

Do You Know What A "Saint" Is?

by Bill Crews

Following the death of the Catholic nun who was known as "Mother" (a religious title; see Matt. 23:8-10) Teresa, there was a renewed interest in the subject of "saints." Many people were wondering whether this obviously sincere and benevolent woman would be "made a saint" by her church. The consensus seemed to be, "If anybody ever deserved to be a saint, she did." Please do not regard this article as any kind of attack upon the woman who practiced kindness and benevolence toward many of the poor, abandoned, sick and diseased in India. It is rather a look at the doctrine of "sainthood."

Because of the powerful and pervading influence of the Roman Catholic Church, most people do not have a clue as to the real meaning and proper use of the word "saint." The saints of the Roman Catholic Church, and the saints of the New Testament of Christ are two entirely different things.

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING

The Greek word translated "saint" in the New Testament is *hagios*. Its simple meaning is "set apart, separate." It is more often translated "holy" but still with the meaning of "set apart, separate." In the KJV 61 times it is translated "saints," and one time "saint." A cognate verb is *hagiazō*, which in the KJV is translated "sanctify" 26 times. Its simple meaning is "to set apart, to separate." To the reader of the New Testament it becomes obvious that everyone who has been saved from his sins, who has become a child of God, a disciple of Christ, a Christian has become a "saint," a set apart person, is both described and addressed as such.

Saul of Tarsus persecuted "the saints" (Acts 9:13; 26:10). He did that when he persecuted "the church" (Acts 8:3; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:6), "the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1), those that "believed on" the Lord (Acts 22: 19). As the apostle Paul he wrote many New Testament epistles, and the people to whom he wrote them are addressed as "saints."

Romans: "to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints" (Rom. 1:7; literally, "called saints"; "called" is a verbal adjective modifying "saints"). God's living children are also called "saints" in Rom. 8:27; 12:13; 15:25, 26, 31; 16:2, 15.

1 Corinthians: "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Cor. 1:2; again "to be" is supplied by the translators). God's living people are also called "saints" in 1 Cor. 6:1, 2; 14:33; 16:1, 15.

2 Corinthians: "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia" (2 Cor. 1:1). God's living servants are also called "saints" in 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1, 12; 13:13.

Ephesians: "to the saints that are at Ephesus" (Eph. 1:1). God's living disciples are also called "saints" in Eph. 1:15, 18; 2:19; 3:8, 18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18.

Philippians: "to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons" (Phil. 1:1). God's living children are also called "saints" in Phil. 4:21, 22.

Colossians: "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ that are at Colossae" (Col. 1:2) God's living servants are also called "saints" in Col. 1:4,12, 26. Notice the use of the word "saints" in 1 Tim. 5:10 ("if she hath washed the saints' feet"); Philemon 5 (speaks of Philemon's faith "toward all the saints"); Philemon 7 (speaks of Philemon's refreshing "the hearts of the saints"); Heb. 6:10 (these Hebrew Christians are commended for ministering unto the saints); Heb. 13:24 ("salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints"); Jude 3 ("the faith" was "once for all delivered unto the saints").

250603