**I AM A HOLY SAINT**

***Sanctified For God’s Service***

Saint Rick. No, not St. Nick, but saint Rick. Does that shock you? Do you think I am a bonified egomaniac? Do I think I’m holier-than-thou? The very title to this article will turn some off from reading further. To classify myself in the same breath as the holy men of the Bible seems like a major case of narcissism. On the Mayo Clinic website they define a psychological problem called NPD (Narcissistic Personality Disorder) in which they say, “NPD is a mental condition in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance.” It originated with the Greek myth of a man named Narcissus who was a very handsome youth who looked into a pool of water and fell in love with his own reflection. He spent so much time admiring himself that he soon changed into a flower that bears his name – Narcissus.

Is it truly narcissism to think of oneself as a holy man of God? Is it wrong to think of myself as a saint? When I open my old King James Bible and read the titles of the New Testament I see headings with these titles: “*The Gospel According to St. Matthew*,” “*The Gospel According to St. Mark*” “*The Gospel According to* *St. Luke*” “*The Gospel According to St. John*” and “*The Revelation of St. John the Divine*.” Do I now put myself in their category and join myself in their sainthood?

Yes. And, I might quickly add, if you’re a Christian you are a saint too. Centuries ago the Catholic Church created this totem pole of Christianity that elevated some men above others. It is how we eventually got to this very unscriptural and ungodly false doctrine of a clergy / laity distinction. Creating new titles and positions like Parish Priest, Arch Bishop, Cardinal, and Pope placed men in positions of power and prestige that God abhors. It evolved into a privileged class, a sanctified Hall of Fame that certified men and women as “*saints*” only after they had lived exemplary lives and had died. For example, “Mother” Teresa of Calcutta, who died in 1997, was declared “St. Teresa of Calcutta” in 2016 by “Pope” Francis.

Even outside the Roman Catholic Church there are similar thoughts of sainthood in those who are “Protestant Christians.” Men and women who wear special “holy” garments and accept sacred titles like “Reverend,” “Father,” “Rector,” “Parson” and “Pastor” (an ordained position in the clergy) are thought to be “saints” above others called “laity.”

However, even a casual reading of the Bible reveals a totally different picture of sainthood. The word *saint* is the Greek ***HAGIOS*** and means “holy, sacred, pure, consecrated to God” and is found 229 times in the New Testament. It is used of the “*Holy Spirit*,” the “*holy city*” (Jerusalem), the “*holy angels*,” the “*holy Child*” (Jesus) and the “*holy scriptures*”. But it is also used to describe the saints at Jerusalem (Ac. 9:13), the saints at Lydda (Ac. 9:32), and the saints at Rome (Rom. 1:7), Corinth (I Cor. 1:2), Ephesus (Eph. 1:1), Philippi (Phil. 1:1), Colosse (Col. 1:2), and Thessalonica (I Thess. 3:13).

Reading Philippians 4:21-22 we see Paul’s good-bye to that good church he loved dearly. In his farewell he said: *“Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar’s household.”* But quickly read Paul’s introduction in Philippians 1:1. *“Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.”* Every single Christian in that church was considered by the apostle as “*brethren*” and “*saints*.”

In the N.T. we are struck by the various names given to followers of Christ. Ironically, the least used name is *Christian*, applied only three times (Ac. 11:26; 26:28; I Pet. 4:16). Other words for God’s people are the *church* (God’s called out people), *disciples* (Ac. 11:26), *brother* / *brethren* (Ac. 18:27), *believer* (2 Cor. 6:15), *follower* (Ac. 24:14), *Nazarenes* (Ac. 24:5), the *body* of Christ, *citizens* of the kingdom (Eph. 2:19), *servants* (Rev. 1:1), *children* of God (Rom. 8:16), the *elect* (Col. 3:12), and the *chosen* (Eph. 1:4).

But if those descriptions are not enough to make you feel special, read this: “*You also as living stones are being built up* *a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*” (I Pet. 2:6), followed by this: “*You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*” (I Pet. 2:9). Did you get that? A “*holy*” priesthood, a “*holy*” nation.

A priest has direct access to God. But to be in that special position he must first be ***holy***. That means he must be “*sanctified*” or “*set apart unto God*.” That’s exactly what a saint is. “*To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints*” (I Cor. 1:2). Who were these super special people? Paul tells us they were former low-life sinners. These “*saints*” at Corinth were former *“fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners … And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were* ***sanctified****, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God”* (I Cor. 6:9-11).

These Corinthians, who had been abominable sinners, were now thought by God to be “*washed*” from their sins (Ac. 22:16), “*sanctified*” (set apart as holy), and “*justified”* (declared in God’s court of law as “not guilty” of sins). If God were still writing His elite Hall of Faith list like He did in Hebrews 11 these sinful nobodies would be among this “great cloud of witnesses” who were waiting to be perfected in their heavenly home with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and others (Heb. 12:1).

Back to me … and you. We are saints, now! We are set apart as holy *vessels of honor* (2 Tim. 2:20) to be used for His purposes on earth. *Saint* Matthew, *Saint* Mark, *Saint* Rick are not titles to be worn, but descriptions of how God sees us, and uses us. Paul says it perfectly this way*: “​I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice,* ***holy****, acceptable to God, which is your* ***reasonable service****”* (Rom. 12:1). We are a sanctified, holy people to render service to the Lord.

The Hebrew writer was not a narcissist when he said, “​*Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling…”* (Heb. 3:1), then closed his epistle saying, *“Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints” (Heb. 13:24).* God wants us to know we have a special place in His heart, and in His plans. This week, let us act like it.

I love you. – saint Rick