

Romans: A Solid Foundation for Christian Living

Message 4: Your Status in Christ

Text: Romans 1:7

Open your Bibles this morning to Romans, chapter 1, and verse 7. As we continue our series of studies through Paul's letter to the Romans, I'd like to speak with you today about your status in Christ.

We live in an age that places great value on status, your position or standing in life. So many study for years to reach the status of college graduate. And some work hard over time to reach the status of manager. Some long for the status others have gained, while others lament the status they have. Status, like a mile marker on the highway, gives some an indicator of what they have accomplished, how far they have come and how far they have to go. For others it is a source of pride, and even an unhealthy arrogance. But whatever importance you assign to your own status, there is no question that in contemporary society, elevated status is highly prized and sought after.

Well, in Romans 7, the apostle Paul raises the issue of status in addressing his letter. But the status he describes is not one that is earned through years of hard work and study. In fact, it is not gained by any act on our part at all. It's given. He's writing about the status you and I have as a result of our faith in Jesus Christ. Listen to what the Bible says (read Romans 1:7).

Now this is the final verse to Paul's address for the Roman letter that we've been looking at for the past three weeks. He began by describing himself, introducing himself as a servant of Christ and an apostle, set apart for the gospel. He then went on to describe in summary the gospel He was called to preach. Now he identifies his readers. He says, "*I'm writing this letter to all of those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.*"

Notice that this letter is not addressed to everyone. Paul has a specific audience in mind. He's already described this audience as Christian in verse 6: "*You also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.*" But now, in vs. 7, he uses two adjectives to describe them. And what's especially notable this morning is that these two adjectives are indicators of status. They both describe the position in life that is common to Christians.

See, when you trust Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, your status in life changes. Oh, you will still be a student, worker, manager, husband, wife, parent, etc. But you also become something else. From the moment you become a Christian, you take on a new role. And this role is described in two different ways by the adjectives Paul uses in vs. 7. So what are they. How does your status change when you trust Jesus Christ?

1. You become part of God's family.

Vs. 7: "*To all in Rome who are loved by God...*" Lit: "to the beloved of God."

The wording in the original language (no def. article) emphasizes the personal nature of Paul's correspondence. In other words, Paul is not writing as much to the church as a body – as he does in most of his other letters. He's writing to the individual members who make it up. These persons are described as the beloved ones of God, in contrast to those who have not trusted Christ. It's not that God has no love for those do not trust Christ. It's that He has a special love reserved for those who do.

It's like our families. We may love lots of people, but not quite the same way that we love our children, and our spouses. Those loves are special, indicative of a relationship that others do not have. Well, when you trust Jesus Christ for salvation, you become part of God's family, one of the beloved.

Now family is a common image used to describe your relationship with God. In John 1:12 we're told that those who receive Christ, who believe in his name, have the right to become children of God. In Galatians 3:26 Paul told a local church, "*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*"

And this fact should be important to us for at least three reasons:

- **It highlights the special privileges reserved for those in the family.** There are certain privileges reserved only for family members: support, the parent's advocacy, inheritance, for example (Rom. 8:17, "*If we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.*")
- **It highlights the fact that not everyone is part of the family.** Not everyone in Rome was beloved of God. And in the same way, not everyone today is beloved of God. Some are left out. Only those who trust Christ for salvation become part of the family.
- **It highlights the openness for everyone to join the family.** Paul preached the gospel so that those who were not part of the family could be adopted into the family. Unlike most families that are closed to anyone except those who are born into them, the family of God is open to anyone who would place their faith in Christ for salvation.

But this is what it means to be in God's family. Once we were not. Had we not given our lives to Jesus Christ, we would still be on the outside looking in. But, by the grace of God, we who have turned away from sin and self and trusted Christ as Savior and Lord have been adopted into the family, so that we enjoy a special relationship only family members enjoy. This is how your status changes through Christ. You become part of His family.

2. You become part of God's service.

Vs. 7: "*... and called to be saints.*" Literally: "and the called saints."

The word saints is rooted in the word translated as holy. And so it means “the holy ones.” And notice that it is not used to describe a special class of Christian such as the “super spiritual”, “especially gifted”, or even martyrs. It is used to describe all Christians. And so all Christians – everyone who has given his life to Christ – all of us are saints.

And as I said, saint means “the holy ones.” In the Old Testament holy was used to describe those things that were (1) pure and without defilement, and (2) those things that are set apart for God’s purposes. And I believe both uses apply here.

- **You are declared holy when you place your faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.** Paul says the Romans were called saints. And he uses the same word he used in vs. 1 to say he was a called apostle. This emphasizes that God declares us holy from the moment our sin is forgiven in salvation. We are not perfect, and we may retain many old, sinful habits going back to before we met Christ. But from God’s point of view, we are holy. Why? Certainly not because of anything we’ve done. It is that, just as our sin was applied to Jesus at the cross, His righteousness is applied to us through faith. In Romans 4:24 Paul speaks of us, *“to whom God will credit righteousness – for us who believe in him who raised Jesus from the dead.”*
- **On the other hand, once declared righteous, we are to live so that the holy declaration becomes a reality.** And this is where my point, “You become part of God’s service” comes from. Once declared righteous, we are to live so that the righteousness of Christ flows forth from our lives. In 1 Peter 1:16, Peter writes to those who have already been declared saints saying that the Lord calls us to be holy even as He is holy. In other words, we are to separate from our lives anything that would defile ourselves in the presence of the Lord, and we are to live as His servants. We are to give ourselves for His plan and purposes.
 - This is more than about serving in the church. It is about a lifestyle of serving the Lord in all we do, whether it is the home, school, work, wherever. I saw a report on last evening’s news about a group of college students doing some projects as part of Make a Difference Day. One student called it the national day of doing good, which of course means that doing good is not necessarily important for the other 364 days in the year. But when your status in Christ changes, you are called to enter His service 24/7. We are to walk with Him, letting Him lead us, honoring Him in our home and work. Why? Because we’re His saints.

Conclusion: If you have given your life to Jesus Christ, than this is your status now. You are part of God’s family, with all of the rights and privileges thereof. And you are part of His service. You are called by His grace to live for Him.

Now, as we come to our invitation, what does this mean? Well, that depends on what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. It could be that the Lord is saying, “You have received this status, now you need to take it seriously.” Perhaps you simply need to say, “Lord, help me to live as a faithful member of your family. Help me to honor you in all I do. Show me where I can be of service to you, that you would be glorified in my life.” That’s a prayer we all could pray.

But maybe you need to go a little farther. Maybe you need to place yourself in a position where you can learn more about what your status in Christ means. You know you are saved, but you have yet to discover what it means or how to grow....

Maybe you know you are saved, but you have allowed a pattern of sin to dominate your life, so that the only thing holy in your life is your status. That can be corrected right now. Simply confess your sin before God, with an attitude of repentance, and you will stand as forgiven as your first moments as a Christian.

Or perhaps this is the day you realized that you are not really part of the family...