**Sanctified How?**

**1Corinthians 1:1-9**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

So, did you listen to the Old Testament lesson? God, using Moses to speak to Israelites, said, "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?” (Deut. 10:12-13)

And that’s just the beginning. They know what it feels like to be sojourners in a foreign land, and made into slaves, as they have come out of their slavery in Egypt. So, they also ought to love the sojourners in their land.

Sound familiar? Here are the Lord God’s commands to you as well, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, and your neighbor as yourself.*

In the gradual today, that portion of the Psalms we read responsively between the Old Testament and Epistle lessons, it said, “I was glad when they said to me: Let us go into the house of the Lord.” Are you?

Why do you follow God’s commandments? Or maybe I should ask it this way, why do you ***try*** to follow God’s commandments? Why do you come into God’s house each week? Is it so that you look holy and righteous before others? Or, are they the things you do in the hope that God will smile upon you and bless you?

Are there times you try to make deals with God? You know what I mean, “God, if you get me through this problem, I will be in church every Sunday.” Or maybe it isn’t so much a deal with God as much as it is asking if He’s noticed you, “Lord, I love you and try to be good, why does my life have this or that problem?”

In our Gospel lesson, the Pharisees are asking Jesus what the greatest commandment is. They know it has to do with loving God. They ask, because their public actions appear to show their love of God. They think they must be pretty good stuff in God’s eyes. Most of the Jewish people think of the Pharisees as the ones you hope most to be like, because then you’ll be a good Jew. Loving God is easy to show – you keep the Sabbath, you tithe, you make the requisite sacrifices, and so, outwardly at least, you look pretty good.

But, to be holy – to be truly sanctified – Jesus says, “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48) To be perfect includes the second part of what it means to love God, which Jesus brings to their attention. To truly love God means that you will also love your neighbor as yourself – after all, God did create you both in His image.

We all like to **think we are** pretty good people. At least we are god-fearing people, and that’s got to count for something. This now brings us to our text which is going to tell us something a bit different in regard to becoming holy.

Jesus said you and I are to be perfect. We are to be holy. We are to be righteous. What did we just confess at the beginning of our service? Yeah, that is how being holy is going for me too, “I, a poor, miserable, sinner…”

Now, in our text, Paul writes that we are ***called to be saints*** – that is, we are called to be holy. But we fail at every turn. And when we fail to live up to God’s holy and righteous demands, we make excuses. We blame others – “if Herman would not have done that to me, I would not have retaliated.” Or even worse, we blame God – “It isn’t my fault, God made me this way, so it must be OK.”

In both cases, we try to look to ourselves to be holy. Adding insult to injury, there are hundreds of preachers out there who will tell you how to live the sanctified life. That is, they tell you what ***you must do*** to live the holy life. There was a multi-million selling book full of lies that purport to tell you how ***you*** can find purpose to live your life to be holy by your works.

When all is said and done, many of you would like the pastor to tell you what we have to do to be better Christians. It is not your works which make you holy. Pauline is not a saint because she puts up with me – although if there was anything which could qualify one for sainthood – that would be it.

So, if it isn’t our own works which sanctify us, that is, make us holy, what is it? Didn’t you hear it? To the church of God which is in Embarrass, and Pella Opening, and Belle Plaine, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

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

I give thanks to my God always for you because ***of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus***, that **in every way** ***you were enriched in him*** in all speech and all knowledge— even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ***who will sustain you to the end, guiltless*** *in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.* God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

You are sanctified in Christ Jesus. You are called to be saints – just as are all, who, by God’s grace given to them, are in Christ Jesus. It is Christ who sanctifies you. It is Christ who makes you holy. It is Christ who sustains us, guiltless till His day will dawn again.

The Pharisees tried so hard to prove that they were sanctified, that they were holy because of how they lived. Their hatred of Christ proves otherwise, but Jesus wanted them to be holy – He wanted them to be a part of His eternal kingdom. Jesus tried, time and time again, to get them to acknowledge their sinfulness and repent – that is, to have sorrow over, and then turn away from their sins, and trust solely in God’s grace. They stubbornly refused to do so.

There are those who sit in the pews of His church today who do the same thing. Pastor calls specific sins what they are in the sermon, and it tags someone right between the eyes. Immediately, the thought runs through their mind, “How dare the pastor talk about me like that?” They get so riled up they fail to hear the rest of the sermon. What is more, too bad they do not know that the pastor kicked himself squarely in the teeth with the same condemnatory words from God’s Law.

But it doesn’t end there? It never ends solely with the Law. Although some fail to hear the best part because they got their dander up, the best news is still coming.

As our text says, we are sanctified in Christ Jesus.

It was Christ who did fulfill the Law perfectly – loving God and man perfectly. Christ was indeed holy and righteous – He was not only a saint, but God – God in human flesh. That holy flesh of Christ God allowed to suffer. He endured pain, punishment, and death as payment for sin – for Pharisee sin, for Sadducee sin, for your sin, and for my sin. Christ paid for all sin, of all time, in His one time atoning sacrificial death upon the cross.

Those who are saints, are those to whom that grace of God is given in Christ Jesus. God’s grace sustains you, me, and all believers as guiltless. It is God’s grace which makes us holy, sanctifying us as His beloved Children.

How are you sanctified? How are you made holy? When your sin is no longer yours! When you are in Christ Jesus, He bears your sins and you are robed in His holy righteousness!

By God’s grace, you are baptized into Christ – into His death and resurrection. You wear His holiness as your own garment of salvation, so that when the Father looks at you he sees only His beloved Son.

How are you sanctified? How are you made holy? When you are in Christ Jesus – when you trust that the word of forgiveness spoken into your ear cleanses you of all sin, and truly makes you holy, a sanctified child of God.

How are you sanctified? How are you made holy? When you are in Christ Jesus – when you eat of His body and drink of His blood, It is in the eating and drinking of Christ that your sinfulness is removed, and you are filled with His holiness and righteousness.

You dear friends are called to be saints – to be the holy ones of God – and so you are, sanctified in Christ Jesus. God is faithful, who will sustain you to the end, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.