

Instant Access Study Guide #1

“Saint or Sinner – Why How You See Yourself Is So Important”

Main Point:

A person cannot consistently live contrary to how they see themselves to be. How we act, think, feel, and relate to others will be an extension of what we believe ourselves to be. Therefore, it is vitally important as a Christians that we know exactly who we are and Who says so.

80% of believers in a recent survey said they were discouraged and disappointed in their spiritual lives. They could not consistently live their Christian life as they thought God wanted them to live it.

Can you identify with these 80%?

We must stop identifying ourselves by our actions and begin to identify ourselves by our natures.

The Butterfly Story – a boy helps a struggling butterfly out of its cocoon. But because he helped, the butterfly’s wings did not develop properly. It cannot fly. Is it still a butterfly even if it cannot fly?

Yes – it is a butterfly by its nature. What it is is not determined not by its actions. What it is is determined by its nature.

- **67 times in the New Testament God inspires the writers to call believers “Saints”.**
- **Were they perfect or in some way better than we are today? No!!**
- **Take the church in Corinth for example. They were a mess – cliques, public law suits, immorality that made the unbelievers blush, and worst of all, gluttony and drunkenness at the Lord’s Supper.**
- **Yet Paul addresses them as “saints by calling” in 1 Cor. 1:2. They were “saints” (holy ones) by nature. They were “saints” because of how God had changed them when they trusted Jesus as their Savior.**

How did God change them?

“Therefore, if any man (anyone) is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

new creature = From the verb “to make”; to fabricate, to completely change

old things = The original; those that existed from the beginning; the attitudes and actions we have had and done for which we earned “death”.

The “old things” = Greed, Jealousy, Lies, Arrogance, Immorality, Anger, Cliques, Sensualness, Rebellion, Evil, Gossip, Slander, Maliciousness, Impurity, Envy, Abusiveness, Insolence, Quarreling. (*Rm. 1:28-32; Gal. 5:19-21; Col. 3:5-9*)

passed away = *perished; died*

new things = *A new kind of; unheard of; unprecedented; not in existence before*

The “new things” = Love, Compassion, Humility, Kindness, Gentleness, Patience, Forgiveness, Sympathy, Joy, Concern, Self-Sacrificing, Empathy, Service, Peace, Hopeful, Self-Control. (*Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 3:15*)

have come = *to exist, to be*

- When the Corinthian believers had made their decision to accept Jesus as their Savior, not only did God forgive their sins, He made them into new creatures.
- They became something unheard of. They became something that had never existed before.

Jesus described the need for this change in Mark 7:20-23

“20 And He was saying, ‘That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. 23 All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.’ ”

- Jesus was replying to the Pharisees and religious leaders who wanted to know why Jesus disciples did not keep the ritual, external cleansing traditions of washing cups and other utensils before using them.
- Jesus was saying to them that external rituals could never make a person “clean”. Jesus knew that people needed a heart change if they were ever to have a chance to really change their behavior.

By saying this He was identifying His ministry with the Prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel had prophesied of a time when God would perform a heart change in His people.

Ezek 36:25-27

26 “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 “And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

This is the “new creature” we become when we trust Jesus as our Savior.

- First, our sins are forgiven.

- **Then God, the Divine surgeon, performs a spiritual heart transplant within us. We are given a new heart, and it is good.**
- **Plus, the Holy Spirit takes up residence within us to give life to the “new things” that are the nature of our new hearts.**

You might ask, “If I am new creature, why do I feel and act the same as I felt and acted before my salvation?” That is an important question. It will be the subject of a later study whose focus will be on that question alone.

For this lesson, the issue is, “How do I see myself?”

- **God says you are a Saint by calling.**
- **God says you are a Saint because of what He has done in you by giving you a spiritual heart transplant.**
- **God says you are a Saint with all the potential to be all that He wants you to be.**
- **Satan wants you to continue to see yourself as a sinner who has no real hope of ever being what god wants you to be.**

You cannot consistently behave contrary to what you believe yourself to be?

Who will you believe, God or Satan??