

## A Call To Holiness – The Communion Of The Saints

The term saints means holy ones. When the New Testament refers to Christians as saints, it affirms that we are a holy people. Fundamentally, the term holy refers to that which is separated. Its use in Scripture indicates that above all, it is a characteristic that applies to God and that is applied by him to those that are in a relationship with him. The fundamental idea of holiness is that of unapproachableness, a condition that is based on the fact that God is divine and therefore absolutely distinct from his creatures. [Holiness therefore marks the distinctiveness or otherness of God when considered in relation to creation.](#)

However, there is a secondary sense in which God's holiness is to be understood and that is in its ethical dimension. In this regard, God is holy because he does not sin; indeed, he cannot sin; he is altogether sinless. This ethical purity is an active principle of God proving itself in his righteous works and actions towards, on behalf of and even against his creatures. The primary Old Testament depiction of the holiness of God is that of light, a light of the divine glory, Ex 13:21-22; 40:34-38, and a light in the form of a consuming fire, Dt 4:24; Ps 97:3; Heb 12:29.

Among those persons and things that the Lord God separated unto himself in a special relationship were the:

patch of desert ground on which Moses stood, Ex 3:5

land of Canaan was called the holy land, Ps 78:54;

city of Jerusalem; Neh 11:1;

solemn assemblies, Ex 12:16; sabbaths , Ex 16:23; convocations and feasts, Lev 23:2-4;

prophets, Lk 1:70;

priestly garments, Ex 28:2;

Levites and the priests, Ex 28-40;

tent of meeting and ark of the testimony; table; lampstand, altars of burnt offering and incense; and so on, and all their utensils, Ex 30:27-31

items of the tent of meeting that the Kohathites were to carry, Num 4: 15

etc.

These were holy because the Lord God decreed them to be so and consecrated them unto himself for his own purposes and glory.

In both the Old and the New Testament, ethical holiness is never a quality that terminates in and that is produced by man himself. It is always the result of the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit within the heart and lives of God's covenant people. Again, we see that the biblical conception of holiness is always indicative of a relationship that we have with the Lord. Thus, [when we speak of the communion of the saints, we refer](#) not to a loose organization or network of individuals who are nice, religious people striving to do the best that they can but rather, to [God's covenant people that he chose in Christ "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him."](#) Eph 1:4.

Human beings, created in the image of God, are "finite analogies" of the infinite, covenant God whose very existence is covenantal in that Father, Son and Holy Spirit "live in unceasing devotion to each other." (Dr. Michael Horton God's Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology, p. 10). This means that we were created in a covenant relationship with the Triune God and as a result, with one another. The Fall of Adam which plunged man and the rest of creation into sin, disarray and divine judgment, was not the last word in history, for God in his sovereign mercy and goodness, had chosen unto himself a holy people who, after regeneration by the Holy Spirit unto faith alone in Christ alone, would live holy lives to demonstrate the reality of their covenant relationship with their God and Savior. These are the very ones whom he has been pleased to place into his covenant community, the church, the body of Christ, whose members he calls to be holy in all their conduct "since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."" 1 Pe 1:15 -16. Thus, the saving grace of God is also a sanctifying grace that rules righteously in our lives, Rom 5:21. "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, " Tit 2:11-12.

As the divinely constituted communion of saints, the church is therefore that body of holy people whom God has set apart from the world unto himself for his own glory. It is within this covenant community that we demonstrate the concrete existence of our relationship with God by living faithful and fruitful lives. We are a holy people with a heavenly agenda. As God's covenant people whom he has sovereignly redeemed from death, sin and Satan, we no longer live for the passions of the flesh but for the will of God, 1 Pe 4:2. We are a holy communion that the Lord Jesus Christ **is conforming to His image through the ordinary means of the preached Word and the proper administration of the sacraments and also through prayer, fellowship, and other benefits and privileges that he has given us.** One of these that is often neglected is the means of counsel.