

## Before And After

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Don't you just love those "before-and-after" pictures? In the "before" shot, you fill out those sweat pants completely. After you shed many excess pounds, you put on the same sweat pants, but now they're baggy; you have to hold them out at the waist to keep them up and show how much smaller you are. Impressive!

Even more impressive is the before-and-after picture of your relationship with God presented in Colossians 1:21-22. Two characteristics glare forth from the "before" image: "and you who were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works" (v. 21). One who is "alienated" not only lacks citizenship, but is on bad terms with the Lord. This feeds into the second word, "enemies." The corrupt thoughts of your mind led to wicked works, all of which alienated you from God and made you His enemy.

But now let's see the "after" picture. In Christ, you are "holy, and blameless, and above reproach" (v. 22). No longer aliens, you have been made holy, set apart from the world to serve God. No longer are you blamed for the wicked works you committed. No longer are you liable to reproach.

How did all of these radical changes occur? Jesus Christ "*has reconciled (you) in the body of His flesh through death*" (vv. 21b-22a). To reconcile means to re-establish friendly relations. Jesus accomplished this when He died upon the cross to atone for your sins. He "bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). Your sins alienated you from God and made you His enemy, but Jesus' blood washed away your sins so you can be on good terms with God once more.

Before and after – oh, what a difference!

## Love For All The Saints

An interesting tidbit from the New Testament is that only once does the Greek word for "saint" (hagios) occur in singular form. That occurrence is in Philippians 4:21, and even there it refers to more than one "saint," being prefaced by the word "every." In other words, every reference to the followers of Christ as "saints" is in the plural form. Without a doubt, this shows the strong bond we are to have with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Christianity is indeed an interactive, loving, symbiotic existence. It is God's desire and design that Christians involve themselves and their lives with one another. Notice these ways we involve ourselves with one another. Here is "*the faith of the saints*" (Revelation 13:10):

- \* "*distributing to the needs of the saints*" (Romans 12:13)
- \* "*devoted...to the ministry of the saints*" (1 Corinthians 16:15)
- \* "*the fellowship of...the saints*" (2 Corinthians 8:4)
- \* "*the equipping of the saints*" (Ephesians 4:12)
- \* "*praying always...for all the saints*" (Ephesians 6:18)
- \* "*Greet every saint*" (Philippians 4:21)
- \* "*washed the saints' feet*" (1 Timothy 5:10)
- \* "*hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you*" (Philemon 7)
- \* "*the prayers of the saints*" (Revelation 5:8)
- \* "*the righteous acts of the saints*" (Revelation 19:8)

Truly, this is how we show our "*love for all the saints*" (Ephesians 1:15; Colossians 1:14; Philemon 5): by interacting in helping, ministering, fellowshiping, training/mentoring, serving, refreshing/edifying, praying, and acting in righteous ways.

Take a good look at your life currently. Do you interact with your fellow saints? Do you show your love in the ways which were just listed? If you are truly a saint of God, then resolve to live up to your holy name!

"*Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints...*" (Ephesians 2:19).

--Edd Sterchi (Campbellsville, KY) adapted

## COMMON SENSE?

"Common sense? ..., ma'am, sense is the most uncommon thing in the world." --Christopher Morley--

Mr. Morley was right. Much of what passes for common sense is nonsense. People believe things that an investigation would disclose as a fraud. But they are following the crowd, not investigating.

People commonly believe historical falsehoods. Many people believe that the United States constitution speaks of "the separation of church and state." In fact, no such language appears anywhere in the constitution or any of the amendments. Far from forbidding churches to criticize the government, the constitution actually guarantees churches that right, using language even stronger than that used to protect newspapers from government interference.

People commonly believe scientific falsehoods. Almost anyone will tell you that water boils at 212° Fahrenheit (100° Celsius). That is true if you are at sea level, but try it at Denver and you will get a different result (about 202° I believe).

People commonly believe spiritual falsehoods. Satan has filled the world with religious ideas that are false, and many people (including many church-goers) have accepted these common ideas as the truth.

Do not get your faith from the television. Do not get the content of your religion from what everyone believes. Check it out. Go to the source. Get the facts. It is the scriptures that are able to make us "*wise unto salvation through faith in Christ*" (2 Tim 3:15). Let us make sure that what we believe can really be found there.

"Common sense" religion, believed by most people, will lead to the wide gate at which many will enter. And that is not a good gate to pass through according to Jesus (see Mt 7:13-27).

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)