

I'm OK and I'm On My Way!

by Joyce Meyer

Insecurity and self-rejection are in epidemic proportions in our society, and the church is no exception. So many Christians simply don't like themselves. They feel that until they "arrive" at the place of perfection, God is angry with them. As a result, they live in a state of perpetual frustration—continually rejecting themselves and feeling bad every time they make a mistake.

I have found that some of the primary reasons for this wrong mindset are that we don't have a proper understanding of our righteous identity in Christ. We are trying to change ourselves in our own strength, and we are too impatient—expecting things that took years to develop wrongly to be fixed in a few months or days.

I believe that in order for us to experience true freedom and grow in our relationship with God, you and I need to learn to accept ourselves where we are and see ourselves the way God sees us. As we do, we will begin to understand that becoming like Christ is a process that takes time, and if we will give ourselves a break, God will be faithful to finish the good work He began.

The Basis of Self-Acceptance

As Christians it is essential that you and I understand that we have been made right with God through our faith in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8,9 says, *For it is by free grace (God's unmerited favor) that you are saved (delivered from judgment and made partakers of Christ's salvation) through [your] faith. And this [salvation] is not of yourselves [of your own doing, it came **not** through your own striving], but it is the **gift of God**; not because of works..., lest any man should boast...* A believer who lacks this understanding is like a jumbo jet on the runway with no gasoline—he has all the equipment but is going nowhere.

For many years I tried to please God with my works. It seemed as if I was living on a performance treadmill—always trying to do something to feel good about myself and feel like I was in right standing with God. In the process, I became weary and worn out, lacking peace, joy and power in prayer. In His mercy, God allowed me to see that there was absolutely nothing I could do to make Him love me any more or less than He already did. All He wanted was for me to *believe* in Jesus, the One whom He sent (see John 6:29), and *receive* the righteousness He provided. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, *For our sake He made Christ [virtually] to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in and through Him we might become...the righteousness of God [what we ought to be, approved and acceptable and in right relationship with Him, by His goodness].*

This is the basis of self-acceptance: knowing that God accepts us through Jesus and sees us as totally righteous. This does not mean that we don't sin anymore or that when we do sin we can just dismiss it like it's no big deal. It simply means that God loves us even while we are on our way—while we are in the process of becoming like Christ—before we have "arrived."

For example, Dave and I have a two-year-old granddaughter. Many times when she doesn't get her way, she throws a fit, tossing herself on the ground and screaming uncontrollably until she sweats. Even though I dislike her behavior, I still love her tremendously. I don't stop loving my grandchildren or kick them out of the family because they do things wrong. I love them and work with them to develop the good character I know they need to succeed in life.

The same is true with God, our heavenly Father. He doesn't love our wrong behavior, but He certainly loves us. Romans 5:8 says that He showed and proved His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. In other words, He didn't wait until we were righteous to send Jesus—He sent Jesus because we would never be righteous without Him.

So when we sin and make mistakes, God has it covered. Isaiah 61:10 says, *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness....* Realizing that we are covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness gives us reason to rejoice! When the devil comes against us with condemnation, we can stand firm against his accusations. Instead of receiving his criticism, we can stand on God's Word and say, "I am the righteousness of God in Christ. I am clothed in *His* righteousness—not mine. If I confess my sin, God is faithful and just to forgive me and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. I am loved!"

If God Doesn't Do It, It Won't Get Done

Once we believe that we have been made right with God through Jesus, we can begin to make real progress in our spiritual walk. I believe that one of the next biggest issues to understand is that we cannot change ourselves. Trying to bring about change in our own strength and through our plans will always result in frustration.

I spent many years of my life frustrated because I was trying to change things I was powerless to change. I struggled to change my husband, my children, my circumstances and myself. If I didn't get my way with others, my automatic response was to get upset. I often used anger and self-pity to try and manipulate and control people to do things the way I wanted them done. I used to be so harsh with my kids that I couldn't even tell them to take out the trash without sounding like a drill sergeant.

When I finally realized that I was the one with the problem, I immediately *went to work* trying to change myself into a good Christian. I tried to improve my mouth, my mind, my behavior and every other area where I didn't measure up to perfection. However, my efforts were in vain. It seemed like every other day I was giving up. I became so sick and tired of being upset and frustrated that I regularly cried out, "God, I can't do this anymore. I have done everything I know to do, and nothing is working. If anything is going to change, you are going to have to do it."

One day after I said this, I heard the Holy Spirit respond, "Great! Now *I* can go to work." That is what He had been waiting for—for me to stop *trying* to change myself and start *trusting* Him to change me. It's true that we need to work out our own salvation, but the Bible says it is *[Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight* (Philippians 2:13).

What a powerful revelation! You and I *cannot* change ourselves, but we *can* spend time seeking the One who can change us. We cannot change ourselves by the power of our will, but we can use our willpower to make a decision to set aside time to seek God. As we regularly wait in His presence, we put ourselves in position for Him to change us. During these times He will reveal the things in our lives—thoughts, attitudes, behavior, and so on—that need to be changed.

All He wants us to do is get into agreement with Him. He wants us to say, "God, I see this area in my life that You are showing me, and I agree that it needs to change. However, I am powerless to do it. If *You* don't do it, it won't get done. Show me what I need to do, and give me the power to do it." This is what it means to work out our salvation: cooperating with the Holy Spirit from the time we accept Christ as our Savior to the day we meet Him face-to-face, allowing Him to work out of us our ungodly traits and work into us the character of Christ.

Slowly but Surely, We Are Changed

When we get saved, we get a new nature—God's nature. Every quality and characteristic that He has is deposited in each of us the moment we acknowledge and receive Christ into our lives. Of course this is not something that we can see physically—it's in the unseen realm of our spirit that the Seed of God is planted. First John 3:9 says, *No one born (begotten) of God [deliberately, knowingly, and habitually] practices sin, for God's nature abides in him [His principle of life, the divine sperm, remains permanently within him]; and he cannot practice sinning because he is born (begotten) of God.* In other words, when we accept Jesus as Savior, we receive the ability to bear the fruit of the Spirit—the power to walk in love, experience His unshakable peace, exhibit self-control and so forth. But just as a seed that is planted in the ground needs certain conditions to be able to grow, so does this Seed of God's nature.

It takes *time* for His character to germinate and grow in us. Just like a seed needs regular amounts of water and the right soil temperature to break its outer hull and begin to bear roots downward and bear fruit upward, the same is true for us as Christians. In order for the divine Seed of Christ to grow, we need to be "watered" regularly with the water of the Word—this is our part (see Ephesians 5:26). God provides just the right "temperatures" or circumstances we need to grow.

Second Corinthians 3:18 says, *And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit.* The power to change doesn't come from us, it comes from the Lord. Our job is to continually get into the Word and see what Jesus looks like; like a mirror, the Scripture reflects His image. When we see what He is, we also see what we are not. That's when you and I need to get into agreement with God and ask Him to change us.

Usually, the bigger the problem, the more time it takes to change it. When I first started walking with the Lord, my life was filled with some big problems. Day after day, I sought the Lord, asking Him to change me. I read the Bible, studied specific scriptures, fasted and prayed. Little by little, He began to change me, renewing my thinking by the truth of His Word. In the beginning it seemed as though I hadn't changed at all. But as time passed, all those little, almost imperceptible changes began to add up. Before long, a visible difference could finally be seen in my behavior.

You and I are constantly growing in our dedication, consecration and commitment to the Lord. No matter how bad our behavior may seem, if we are committed to Christ, our lives will be changed into His likeness. Peter was fearful and denied Jesus three times, but God changed Him into a powerful preacher of the Gospel. Saul was murdering Christians, thinking he was doing God a favor, but God changed him into a mighty teacher and writer of the Word. The more experience we have with God,

the more we see how wonderful He is. And the more we see how wonderful He is, the more we love Him and want to do what He asks us to do.

Give Yourself a Break

God is no respecter of persons—what He does for one, He will do for another (see Romans 2:11). I encourage you to stop looking at how far you have to go and start looking at how far you have come. Don't spend your whole life being mad and speaking negatively *about* yourself and *to* yourself because you have not "arrived." Start believing in your mind and confessing with your mouth what the Word of God says about you. God is not mad at you because you're not perfect—He is only disappointed if you quit running the race.

I challenge you to regularly get alone with God to meditate on His Word and talk to Him about your life. Ask Him, "God, why do I feel the way I feel? Is there something wrong in my life that I need to deal with now? If so, what is my part?" Then be silent and listen for His direction. If you have done something wrong and you feel convicted by the Holy Spirit, repent—ask God to forgive you and take away your guilt and shame. Then, receive His forgiveness, let go of the past and go on. Say it loud and say it strong: **"I am not where I need to be, but thank God I am not where I used to be. I'm OK and I'm on my way!"**