

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

Colossians 1:2

An Awful Thing



READING AGAIN THE DEFINITION of the Greek word translated “saints,” I was reminded of the typical first words out of the mouth of a visiting angel in God’s word.

The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.”

Luke 1:30

The angel said to the women [at the tomb], “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.”

Matthew 28:5

The first sight of angels must have been a frightful, horrific experience for mere mortals, for the standard reaction to an angelic visitation was one of trembling, quaking fear. Remember Isaiah’s reaction when in his vision he stood before not just God Almighty on the throne of heaven, but was also surrounded by swirling, sweeping, worshipping seraphim? He was scared out of his wits.

This idea of something so awe-inspiring, so awful is the root source of the word “saints.” The word translated “saints” in the New Testament is *hagios*, from *hagos*, which means an awful thing. *Hagios*, by extension, means something sacred, pure, consecrated, holy.



We are “saints” not because we attend church, and certainly not because we are remotely perfect. We are saints because in

every believer there is an almost symbiotic relationship with the person and spirit of Christ Jesus. Symbiosis implies mutual benefit, and for that reason the term is not wholly accurate, since we contribute nothing to the perfection of the Godhead beyond our devotion and praise. But it does describe reasonably well the fusion, the level of supernatural intimacy in the relationship—something that is hard for the temporal mind to grasp.

hagios: from *hagos* (an awful thing); sacred (physical pure, moral blameless or religious, ceremony consecrated, separated) :- (most) holy (one, thing), saint.

We too often forget that we, as believers in Christ, are made sacred, consecrated, awful things. Paul addresses this letter to “saints and faithful brethren in Christ.” Believers are *in* Christ—inside Him—a mystical relationship that goes beyond the necessary “faith in” (v4). We are in Him and He is in us, as Paul states in Chapter Three, taking it a degree further:

When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Colossians 3:4

Certainly the most eloquent version of this truth is found in Paul’s letter to the Galatian churches.

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

Galatians 2:20



It requires an atypical thought process for us to think of ourselves as “holy,” “sacred,” “consecrated.” Such a perspective goes against everything we know about ourselves. But Paul uses a word that reminds us that we are, indeed, holy things because we are in Christ. And that astounding truth should inform our every waking minute.

We are in this world, but we are not *of* this world, because we are consecrated.

Temptation to sin should find no purchase in our lives, because we are holy.

When challenged and ridiculed for our faith we should not retreat but stand our ground, because we are, in Christ, an awful thing.

