

God's People Are Saints

by Tim Conway

To be a Christian is to be a saint, set apart for God's use, separated from the world, and brought near to God.

Duration: 1:06:58

Scripture: Psalm 16:3, Ephesians 1:7, Ephesians 2:12-19, Ephesians 4:24

Topics: "Christian Sanctification", "Holy Living"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the significance of being saints, set apart for God's own possession. It highlights the distinction between true sainthood and the world's perception, focusing on the need for purity, holiness, and separation from the darkness of the world. The message underscores the transformation that occurs through Christ's blood, granting access to God and making believers part of His chosen people, reconciled and united in Him.

Transcript

Please turn to Ephesians 1. I simply want to read to you Paul's introductory statements. The greeting, Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I recognize that there's a temptation to run very quickly past this. And one of the things is that there's a similarity here in the way that Ephesians is open with the way some of the other epistles are open. Paul, in addressing some of the other Christians at other churches, may say things that are kind of like this.

And so, it's familiar to us. And oftentimes, we want to go right past, yes, I see it's to the saints who are in Ephesus, but let's get on with it. We want to get to what's more important.

We get impatient. We want the message. Let's get to it.

Enough with the greetings. Enough with the trimmings. We want the meat.

But, the thing is if we'll stop and look at this and just think for a second, this is God-breathed. And I seem to remember reading somewhere that all Scripture is profitable. You ever read anything like that? You see, the thing is, there really is meat here.

There really is doctrine here if we'll stop and listen. There are actually some very important truths even encompassed and encapsulated in these first two verses. We get used to it.

Grace to you. You know, there's a radio program called that. And peace from God our Father.

We just kind of fly past this. And we don't even really stop and think and meditate and mull over this. To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus.

Where did these words come from? We need to stop and think about this. Can you envision it? I can see it in my mind. Paul.

An apostle of Christ Jesus. This is one of the prison epistles. We know that this guy is in jail.

But think about what it is to be God-breathed. Peter kind of gives us an idea. Carried along by the Spirit.

Can you see Paul there? I don't know what the incarceration looks like. Sometimes Paul was under house arrest. Sometimes we hear about some of the horrors of what some of the Roman prisons were like.

I don't know. I don't know what it looked like. Even at times when he was in prison, it seemed like his friends were able to come to him and even his secretary or his amanuensis was able to write for him.

I don't know what this looked like. But I know this. Paul, what was he doing there? When he was incarcerated, what was he doing? I'll tell you what Paul was doing.

If he was able to have materials, the scrolls brought to him, he'd be reading. He'd be thinking. He'd be meditating.

He'd be praying. Praying. Often he was praying.

But he was thinking all the time. He was thinking. He had the care of the churches.

And you can see what happened. His mind at one point went in the direction of the Christians at Ephesus. How did he even come to the place where he would write to them? Well, because he was prompted to do so.

You know what? How do we write to people? I think I'm going to send them an email. Well, we got thinking about it. Somehow our mind, somehow we saw a need.

We need to do this. That's what was happening in his mind. The Ephesians were brought to his mind.

He's thinking about them. He's prompted. Whether he feels it or not, whether it seems like to him, whether he has a perception that he is actually having God divinely from the outside put impressions upon him, I don't know.

I don't know if he felt it. I don't know if it was very subtle and he couldn't feel it. But I can tell you this, it's the Spirit of God because we know how inspiration takes place.

And the Spirit of God is carrying him along and prompts him to write a letter. And then the thoughts begin to flow. The thoughts begin to flow.

And it's coming from outside of himself. That's the idea behind inspiration. God is breathing this.

God is moving man to think thoughts that are God's thoughts. And what happens is Paul thinks those thoughts and Paul puts them on paper. You say, did they really have paper? Whatever.

Papyrus, vellum, whatever it was that they had in that day, he put it in written form. Either he or his secretary. And what did we end up with? I'll tell you, we ended up with God's Word in written form.

To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus, what we need to recognize is this, this is God's identification of these people. Did Paul think the thought to write them and address them that? It's like Paul, he didn't actually do this, but he could just as well. God, how do you want me to address them? Because just as real as God's saying, here's how I want you to address them.

Address them as saints. Address them as faithful. Address them as in Christ Jesus.

That's what happened. No, he didn't ask that question, but he could have just as well have done it. And God is saying, you know what? These people.

These people that we heard about in the first hour that God rejoices over and that God sings over and that God quiets by His love, how is He going to address them? Listen, the way people address one another is extremely informative. Listen to two people talk to each other. You can tell a lot about how people feel about each other by the way they address them.

This is the Lord God Himself giving inspired words. He's breathing out words through the mechanism, through the machinery of man. He's using man, instrumentality of mankind to bring His thoughts so that 2,000 years from then, we can still see them.

They're on the paper of our Bibles. Saints. Faithful.

Now, faithful. We're not going to look at that so much today, but faithful could be full of faith. It's pistos.

It's actually the idea of either reliable or trustworthy. We use it that way. Faithful.

Or, it's the idea of full of faith. And it's used prominently in both ways throughout our Bibles. Which way exactly it's being used, we may investigate that next week.

But I want to deal mainly with saints. To the saints who are in Ephesus. Saints.

How does God view His people? This is the thing. God's mind is infinite. Infallible wisdom.

You know, when you think about God, we have a certain level of vocabulary. God is infinite. And with all of His thoughts and with all of the vocabulary, with all of the possible concepts or titles or names that He could have addressed us with, the very first thing off the lips of Paul or out of his thoughts through the pen is this, saints.

Saints. We just really need to get comfortable with that word. Saint.

The saints who are in Ephesus. God's very own thoughts. What will God call us? Saints.

In very concise fashion. There is a theology here. There's a theology just in these three concepts.

Saint, faithful, in Christ. There's a real theology about who we are as Christians. And brethren, I'll tell you this.

Do we not need, it seems like, in every age, in our age, in this age of the church, in the condition that it is in today, in the condition that Christianity is in today, and I'm using that in a broad sense. But brethren, has

it not been true all through the ages, including all the way back then and right up until now, that we need to be clear about what true Christianity is? Do we not need to come back to that again and again and again? Does it not seem like the authors of Scripture deemed it necessary under the inspiration of God to come back again and again and again and again and again to what and how true Christianity is defined? And here we have it. In three very concise descriptions of what true Christianity is.

What is it? To be a Christian first off is to be a saint. It's to be a saint. That's the first thing that I want us to notice.

That's what I want to deal with this morning. We need to be comfortable with this. Now, I think to some degree some of you are, but we should hear the term more.

Saints. Brethren, can I tell you something? Throughout the whole book of Ephesians, Christians are never called Christians. Christians are never called believers.

But repeatedly, they are called saints. See, we use the term Christian and we use the term believer a whole lot more than we use the term saint typically. But not so when you examine the book of Ephesians.

Let's just take a quick survey. Look at v. 15 of chapter 1. Chapter 1, v. 15. I just want you to feel this.

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints. Now what is Paul saying? Is he saying to these Ephesians who he addressed as saints, who they love the saints, is he saying, well, you guys basically have some ethereal glow about your head and a halo and you love all the other people that have that. Is that what he's saying here? He's talking about all Christians.

He's talking about the fact that these people's Christianity is being verified by this fact. I mean, he says I'm praying for you people because I think you're the genuine, the real deal. Why? Because I've heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints.

Faith and love. Faith and love. Love pouring forth from faith.

How about you go to v. 17 where Paul is talking about the fact of what he's praying for. He's praying that the Father of glory would give them, these Ephesians, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation of the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of their hearts enlightened, that they may know what is the hope to which He has called them and what are the riches of His glorious inheritance. Notice this.

Glorious inheritance in the saints. Don't you love that? When do we talk like that? You talk about the glorious inheritance in the saints? The glorious inheritance in the saints. In.

That's not the way we would say that. It's a within-ness. There is a glorious inheritance in the saints.

It denotes the boundaries. That's what within. When you say something is in or within, there's a within-ness here.

It's the boundaries. And the saints are the boundaries of this inheritance. Again, it's not Mother Teresa.

It's us. It's us. We're the saints.

Or go to Ephesians 2.19. We heard about it. The middle wall of partition is torn down. We're no longer strangers.

We're no longer aliens. We're fellow citizens with the saints. Look, if they're saints and I made a fellow citizen with them, I made a saint with them.

That's the idea. The idea is that we're grafted in. The idea is you're a saint with the saints.

You're a citizen with the saints. You're in the same household with the saints. Or notice Ephesians 3.8. Paul talking about himself and the fact that he's been given this mystery of this Gospel.

He says, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. Or you go to chapter 3, verse 17. So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

Chapter 4, verse 11. Again, just a quick survey of the number of times that this term saint comes at us in the inspired language. Brethren, we really need to regard one another this way.

And the thing about words when God uses them is they're significant because they have meaning. You know, you ever notice God doesn't just use words and throw them around randomly and sporadically with no meaning? Sometimes we call people by certain names and there's no truth to the name. Sometimes we call ourselves... you remember, that's how it was in Sardis.

They had a name that they were alive, but really they were dead. Sometimes we use names. They don't adequately describe us at all, but I'll tell you this, when God uses a name, it describes people accurately.

He puts all names right. How about this? Ephesians 4.11 He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers. Now, I love this verse because notice this.

All these very gifted people, are gifts from Christ to the church. Namely, apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers, to equip the saints. Now you see, the Catholic Church has this idea about saints are like the elite.

Well, brethren, I'll tell you this, the apostles are an elite class. But notice this, apostles are given as are prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. Not because they have these gifts because they are the saints.

They are the elite. They are given what they're given in order to teach and equip the saints. The saints are the ones being taught by them.

It's them too, but it's to the least that's sitting and being taught. It's the newest convert. It's the newest believer who comes in and not just the great apostles, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

That's who the saints are. They're the body of Christ. It's the church, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

How about Ephesians 5.3? Sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you as is proper among saints. You see, the term saint has significance. It implies something.

It describes you as being something. And you being that, there are certain things that are proper and there are certain things not proper. To be a saint, there is a realm of propriety.

How about this? Ephesians 6.18 Praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication to that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. The Catholic church would tell us that the saints need to pray for us. But you get an idea, the Apostle Paul does not regard the term saint like the Catholic church does.

We should be praying for them. Not them for us. But of course, we're all saints, so we pray for each other.

And each other we pray for the other. Anyway, the church. We often say, well, it's a bunch of Christians.

Yes, and that's true. It's a bunch of believers. But brethren, I'll tell you this, if you're looking for any emphasis, not only in this epistle, but in many of them, you don't find the terms that we so often use.

What you find often is this term saint. The church is a gathering of saints. The church is not primarily a building.

We heard that from Scott not too long ago. It's not a place where you just come to do religious things. The church is primarily an assembly of the saints.

So let's think about that word. Saint. A definition.

Hagias is the term. And here's something that's interesting about it. Sometimes the term is translated holy.

Sometimes it's translated saint. Saint. The meanings are very much one and the same.

Holy, saint. The words holy or holiness, sanctify, sanctification, they all come from the same word group. A saint is a hagias.

You know what? So often we have this idea we want to think about the moral realities of holiness. We want to think about purity. But at the first level, first and foremost, the idea, you're well aware, the idea of saint is to be separated.

The idea of saint is to be set apart. These people that we heard God is singing over, God has taken them away from all the rest of mankind and He sets them aside. We are called to be saints.

It says that at the beginning of Romans. It says that at the beginning of 1 Corinthians. Called to be saints.

God calls you out and sets you aside. Separate. Set apart.

That's the idea of this word. To be a saint is to be one that God has set apart as holy unto Himself. That's the idea.

There's one special kind of separation alone that makes a person saint. Set aside for God. That's it.

For His special use. The term saint. We have to get this idea down.

There's a connection obviously with moral implications. But at the first level, we really need to be clear about this. When we call people saints, the idea is you're not out there in the world.

You're not like the rest of men. You're not a mere man. Isn't that what Paul talks to the Corinthians about? Not mere men anymore.

What are we? Are we not men? Yes, we're men, but we're not mere men. Because we're not like the rest. We've been called out of the world.

We've been called out of the darkness. We've been called out of the kingdom of darkness. And we've been translated somewhere.

We've been moved from this group to this group. Set aside. Set apart for God's own special use.

For what? Well, we'll look maybe at that in a second. But listen, we need to recognize the implications of this. The term saint does not in the first place imply moral qualities like purity or goodness.

That's typically how we use it. But that's not the first and most important identity of what it is to be a saint. You know, we'll say, she's a saint.

What do we mean by that? Yes. We don't typically mean God put her over here aside for His own purpose. What do we typically mean? She's a saint.

We mean, she's good. She's kind. She's benevolent.

She's caring. She does things in her life that we really appreciate. She's a saint.

That's typically how we use the word. But that's not primarily the idea here. To be a saint means that you are one who is brought near, who's been granted access to God, who's been brought into the presence of God.

Brethren, you know as well as I do that reading the Old Testament, many things were called holy. We got the holy mount. We know that there was holy anointing oil.

We know that there were garments that were holy. We know that there was incense that was holy. Brethren, they have no moral qualities.

They had these pans and these utensils that they used at the altar. They were holy. There was a candlestick.

There was bread. Those things are holy. Did they have any moral qualities? Could you look at them and say, oh, they're nice, they're benevolent, they're caring, they're kind.

That's why they're holy. No, that's not the case. What that means is, you know what? There were articles that weren't holy and then they were holy.

Why? Did they change morally? No, they didn't change morally. It was because they were uniquely set apart for God's use. That's what the idea of holy is.

Listen, look with me at this idea in 1 Peter 2. You can really see this concept. Peter brings it out for us. You know the text where it talks about royal priesthood? Look with me at 1 Peter 2 and v. 9. This is it.

This is the idea behind saints. To the saints who are in Ephesus. To the saints.

What's a saint? Separated for God. A chosen race. Do you see it there? Chosen.

That means God reaches in and chooses. Oh, brethren, to be a saint. You know, we come back to this truth over and over.

Few there be that find it. Few there be that find it. Remnant.

For everyone God chooses, God passes over many. What a privileged group this is. Chosen.

Chosen. A chosen race. Chosen by God.

Notice the next thing. A royal priesthood. See, we the priesthood, we are the ones chosen out to offer acceptable sacrifices to God.

You know what the priest did? The priest went into the Holy of Holies to offer the blood. We are the priesthood. You need to recognize this.

The world out there at large, they view God as a God that they can readily run into the presence of, but you know what? They cannot. Because the truth stands today as it did back then. You cannot enter His presence without blood.

The world does not have access. This is a privileged, chosen people who have been set aside and separated to enter into the presence of God. Have you ever read anything in Scripture about we were once far off and we've been brought near? And we've been granted access through one's spirit to the Father? We've been granted access.

The world at large has not been granted access. Oh yeah, they drop to their knees when they're in need. There's all sorts of foxhole prayers.

There's all manner of people out in this world who have needs and they take them to God, but they have no access. They may imagine that they do because they imagine a God that gives them access, but Scripture does not know of any such thing. Do you know that the only people that have access to God are saints? Or somebody that God is calling to Him to be one.

Nobody else has access. Nobody. We are a privileged people.

We are a royal priesthood. A kingdom of priests or kings and priests to our God. A holy nation.

Do you know the word holy there is exactly the word used for saints. It's the same word. You can interchange them.

This is a saintly people. That's the idea. A holy nation.

It's a saintly nation. Notice this, a people for His own possession. That's what God does.

But you think, well, doesn't God own everything? Didn't God create everything? Aren't all the people in this world, aren't all nations His? They are. But this is a people for His own possession. They're a unique possession.

Do you see what they do? That you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Notice this, once you were not a people, now you are God's people. That's the idea.

You walk down the street in this world if you're a Christian, and you're one of God's people and no one else is. Do you realize that about yourself? You are a people set aside. And what is one of the primary things that you've been set aside for? Oh, we could look at all manner of things, but what does Peter tell us? Brethren, you need to take this seriously.

When you go out into this world as a people set aside for God, one of the primary reasons that you have been set aside is to use your mouths to do something. Do you see it there? To proclaim the excellencies of the One who's made you a saint. The One who's called you to Himself.

The One who's made you one of His people. You who were at one time not a people. Nothing about eternal justification here.

Nothing about God eternally, always having you in the same class or in the same category. This is a category that in the course of time, God brings you into. At one time you were not a people and then you become one of His people.

God calls you out. He calls you out of the rest of humanity to Himself. This is the idea of being a saint.

It's being possessed by... Brethren, don't you love that? He owns all of us, but some people are for His possession in a way that everybody else is not for His possession. Listen, brethren, for what purpose? To proclaim His excellencies? Or you think of John 4. He's seeking those who worship Him in spirit and truth. A people of His own possession to be this priesthood, to bring acceptable offerings, and to worship Him.

And I'm not exaggerating here. To be His lover. His worshiper.

His lover. To be His joy. Rejoicing.

To fashion us so that we are like His Son. Already image bearers as man, but how much more when we bear that spotless, pure, and undefiled image of Jesus Christ. And think with me, brethren, one of the things that it says in Ephesians 2 is so that through all the coming ages, He's going to bestow upon us just the immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness.

Do you know one of the reasons He brings you out from the rest to say, I'm Almighty God? You want to see the kind of grace and kindness that I can pour upon a human being? You have been set aside for me to show how great of kindness can be poured and lavished upon a created being. Brethren, this ought to blow you away to be a saint. You are called aside to be something.

Now, brethren, listen. We need to think about it. If we are set aside to be a people to enter His presence and to have access and to be His own, we need to think about the thing that separates us from that in the first place.

And certainly, the only thing that separates us is sin. So, yes, God can talk about a holy mountain. He can talk about a holy oil or a holy vessel of some sort.

But see, those don't have moral qualities. We have moral qualities. And if God's going to set us aside to approach to Him, the thing that separated us from God has to be removed.

So of course, very often you do find that it seems like in the New Testament when holiness is used, there is a moral implication. Well, there has to be with us because no way could we be granted access unless the sin has been dealt with. And certainly, something has happened on the moral level to grant access to

the saints.

And what is that? Well, look right here in Ephesians. Look at Ephesians 2.13. But now, in Christ Jesus, you who are once far off have been brought near. Isn't that the idea of sainthood? Isn't that what being a saint is? A people for God's own possession? You are far off.

Where? Out there with the rest of the spiritual Gentiles. Out there, separated. Out there, far away.

Brethren, do you recognize that's what hell is? Hell is outer darkness. It's away from the light. It's away from God.

We've been brought out of the darkness into His light. Don't you love Colossians? The saints in light. I love that terminology.

But brethren, we were far off. Isn't that amazing? Because the world doesn't think of themselves far off from the true God. But that's exactly where they are.

They are far off. They're not His people. They're not His people.

America, what proud arrogance is manifest when we call this country a Christian nation? Arrogance! It is not. The vast multitude of this country is far off and they know not God and they are pagan and they are spiritual Gentiles just like we were. And we bore the ways of our forefathers.

And you know, you know if God has awakened you and opened your eyes, that's exactly what was true of us. But what's happened? What's happened that we have access? You see, something has happened. We've been granted access by the blood of Christ.

And what does the blood of Christ do for us? We'll go back to chapter 1. It tells us exactly. Chapter 1, verse 7. In Him we have redemption through His blood. The forgiveness of our trespasses.

How is it? We were far away. We've been brought near by the blood of Christ. Why? What did the blood of Christ do? Brethren, through that blood we have redemption, the forgiveness of our trespasses.

You see, we're forgiven. We can dance in His presence. Brethren, even on your worst day, you can come and you have access.

Why? Because of the blood. You can come and revel. You can come and bask in the glow of God's glory and you can come there and you can rest.

Those words. Quiet. He quiets us by His love.

What did His love do? His love sent His Son to shed His blood so that we might be a people for His own possession. And He possesses us. Brethren, isn't that true? Even when you go back to the tabernacle and you look at the things that were set aside, separated for His own use.

Moses went around and threw blood on everything. And that's a picture. That blood was thrown on us.

The true blood. The life-giving blood of Christ. But something else.

Look at Ephesians 4. When we talk about access, when we talk about God's presence, when we talk about being saints and being brought close, look at this, v. 17 of chapter 4. Now this I say in testifying the

Lord, you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do. See, they're the outsiders in the futility of their minds. They're darkened in their understanding.

Notice this, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart. Alienated from the life of God. We're not alienated.

We've been brought into His presence. We're no longer alienated from the life of God. God now has us there.

His life coursing through us. And us now beholding God and beholding His life and beholding what He is and who He is and understanding Him and understanding His Word. We've been brought into a domain.

We've been brought into a realm of the saints. To the saints. The idea here is that on the one level, we've been brought near by the blood.

We've been justified by faith and what He has done and there's been forgiveness. But also, in the practical level, we're no longer like the Gentiles. And we're no longer alienated from the life of God.

But what? We're new men. You go down just a little bit and what does it say? It says, you put on the new man, 24, created after the likeness of God and true righteousness and holiness. There it is.

We're not alienated from His life anymore. His righteousness, His purity, so many of His attributes, they become ours and are transformed and regenerated. New man.

So we get the whole significance of Christian holiness. What it means to be a saint. Christian, do you know what it is to belong to God? And you who are professing, do you know this reality where you were living your life and you were not God's people? And then God brought you to be one of His people.

And no longer are you alienated from the life of God. It's been opened to you. You recognize.

You realize. You've been brought in. Your sins are forgiven.

God's Spirit has communicated that to your very own spirit that you are children, that you are one of His. Christian, do you know that you belong to God? Or are you like those that have no consciousness of God's ownership and they don't yield themselves up to Him for His use? Sainthood, brethren, sainthood is God's stamp upon a man. It's God's mark by which He says this one belongs to Me.

Have you ever seen children? They'll write their name in their coloring book or they'll write their name on their toys. God writes His name on His people. He writes it there.

And the name He writes is His own character. That's how we know. The righteous and the holiness that is found in God.

He writes that name on us to the saints who are in Ephesus. Brethren, anybody have any idea what the Catholic church is doing on September 4th of this year? According to the Catholic News Service, Pope Francis will declare Blessed Teresa, that's Mother Teresa, of Kolkata, formerly Calcutta, a saint at the Vatican September 4th. What do you think of that? I'll tell you this, John MacArthur, I came across a message of his one time way back.

Back in the 70's, 70's or early 80's, MacArthur took his whole family to Kolkata. They visited Mother Teresa. MacArthur said it was dark.

Full of idols and darkness. And if anybody has read Mother Teresa's own memoirs, her own autobiographical descriptions of herself, she says if she's ever sainted, she will be the saint of darkness. She had no sense of God's presence in her life.

The Catholic church is going to canonize this woman September 4th. I read a very pathetic email online this week. A 15 year old Catholic student asking how can I become a living saint? You know what the Catholic church says? One, become a Catholic, because everybody they make a saint was a Roman Catholic in these days.

Two, live an exemplary, virtuous, selfless, memorable, pious life. Being a priest or a nun is a good place to start. Perform at least two verifiable miracles.

Technically, you can do them after you die, but if you do them after you die, people might not connect them to you. Then you have to die, because canonization can't begin for at least five years after you die. Get a group of people to show devotion to you and pray to you because of your perceived holiness.

Have your local bishop initiate your cause with the Vatican. Get investigated by the church. Be recognized by the Pope as venerable, which means you're heroic in virtue.

Have your first miracle verified and get beatified by the Pope. Then they can call you blessed. That's why they call her Blessed Teresa, because she's already had that done.

Get your second miracle verified and then you get canonized. And then you have your own feast day. Churches can be named after you.

People can venerate you. In fact, they are supposed to venerate you and they can pray to you. And I'll tell you this, we need to reject the abominable practices.

And one of the problems is that many of us, we live in San Antonio. Heavily Catholic. Maybe you're not exposed so much to it.

But I know some of you have Catholic families. You come out of Catholic backgrounds. This abominable idea of what a saint is.

And I was exposed to it. I know that. I can remember, you know, my mother went to St. Augustine High School.

And my grandfather had a little statue of St. Andrew that was glued to his dashboard. What is he? Is he like the saint of transportation or something? Maybe he is. I don't know.

Why would you have that there? But we've got to get rid of that idea. And I think perhaps that's one of the things that causes us hesitation. Brethren, I think the more we use the term, because terms really encapsulate reality.

Call one another saints. And be saints. I mean, live your life like people that are set aside for God.

Who are what? Who are called out of the rest of the masses of depraved humanity for the sake of proclaiming the excellencies of Him who called you out of the darkness into His glorious light. Proclaim His excellency. Remember who you are if you're saints.

Saints. Saints. Brethren, to the saints who are in Ephesus.

To the saints. Who is He talking to? To the people with the halos over their heads? Listen, brethren, when you go through Ephesians, you know what? He starts out by saying to the saints. And as you go through, remember this? He says, let the thieves no longer steal.

Who's He talking to? Who are the saints? People who used to be thieves, but have been taken out. They used to be these Gentiles, but they've been taken out. They used to be alienated to God, but they've been taken out.

They used to be far off, but they've been brought near by the blood of Christ. Who are they? Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands. Husbands, love your wives.

They're husbands and wives? Children, you're to honor your parents. He's speaking to children. He says slaves.

Slaves need to submit to their masters. Masters. Who are the saints? You know what? They're the common former thieves.

Husbands and wives and children and slaves and slave owners. They're the people that made up the church. Many of which were slaves.

You know what? They're not people that the Roman Catholic church has to recognize. God recognizes them. He knows them by name.

All those slaves that Paul was talking to there. Slaves. God knows everyone by name.

And they are with Him and they are beholding Christ face to face. And the Roman Catholic church with all their abominations need not remember any of them. They're saints.

They're gods. They're different. The mark.

I mean, that's God's mark. Sainthood. Saints.

It doesn't mean that they don't have problems. It doesn't mean that they don't have sin. But there are people that are set aside for God's own use.

And I'll tell you this, they're different. They're separate. And even when they sin, even when they have problems, they have problems different from the rest of the world.

Even when they sin, they sin different from the rest of the world. They're not like the rest of the world. They're called out.

How do we sin different? Peter went out and wept bitterly. We confess our sins. We turn from them.

We're grieved. We're like David. You remember Psalm 32.

You remember Psalm 51. Against you and you only have I sinned. We have a sense of that.

Even when we sin, we sin different than the rest of the world. We're people called out. We're people that are separate.

We're people that are different. Do you fit this description? Does this describe us? Listen, brethren, we need to recognize something. That church in Ephesus, you think about where they were.

You think about the darkness of that Greco-Roman culture. They lived in the city where the temple of Artemis or the temple of Diana once stood. You remember, this is the city where the seven sons of Sceva were seeking to cast out a demon or various demons.

This is the city where they burned all the magic books. This is a dark place. Brethren, how are we going to turn the world upside down? Brethren, I know like at the conference, we get these messages on legalism.

And we don't want legalism. And we need to fight against it like crazy. But brethren, I'll tell you this, the last thing we want to do is be like the world.

And that is not legalism. God says come out from among them. And He says, I will be your God and you will be My people.

Touch not the unclean thing. Are we saints? How do you turn the world upside down in the midst of the worship of Diana? Where the great stone fell down? How? Paul comes there. What does he find? He finds 12 followers of John the Baptist.

They don't even have all the truth straight. They don't know about the Spirit. They don't know what Christians ought to know.

Their knowledge is somewhat defective and there's ignorance in many places. Twelve of them. That's a dozen people.

How are you going to turn the world upside down? How? Your slaves. Who are you? Former thieves. Husbands and wives and children.

How do we turn the world upside down? It's not because we get some great name. It's not because we have a lot of money. It's not because we promise the world health, wealth, and prosperity.

Brethren, I'll tell you the thing that is how we've turned the world upside down all through the last 2,000 years. And it's when God's people look like God's people in the midst of a dark and crooked and perverse generation. Brethren, you don't be salt.

You don't be light unless you're radically different from the darkness and from the meat that is rotting and corrupting. That's what salt does. That's what light does.

Light exposes the darkness. If we're going to be different, we've got to be light while they're darkness. We've got to be salty while they're decaying.

Brethren, we've got to be saints. We're called to be saints. To the saints.

The saints are a called-out people for God. They're a people of His own possession. Brethren, do you recognize the privilege that you have? You can walk with Him and you can talk with Him.

And you know what? Through one Spirit, you have access to the Father. We have access. We can come into His presence.

The rest of the world cannot. Brethren, you have the ability to read the Word of God and the Spirit teaches you what those things mean. You have an interpreter.

You have an intercessor that the world does not have. You have eyes that have been opened. Brethren, are you saints? Saints.

To the saints who are in Ephesus. To the saints. It takes saints to impact the world.

They impacted the world around them because they were what they were. They were saints. It was not their buildings that impacted people.

Brethren, it was the quality of their lives combined with the power of the message. That's what impacted the world. That's what's going to impact the world today.

Saints. Are we saints? That's how Christianity did it then. That's how it happened then.

That's how it happens now. Separated to God. Different.

They were different. Different by design. A people for God's own possession.

The saints stood out. And they always will. They were different.

Saints. Saints. Listen to this.

In Psalm 16, don't turn there, but listen. In Psalm 16, we find when we go to the book of Acts and we carefully study what Peter said on the day of Pentecost, Acts 16 has everything to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One that God would not leave to corruption.

Let me tell you something that Christ says through the inspired David. As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight. Does that ring true with what we heard from Zephaniah? The excellent ones.

I would ask you this. Christian, is there a time when you were not a people, but God has made you a people? He called you out to be a person of His own personal possession? A royal priesthood? Has it happened? A chosen race? Where you were distinctly set aside? Is there an excellence about your life? I'll tell you, what you find there in Psalm 16 is Jesus, He scans all the realm of humanity. And He says, there is a people in the midst that He takes great delight.

And there's an excellence about them. It's because God has taken them and set them aside. Brethren, you know it.

So much of professing Christianity today is a joke. Everybody wants to talk about their Christian liberty. Everybody wants to say, oh, I'm a believer.

I believe in God. Yes, but are you a saint? Are you a set-apart, holy nation? Are you a set-apart one? Are you a vessel for His own private use? Brethren, if we're concerned about the condition of the church, if we're concerned about the lost world out there, they are hurtling towards destruction, towards hell. And I'll tell you this, if your agenda in this life is, oh, well, the way I'm going to reach them is by being as much like

them as possible, then you're deceived.

Because God's people have never reached the world that way. It's carnal logic that says that. Oh, I need to dress like the world and listen to the music of the world and have my hair like the world.

And I need to be like the world and I need to swear like the world. I'll do all those things like the world. And I'll guarantee you this, you may have friends from the world that you've made feel comfortable around you, but in the end, any true fruit won't be there.

Because God says this, we find this, that the Lord chooses vessels to use. You can find this truth in 2 Timothy 2. He uses vessels, but only if they're pure and only if they're holy. There may be some apparent usefulness of unholy people, but you know what? You don't want to measure things until that day, much like we find in 1 Corinthians 3. We'll measure it in the end.

Don't build with wood, hay, and stubble, folks. Purity. Saints.

To the saints. That's what they were. Now brethren, just as I close, let me say this, the book of Ephesians is to the saints.

A lot of people go to the Bible as though the Bible is for everybody. The world will often go to the Bible and they'll quote the Bible as though the Bible's for them. The book of Ephesians is not for the world.

Now there are certain texts that I could take people to that are for people who claim to be saints, but are not, but it's not this letter. I could take the world to quotes in the Bible that are for them. Distinctly for them.

But this book, it's like the writings of a father to a son or the writings between two lovers. You can come along and you can read a love letter from one person to another. You being a third person, kind of an outsider, you can read that.

If a lost person reads the book of Ephesians, that's basically what's happening. The promises here are for the saints. The instruction here is for the saints.

The encouragement here is for the saints. In the days ahead as we look at these things, they're not for the world at large. Look, you have to envision this.

When God speaks this letter, it's to the saints. That means God turns His attention to this chosen people, this chosen race, this holy nation, to a people for His own possession. They're the ones He's talking to.

Well, I told you very quickly how you can become a saint in the Roman Catholic system. How do you become a saint in reality? The way that really matters. Let's just finish looking at this.

Ephesians 2.12 If you recognize you're not a saint, just consider this. Ephesians 2.12 Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ. That's where we came from.

And if you're not a saint, that's where you are. Separated from Christ. Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel.

You're not an Israelite. Not one truly. Not one indeed.

Strangers to the covenants of promise. That means all the promises of life, salvation, being one with Christ, being one with Abraham, the promises given to Abraham, to David, you have no part in. And as

such, you have no hope.

You're without God in the world. You see, to be a saint is to have God. But you're without God.

Here's the way, in Christ Jesus you who were once far off, I know we've looked at this, but this is where the non-saint, the unbeliever is. Far off. But how do we get brought near? It's by the blood of Christ.

You see, if our faith is there, not in our good works, not in having the right impressions, not waiting for God to regenerate us, but if you'll trust what Christ did on that cross and the shedding of His blood, that's where the access is. He Himself is our peace who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace. Notice this.

He might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. You see, this is one of the problems about becoming a saint. How can we become one of God's chosen people when there's hostility? Well, Jesus Christ took that hostility that He might reconcile us to God.

It happened there when His body hung upon that cross. And He came and preached peace to you who are far off and peace to those who are near. For through Him, we both have access in one Spirit to the Father, so then you're no longer strangers and aliens, but you're fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

How do you get access? How do those who are far become near? It's because Jesus Christ went to the cross and He killed the hostility. And in His body, He suffered on that cross. He shed His blood and He gave up His life.

He suffered death in the place of the condemned. And if we trust, we're granted access. Putting all your hope... See, they have no hope.

They're without God. But that's where our hope is. Our hope is in the blood of Christ.

And if we cling to that hope, God will grant us access. That is the way in. God doesn't allow you into sainthood because you had some extraordinarily meritorious life so that you might be canonized.

You don't have to do miracles. Miracles get done to you. They're not something you do.

You look to God to do everything that needs to be done. You look to Him for your hope. You look to Him to fulfill the promises.

You look to Him to credit to your account the merits of Jesus Christ. You look to Him trusting that you have access by everything that Christ did. That's where sainthood comes from.

That is the only true saint. You being brought near by the blood of Christ. Don't look at yourself.

Don't hope there. It's Christ. See Him shedding His blood.

See His life poured out. His life for your life. Substitutionary atonement.

That's your hope. If you do that, you're no longer alienated from Israel. You're part of it.

You're no longer separated from Christ. You're joined to Him. You're in Him.

And that's one of the things we're going to look at. You're no longer without God, without hope. You're no longer separated from the covenants.

You're now partaker. Father, I pray that Grace Community Church, those that are visiting with us today, Lord, we pray greater expressions of our sainthood. Saints.

To the saints who are in Ephesus. Saints. Saints.

Lord, I pray that that would characterize a people set apart. A people whose lips are moving all the time proclaiming the excellencies. Your excellencies.

A people for Your own possession. Possess us, Lord. Possess us.

We thank You in Christ's name.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/h15StZnBK1I.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/tim-conway/gods-people-are-saints/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net