

Marks of Saintliness

by Elmer Ellsworth Shelhamer

Elmer Shelhamer outlines the marks of saintliness, emphasizing the importance of prayer, few words, graciousness, deadness to earthly things, bearing losses patiently, magnanimity, and humility.

Scripture: Proverbs 11:25, Romans 1:7, Ephesians 4:2, Philippians 2:3, Colossians 3:3, 1 Peter 5:5

Topics: "Christian Maturity", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

Elmer Ellsworth Shelhamer emphasizes the importance of maturity in the Christian faith, highlighting that while initial salvation can be instantaneous, becoming an advanced saint requires years of discipline. He outlines seven marks of saintliness, including the habit of constant prayer, using few words wisely, graciousness in speech and actions, being dead to earthly desires, bearing losses patiently, showing magnanimity, and embodying humility as the crowning virtue.

Transcript

Elmer Ellsworth Shelhamer (1869-1940) was an American, an evangelist with the Free Methodists in the latter 19th and early 20th centuries. He wrote many practical and forceful tracts and pamphlets and also a few books. His autobiography is a classic and well worth the read. Here is a small portion taken from his outstanding little book "Guide To Beginners," which contains much practical advice for those young (!) in the faith. This is the 19th chapter entitled 'Marks of Saintliness.'

Paul said that he was "called to be an apostle." Not many are thus called, but we are all "called to be saints." This means more than mere church membership; yea, than the initial states of pardon or purity. These may be had through "the precious blood" in a moment. But maturity is the work of years of discipline. Since every true Christian desires to be an advanced saint, let us notice a few marks of saintliness.

1) The Habit of Prayer. Multitudes say and read prayers, who know nothing about contacting God. Then there are others who pray through and touch God occasionally, especially when in trouble. But there are only a few who live constantly in the spirit of prayer; where it has become a fixed daily habit; where hours of communion and travail have become a natural delight.

2) Few Words. The mature saint weighs and spares his words. A wordy person will invariably drift into evil speaking, foolish talking, and "ego" conversation. "Let your speech be always with grace seasoned with salt," that ye may excel to the edifying of the hearers.

3) Graciousness. It is a mark of sainthood to be polite rather than rude. How lovely to behold one who is always courteous and appreciative of the smallest favor from great or small. It costs nothing to speak in a gracious tone, even to opposers and inferiors. On the other hand, how unfortunate that anyone, especially leaders, should become curt and dogmatic.

4) Deadness to Earthly Things. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." A dead man is not given to curiosity. He is unconcerned about the latest news, or prospects of place and power. He is oblivious not only to carnal, but to legitimate joys; the one and only concern being that he and others may stand acquitted in that great day.

5) Bearing Losses and Interruptions Patiently. Few can do this. To be able to keep perfectly calm amid the carelessness and ignorance of a servant, or with those of your own household, is a mark of being "hid with Christ in God." The tone of the voice, the move of the hand, or the glance of the eye, are outward signs of inward grace, or the lack of it.

6) Magnanimity. A ripe saint cannot stoop to a mean, unbrotherly act. He is too big to readily believe what he hears of another. He is not close and stingy, but gladly pays his full share; yea, more than is required. "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

7) Humility. This is the crowning virtue. But who can describe it? If we ask it to do so, we are silently reproved, for it never speaks of itself. Shall we let a mature saint, Andrew Murray, try? "Humility is perfect quietness of heart. It is to have no trouble. It is never to be fretted, or vexed, or irritable, or sore, or disappointed. It is to expect nothing, to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel no resentment done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised. It is to have a blessed home in the Lord, where I can go in and shut the door, and kneel to my Father in secret, and am at peace as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and above is trouble." To your knees! To your knees!

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