

# Saints not sinners

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### Sermon Audio file

To the saints...

Hagios = set apart and dedicated as holy unto the Lord

A saint is not a deceased super-Christian who had done lots of kindness to the poor and some posthumous miracles.

It's the word Paul uses to describe ordinary Christians, followers of Christ.

To the saints in... is used in the Dear bit in many of his letters Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Ephesians and Colossians.

Your identity, our identity as followers in Christ is not a miserable sinner anymore - you are a saint!

Blessed us with every spiritual blessing

Individualistic culture - where it is all about me and my self esteem. Who I am in Christ... make declarations that are true and helpful - I am forgiven...

You are part of the glorious Church that Christ loved so much he died for it.

What follows are ten truths that are true of us individually and corporately together whether we feel like it or not.

We are blessed.

#blessed

To be blessed is to be spoken well of, to be praised or given a gift.

God speaks well of us, of you. Jesus blood speaks a better word than our efforts.

Not dependent on how well you are doing this week.

Heb 12:23-24

every spiritual blessing - how abundant and glorious! Every, every, every spiritual blessing is yours.

Stop speaking negatively. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing!

Paul then does onto list some of them

We are chosen

Picked out from before the creation of the world to be blameless and holy.

A lot of you struggle with the doctrine of election - that God chooses those who would be saved. Because it leads to the thought that God chooses who wouldn't.

What you have got to know is that passages that talk about believers being chosen are in the letters written to Churches that are struggling under persecution to encourage them. You are okay, you will get through this. God chose you, you are secure! Knowing as a Christian that God chose you is to give you encouragement and security. Passages which show us the gospel being preached urge people to choose God and make no mention of who is chosen. It's a conundrum, a paradox of freewill/pre-destination.

Best way to explain is Jesus is standing at the door of your heart knocking. From your perspective the door has Choose Jesus on it. As you go through, you look back and see it has Chosen written on the other side. You chose and God chose!

We are holy and blameless

When I have messed up yet again, I don't feel too holy and blameless. But the truth is Christ has paid the penalty for my sin. He has swapped my unrighteousness for His righteousness.

When you play Monopoly the best Chance card to have is the Get out of Jail free one. It is there in case you get sent to jail.

In a greater way followers of Christ have been gotten out of jail. The fine has been paid. And we have that Get out of jail card for when we mess up - we won't be condemned. We are holy and blameless because of Jesus!

We are loved

God loved the whole world so much that he sent Jesus so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Stop wallowing in self-pity - God loved you beyond measure from before the creation of the world.

We are adopted

That's especially poignant here at The Gateway where we have so many families adopting children. Choosing to legally take responsibility for a child so that they have the same rights as a natural born son or daughter. As a follower of Christ, God the Father has adopted us into his family and given us the same rights as His One and Only Son Jesus. We are adopted!

We are redeemed

The blessings keep piling up!

Redeem has two meanings

to compensate for the bad aspects. "a disappointing meal redeemed by the dessert"

to gain or regain possession of (something) in exchange for payment. We can buy our way out of a mortgage by redeeming it.

We also use it for coupons. Often Tesco's and the like print out a voucher for something they think you might be interested in. When I turned 50, I started getting Tena for men coupons. NOOOOOO thank you!

We also use the word "redeem" when we talk about coupons. When you trade in a coupon, you redeem it; you are given the cash equivalent for it.

Imagine you're at your local Tesco, when the receipt prints out and says, "Congratulations, you've been chosen to get one free ham! Present this coupon at checkout."

Ham wasn't on your shopping list when you walked in, but it is now. So, you go back and get the biggest ham you can find. You take it to the checkout line and proudly dump it on the belt. When the cashier says, "That'll be £20," you just smile and hand her your coupon. "That ham might be £20 for everyone else, but not for me. I have ..."

Dramatic pause.

"A coupon."

You hand the coupon to her and—boom—it's redeemed. Free ham.

Now, what did you pay for this glorious pork product? Nothing. What did the manufacturer pay? Full price. (The pig, of course, is the real hero, because the pig paid it all. Your coupon just connected you to that sacrifice.)

When we start following Jesus we are redeemed. He paid the full price we get redemption.

Jesus has more than compensated for our bad points and he has paid our debt of sin. We are redeemed!

When Jesus Christ cried out, "Tetelestai!", which we translate, "It is finished," what it really means is paid in full.

We get the next one!

We are forgiven

We are forgiven in accordance with the riches of God's grace, that he lavished on us.

Erwin Lutzer tells a story set in 14th Century, where Robert Bruce of Scotland was leading his men in battle to gain independence from England. Near the end of the conflict, the English are trying to capture Bruce to keep him from the Scottish crown. So they put his own bloodhounds on his trail. As the bloodhounds got closer, Bruce could hear their baying getting louder. His servant said, "It's no use, we are done for, they are right behind us." Bruce assured his servant that they would be all right and headed for a stream that flowed through the forest, plunged in and waded upstream before exiting on the opposite bank. Within minutes, the hounds, tracing their master's steps, came to the bank and went no further despite the soldiers urging them on. But the trail had been broken; the stream had carried the scent away. A short time later, the crown of Scotland rested on the head of Robert Bruce.

The memory of our sins, prodded by our conscious, can be like those baying hounds, but a stream flows red, with the blood of God's own Son. By grace through faith we are safe.

Paul expresses it with such emotion - riches of God's grace, lavished, because he felt he was the chief of sinners, much in need of grace. Jesus said he who is forgiven much loves much. But the reality is before coming to Christ we are all dirty rotten stinking sinners.

A large prosperous downtown church had three mission churches under its care.

On the first Sunday of the New Year, all the members of the mission churches came to the main church for a combined communion service. In those mission churches, which were located in the some worst part of the city, were some remarkable cases of people who had come to Christ: drug addicts, thieves, and so on. And all would kneel side by side at the communion rail. On one such occasion, the pastor happened to notice a former burglar kneeling beside the very judge who has sent him to jail where he served seven years. After his release, this burglar had received Christ and became a volunteer at a shelter. As they knelt there, the judge and the former con, neither one seemed to be aware of the other.

After worship, the pastor was talking to the Judge who asked, "Did you notice who was kneeling beside me at the communion rail this morning?" The pastor replied, "Yes, but I didn't think that you had noticed." The judge said, "What a miracle of grace." The pastor nodded, "It sure was." Then the judge said, "Who did you think I was referring to?" And the pastor said, "Why to that ex-con of course." And the Judge said, I was not referring to him, I was thinking of [myself](#). The pastor was taken by surprise, "You were thinking of yourself?" "Yes," the Judge replied, "It didn't take a lot for that thief to accept Christ, he had nothing but a history of wrongdoing behind him and when he saw Jesus as a chance to be forgiven of it all he jumped at it! But look at me; I was taught from my earliest days to live as a gentleman, that my word was my bond, that I was to say my prayers, and go to church and take communion and so on. I went to college, received my degrees, and eventually became a Judge. Pastor, nothing but the grace of God could have caused me to admit that I was a sinner on a level with the burglar. It was much more a miracle of grace for me to receive forgiveness for all my pride to admit that I was no better in the eyes of God than that ex-con I sent to prison.

We are included

Rejection is a huge issue for many - rejected on the high school sports field last to be chosen, rejected by a marriage partner whose vows were life, rejected for a job. Rejection because of race, class, education, looks what ever.

You are included!

The background to this Paul explains further on in the letter. God's intention was that the people of God would be made up from every nation reached out by Israel (Gen 12:1-3). But they had been so bad at influencing instead being influenced, the Jews had focused on their separateness. The Temple had a dividing wall between the court of the Gentiles and the inner courts. Even for the Jews there was a curtain separating the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. When Jesus died the temple curtain ripped in two making entry into the MHP open. Paul writes that the dividing wall of hostility is broken down two - the two Jew and Gentile becoming one in Christ. So you are included in the people of God. God's family.

We are marked with a seal

Nowadays a contract is signed with a pen or increasingly digital. In the Bible times, contracts, laws, invoices and military orders were marked with a seal - some wax melted onto it and then the sealers ring

pressed in.

It was a mark of authenticity - check the seal - whose it? It was a security mark like a watermark nowadays

It was a mark of security - you had to be authorised to break the seal.

It was a a mark of ownership - a seal was attached to the goods to show who owned them. Slaves were marked with a seal.

So when Paul writes we are sealed by the Spirit - His work in us shows ownership - we are adopted, it gives us security a guarantee.

We have a guaranteed

I love a life-time guarantee - when a manufacturer thinks their product is so good that they will replace and replace it. Not many manufacturers offer them now, preferring obsolesce to keep us buying again. God gives us an eternal life guarantee

The receiving of the Spirit is that seal, that deposit - the first down payment that God guarantees our inheritance when we die or Jesus returns whichever comes first.

When he wrote to the church in Philippi - Paul reminded them that they could be confident that he who began a good work in them will carry it on until the day of completion.

What a lot of Spiritual blessings!

Application

Have you received them? Have you come to Christ?

Accept that you need Him as much as that judge.

Believe that He died for you and rose again

Commit to follow Him and accept his lordship or leadership.

When we do that God transforms us from a sinner to saint - lavishes all those blessings on us!

Meditate on those verses - marinate on them until you believe them

Receive the Spirit - he is the one that guides us into all truth and changes us.