

A New Resident: Living in the Old Residence

Romans 1:7

March 8th, 2008

The past few chapters have centered on the identity of those to whom Paul is writing. He has already identified them as "*beloved*" and "*called*" but I want to introduce another aspect of their identity. Paul describes them as "*saints*".

In his 1980 novel, The Bourne Identity, Robert Ludlow begins with his main character suffering from what is called retrograde amnesia, meaning he cannot remember his past. The main character, Jason Bourne, tries to discover who he is throughout the rest of the novel. Now, I do not think there are many believers who suffer like Jason Bourne from retrograde amnesia. As a matter of fact, I would almost say that every believer remembers their past. From time to time, previous sin, mistakes, and failures comes up in your mind at a time when you least expect it. And for a moment, you are paralyzed at the thought of what you have done in your past. As a matter of fact, some of us wish we could suffer from retrograde amnesia.

In preparation for this lesson, I discovered there is a second type of amnesia that actually has the opposite effect. It is called anterograde amnesia. In this form of amnesia, a person can clearly remember their past, and has the ability to ascertain truth in their short-term memory. They can hear a fact, analyze it, and know that it is true. But this type of

amnesia prevents a person from taking immediate short-term truths and thoughts and storing them in their long-term memory. So that person does not live by what they just learned to be true because it is not stored in their long-term memory. They suffer from only remembering their past. This is just where some of us are.

Identity in Christ

I have been preaching on identity for almost 25 years, so this is not something new, but I still sometimes hear the words "I am just an old sinner." Are you just an old sinner? If you still believe that you are just an old sinner, I have a message for you; you need to get saved, today! If you say you are a sinner, then what you are really saying is that you are separated from God. You have never been born again and you have never experienced the grace of God in your life. If you die as a sinner, you will spend eternity in hell. Now, I know this is not what you mean when you say that. But if you are trying to say that you, as a Christian, are still a sinner, then you are confused and you are not in Bible territory. Please listen to who Paul is writing to. You see, some of us miss what is right here in the beginning of the chapter. The Apostle Paul not only identified himself as a bondservant of Jesus, a called Apostle, and a consecrated person to the gospel, he also identifies his audience. He uses two adjectives we have already discussed, "*beloved*" and "*called*." These are awesome words that show God has set His special covenant love upon us. While we were in sin, minding our own business, doing our own thing, He reached out to us with an effectual call that drew us to faith in Jesus. But another word in this verse that we have to look at is "*saints*."

Scripture

"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."

- **Saints: God's Workmanship**

This word "*saints*" was an adjectival noun in Paul's language. We do not have those in English, but this means it was not just an ordinary noun. The very word itself is a description of who you are. Now this is so important that Paul has already put two other adjectives before this noun. So in essence, there are three descriptive words here that describe our identity in Christ.

Please read 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. In the beginning of each of these letters, Paul writes to the saints in Christ. This word "*saints*" is used by Paul to describe who we are as believers in Christ. I want to get this out of our short term memory and store it into our permanent memory.

In Ephesians 2:10, Paul addressed the Ephesian believers as saints and said they were dead in sin, and then talked about that lifestyle. He said they were dead in sin and God, by His grace, made them alive, raised them up with Christ, and seated them at the right hand throne of God. He then said:

"...by grace you have been saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

We know that to be true. We agree with Paul in chapter 2:9 when he said:

"...not of works lest any man should boast."

We would never boast about our salvation being of us. Verse 10 says:

"For we are His workmanship..."

We, the saints, are God's workmanship. The Saints are those who have experienced salvation by grace through faith, and have been rescued from a life of deadness, and have been made alive with Christ to be a trophy of God's grace throughout all of eternity.

This word "*workmanship*" in the Greek literally means "finished business". We are God's finished business, finished product. This word was used in the ancient world to talk about a finished piece of literature, a finished poem, or a finished marble sculpture. In other words, we are His work of art, we are His masterpiece...I kind of like the sound of that! God made us into His masterpiece in Christ Jesus. God does not make junk! But, do you really believe that? Some of us feel like junk. Some of us feel like a failure. Some of us put it in words like, "I am just an old sinner." What you are saying is, "You cannot expect much out of me." If we went to a museum someone could point out a Rembrandt, a Picasso, or a Michelangelo. In God's museum of life, He wants to point out to people a God. You are not a god, but you are a work of God. That is awesome! Do you really think the word "sinner" captures that? That is why you do not ever see Paul addressing a church as "saved sinners", never. Paul's favorite description of a believer is "*saint*." Let that sink in...if you are a believer in Jesus, you are a saint of God.

- **Saints: Set Apart**

I looked the word "*saint*" up in the Greek in all of its uses. The Greek word is "**agios**." And every time Paul uses it, it is an adjectival noun. This word describes who you are as a person. The root of this word means to be "holy, set apart, separate, or to cut." For something to be holy means it has been cut. But the purpose of cutting to make holy implies there is a separation. When something has been made holy, it has been separated from its commonness, its ordinariness, and it has a special use because of who it belongs to. As a child of God, you are a saint because God cut you out of a life of sin to a life of salvation. He cut you out of a life of being self-centered to a life of being God-centered. That is what makes you holy. It could be translated as "the from above ones." God reached out from Heaven into your life and cut you out of a life of sin and separated you to Himself. That is what it means to be a saint.

In the New Testament, this word is never used to talk about the work of a believer. It is always used to talk about the believer being the recipient of God's work for the believer. You are not a saint because of your behavior; you are a saint because of the work of God for you in Christ. You did not do anything to be who you are; you are who you are as a result of what God did for you in Christ. At the moment God stepped into your life and revealed what He did for you, you did what must be done and that is to respond to the gospel by faith. That is why we have been saved by grace through faith. Faith is our response to what God has done. Our faith is not adding anything to or taking anything away from what God is doing. Our faith recognizes what God has done for us and all we can do is receive and believe it. It is overwhelming! As a result of what He did, we are saints.

- **Saints: New Creation**

Since "*saint*" describes your identity, you need to remember that you are not who you used to be. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

"...if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation." KJV says, "Behold all things pass away, all things have become new."

Ephesians 2:10 says:

"...for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus a new creation."

This means you are not who you used to be. God did not remodel you, He made you brand new!

Those of you who know me personally know that I love Baptist history. I do not mean this in a negative, elitist, or exclusive way, but in a pure sense. I have had people ask if I will ever take the word Baptist off of our sign, and my answer has always been no. Unless Baptists do something really stupid, it will not happen on my watch. We are never going to be the Hardin Community Church. I am not saying that because I believe that Baptist is the only type of church. But I believe that some great men before me have fought and died for the security of the believer, baptism by

immersion, and for salvation by grace only. I will never separate myself from those people, even though on the other side of our Baptist family, we have a lot of outlaws that believe some really weird stuff! However, my great, great forefathers missed it in that they got so hung up on salvation by grace and giving God all the glory for their conversion that we somehow forgot to study what actually happened at the moment of salvation. So in reform theology, to give God all of the honor and the glory, we leave God's finished product still a sinner. We still take Old Testament passages that apply to unregenerate people and try to apply it to regenerated people in the New Testament, and that is not true. You do not have a heart that is desperately wicked. God gave you a new heart at salvation.

I want to get rooted into your long-term memory, and out of your short-term memory, that you are not a saved sinner. If you are saved, you used to be a sinner. You are not a sinner now. You are not who you used to be. Romans chapter 5:8 says:

"...but God showed His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

In Romans 1:7, Paul does not write to us as saved sinners, he writes to us as saints. You must reject the teaching that says the only two kinds of people in the world are lost sinners and saved sinners. I know some of you have been taught that all of your life. The word sinner means you are a sinner in your core being. You still have a nature to sin, and left up to you, you would sin every time. That does not describe who you are in Christ. We put the adjective "saved" in front of sinner, meaning we are saved. But when you leave the noun "sinner", you are saying you have had a change in destination but not in identity. In other words, you are still who you have always been, a sinner, But as a sinner your destination has changed. You are going to Heaven and not Hell, and that is just not biblical. The Apostle Paul talks more in his writings about who you are after you got saved than he ever wrote about you before you got saved. He labors to tell us that we are not who we used to be, and he uses the word "*saint*." The

word is not describing behavior; it is describing who we are in Christ. Transfer this to your permanent memory. Believe this to be true and start acting upon it.

- **Saints: Sin Less not Sinless**

I want to remind you that saints can still sin. Not that we want to, but the possibility is still there for a saint to sin. Saints are not sinless, but they do sin less. It is a wrong concept to think that saints are sinless. You do not become a saint after you die when the Church canonizes and declares you a saint because you did some great work. The Bible does not declare you a saint after death because of your work, the Bible declares you a saint at the moment of your second birth because of God's work!

The reason saints are not sinless is because we still have physicalness about us. In our physicalness, there is still an unredeemed flesh and the power of sin lives in our unredeemed flesh. Therefore, until the day I die, I will struggle with the temptation to sin because Satan will always approach me through my unredeemed flesh. This struggle with sin will never go away. I cannot pray it away, I cannot study it away, and going to church will not make it go away. It is a struggle within me that will be in me until the day I die, or Jesus comes first. I still sin because I still have the capability of sinning.

But I do not sin like I used to because I now have a new nature. I have the Holy Spirit of God living within me and I am not who I used to be. Because I am not who I used to be, I do not want to do what I used to want to do, even though I am still living in the same body. It is a different me in this body, and this me does not want to sin against my Lord. I do not want to sin those sins that I know He forgave me of on the cross, because they crucified my Lord. It is not my desire to want to sin. I desire to want to do right. I have to understand that there is a new me in the old body.

Old Self/New Self

In the writings of Frances Schaeffer, he calls the body "the Earth suit." I have the kind of body I have because God designed me to live on planet Earth. I need this kind of body to live on Earth. If God had designed us to live on Mars, we would have a different kind of body. I have no doubt that God could have put us on planet Mars, but if He had, it would be a whole different type of existence than what we have right now. I have seen some of our people in their Earth suit go into outer space and walk, but they have to put on a space suit. The space suit fits this body that is designed for Earth, and they have to take what the body needs to exist in outer space with them. So using this terminology, God has put a new man in the old Earth suit.

I think some of us believe that at the moment of salvation God put new clothes on the old man. If you still believe you are a sinner, then that is exactly what you believe. I do not believe that. I believe that God put a new man in the old clothes, but as soon as He did, He told the old man to change clothes. As soon as the new man realized who he was and who he was not, he knew he could not wear the clothes he used to because he was not that man anymore!

Colossians 3:9-10 says:

"Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."

He is not telling us not to lie because it is bad to lie or because we are going to hurt someone. He tells us not to lie since we have put off the old self, and have put on the new self.

The words "*put off*" and "*put on*" are aorist participles. Let me remind you that a participle is a verb that describes a certain kind of action: a punctiliar action, a simple undefined action, and an action that takes place and then it is over. It is the opposite of continual action. In Curtis Vaughn's

commentary on Colossians (and also in Ephesians), he says that Paul is saying you shouldn't lie because you, once for all, put off the old self. And not only did you put off the old self, you put on a new self. This is not something you do every day of your life, and it is not something you do and then go to the altar to rededicate your life. Most of us need to quit rededicating and just live up to the dedication we made the day we got saved! You either got saved or you didn't, and that is what should be affecting your life! If you have to rededicate something over and over again, you might need to check to see if you really have anything to dedicate! The Bible says that at the moment the Holy Spirit opened your eyes to the truth of the gospel and you responded by repenting of sin and putting your faith in Jesus, you died and was raised with Christ and put off the old man and put on the new man, at that moment.

- **Old Self**

What does the Bible mean by "*old self*" and "*new self*?" The commentaries and scholars will all define this differently, but I will tell you where I stand on this today. My definition of the old man (self) is the totality of who I was before I met Christ. I put that guy off because that guy died with Christ (Romans 6). Even though I died with Christ at the moment of salvation, God wants me to know that I put him off. I put off Ricky, the sinner. He was born dead to God and alive to sin. Because he was spiritually separated from God, he lived his life according to his unredeemed flesh and had the power of sin in him. Ricky, the sinner, following the leadership of his unredeemed flesh, lived a life that put Ricky first. He just looked at life through his lens, and he was the center of the universe, and everything revolved around him. Does this sound like anyone you know? Wow, did he have some practices and habits. He did a lot of good things because Ricky, the sinner, was a moral sinner. He was not an Adolf Hitler type sinner. But the root of everything he did was for him because it benefited him. Because he was raised by moral parents, I promise you, it benefited him to be moral. If he was not moral, his mom let him know he was not going to get by with that, so he learned to be moral.

Do you get the picture? That guy was a sinner. I put him off in salvation, and I put on the new man.

- **New Self**

Now, the new man (self) is the totality of who I became once I met Christ. This guy is Ricky, the saint. Ricky, the sinner, was dead to God and alive to sin but Ricky, the saint, is dead to sin and alive to God. Ricky, the sinner, lived life according to the unredeemed flesh but Ricky, the saint, lives his life according to the Spirit of God who lives within him. Ricky, the sinner, had a nature to disobey but Ricky, the saint, has a nature to obey. Ricky, the sinner, was wrong with God but Ricky, the saint, was right with God. So at the moment of salvation, Ricky, the sinner, died with Christ and Ricky, the saint, became alive with Christ. So in my mind, I have put that old man off and have put on the new man in Christ! Then, the end of verse 10 says:

"...and be renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator."

Ephesians 4:22-24 uses aorist infinitives, not participles, to describe "put off" and "put on." It is the same kind of action, but instead of a present participle, it is a present infinitive, meaning, "I have once and for all put on." Now, once I have put on Christ, I live my life by continually being renewed in the spirit of my mind. Some of you have forgotten that. That is why you cannot get it out of your immediate thought into your permanent life. You have forgotten that the Bible says this new man you are has been created after the image of God in true holiness and righteousness. How dare you call that guy a sinner! If that guy has been created in true righteousness and holiness, you cannot lay the name sinner on him. He has been created in the image of God, not Adam.

New Resident in the Old Residence

How does this transformation take place in my life? How do I live out the new man? It is by constantly being renewed in the spirit of my mind. In Romans 12, Paul is going to tell us not to be conformed to the world, but

be transformed or metamorphosed by renewing of mind! I am laboring to say that God has put a new resident in the old residence. The residence should now say something about the new resident.

At salvation, God stuck a big old sign on my head that said "under new management!" If you see a restaurant that you have been dissatisfied with but it has a new sign that says "under new management", you do not expect things to be like they used to be. You expect them to be different. When God put the Holy Spirit in your life, He hung a sign up that said "under new management", and the world is expecting to see a change in our life! God did not re-form an old man; God said there is no hope for that old man, the sinner, so He had to kill him. God killed him at the cross in Jesus Christ. Now, when God kills you, you are dead! God decided to create a brand new me, but he left me in the apartment of Ricky, the sinner. I want you to get this. I want you to think of your body as an apartment. (Despite what you think about yourself, and despite what your girlfriend is telling you now, you are not a palace or luxury condo, you are an apartment!) Now just imagine Ricky, the sinner, living in this apartment, and he has lived in it for a long time. Then, all of a sudden on March 24th, 1974, a new guy moved into the old apartment.

Have any of you ever moved to a place where the first residents had left a lot of junk there, and you had to sort through it? You had to repaint the place and take their old stuff off of the wall and replace it with your stuff. After fixing it up, you were really feeling good about it. Then, someone came over who remembered what it looked like when the other person had it. You see them analyze it and then say, "I really like what you have done to the place." The residence is revealing the resident.

You see, that is what happened. At salvation, God put a new resident, a new you, in the same apartment that the old you lived in. And now when God shows up in your life, He should be able to look at the new you in the old body and say, "Wow, I like what you are doing with the place!" There should be a significant change in our lifestyle because we are not who we

used to be! We are not a sinner anymore; we are a child of God. You do not have the palace yet, but the palace is on the way! I am telling you that at the second coming of Jesus Christ, God is going to bring to me a body, and when I get that body, there is not going to be the presence of sin. When I get that body, it will be just like that of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When I sit down at the table in that body, I will look to the head of the table because I will know that I am there because of Him, and that is the only reason I am there! In my glorified body throughout all of eternity, God will let all of creation know that what He did, He did for me because of Him, so that I would be a trophy of His grace forever!

So until then, I have to get in my head that I am physically still living where I have always lived. Satan, the world, and the power of sin are still going to send mail to your mailbox. But I knew the sinner was dead, so I did not open the mail! When it comes addressed to the sinner, and it is one of those magazines you should not look at or one of those drinks you should not entertain yourself with, then leave it in the mailbox and do not dare open it! Just open the mail that is addressed to the saint of God. It might do us good to go to the source of our worldly mail and tell Satan, "Hey buddy, in case you have not got it, the sinner is dead. The guy living here now in the old body is a saint and I just do not approve of you sending me junk!" We are not who we used to be.

Have you ever wondered why we have memorial services in our culture? When you go the funeral home, there is closure. You see them and you know they are dead. As painful as that is, that gives you closure. As a pastor, I am glad God gives sinners a memorial service! Baptism is our memorial service. Even though salvation is by grace alone, baptism is so important because when you go into, and come up out of the waters of baptism, it is a memorial service. Baptism points us to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross in a redeeming way. When a person is baptized, they are identifying their faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The old man dies and he is born again. He is born a new babe, a saint. Believer's baptism tells the world that the old man, the sinner, is

dead and buried with Christ. In baptism, we memorialize Christ's death on a cross, and our death with Christ. When you come up out of the water, you are testifying you are not who you used to be, you are a saint of God! Paul will not take us back to our moment of faith in Romans 6 to tell us to quit sinning; he will take us back to our baptism. He does this because it is in baptism that we publicly identify with Christ and tell the world that our faith is not in us, but in Him. We are not who we used to be! How can the Church lead people to Christ and let them wait five years to be baptized! You do not get saved and wait ten years to get baptized. Moms and dads, if you are going to pray to God for the salvation of your kids, then pray for the full gospel affect for them. Pray that it not be just a public profession of faith in Bible school, or a worship service, but going down into, and up from the waters of baptism to identify with Christ and live a life of a saint of God.

We must get back to the Bible. We must understand this letter is being written to the beloved of God, the called saints of God. If you still believe you are a sinner, you need to get saved and turn from sin and put your faith in Jesus. You must bow your heart and knee to Christ.