

Saint

In addition to Christians being called disciples and believers, they are also called saints. Paul's greeting to the church in Corinth addresses the church this way. *"To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been **sanctified** in Christ Jesus, **saints** by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours"* (1 Corinthians 1:2).

If you Google "saint," you get a definition like; "A saint is a person who is recognized as having an exceptional degree of holiness or likeness or closeness to God. However, the use of the term "saint" depends on the context and denomination." So, from a football player in New Orleans, through the myriad of canonized dead Catholics, to the predestined saved as defined by Calvinism, the term can become confused and misunderstood by the disciple of and believer in Christ. What did the Holy Spirit mean when He used the term in scripture?

The Greek word "hagios" is used 231 times in the New Testament. It is translated holy 168 times and saint 62 times. It occurs twice in Jude 20 where "**hagios hagios pneuma**" is translated **Most Holy Spirit**; the Greek using the same word twice to indicate increased importance. The word describes the characteristic of God that His children are to imitate (1 Peter 1:14-16). *"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but **like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves** also in all your behavior; because it is written, '**you shall be holy, for I am holy.**'"*

The phrase Peter used refers to those called by the Holy One. Since holy is a translation of hagios, the calling is understood to be from the Sainly One. The last clause can be translated, "you be saintly for I am saintly." The idea of "**Called to be saints**" found in Romans 1:7 and 1 Corinthians 1:2 is the same as Paul's "**called an apostle**" in 1 Corinthians 1:1. The intent is "**called for the purpose of.**" Paul was called from being a persecutor of the church to be an apostle to the Gentiles. People are called out of the world to be sanctified holy people to do God's work on earth.

The term saint, Greek hagios, is applied to Christians three ways in the New Testament:

Holy people who are living in a community and visible throughout the community. *"Now as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda"* (Acts 9:32). Also (Acts 9:41, 26:10).

The Church, collective individuals who assembled within the community to worship God through Christ. Notice the address to the church at Colosse in Colossians 1:2. *"**To the saints** and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."*

Holy Individuals are addressed singularly and collectively. An admonition to greet each saint is given in Philippians 4:21. *"Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you."* Paul had addressed the letter to Philippi *"to all the saints who are in Philippi"* (Philippians 1:1).

As we are before the Lord our God continually, as a child of God and called to be holy before Him, we are like Aaron when he went into the presence of the Lord one time each year (Leviticus 16). Moses was commanded to make a band of gold that Aaron wore on his turban, resting over his forehead. On the band were the words *"Holiness to The Lord."* It was a reminder that what he did was for Israel, God's saints, so they would be accepted by God (Exodus 28:36-38).

In obedience to Christ, the believer is changed from worldly ways into one of God's saints. *"But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God"* (1 Corinthians 6:11). It is not a band of gold that identifies us, but a heart transformed to match His heart by the working of the Word of God within us. *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works"* (Ephesians 2:10). *"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God"* (Ephesians 2:19).

Whereas Israel could not approach the Mercy Seat and the presence of God, we who are made holy are encouraged to approach. *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need"* (Hebrews 4:16).