

A SAINT IS ANYONE WHO IS LED BY THE SPIRIT TO PLACE HIS HOPE IN THE LORD!

Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints! For the LORD preserves the faithful, and fully repays the proud person. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the LORD. Psalm 31:23-24

The Christian Church of Luther's day and unfortunately branches of the church today did not and do not understand the biblical meaning of the word "saint." Consequently, there is much confusion both within the external Christian church and outside it as well concerning this precious biblical truth. The word "saint," in either its singular or plural form, is found ninety-six times in the Bible. In every instance it refers simply to someone who believes in God and places his faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord! Therefore, you and I, biblically speaking, are saints in the eyes of God!

David reveals this in Psalm 31:23-24. Hebrew poetry is thought-poetry. It states an idea and then often repeats it in order to further define it. David does this very thing. He begins by exhorting us with the words, "*Oh, love the LORD...*," after which he identifies us: "*All you His saints!*" He then ends with a second exhortation, "*Be of good courage...*," and then further defines us: "*All you who hope in the LORD!*" Consequently, we can say biblically that a saint is anyone who is led by the Spirit to place his hope in the Lord!

Therefore, as saints we are encouraged to "*love the LORD!*" You and I have every reason to do so! As we confess - we are by nature sinful! We have not loved God above all things, nor our neighbours as God has loved us. We have sinned by doing things contrary to God's will and sinned by failing to do what He has commanded. We sin in our thoughts, with our words, and through our actions. Yet, God has loved us! In Romans 5:6-9 Paul speaks of that love of God when he writes: "*When we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him!*"

Isn't God's love wonderful! He gave that which was most precious to Himself - the life of His only-begotten Son, so that we might be saved. Through Him we have been cleansed. By His work we have been declared saints! How might we love Him? Jesus says so very plainly: "*If you love Me, keep My Commandments,*" (John 14:15). What is the summary of His commandments? It is simply to love - love everyone, in every way, and at all times! Pray that God would give you that "*clean heart*" and "*steadfast spirit*" (cf. Psalm 51:10) necessary both to see how to meet the needs and to desire to meet the needs of those around you and so to love them! As you strive to do that, rejoice in the fact that as David promises: "*The LORD preserves the faithful!*" He will care for you, guide you, and free you to be the saint God has declared you to be - not a perfect man or woman, but a forgiven man or woman declared holy through the blood of the Lamb, a determined man or woman focused on living life to God's glory and under His blessing!

"*Be of good courage,*" David likewise encourages us! As God's saints we have every reason to be filled with courage! Our God stands beside us. He will never fail us, nor forsake us. Rather, David says, He will "*strengthen your heart!*" Luther wrote in his famous Reformation hymn: "*A mighty fortress is our God, a trusty shield and weapon!*" That hymn was based upon Luther's favourite psalm - Psalm 46. It begins, "*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear,*" (vs. 1-2a).

We have every reason to place our hope in the LORD. Consider the history of David - deliverance upon deliverance and blessing upon blessing! Consider the history of Luther - deliverance upon deliverance and blessing upon blessing! Oh, yes, both David and Luther faced many trials in this sin-filled world, as will we all! Yet, as saints of God we can place our hope in the LORD, knowing that in the end our lives too will be summarised in the same way - deliverance upon deliverance and blessing upon blessing! Truly - a saint is anyone who is led by the Spirit to place his hope in the Lord!