I love you and try to be good, why does my life have this or that problem?"

In our Gospel lesson, the Pharisees ask Jesus what the greatest commandment is. They know it has to do with loving God. They ask, because they are good at the outward show of keeping the commandments, an outward appearance of loving God. They think they are righteous in God's eyes. All the Jewish people think of the Pharisees as the ones you hope most to be like, because then you'll be a good Jew. And loving God is easy to show – you keep the Sabbath (by doing nothing), you tithe, and you make the requisite sacrifices. Outwardly at least, you look holy.

But, to be holy – to be truly sanctified – Jesus says, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) This includes the second part of what it means to love God, and which Jesus brings to their attention. To truly love God means that you will also love your neighbor as yourself – after all, did not God create you both?

Guess what, we all like to think we're pretty good people. At least we are God-fearing people, and that's got to count for something. That brings us to our text which is going to tell us something a bit different in regard to becoming holy.

Jesus said you and I are to be perfect. We are to be holy. We are to be righteous. Maybe that is why we hate the law so much. Maybe that is why we bristle when the pastor talks about this sin or that sin. We want to believe that we are doing what we need to be doing, that we are indeed holy and righteous, that we are saints because of what we do.

If that is true, why do you confess, "I, a poor, miserable, sinner..." In our text, Paul writes that we are called to be saints – we are called to be holy. We try to look to ourselves to be holy, thinking it is accomplished by what we each do. In Romans chapter seven, Paul explains that he could not do it. I cannot do it! You cannot either!

If it is not our own works which sanctifies us, make us holy, makes us saints, what is it? Didn't you hear it? To the church of God that is in Embarrass and Pella Opening, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

You are sanctified in Christ Jesus. You are called to be saints – just as are all, who, by God grace given to them, are in Christ Jesus. It is Christ who sanctifies us. It is Christ who makes us holy. It is Christ who sustains us, guiltless till His day will dawn again.

How badly do you want to trust in yourself? Jesus wanted the Pharisees to be called to be saints. However, the Pharisees tried to prove that they were sanctified, that they were holy because of how *they lived*, that they did it all on their own. Their hatred of Christ proves otherwise. Jesus wanted them to be holy – He wanted them to be a part of His eternal kingdom. He tried, time and time again, to get them to acknowledge their sinfulness and repent – that is, in sorrow to turn away from their sin and trust God's grace. Their stubborn pride got in the way, they trusted their own works and failed to repent.

How many sit in the pews of this church who do the same thing. Pastor preaches the Law in the sermon, and it tags someone right between the eyes, "How dare the pastor talk about me like that?" is the thought running through their mind. Instead, they get so riled up they fail to hear the rest of the sermon. Little do they know that the pastor kicked himself square in the teeth with the same condemnatory words from God's Law.

But it doesn't end there? It never does end with the Law. Although some fail to hear the best part because they got their dander up, the best news is still coming.

As our text says, we are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.

It was Christ who did fulfill the Law perfectly – loving God and man perfectly. It was Christ indeed holy and righteous. He was not only a saint, but is God, God in human flesh. That holy flesh of Christ, God allowed to suffer pain, punishment, and death as payment for sin – for Pharisee sin, for your sin, and for my sin. Christ paid for all sin, of all time, in His one-time, all-atoning sacrificial death upon the cross.

Those who are saints, are those whom God has called to be saints in Christ Jesus. God calls you by the Gospel, enlightens you with His gifts, and sanctifies and keeps you in the one true faith. It is what He does with each and every believer, for they are believers because of what God does! God's grace makes us holy, sanctifying us as His beloved Children.

How are you called to be saints? How are you sanctified? How are you made holy? When your sin is no longer yours! When you are in Christ Jesus, He bears your sins and you bear His holy righteousness!

You were called by God's grace to be one of His saints when you were baptized into Christ – into His death and resurrection. You are called by God to continually wash the garment of salvation given to you that day through the daily life of contrition and repentance.

You are called to be saints by the Word of Christ is proclaimed. When the Word of forgiveness is spoken into your ear, it calls out to you, it cleanses you of all sin, and truly makes you holy – a saint – a sanctified child of God.

You are called to be saints when Christ Jesus beckons you to His holy banquet. At that meal, when you eat of His body and drink of His blood, Christ makes His dwelling within you. You are called to be saints, called to be holy, called to be filled with Christ, called to be perfect not of yourselves, but of the holiness and righteousness that fills you – Christ Jesus Himself.

You dear friends are called to be saints – to be the holy ones of God – and so you are in Christ Jesus. God is faithful, who will sustain you to the end, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.