

Saints in Christ Jesus

By Don Green

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Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

Well, it's our privilege this morning to return to the book of Philippians and I invite you to turn to Philippians in your New Testament for what we have in front of us today. I'm quite excited about this book, quite excited about what the Lord has been bringing to bear on our hearts and minds as a congregation and upon my own life personally in the things that are so rich and deeply embedded in this book, and as we come to Philippians 1:1 and 2, let me read those verses just to set the context for us again as I believe that what we have for us today has the potential to change our lives and to change your life as we come together, even those of you that have been Christian for a long period of time. It's easy to lose sight of what Christianity is really about and what it means to be a Christian, and for you young people on the starting edge of coming into adult consciousness, these are some of the most vital crucial things that you could ever hear in all of your life because this defines and orients you toward the way that you think about all of life, the very things that are contained in words that we read so superficially and so briefly sometimes but not here, not today, not in our opening to the book of Philippians.

Philippians 1:1 and 2,

1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I feel a little bit self-conscious, I guess, of spending so much time in these opening verses, but what I find is this the more that I prepare and the more that I think about us and bringing these things together to you, there is something profound that is contained in the nouns that are in this verse and the impact and the import that they have is really immeasurable, and changes and reorients the way that you think about all of life. You see, the book of Philippians, what God is doing through this book, what Paul was doing as he wrote to that church 2,000 years ago, in the book of Philippians you find truth that defines your identity as a Christian, not simply giving you a list of two or three things to do to bump up your weak or bump up your self-esteem or to make you feel better, no, no, when you understand what is being said here, you find that which defines your entire purpose of existence in Christ, and without which, let's state it positively, it defines all the nature of your existence as a Christian, without a proper understanding of this, you really don't have a good idea of what it means to be a Christian at all. And there was a lot of

response to last week's message and that gives me hope that perhaps I'm not speaking in vain or taking things too slowly here, because beloved, here's what you need to understand. When you know what you are in Christ, when you know who you are in Christ, you are suddenly positioned to be able to live as God intends for you to live as a Christian. Without that understanding, you have a distorted view. It's like you've walked into a fun house with the mirrors that distort you and either stretch you out or make you look really tall and thin, or compress you and make you look really short and fat, but nothing that's reflecting the true reality. There is something there that conforms to what you are supposed to be like and what you really are, but it's so distorted that you don't have a clear idea of what it is. When we treat these terms seriously and earnestly in the opening verses of Philippians, we suddenly start to find that when you become a Christian it is radically reoriented, it is radically changed. Everything that you had lived for before has died and now new motivations and new reasons and a new identity have become yours in Christ, and until these things are brought to your consciousness and explained to you clearly, you stagger along with a distorted image looking like the fun house version of a Christian rather than what Christ truly saved you to be, and without these things, your life will lack clarity, it will lack direction on a personal individual level, and I would say that a local church that lacks understanding of these things will easily be tossed about by the winds of cultural change, of doctrinal drift in other places, and maturity and true effectiveness in ministry will be missing. That's why we're taking our time in this introduction to Philippians. It is not that we are trying to belabor points, it's that we believe that we're laying down the most crucial foundation that could be laid down for this time in the life of our church.

Now last time one aspect of our identity that we saw, that we spent the whole hour on, was that to be a Christian is to be a slave of Jesus Christ; that you belong to him as a slave belongs to his master; that you have no independent rights apart from Christ but everything that is in Christ is yours and in response, you respond with a full-hearted submission that recognizes him as the absolute authority in your life, the one to whom you give exclusive and absolute obedience to. And that means something, that means something, beloved, that means that life is no longer measured by how long you can make life last, it is no longer measured by how much you can get out of life for your own personal benefit, rather instead life is oriented toward giving a complete, absolute, exclusive obedience to Christ and you realize that that is the right thing to do and it is the only way that it could be because Christ paid your redemption price to deliver you from your spiritual slavery. He delivered you from Satan with his shed blood. He delivered you from your sin with his shed blood. He delivered you from eternal hell and the judgment and wrath of God that you so richly deserve with his shed blood. Well, beloved, isn't it obvious that when someone buys you like that, that he owns you? That you belong to him? That everything about your life should be oriented vertically toward Christ to the praise and the glory of the one who saved you by his grace?

This is why we exist and Christ paid for us and therefore he owns us just in the same way that you implicitly have a sense of ownership over anything that you spend your money on and bring it into your possession. Those of you that own your own home, you think about it, "That's mine. I paid for it." Your car, your personal belongings, whatever it may

be, you have a sense that, "This belongs to me because I paid for it and therefore it is at my disposal to do with what I will, what I wish." Well, beloved, just take that general mindset that you understand and live by in the way that you treat your own personal possessions and your own personal property, take that and multiply it by infinity and realize what is owed to Christ, the one who bought us. You have been bought with a price, Scripture says, therefore glorify God with your body. You have been bought. You are owned by another. He purchased you at great personal cost and brought you into a relationship that is like that of a master who has absolute claims over his slave, and you are now related to him in a position of subordination to a person to whom you owe your complete devotion, your complete loyalty, your complete obedience.

Now I realize that we fall short of that ideal but that's not what we're talking about here today. That's not my point. We're talking about what the reality of the position is. One day down the road in Philippians, we'll get more to the fact of how we fall short of the ideal of the perfection to which Christ purchased us. We'll get to that later. What we need to understand now is that the imperfection of the way in which we live these things out does not diminish the reality of the position that we have in Christ and that needs to be really abundantly clear. And beloved, that is why people can die for the Christian faith, that's why people can die for Christ, why throughout the centuries since the coming of Christ the church has known people who refused to renounce Christ even though they knew it would cost them their life, and this is where all of this becomes so clear and helps us understand the meaning and the significance of it.

"Why not," the worldly man might say, "Why not just temporarily, you know, fudge a bit on your commitment to Christ so that you can extend your life, so that you won't be killed at the hands of those who were after their blood back in the early days of the church, and it takes place in other places here even in our day. Why not fudge on it? Why not spare your neck just for the sake of a few words and a few moments and, you know, satisfy the, you know, the demand of the one who has the power of life or death over you? Why not fudge on it so you can live longer? Why didn't they fudge?" Well, they didn't fudge, it's because they understood that they owed complete obedience to their Master and that life itself was subordinate to the responsibility of obedience and loyalty and love to the one who had bought them with his own shed blood. So if my blood becomes the price that I pay for obedience to Christ, then so be it. It's no longer about my life, it's about obedience to Christ and that's the mindset that informs those who would give their lives up for Christ like that. In the moment, you understand that the greater loyalty is not to preserve your neck, the greater loyalty is to preserve your loyalty and obedience to Christ, and he is your Master and whatever the consequences of obedience and loyalty to him are, let the consequences be what they may, what cannot be sacrificed is loyalty to Christ, obedience to Christ. How can I deny the one who saved me? One of the early church fathers was threatened with martyrdom when he was 86 years old and they said, "Just renounce Christ." He said, "How can I do that? For 86 years He has been a tender faithful Master to make. How could I deny Him now?" And he paid for it with his life.

You see, beloved, the reason that I'm explaining it in these terms to start now is to set the idea in where all of this goes. I realize that most of us aren't going to face that kind of martyrdom, that kind of stark choice where our life is at stake for Christ so vividly, but that makes it all the more important for us to understand it clearly because for us, the temptations to compromise are more subtle. It's more in the margins of gray rather than black-and-white and therefore we need to have it clear in our minds what being a slave to Christ means, what our identity in Christ is. We need to have it clear so that there is some moral clarity and there is some spiritual integrity to the way that we live that determines what we do and what we say. Without that clarity, there's not going to be the corresponding integrity that follows in life as a result of it. So when these things are clear, it helps us live before our world and it helps us in our battle against sin, and we start to realize that the sins that we tend to stroke and tolerate and hold close to our bosom, what we need to understand is that those sins are a violation of our loyalty to Christ and that gives us a different sense of perspective to fuel our obedience even when our flesh might pull us in a different direction. This is so vital. This is so vital and it's not like anyone is complaining that I'm spending so much time on it but it's why I can't apologize for it. We just don't get these things unless we dwell on them and that's why we're taking our time as we go through, no matter what others might do or how others might handle it.

Well, today, having seen our position as a slave in Christ last week, today we see our position in Christ from another perspective. Look at chapter 1, verse 1 with me. "Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus," and here it is, "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons." To all the saints in Christ Jesus. That is our operative phrase for this morning, saints in Christ Jesus. What does that mean? What does that mean? Who even talks this way? Who talks about spiritual life in terms of slavery and being a saint? Who talks this way? Well, maybe not too many in our world today, maybe not too many in the church today because they're too busy trying to litigate the issues of social injustice in the past, but Scripture talks about it and therefore we talk about it. Not only are we slaves of Christ, somehow we are also saints in Christ, and the question is what does that mean and how does it correspond and fill out our sense of our identity in Christ and what it means to be a Christian.

Well, as they've done in so many other areas, the Catholic Church has greatly obscured this truth. They have a separate category for the so-called faithful that they call saints, and the saints are those who supposedly lived life with such an elevated virtue, such an elevated fidelity that it separated them from the other faithful and they've become models for the lesser ones to look at. You've got your ordinary run-of-the-mill kind of Catholic, but then you've got the saints. You've got Teresa and you've got others and, whoa, and they hold up these human examples which are used to club down the faithful, so-called faithful, but the idea being that there is a select subgroup that are the saints and everybody else is, you know, a different idea. The idea is this, is that the special lives of these so-called saints gave them an elevated status as saints that set them apart from others who were not as spiritual. So even in common parlance you'll hear people talk this way, "Oh, oh, that woman is such a saint. Do you know how difficult her husband is and she just perseveres. She's such a saint living like that." Well, to the extent that we have that understanding of the term "saint," beloved, we need to utterly abandon it, reject it in

its entirety and learn the truth about what this term means so that the truth could set us free, and could give us also a clearer sense of our identity in Christ.

So I want to structure our time together today around three basic principles that we'll take one by one and hopefully the Lord will bless this to his glory and to the good of us who want to follow him. So point 1 this morning: the meaning of "saint." What does it mean to be a saint and who is a saint, is where we want to go, first of all. So beloved, let's approach it this way, state it in the negative and then state it in the positive, if that's all right with you. Saints are not a subset of Christians who are more holy in their behavior. Saints are not a subset of Christians who are more holy in behavior. The word "saint," coming from the Greek term hagios, means "to be set apart for dedication to the interests or expectations of God." The word "hagios, saint," means "to be set apart for dedication to the interests or expectations of God." To be a saint is not an attainment in behavior. It is not an attainment in behavior. I'm saying everything twice, that means this message will go for two hours if I keep this pattern up. Put her on the payroll whoever said that. Thank you. It is not an attainment in behavior, beloved. We have to get that out of our minds and I'm going to help you with that, rather it's a reality of position. It is a reference to someone or something that has been set apart to serve God. It is a reference to someone or something that has been set apart to serve God.

Now I'm just going to run through a couple of examples, not even having you turn to the texts for some of these things to make this point. In Exodus 40, the tabernacle and the altar were anointed with oil to consecrate them as they were being set into service for God, and once they had been anointed with oil, once they had been consecrated, they were then called holy. Now beloved, think with me, these are the building blocks of coming to understand the greatness of our position in Christ and what it means to be a Christian, and we start with these small examples that help us see and understand the meaning of very critical terms. The tabernacle and the altar were called holy.

Now what does that mean? It does not mean that those physical materials were intrinsically changed and, beloved, it certainly doesn't mean that those physical inanimate materials suddenly started to behave in a more godly way. It couldn't mean that because they're just inanimate objects. It's not that they were behaving in a godly way, they weren't behaving at all. They were inanimate. Rather the word "holy" meant simply that they had now been set apart for a special use by God and they would become the place, the set apart place where the people of God in that dispensation would come to meet him for worship. The materials were set apart for a special use that was not given to any other materials. They were set apart. They weren't behaving in any given way.

In a similar way in Matthew 4:5, Jerusalem is called the holy city. The holy city, a city set apart for the purposes of God. The city where at that time the temple was. The city where Jesus conducted his ministry and based his ministry. The city where the apostles were when the Holy Spirit came upon them and then they went out. That geographic area was set apart for a manifestation of the purposes of God but the city itself, the geographic region, it was just a land mass with buildings on it, but it was set apart and used by God

in a way that distinguished it from any other city in the world. We studied that in one of our Psalms not too long ago.

So you have the tabernacle and the altar and a city being called holy, having nothing to do with the Roman Catholic perversion of the term that I discussed earlier. The common thread here is that they were set apart for a purpose that God had appointed for them. The city was set apart for God and his use.

Now I think this next part is really cool. I do. We'll go to another extreme and show that "holy" couldn't mean something becoming better or something being better than what it was. This one I want you to turn to in the Gospel of John 17. Here in John 17, Jesus is praying to his Father anticipating his soon crucifixion. He is praying for his disciples and he says in John 17:19, he says, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." That verb "sanctify" is from the same root of the noun that is translated "saint." To be a saint is to be set apart. To sanctify is to set something apart in a verbal sense, and Jesus says, "I sanctify Myself." Now beloved, follow me. This is really important. This is one that you need to get. Jesus Christ could not possibly be saying that he was making himself more holy because Jesus Christ was already perfectly holy. He couldn't become more holy than he was. He was already the embodiment of divine perfection. So to be sanctified in this sense was simply for Christ to say that he had set himself apart for the work that he was about to do at the cross. Christ is saying, "I sanctify Myself. I set Myself apart for the purpose, Father, that You have given to Me. You set Me apart. You gave Me the unique role of going to the cross to offer Myself as a sacrifice for the sins of My people. I embrace that. I sanctify Myself for that. I'm set apart for that purpose and that is why I am moving forward in the redemptive plan, because I'm set apart for that purpose."

So what does it mean to be a saint? It means, beloved, that as saints, you as a Christian have been set apart. You have been set apart to serve the interests of God. You have been set apart to serve the expectations of God. And I know I talk like this quite a bit in what I'm about to say, but to understand that you are a saint in this term, set apart for the interests, the service, the expectations of God, this is to understand the reason that you exist. This is why you were saved, was that you would be set apart for God in Christ. It's one aspect of what it means when Scripture says we are not of the world even if we are in it. We're not of the world because we don't belong to the world. You're not in the world because you don't exist to serve the interests of the world. You are set apart for something else. You have been removed from that realm. You have been removed from under the bondage of Satan. You have been removed from the bondage of sin so that you would be free and exist to serve the God who saved you like that.

So beloved, again tying this together with the series that we're doing on moralistic therapeutic deism on Tuesday, I ask you again to get that series if you haven't heard it and to be listening to it because it is vitally critical to everything. I realize I can't make you listen but I can sure beg you and implore you to listen, and these things fit together like a hand in a glove in what they are saying. You see, the mindset that we are so accustomed to being taught is to think about God as the servant to our needs. When we

need something, we go to God and we ask him to give it to us. There's a place for that in the Christian life. Jesus said and told us and commanded us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Express your dependence to God. Let your needs be known to him. That's true. That's fine. That's part of Christian living. That's part of our Christian privilege that we would be able to go to God in our need and express that to him but, beloved, and I'm really resisting the temptation to be far more physically animated than what I'm actually doing here, beloved, what we must understand is that is hardly the totality of why you have been saved. That is not why God exists, as though he were completely subordinate to serve what you wanted him to do and after he's done that, he has no further claim on you and there's no further purpose in seeking him because you're content and you got what you wanted and you can go forward and keep just doing what you want to do. That's not it. That's not what it means to be a Christian, beloved. That's not what it means to be a Christian and to the extent that someone has had the thought that that's all that it meant, you know, I would tell a person like that, "I really think you ought to go back to the word of God and rethink everything that you've ever thought about what it meant he saved, if God is simply a utilitarian device to help you advance in life and happiness in your own personal pursuits." Goodness, how did we ever start thinking that way? Who is the Sovereign here? Who is God here? And who is serving whom? And why does God save us?

So beloved, for you to be a saint and let me just state this really plainly lest it be missed in all the other things I'm saying: every true Christian is a saint. Every true Christian is a saint because every true Christian has been saved by Christ and set apart by Christ in order to be his servant, to be his slave, to serve his interests, and this is a position, this is a relationship of love, of grace and mercy, but it's a position of love, grace and mercy that is done in a context of subordination to the person who saved us. You're subordinated to a person. You're a slave of Christ in that sense and now to be a saint is to recognize the purpose for which you have been saved, you have been set apart to serve the interests of the one who saved you.

So beloved, quite apart from any behavioral considerations, the essence of a true Christian is that he or she has been set apart to serve the interests and expectations of Jesus Christ. This is why you exist. It's not to maximize your profit here on earth. You don't exist simply to find exactly the relationship that you want, or necessarily even to find satisfaction and inner fulfillment in the things that you do. You exist to serve the purpose of Christ, those other things are secondary. Sometimes we get them as a byproduct but they're not the primary goal. We have been separated from the world and placed into union with Jesus Christ and therefore you exist to serve him. He served you at the cross doing that which you could never have done on your own, now having been saved by that cross work, now you are set apart to return your life devotion and loyalty to the one who did such a gracious act on your behalf, and I ask you therefore beloved, have you ever thought of yourself as a Christian from that perspective, because this is what it means, and what this means then, beloved, is that there is a very real sense in which all of your desires for life are crucified when you come to Christ. Your goals, your aspirations, your dreams came to the cross and they died. They ceased to exist, replaced by something

else, replaced by the reality that you now exist to serve Christ in the life that he has given to you, and everything is determined by that going forward.

James Montgomery Boice asks the question this way, he says, "Are you a Christian? If so, you are a saint and so am I regardless of our station in life, and we are so not because of what we have done but because we have been separated unto God in Jesus Christ."

Now beloved, this can be described as what the theologians might call positional sanctification or definite sanctification, by position you have been set apart. What makes this confusing sometimes is that the same word, "sanctification," is used to describe our progress in spiritual growth, progressive sanctification, and that is imperfect and we struggle and we go up and down in that sometimes. The fact that that's the way the term is normally used doesn't mean it shouldn't exclude us from understanding this positional understanding, this reality of what it means to be in Christ, that you are set apart for the interests of Christ Jesus regardless of what your present course of behavior might be if you're a Christian. So the reality becomes you've got a guy struggling in sin, he is not acting very sanctified in that use of the term, a woman, of course it goes the same way, and the way that you understand this and apply it is you go and you say, "Friend, you are a saint. You have been sanctified by God to serve His purposes therefore based on the reality of your position, you need to repent, you need to change. You can't keep living this same selfish sinful way. You can't live this sinful way because you have been set apart for the purposes of God." And the reality of the position starts to inform the reality of the way that you practice the Christian life. This is how we understand and make these connections in our mind, but our focus today is not on behavioral matters but the reality of what God did when he saved you.

Beloved, just think about it, just think about it in spatial terms, if this helps; those of you who are visual thinkers kind of like I am, it helps to think this way. Picture a realm which is the world and you in it before you were a Christian and the realm of Christ Jesus. Christ comes and saves you. He plucks you up out of that world, out of the world, out of that realm and moves you over and puts you in his realm where you now exist to serve him who saved you in the realm over which he rules, and to serve and advance his interests and to subordinate every thought, every desire of yours to that greater purpose. Talk about more about how that plays out at the end of the message if I don't forget to do it.

We want to be thinking about this in terms of separation and if you've never really thought about it in these terms, then what a blessing of grace should be exploding on your mind and cheering and encouraging your heart, to realize that God personally plucked you out, that Christ died for you by name in order to make you his own, to say, "You will be Mine. You will serve My purposes henceforth and forever more." And the truly redeemed heart doesn't resent that at all, the truly redeemed heart rejoices at the prospect of having such a noble lofty purpose for which to live throughout all of eternity. "I am His and He is mine." And suddenly the way that the world buffets you, the way that perhaps those close to you have disappointed you, even betrayed you, suddenly you have a whole new purpose on that. "Yeah, that stings, that hurts, that saddens me, but there is

something greater, more transcendent, more lasting secured by the love and the blood of Christ for which I live and therefore I can transcend the earthly disappointment here for the sake of the greater purpose that has been bestowed on me by my benevolent Christ, the One who is good to me, the One who loved me and gave Himself up for me, the One who represents me in heaven as my elder Brother and names me before the throne of grace as His own, and I belong to Him and He is mine, and I am His for Him to use and dispose of as He sees fit. If that means I dwell in obscurity, hey, I dwell in obscurity. That's where I'll serve Him. If He appoints me to obscurity, I will serve Him in obscurity with gladness. He appoints me to poverty, I'll serve Him in poverty. In riches." The outer circumstances start to diminish in importance when you realize that whatever you are doing, whatever life you have, you have been appointed to live that life set apart for whatever Christ would have for you in that realm and that changes things, beloved. No longer are you viewing Christ as the one who has to fix every earthly problem, and that's his job. All of a sudden you start to accept the fact, "Okay, these are the circumstances He's given me. I'm set apart to live for Him in this realm, in these circumstances and I'll gladly do it."

If you're a young person, you're in your teens, your early twenties, you're really just starting life in one sense, I know it doesn't seem that way but from my perspective it is, you're just entering into the adult realm where you're able to make your own decisions about what you're going to give your life to and what you're going to pursue in life. You have the blessed privilege at this moment in that brief window of time to step back and say, "How could I give my life to fully serve the interests of my Master? And maybe that's different from the career oriented things that I had originally chosen in life, or the career orientation that I walked into this room with. I'm set apart to serve Christ. Maybe I should rethink what that means before I take too many more steps down the road that I'm taking. Let me think about how I could give a life over to serve His interests." That doesn't mean everybody has to go out and be a missionary. It doesn't mean everybody has to go out and go into ministry, but it sure is worthwhile to ask that question and to let life be something more than just seeing how much you can get out of it.

At what point, beloved, at what point does it become a point where you say, "Oh, I need to lay down my earthly aspirations for the sake of something else. There is a realm where I could serve Christ if I would just let go of my earthly aspirations and serve Him and devote myself to Him, no matter what it costs me." There's a place for that in the Christian life. It starts to affect who you view as a potential spouse, "Can I serve Christ with this person or is this person so wrapped up in the world that they're just going to be a drag on me seeking Christ?" You see, all kinds of good profitable questions and motivations are brought to the fore when you start to realize that you are a saint in Christ Jesus, separated unto God to serve his purposes.

So let's go to point 2. Go back to Philippians. Go back to Philippians and as you do, let me just add one final passing observation about this meaning of saints. When Paul, you'll remember the church at Corinth, the Corinthian church was quite a mess. They had all kinds of problems and bad behavior and they were just an unholy mess within the church, unholy in the sense that they were just so very carnal and sinful and yet in 1 Corinthians

1:2, Paul could address them as the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Corinth. They were not saints because they were behaving so well. He had to write long long chapters to correct them. They were saints who had been set apart for the purposes of God who now had to be instructed to leave behind their sinful ways in order to advance the purpose for which they had been saved. They were set apart, they were falling short of that lofty position and therefore Paul writes to them, but he doesn't say, "You're not saints," they were saints and that just goes to show that it's about being set apart for a purpose, not necessarily a reflection on how you are fulfilling it.

Philippians 1, point 2 here and we'll just in the clever way that I titled my points these days, point 2 is: saints in Christ Jesus. What is the realm in which we are saints? We are saints in Christ Jesus. What is it that makes us a saint? Look at Philippians 1:1 with me again, "Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi." They are saints in Christ Jesus. What does that mean? What does it mean to be a saint in Christ Jesus? Well, one commentator explains it like this, he says that, "This is a phrase indicating incorporation. Believers are united with Christ in His death and resurrection and the new corporate life that they have entered into is their share in His resurrection life. To be in Christ Jesus is the sphere in which the Christian lives and moves." Christ died and rose again. We who have come to Christ by faith are united with him in that death and resurrection as is pictured in the ordinance of baptism by immersion.

So it means that we have been brought into the life of Christ, we share the life of Christ by the indwelling Holy Spirit, there is a common life principle that is ours in Christ, there is also this sense in which Christ is our representative. He represented us at the cross when he died for us. He represents us in heaven. He is the one who represents us before God and we are in him. So we are united with Christ, we are joined with him in such a way that our confidence is in Christ Jesus, Philippians 1:26, our glory is in Christ Jesus, our peace is in Christ Jesus, our needs are met in Christ Jesus, our future prize is the heavenly call in Christ Jesus, our attitudes toward one another are in Christ Jesus. You see, beloved, the whole of life is determined for you by the reality of who Christ is and what he has done for you. This one who died and rose again and ascended into heaven to save you from your sins brings you into union with himself. You are in Christ. You are identified with him. Scripture says that because he lives, you will live also. The course of his life entering into death and coming out on the other side and being glorified, that is your destination now. That is what belongs to you. That is what will happen to you. If he tarries, you will die but you will come out on the other side. You will live again because this is what Christ has done and everyone that is in him will share in that resurrection life. You are seated at the right hand in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Scripture says, and that reality of being in Christ is the reality and the realm in which we are saints. We are set apart into a realm where Christ has lived, died and risen again, and that is the realm that defines our existence. Everything is determined by that.

That same writer goes on to say, "Christians are saints because of the new relationship into which they have been brought by God in Christ Jesus." Listen carefully, beloved, "It is not because of their own doing or by works of the law but because of what Christ has

done. They are set apart for Him and His service." You are a saint, you are set apart because of what Christ has done in dying for you, in living for you, and being raised from the dead for you, and he has shared all of the benefits and all of the reality of that with you, and by the person of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the very life principle that empowered and enabled Christ to do that on earth now resides within you. So there is such a close identity with Christ that we are said to be in him and to be in him is to be separated from the world, to be in him is to be set apart for his service.

So beloved, the reality of being a saint, the reality of being set apart for his service is the defining nature of your purpose in life. Listen to me carefully: whatever time that you have, whatever resources you have, whatever mind you have been given, whatever spouse, whatever family, whatever job, whatever abilities you have, beloved, hold the thought there for just a moment, those things are not parallel items in your life to being a Christian. It's not that there's being a Christian and you do certain things because you're a Christian, and then you set that aside and you move over and then devote yourself to your job or your family or these other things. No, no, your time, your resources, your mind, your spouse, your family, your job, your abilities, everything else about your life, all of those things are integrated into one great surpassing reality. You have been separated from the world into Christ and the totality of those things, you gather all of those up and you understand that all that I have represented in those things is set apart that I would be serving under Christ and fulfilling his purpose in what he has given to me. The life he has given to me in all of its details, in all of its opportunities and all of its disappointments, all of its relationships, I am set apart to serve Christ in every one of those areas. And those things are given to you to devote yourself to, to spend, to use for his purposes so that Christ and his purposes become the great unifying theme of every aspect of your life.

You can see how foolish it is and how misguided it is to think that being a Christian is simply you coming to church on Sunday and then just doing whatever you want during the rest of the week. In what sense is a person set apart for the purposes of Christ if that's their mindset? Christ is not one check box, one box to check in the midst of a lot of other things. Christ is the check box and all of those other things fall as subsets of the purpose for which you have been set apart in Christ. If you follow the flow of thought in the book of Ephesians, you find the implications of salvation that was described in chapters 1 through 3 being works out in personal morality in chapter 4, in the body of Christ in chapter 5, in a marriage relationship, in a parenting relationship, in the work relationship, and the reason for all of these things is that the great reality of salvation defines how you look at everything else in life because you've been set apart for that purpose.

Now maybe you're fairly new to Christ, maybe you're fairly new to this thought and you say, "Man, I've never thought about it. I don't even know where to begin." Well, praise the Lord for that. Praise the Lord for that because now all of the sudden you understand why the word of God is so precious and important to you. You need to know the word of God if you're going to live this way. You need to know the word of God if you are going to know the mind of the one who has set you apart to live for his purposes. And look, look, I'm saying this in love but I've just got to, there are times where you've just got to be direct as a pastor, if the word of God is not a regular ongoing part of your life, you're

missing the purpose for which you have been saved because it is in the word of God, the 66 books of the Bible, where Christ makes known to his slaves how they are to live and the way that they are to fulfill their purpose of being set apart for him. You can't intuit this. You can't guess at it. You have to know what the word of God says.

So his word, then, is more than an occasional part of life, if you happen to show up on Sunday, his word is your daily bread. You need to be in his word on a consistent regular, if not daily basis, beloved, because how are you going to fulfill the purposes of Christ if the one place where his purpose is revealed is closed on your shelf day after day after day? You say, "But you don't understand, I've got work to do. I've got lots of things going on in my life. I'm really really busy." To which I reply, "Friend, I don't think you understand. I don't think you understand because if you understood you wouldn't be pitting your earthly busyness against devotion to Christ. You wouldn't even talk that way if you understood that."

So beloved, let me wrap this up. All of this has very practical implications. The life that you have right now is the life that God has given to you. He is in providential control of all of your circumstances, good, bad, indifferent, and accidental seemingly. This is the life that God has given to you whether you like it or not. This is the life that God has given to you. If you are in Christ, you have been set apart by God to serve his purposes in exactly the life that he has given to you. If you're a young person, you say, "I've got a lot of days ahead. I'd better be thinking about how I could use those for Christ." If the sun is setting on life for you and you know you've only got a few more short days to live, the principle is still the same, you're set apart to live for Christ in this particular place. And the thing that we all need to come to better grips with is this, is that the life that Christ has given to you and the salvation that he has given to you so graciously, is not about you now fulfilling your ambitions on a personal level and Christ is an accessory to help advance your agenda, rather the life that you have been given is the means in which and the means by which you are to serve Christ. And we can look at every area of our lives, of our family, of our jobs, of our relationships, of our church, of what we preach, of what we teach, of how we deal with our children, and we see in all of this the word of God has addressed it all and when we realize that what I am doing here is the service that Christ has given to me, that which I have been set apart to do.

So we have this position as saints. A great privilege. Great, great, noble, highest purpose that could be given to immortal being to live life. You say, "But I'm crushed. You don't know how hard life has been and you don't know how the people closest to me have betrayed me." To which the answer to that is the same that it is to anything else, "Yes, brother, I understand that. I sympathize with that. I'm sure that's difficult but don't stop there. Understand that what you are to do now is to display how one lives for Christ in that situation, how do you serve Christ in that broken position, how do you live and manifests faithfulness to Christ there, because He gave you the life and has set you apart to serve Him and to glorify Him in exactly the life that He has given to you." You don't have to be a pastor for this to be true, this is what every Christian does. This is how a Christian thinks about life, "I'm a slave of Christ. I'm subordinated to a person greater than I am. I'm a saint in Christ Jesus. He has set me apart to serve Him in the life that He

has given to me. God, help me to know what that looks like that I might fulfill the very purpose for which I was saved, to be a saint here, one day to be set apart in glory for His honor and praise."

Father, these things are so searching, in one sense so intangible but in another sense so very practical. For our young people, Father, let them think seriously, work by Your Spirit and search out the ambitions by which they have been setting up their lives and if those ambitions have not been sanctified, set apart for Christ, Father, work in their hearts that they might give their life over to the purpose for which they have been set apart rather than seeking fame, glory and riches as ends in their own right. Father, for those of us further on with more years in the rearview mirror than there are ahead in the windshield for us, Father, we pray that just as You set us apart in our youth to serve You, so now we have this time, this season, this purpose in life by which we are to be set apart and to serve. Father, let the great principle inform our perspective. Help us find the practical tangible ways in which this is lived out that we might fulfill our calling as slaves and saints in Christ Jesus, our Lord. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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