

Growth in Grace Involves Recognition of the Sinfulness of Sin



1 Timothy 1:8-17

The more a believer grows in grace, the more he realizes the enormity of his own sin and the more he is made aware of the plague of his own heart (1 Kings 8:38). He sees the brilliancy of God's marvelous grace and mercy against the terrible backdrop of his own iniquities.

The Apostle Paul experienced this very thing, and as the years passed, we notice a progression in his own evaluation of his sinful condition. For each passage we will note the approximate year when Paul's words were written. □ 55 A.D.—“For **I am the least of the apostles**, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God, but by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15:9). □ 56 A.D.—“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.... **O wretched man that I am!**” (Rom. 7:18,24). □ 60 A.D.—“Unto me, **who am less than the least of all saints**, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8). Not just the least of the saints, but less than the least! □ 62 A.D.—“And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; **of whom I am chief**” (1 Tim. 1:14-15).

John Bunyan, imitated Paul by titling his autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. The vile slave trader John Newton knew full well what kind of person God's grace had saved, and he wrote the hymn that reflects the experience of every true child of God: “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, **that saved a wretch like me.**”

Our sin is great; ***God's grace is greater!***

~George Zeller: www.middletonbiblechurch.org

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