

THE COMMUNION of SAINTS

Heb 12:1-2, 18, 22-29

I. SAINTS—WHO? (Acts 9:32; Rom 15:26); 2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; Eph 1:1; Jude 3)

- A. Baptized believers, set apart for service
- B. Finally penitent—trusting God’s mercy, confessing Christ as Savior
- C. Westminster Confession: “All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head, by his Spirit and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection and glory; and being united to one another in love, they have communion in each others’s gifts and Graces” (XXVI.1).

II. ON EARTH: CHURCH MILITANT

- A. Bonded via:
 - 1. Communion with Father, Son & Holy Spirit (I Jn 1:3)
 - 2. Interacting with angels (Heb 1:14)
 - 3. Sharing body, Spirit, Lord, faith, baptism, God, Father (Eph 4:4-5)
 - 4. Serving as important members of Body of Christ (I Cor 12:25-27; Eph 4:16) & Kingdom of God
 - 5. Indwelt by Holy Spirit as evident at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21)
- B. Energized by Charity, Holy Spirit (Eph 4:16)
- C. Engaging in:
 - 1. Intercessory prayer: pervasive & efficacious—NB Paul’s constant prayer for, and requests for prayer
 - 2. Eucharistic communion—“holy communion” affirms community life, sharing Body & Blood of Christ
 - 3. “Spiritual Works of Mercy”—various members doing various works, none doing all
 - a. Counseling the Doubtful—apologetics, *a la* C.S. Lewis, William Lane Craig’s Reasonable Faith
 - b. Instructing the Ignorant—Christian schools at all levels
 - c. Admonishing the Sinner—clarifying nature & consequences of Sin/sins via preaching & witness (even if at times silently, by refraining from activity or refusing to approve it)
 - d. Comforting the Sorrowful—pastoral counseling, non-threatening friendships
 - e. Forgiving Injuries—confessional, altar calls, counseling (e.g. Jesse Lee Peterson’s *The Antidote* & organization, BOND, to repair heart-hurts re fathers)
 - f. Bearing Wrongs Patiently—sharing burdens, non-violent resistance (e.g. Pro-Life Activists)
 - g. Praying for Others—constant intercessory prayers, specific & general (e.g. “prayer list”)
 - 4. “Corporal Works of Mercy”
 - a. Feeding the Hungry—food banks; charitable organizations (e.g. Compassion)
 - b. Giving Drink to the Thirsty—wells in needy areas (e.g. Healing Waters)
 - c. Sheltering the Homeless—rescue missions (near & far—Salvation Army especially)
 - d. Visiting the Sick—hospitals & doctors & nurses & friends & relatives & chaplains & pastoral visits & deacons
 - e. Visiting the Prisoners—chaplains, bible studies (e.g. Prison Fellowship)
 - f. Burying the Dead—funerals & family dinners & support groups & literature
 - g. Giving Alms to the Poor—local churches; denominational endeavors; charitable organizations

III. IN PRESENT HEAVEN/PARADISE: CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

- A. United with Christ, both saints on earth and in heaven share communion and those in heaven:
 - 1. They have finished earthly course (2 Tim 4:7)
 - 2. But they retain earthly ties in Communion of Saints (Eph 1:20; Heb 12:23)
- B. Lord’s Prayer: “on earth as it is in heaven” implies concurrent
- D. Hebrews 12:1-2, 18, 22-29: we must diligently run the race, witnessed by saints & angels, trusting:
 - 1. “Wherefore” (v. 1) reminds us of heroes of faith in chapter 11—those gone before, in glory, observing
 - a. They intercede (along with Christ) for us
 - b. They remember their past, as is evident with martyrs, including us
 - c. They see earthly events, witnessing our pilgrimage
 - d. They rejoice at our sanctification and the salvation of the lost
 - 2. Allusion to Olympic Games—thus “lay aside every weight” as we run the race
 - 3. Following Jesus, aiming to join Him
 - 4. Come to Mount Zion (saints & angels & general assembly & Jesus & supreme God)