



Daily Devotionals

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PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2 SET APART *IN* CHRIST

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¹ *Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,*

To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

² *Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

In his address to the church in Philippi, St. Paul indicates that the Church is not just another institution cluttering the human experience on earth. This is no affinity group, special interest lobby, civic organization or even ethnic enclave. The members of the Church are not even referred to as a sub-grouping of citizens of the city. For St. Paul, the Church is the community of “*saints in Christ Jesus.*” He goes on to indicate that the leaders are also members of that community and not above it or along side it. The centrality of Christ for the Church is indicated by the Apostle having included Jesus in all three lines of the salutation.

What does it mean to be a “saint?” Since pre-Reformation days, the Church has referred to those of exemplary devotion, piety and faith as Saints, and to one extent or another venerated them. This usage has carried over into our naming of churches and religious institutions, indicating the apostolic authorship of a passage of Scripture, as well as the naming of some of our commemorative holidays. So were all the members of the community in Philippi so pious that St. Paul referred to them as saints?

The Apostle was using in the term saint in the same way as we now use Christian. We seldom think about the implications of the label “Christian,” that is, followers/imitators of Christ, so to hear that the members of the Church are saints is a bit of a shock to us. The original word in the biblical language that is translated “saint” is the same as that for sacred and holy. As a group, they all have the meaning of being set apart for some purpose. The Church then is the community that has been separated out of the general population as belonging to Christ and finding its purpose in the will of Jesus. But at the same time, that community is not separated out of the world but rather separated in the world. It is the community of saints *at* Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus, Richmond, Nashville, Boise, Seattle...

As you think of yourself as a Christian today, do so through the lens of sainthood. Remember it has nothing to do with being “special,” but it everything to do with submitting to Jesus’ call to follow him...in community – right where you live.

Thank you, Lord Jesus for your call on my life. Through the power of your transforming Spirit, may I grow in my willingness to live according to your will and in order to fulfill your purpose in my community. Guide me onto the path of perfect service so that together with the other members of the Church we might make you known to the world. Amen.

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