

Really Loved

There's a beloved children's story called *The Velveteen Rabbit*, written by Margery Williams in 1922. It tells the tale of a stuffed toy rabbit who longs to become real — to matter, to be alive, to be truly loved.

Darrell Stetler II has summarized the story:

One day, the rabbit asks the Skin Horse — an older, wiser toy — what it means to be “real.” The Skin Horse answers gently: “Real isn't how you are made. It's a thing that happens to you... When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but really loves you — then you become Real.”

The rabbit is confused. “Does it hurt?” he asks.

“Sometimes,” the Skin Horse says.

Later in the story, the boy who owns the Velveteen Rabbit grows sick with scarlet fever. When he recovers, the doctor tells the parents to burn everything that might be contaminated — including the rabbit.

The rabbit, heartbroken, lies in the trash heap, convinced that his love and loyalty were meaningless. But then — in a moment of grace — a fairy appears. She tells him, “You were Real to the boy... because he loved you. Now you shall be Real to everyone.” And she transforms him into a real, living rabbit — one that runs and plays and is fully alive.

Isn't that what God's love does? It finds us when we feel discarded. It tells us, “You are not forgotten. You are not junk. I love you.” It doesn't just patch us up — it makes us new. Not because we were impressive, but because we were loved. *

When we were “on the discard” pile because of our sin, God reached out to save us. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Through Jesus, we are made alive and new.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4-7).

God loves and will save and give eternal life to those who place their faith and trust in Jesus (Acts 16:30-31), turn from their sins in repentance (Acts 17:30-31), confess Jesus before men (Romans 10:9-10), and are baptized (immersed) into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). He will continue to love and cleanse from sin those who continue to walk in the light of His Word (1 John 1:7-9). His love even extends to those who wander away from Him, longing for their return (cf. Luke 15:11-24).

Through the gift of His Son to redeem us from sin and give us life, we can know we are really loved.

-- David A. Sargent

* From "42 Sermon Illustrations on God's Love" by Darrell Stetler II in www.newstartdiscipleship.com.