

Sinners and Saints

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Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0 : 00] Philippians chapter 4, beginning in verse 20.

To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? Many of you have probably played the word association game. Somebody says a word and then you've got to say what comes to your mind first when you hear that word. And so when we think about the word saint, a lot of different things might come to your mind.

For example, if you're a football fan, when somebody says saints, you might think of the New Orleans Saints. And you might think of Drew Brees, who is their most well-known player.

[1 : 13] For others, you might hear the term saints and automatically you think of the song, When the Saints Go Marching In, made famous by Louis Armstrong back in the 1930s.

For some of you, when you hear the word saint, you think of those types of people. Those types of holy people. Those goody-two-shoes kinds of people. For some of you, when you hear the word saint, you think of a great humanitarian.

Somebody who has invested their life and their resources in projects or in missions that have helped other human beings. Someone like Mother Teresa would come to the minds of many when they think of a saint.

Other people, when they hear the word saint, they might think about the Latter-day Saints. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Mormon Church or the Mormon cult, I should say. We talked about that this morning in our Youth Sunday School class. So if you see one of our youths, ask them. They can tell you more about why that is a cult and not part of the true church.

[2 : 17] But there's much confusion over about the term saint and what it really means. And a lot of that confusion can be attributed to the Roman Catholic Church.

According to Roman Catholic theology, a saint is someone who because of his or her exemplary merit and religious achievement is already exalted in heaven.

This is a big deal to them because according to Roman Catholic theology, again, most people who enter heaven do so only after they've spent a prolonged stay in a place that they call purgatory. Again, this is the place that they say is a place where Christians are cleaned up. They're further purified so that they're truly ready to enter heaven.

And this is a place that has been made up by the Roman Catholic Church. There's nothing in the Bible about purgatory. And just so you know, again, purgatory is an invention of theirs and it has no biblical basis.

[3 : 20] There is no such place because there's no need for such a place. Christ's atonement on the cross for sin, for the sin of believers, was sufficient.

Completely and totally sufficient. What can wash away my sins? We sing. Yeah, nothing but the blood of Jesus and purgatory. It doesn't sound right, does it?

Because it's not right. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. It's all we need. And it's more than sufficient. Many Catholics are encouraged by the Catholic Church to pray to the saints as they refer to them. They say that the saints' job is to intercede on their behalf before God. God. This concept is not just unbiblical because its message conflicts with what the Bible actually says.

On the one hand, the Bible tells us that we have only one mediator. We have only one intercessor for us in heaven. And it's not some saint of the Roman Catholic tradition or as they define it.

[4 : 27] Nor is it Mary, the mother of Jesus. Our one mediator is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Our great high priest. Let's look at what the Bible has to say about this.

First of all, in Hebrews 4, 14-16. Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heaven, Jesus, the Son of God. Let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin.

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need. Hebrews 7, 25. Consequently, He, Jesus, is able to save us to the uttermost.

Those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. He makes intercession for us. 1 Timothy 2, 5. For there is one God and there is one mediator.

One mediator between God and man. That man is Christ Jesus. So, according to the Bible, there is no one else that can mediate with God for us.

[5 : 37] And again, who else would we want to fulfill this role for us than Jesus Christ Himself? Praise God that He does. So, all this to say that the Roman Catholic understanding of who saints are and of what saints do does not compare well at all with what the Bible actually teaches, what the Bible actually says.

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the saints are in heaven. But, according to the Bible, the saints are on earth. In the Roman Catholic tradition, a person cannot become a saint unless they are made so by the Pope.

According to the Bible, everyone who has received Jesus Christ by faith is a saint. In the Roman Catholic tradition, the saints are revered, prayed to, and in some instances, they are even worshipped.

According to the Bible, saints are called to revere, called to worship, called to pray to the one true living and only God.

John MacArthur says, According to the New Testament, a saint is not an ecclesiastical relic crystallized in a stained glass window, immortalized in a statue, or canonized by Rome.

[6 : 50] A saint is anyone who has come to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, if you have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, the Bible says that you are a saint.

And so, here's the main idea of this morning's message. All believers are saints and are called to live as saints. All believers are saints and are called to live as saints.

So, the question then becomes, having heard that is, Well, how are saints to live? What should a saint value? What should a saint pursue in this life?

What should the saints be doing? And so, here in this text, Paul tells us who the saints are, what the saints are to be doing. And the first thing we see from verse 20 is that the saints worship.

They worship. Verse 20, he says there again, To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. So, here we see, saints do not receive worship. They give worship.

[8 : 05] And so, here this verse is actually called a doxology. Many of you have heard that term before, I'm sure. It's actually a combination of two Greek words. It's doxa, which means glory, and logos, which means word.

So, here, this is a word of glory. This is a word of praise. If you've seen a team win a major championship, like a Super Bowl or a World Series or a national championship, and the players on the winning team, oftentimes they're celebrating on the field or the court or what have you, and the interviewers come, and they put microphones in their face, and automatically you hear them giving words of praise, right?

Typically, not to themselves. Some of them will even praise God. You know, I thank God for this, you know, victory, what have you, or they think they're coached, or they think the players, or they think the fans, whatever the case may be.

They are giving a word of praise. They are giving the attribution to somebody else. Some will praise God. Others will express praise and gratitude to their teammates, coaches, moms, dads, whatever you.

It's a sudden outburst of a word of glory. That's what a doxology is. And so that's the kind of doxology that Paul is giving here.

[9 : 20] He's reflected upon all that the Lord has led him to and brought him through, and all that he has learned, as we remember, as we just read through the previous verses, all the things that he's

learned about God through his times of poverty, through his times of prosperity.

He's learned that God is somebody who he can trust, that God is somebody who, when he is weak, makes him strong, that God is one who helps him to endure the trials that he has faced in life, and that God is the one who ultimately is the object of his worship, the object of his doxology.

He gives a sudden outburst in praise of who God is and what God has done for him and for the Christians there in the church at Philippi. And notice again that Paul uses the pronoun our.

He is emphasizing the true personal relationship that believers have with the one true and living God. God isn't some kind of a distant deity who's uncaring about what's happening here to his people or here in this world.

Through Christ, we are able to have intimate fellowship with God now and forever. He's our God. He's our Lord. He's our Savior. And that will always be the case for a Christian.

[10:36] You know, I've had conversations with Christians before over what worship entails. What do we mean by worship when we use that term in the church?

To some, they think of worship and they limit it to what we do on Sunday morning when we gather together in the sanctuary and when we sing. To them, that is all that worship is.

That definitely is worship, but that isn't all that worship is. I want to read to you a long quote from J.I. Packer, and I think he does such a great job of explaining what worship is.

And so he says, To worship God is to recognize his worth or worthiness. To look Godward and to acknowledge in all appropriate ways the value of what we see.

The Bible calls this activity glorifying God or giving glory to God and views it as the ultimate end. And from one point of view, it's the whole duty of man. He continues, Thus we might say that the basic formula of worship are these.

[12:13] Lord, you are wonderful. Thank you, Lord. Please, Lord, take this, Lord. Yes, Lord. Listen, everybody. And then he concludes by saying this. This then is worship in its largest sense.

Petition as well as praise. Preaching as well as prayer. Hearing as well as speaking. Action as well as words. Obeying as well as offering. Loving people as well as loving God.

However, the primary acts of worship are those which focus on God directly. And we must not imagine that work for God in the world is a substitute for direct fellowship with him in praise and prayer and devotion.

So hopefully, that gives you a good definition of what worship is. When we're here, we are worshiping through the singing. We are worshiping through the praying. We are worshiping through the reading.

We are worshiping through the hearing of God's word preached to us. When we're out doing our engage events, those are acts of worship. Because there we are doing it for Jesus Christ. And we are telling people, Look at this wonderful Lord in whom we serve.

[13:22] So, saints are people who are not worshipped, but they are people who give worship. And the object of their worship is Jesus Christ. Saints worship.

Secondly, we see that the saints fellowship. They fellowship. What do they do? How do they live? Well, they worship God. And they also fellowship. Verses 21 and the beginning of verse 22, Paul says, Greet every saint in Jesus Christ.

The brothers who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you. So typically, when someone repeats something over and over again, they are doing so because they are trying to emphasize to you something that is very important.

And so three times here, Paul uses the word greet. And he does so to emphasize the strong bond of fellowship that is to exist between saints.

Saints are to greet one another. They are to have this strong bond. Notice Paul doesn't say, Greet only the believers whom you like. He doesn't say, Greet only the people that are in your Sunday school class.

[14:33] Or greet the saints that you don't appear to be rude if you don't greet them. He doesn't say any of that. No, he says to greet every, every saint.

Because every person in the church, every person in the body of Christ matters greatly to God. We greet every single person.

Paul's concern here is for individuals in the church. And he reflects the concern that Jesus Christ had and has for individuals in his church.

Even when Jesus was being sworn by large crowds of people, and he was in a hurry, he had places to go and people to see and things to do, he took time for individuals.

And he cared about their needs. One such example comes from Mark chapter 5, verses 25 through 34. Many of you might be familiar with this encounter that Jesus had.

[15:32] There was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for 12 years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better, rather grew worse.

She had heard the reports that Jesus had come, and she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, If I touch even his garment, I will be made well.

And immediately, the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus, surrounded by all these people, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned around and asked the crowd, Who touched my garments?

And his disciples said to him, You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say who touched me? And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing that what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, and she fell down before him and told him the whole truth.

And what did Jesus say to her? Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your disease. Here's the thing about Jesus.

[16:46] He knew who it was. He knew who touched him. He knew what she was looking for. She knew the healing that she was seeking. But he didn't just keep on going.

Like, oh, she got it. She's healed. Good to go. Let's keep going. No, he stopped. What he was doing, and he called for her, and when she came to him, he had these amazing words of grace to share with her.

Because he cares. Because our Lord cares about those who are in his church. He loves us. Our concern for one another then should match that of our Lord, like the Apostle Paul's did.

You know, one of the worst feelings is to walk into a place and not know anybody and have nobody acknowledge that you're even there.

Even worse than that feeling is if they do look at you and they still don't say anything. Even worse.

Worse than that is to go to a place, especially a place like a church, where you know the people, you know your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, and to have them treat you that way.

[18:11] Even worse. To walk into your church on Sunday morning and nobody says a word to you. It should not be that way.

Especially if you're visiting a church. Man, it's hard to be the new person in a place. Many of our students have found out this beginning school year.

I've talked to some. Some are going to high school. Going to a brand new building. A brand new place. Full of people they do not know. Some are going to middle school. Same case. And for us, it was Jack going to new school in first grade.

And you see the faces. When you take your kids to school and you see it in their faces. Sir, I don't want to get out of the car. I don't want to go into that place. I don't know who these people are.

And then when they get there and still, you know, dropping them off, Jack for us is just like, what do I do? I don't know what to do. Who are these strange people? It's hard to be the new person in a place, isn't it?

[19:08] Even in work, you've probably experienced that. That first day of work can be very nerve-racking. In the church, we often think that when we have visitors come, that we've done our part when we've greeted them at the door.

And we've thought that we've made them feel welcome. And that we've completed our responsibilities simply by saying hello. Sometimes in the church, we think, well, that's the pastor's job. Or if there's a welcome team or a welcome committee, we think, well, that's their job.

That's what they're here to do. They're much better at it than me. But the thing that we see here is that when we have visitors in the church, we haven't completed our job by simply acknowledging their presence to make them feel welcome.

You don't make somebody feel welcome simply by doing that. And again, this is a responsibility that falls upon all of us. The Bible says here that we are to be known by our close bonds of fellowship in the church.

We are to be known by our care for each and every individual, individual, even those who we don't know so well or those who are new. We do what we can to reach out to them, to let them know that here in this place, we are people who care for everybody.

[20 : 25] And here's the other thing. The saints who are with you now will be with you forever. You think about that? The saints who are with you now will be with you forever.

And you can think to yourself sometimes, God, you know, I don't know if I would have saved that person over there. Why didn't you save this person over here? They're much more like me and I think I could get along better with them. You're not God.

You don't have the knowledge that He has, right? You're not sovereign and He is. So get used to the fact that the saints who are here with you now are going to be with you forever.

We may part for a time. A day may come here on earth where we don't see each other like we used to, but one day we will all come together and we will be with each other in heaven forever.

So let's get used to this idea now and let's make the most of it. Let's serve and love one another well as the Lord has served and loved us so well.

[21 : 33] In verse 21, Paul says, the brothers who are with me greet you. We aren't exactly sure who these brothers are that he's referring to, but we can assume that it could have included many of the heavy hitters in the church during this time.

Men like Timothy. Epaphroditus, as we know, certainly was one of those who was delivering the letter. There were other, Aristarchus possibly, Mark and Luke.

Authors of those two gospels could have been in those brothers who Paul mentions. These are guys that people in the church knew. These were the big names. These were the heavy hitters, so to speak.

These are the people that you go to any church and they knew who you were talking about when you used their names. It's kind of weird in the church today. And I think it could have been the same case back then.

We sort of treat some Christians like they're our own little celebrities, don't we? And you can see it, especially like when we went down to the SBC convention. There's some guys that, you know, everybody in the room knows who that person is.

[22 : 35] And we treat them just a little bit better because we treat them, not that they're asking for it or wanting it, but we treat them as if they're a celebrity, as if they're just a little bit closer to God than we are.

But that is not the truth. At the foot of the cross, we are all standing on equal ground. There is not one person in the church who is more important than another person in the church.

No one is spiritually superior or more important to God than another person in the church. There's no attitude of I'm more important than you that should not exist in the church of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 23, 11 through 12, Jesus said, The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. This is the attitude that should characterize disciples of Jesus Christ.

Though, again, we are gifted differently and though we also are at different levels of faithfulness and different levels of spiritual maturity, we all make up the body of Christ and so no one person is more prominent or more important than another person.

[23 : 52] The prominence, the worship, the praise is given to Jesus Christ and to Him alone. So, each of you here, you're important. You're important to God.

You're important to this church. You're important to what we are doing now for the Lord and what we believe the Lord will have us to do in the future. We need you here.

And we're so glad that God has brought you here. We are all sinners. And we have all been saved by grace.

And we have all been made one in the body of Christ. And there is no greater fellowship in all of the world to belong to than to belong with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in the body of our Lord and Savior.

That's our fellowship as saints. Next, we see the saints' mission and joy. And really, for the saints, their mission is their joy.

[24 : 58] All the saints, he said, greet you, especially, Paul says, especially those of Caesar's household. You remember where Paul is at. Paul is in prison.

And he's in prison because he has been preaching the gospel. His crime is preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. And he was on house arrest here in Rome when he wrote these divinely inspired words.

And so, what this meant is that he was chained to a, literally, physically chained to a Roman guard as he is ministering here to this church, as he is writing this wonderful epistle.

And guess what he's doing while he's in Rome? He's been doing what he's always been doing. He's writing this letter. He's writing to the different churches. He's wrote a letter to Philippi, Ephesus, Colossi, those churches, a personal letter to Philemon who belonged to that Colossian church. And on top of all of these things that he's doing while he's a prisoner in Rome, he is continuing to preach the gospel to those who are around him. He's got a captive audience of one every single day, that Roman guard, and others.

[26 : 05] And so while he is in chains, he is preaching the good news of Jesus Christ to his captives. Isn't that amazing? And as a result of that, we see what's happening.

People in Caesar's household are coming to faith in Jesus Christ. What does that mean? Well, Caesar's household refers to those who are in employment of Caesar.

His slaves, his guards, his family, those who were high-ranking officials in Rome, all of these types of people were hearing the gospel and being saved as a result of his work there.

One of the saddest things I've ever seen in a church some time ago, going through their door, it was a church that had been around for a long time in Kansas City.

And we were invited to come there for something and I remember walking into their sanctuary because, you know, as a pastor, you're just intrigued by sanctuaries. You know, there's just something about the place of worship.

[27 : 08] It doesn't bring you closer to God, you know what I'm saying? You go home, you pray in your room and you've got a captive audience with God there too. But you know, there's just, sanctuaries are beautiful. And the thing of all that happens in a sanctuary, we worship people or we worship the Lord in the sanctuary.

We baptize people in the sanctuary and so I was, I was broken hearted when I walked into this particular sanctuary and saw their baptismal in the back and it was covered with a big heavy sheet. And on top of it, there was all different kinds of things, candles, a Bible, and just big heavy things. And so that said a couple things to me.

One in this church, they haven't had a baptism in a really long time because they treat it as just another piece of furniture in their sanctuary. And two, because they've covered it up in such a way, they're not anticipating having any other baptisms any time soon.

How sad is that? This is our mission. To tell people the good news of Jesus Christ. Christ. And our joy is to see the Lord using us to do that, to draw sinners to Himself and then to see them enter the waters of baptism and come out.

[28 : 30] That's our joy. That's our mission. That's our joy. That is the joy of the saints, seeing the Lord fulfilling His great commission through us, being used by Him to share His good news and seeing people come to faith in Jesus Christ by His using us.

That's our mission. That's our joy. You know, the other things are important and they can bring joy, but there is no greater mission. There is no greater joy.

That's what we're to be doing. That's what we're doing as a church. Reaching, teaching people, making disciples, baptizing them, and enjoying their fellowship.

Now and forever. Finally, we see the saints' sustenance. Okay, we've got a tall task. We've got a task unfinished. We've got a lot of work to do.

This is hard work. What's going to sustain us as we do what we've been called to do? Well, in verse 23, Paul tells us, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

[29 : 37] So here, Paul has come full circle in this letter. He began it by wishing the Philippians grace, and here he concludes it in the same way. Here we are reminded of the sustenance, the fuel of the church and of Christians that we need in this life, and that fuel is the grace that comes from Jesus Christ.

That's what fuels us. Grace is unmerited favor. Saints are those who have been saved by God's unmerited favor. that fuels us towards our mission.

Romans 3, 23-24, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2, 4-5, but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. Not by works, not because of who you are or whatever, any other human merit, it's simply by this, by grace you have been saved. That's it.

[30 : 55] God's sustaining grace comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the theme of this epistle, being mentioned almost 40 times in these four chapters.

In this letter, Paul described himself as a servant of Christ. He addressed the Philippians as saints in Christ. He said his imprisonment was for the cause of Christ. He said for him to live was Christ. And he said death ushered him into the presence of Christ. He urged the Philippians to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of Christ. He counted everything in his past as garbage compared to the riches being found in Christ.

He was saved by faith in Christ. He eagerly awaited Christ's return. And as we've recently reviewed, his sufficiency was found in Christ.

Jesus was important to this man, was he not? And so my question is, how important is he to you? We know that the saints worship, the saints fellowship, the saints have a mission, and when it's being completed, it brings them joy.

[32 : 04] And finally, we see that the saints have a sustenance in Jesus Christ. And so I want to conclude with a quote from Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Somebody wrote me the other day about his sainted mother. What did he mean? Had the Pope canonized her, or did she become a saint by dying?

Does death which came through sin bring sainthood with it? Assuredly not. If men are not saints before death, they certainly cannot be made saints after death.

Do the coffin in the grave bring you this canonization? Does corruption in the tomb create an odor of sanctity? I am sure that it is not so. Where death leaves us, judgment will find us.

You cannot make a sinner into a saint by killing him. He who does not live as a saint here will never live as a saint here after. So, are you a saint?

[33 : 07] Is that you? Have you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If you have, then you're a saint and after the sermon you know what you're to be doing.

But if not, this is your opportunity. You've heard the gospel, Jesus Christ, the sinless son of God, came to us.

He died in our place for our sins. Our sins which separated from our holy God. But because God loved us, he sent his son.

And Jesus when he came was willing to be obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. And there as he was suspended between heaven and earth, on that contraption of death, he bled and he died.

He shed his blood as atonement for our sins. The spotless, perfect Lamb of God, crushed for our iniquities.

[34 : 21] Then he was buried. dead. But that's not the end of the story because on the third day he arose from the dead. As proof that he is the son of God.

As proof that he has made atonement which is sufficient for our sins. The Bible says that if you believe in your heart, Jesus as Christ, you confess with your mouth that God raised him from the dead, you will be safe.