



Who Are the Saints?

What Does the Bible Say About Sainthood?

The word "saint" is derived from the Greek verb *hagiazō* whose basic meaning is "to set apart", "sanctify," or "make holy".

There are many who believe sainthood is a process by which the church recognizes certain Christians as Saints, based on an exhaustive investigation of the person's life. The basis for this belief possibly comes from a misinterpretation this definition. I'm not going to get into that here, except to say it's a misguided belief.

There are many verses in Scripture that reference saints. I did a quick search and found as many as 98 verses; 36 in the Old Testament – 62 in the New Testament. None of which single out one person as being a saint.

In many of Paul's letters to the different churches, as well as in his letter to the Romans, he greeted them as saints.

- **Romans 1:7** – “To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- **1 Corinthians 1:2** – “Unto the church of God which is 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:”
- **Ephesians 1:1** – “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:”
- **Philippians 1:1** – “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:”
- **Colossians 1:1-2** – “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

You'll notice Paul didn't address his greetings to a specific person or group of people such as church leaders. They are addressed to all members of each church. The only mention of church leaders, in the greetings, comes in **Philippians 1:1** where he addresses the letter to all saints who are “with the bishops and deacons”. These letters show how God views all members of the church as saints. But that's not the only evidence.

Other verses regarding the saints include:

Old Testament

- **Deuteronomy 33:3** – “Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.”
- **2 Chronicles 6:41** – “Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness.”

- **Psalm 31:23** – “O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.”
- **Psalm 132:9** – “Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.”

New Testament

- **1 Corinthians 14:33** – “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”
- **Jude 1:3** – “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”
- **Acts 9:13** – “Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:”
- **Acts 9:41** – “And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.”

As you can see in these few verses, not once did the verses refer to a specific person. They refer to a group of people, all of Christ’s followers.

Now let’s look at the definition of the word saint again – particularly the phrases “to set apart”, “sanctify”, “or “make holy”.

To set apart:

- **John 15:19** – “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”
- **2 Corinthians 6:17** – “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,”

Sanctify:

- **1 Corinthians 1:2** – “Unto the church of God which is 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:”
- **1 Thessalonians 5:23** – “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- **Hebrews 10:14** – “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

Make Holy:

- **Acts 2:38** – “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

All believers are equally holy and righteous, not by our own acts, but by virtue of the righteousness of Christ imputed to us at the cross.

- **2 Corinthians 5:21** – “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

All believers are equally precious in the sight of God and there is none who can boast of any special place before Him.

Finally, developing a “cultus” (from which we get the word “cult”) around a deceased person to whom we offer prayers and petitions borders on necromancy, (communicating with the dead) which is also strictly forbidden in Scripture.

- **Deuteronomy 18:9-12** – “When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.”