



Digging Deeper Week 1

The Saints

Most days I don't feel like a saint. I forget important things. I'm forever behind on laundry. I know I should pray more and give greater attention to the suffering going on in the world. I agree with God that I am a sinner in need of saving. Yet in the first few verses of Romans, we don't find Paul addressing the church as sinners. Instead he called them saints. What exactly did Paul mean when he called the believers at Rome *saints*? How does this word used in Scripture and in church history apply to believers today?

In Romans 1:7, Paul greets the church at Rome this way, "I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace." This same verse is translated in the English Standard Version, "To all those in Rome who are loved by God and *called to be saints*: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (emphasis added). The King James, New King James, and New American Standard Versions also translate this verse using the word *saints*. The Greek word is *hagios*, which means, "a most holy thing; saint."¹ This word is used eighteen times in fifteen verses in the Book of Romans in reference to the law, the Scriptures, the Spirit of God, and also the people of God—the saints.²

By referring to the Christians at Rome as saints, Paul wasn't calling them virtuous or commending their behavior. Instead he was reminding them of their position before God. Saints are not a select few "super Christians" who are worthy of the title. Because Christ died for our sins, every believer has a new identity as a saint. We are holy, which means "set apart." Through Christ we are no longer separated from God but are cleansed of sin and viewed by God as holy.

We can explore our own identity in Christ by understanding how the title *saint* applies in the life of a believer. By calling believers saints, Paul highlighted their unity, value, and uniqueness as the people of God.

- **Unity.** Throughout the Book of Romans, Paul encourages the church to recognize Gentile Christians as part of God's family. Though the Jews have a history of relationship with God, Gentiles share equal ground at the foot of the cross. In the Old Testament the term *saints* is used less frequently (see Exodus 19:5-6; Leviticus 19:2; Deuteronomy 7:6). The Hebrew word for saint is *qadowsh*, which also means holy

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or set apart.³ By calling all members of the Roman church saints, Paul is communicating to the Gentiles that they are as much a part of the people of God as Israel.

- **Value.** Because God views us as saints, we have confidence before God. He does not condemn us but sees us as worthy of the greatest sacrifice. He valued us enough to send His Son to die in our place so that we might be holy through Christ. So now we can attach value to ourselves, not with prideful achievement or good behavior but because God has set us apart as worthy to be loved. When we see ourselves as the saints we are, we can live and act out of our identity as those treasured by God.
- **Uniqueness.** By calling the people of the church at Rome saints, Paul also is reminding them that they are no longer like others around them. Because they are holy, they are set apart from the rest of the world. Their lives should look different from their neighbors, friends, and family members who do not know Christ. Hebrews 10:10 says, “For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.” We don’t live differently by our own effort or hard work. Rather, out of the overflow of our love for Christ we can spend our time, treasures, and talents in a way that is not conformed to the pattern of this world but instead transformed by God’s love (see Romans 12:1-2).

If you have given your life to Christ, then you are a saint—whether or not you feel like it today. By recognizing our identity as saints, we can find unity with other believers, value in ourselves as those worthy of love, and uniqueness to live differently than the world around us.

Notes

1. *Hagios*, Strong’s Concordance, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/hagios.html>. Accessed May 7, 2019.
2. *Hagios* in Romans, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/kjv/assage/?q=ro+1:2;ro+1:7;ro+5:5;ro+7:12;ro+8:27;ro+9:1;ro+11:16;ro+12:1;ro+12:13;ro+14:17;ro+15:13;ro+15:16;ro+15:26;ro+16:2;ro+16:15;ro+16:16>. Accessed May 7, 2019.
3. *Qadowsh*, Strong’s Concordance, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/kjv/qadowsh.html>. Accessed May 7, 2019.