

‘... That Saved a Wretch Like Me’

As we approach Resurrection Sunday, each of us should take a moment (or maybe more) to reflect on what the grace given us by the cross means in our lives.

We should take a moment to reflect on the person we used to be, the person we are now and the person God is molding us to be.

In 1779, English poet and clergyman John Newton penned these words, “Amazing Grace!/How sweet the sound/That saved a wretch like me/I once was lost, but now am found/Was blind, but now I see.”

“That saved a wretch like me.” Like me. Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines wretch as: A miserable person. One who is profoundly unhappy or in great misfortune. A base, despicable or vile person.”

Undoubtedly, before I truly received Christ into my life, I was all of those things. I don’t believe I was a bad person by any stretch of the imagination. I grew up in a loving home with a Spirit-filled mother who prayed for me always. Yet without Christ, I was unquestionably lost and blind.

When we come into a relationship with Christ—and I don’t mean simply praying the sinner’s prayer and saying you are saved because of that act—we are no longer considered a wretch. “In Him we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7, MEV).

Our behavior may still be wretched at times, but we are not, according to 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Look, all things have become new.”

Certainly, we must repent of our wretched behavior anytime it rears its ugly head. But remember this: You don't have to apologize for the person you are and call yourself a wretch, or garbage (sadly, I've heard even some Christ followers refer themselves as this), or even unworthy. You don't have to condemn your own character because of the lies the enemy feeds you.

Of course, he wants to keep you under condemnation for as long as he can. But remember Romans 8:1, which says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (MEV).

When you come into a true relationship with Christ, your personality begins to change because you want to be more like Christ. You no longer want to be the wretch you used to be. You don't care about what the world says about you, and you don't desire to do what the world does because of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within you. Jesus' death and resurrection has given you that opportunity to change.

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:1, MEV).

In other words, people should be able to see a difference between the way Christians and non-Christians live. As Christ followers, we shouldn't expect instant maturity, but if we have been confessing Christ for years and there isn't a difference in us—that is to say, if your life isn't producing any fruit—then something is amiss. You need to go back to the cross and figure out why the fruit isn't evident.

"If you were raised with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1, MEV). We need to regard our earthly nature—our wretchedness—as dead. We need to change our moral and ethical

behavior by letting Christ live within us so that he can shape us into the person we should be.

It took me years to figure this out. And why? Simply because of my own arrogance and failure to stop listening to what my flesh wanted instead of what my Lord and Savior wanted for me. Believe me, I have learned the latter is much more fulfilling.

If we keep listening to God, we will be changing all the time. Over the past couple years, I have slowly learned to kill many of my fleshly desires. People have told me they have noticed remarkable changes in me, and I'm grateful to God for opening my eyes and my heart.

What about you? As you look over the past year, what changes for the better have you seen in your thoughts and attitudes? Change may be slow, but your life will change significantly if you trust God to make the adjustments.

Remember, the wretch is gone. Keep him or her buried.

And as I always like to say, "there is that." {eoa}