

Amazing Grace
Titus 2:11-15

Slide 1

An atheist complained to a Christian friend, *“You Christians have special holidays, such as Christmas and Easter. Jews celebrate their national holidays, such as Passover and Yom Kippur. But we atheists have no recognized national holidays, it’s unfair discrimination.”* His friend replied, *“You can celebrate April first.”*

We believe we’re saved by faith through grace. God's grace is usually defined as undeserved favor. Grace can’t be earned; it’s given freely.

We count on God's grace and the bridge He built in our relationship with Him. I’m beyond thankful for the grace of God that reached down and saved a wretch like me.

The song, *“Amazing Grace,”* is without a doubt one of the best-known Christian songs ever written.

It’s estimated that the song is played or sang about 10 million times every year, but there’s history behind the writing of this hymn.

In 1744, John Newton was forced into service in the Royal Navy. While in the navy, he was disgraced, relieved of his post, and traded for another man from a passing merchant ship.

This ship just happened to be a slave vessel which was the beginning of his career in the slave trade.

Now, some merchants believed that trafficking in human trade was justified since slavery was permitted in the Bible, as long as slaves were treated with dignity and kindness.

Many historians think that Newton believed the same because his slaves were willing to secretly carry his letters to port to send to his wife.

Despite a promising start with a slaver off the coast of Sierra Leone, Newton once again found himself in tough straits.

Felled by malaria, he was at the mercy of the slaver's native mistress, whose abuse reduced him to the condition of the "*wretch*" he later described in "*Amazing Grace*."

He recovered, yet he was soon to face another trial during which he was strengthened and inspired by Thomas à Kempis' devotional "*Imitation of Christ*."

Newton was aboard ship one night when a violent storm broke out. Moments after he left the deck, the crewman who had taken his place was swept overboard.

Although he manned the vessel for the remainder of the tempest, he later commented that, throughout the storm, he realized his helplessness and concluded that only the grace of God saved him.

Prodded by what he had read in Kempis, Newton took the first step toward accepting Christ. Turn to Titus 2:11.

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Titus 2:11-15, "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.”

We define grace as undeserved favor. God gave us this undeserved favor when He reached down and saved us.

There's nothing we could've ever done to deserve or receive salvation, but God gave it to us anyway. What an *Amazing Grace* that was.

This morning we're going to look at the hymn *Amazing Grace* which shows just how great and amazing God's grace is.

We just finished singing this hymn, but many of us just sing the words without fully understanding what it's actually saying.

Verse 1:

*“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.”*

A wretch can be described as someone who's despicable. Like John Newton, we too are a wretch. Romans 3:23 says, *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*

That means that every person that has ever walked this planet has sinned and because we have sinned, we're despicable, a wretch.

If we were a great and wonderful people, there would've been no reason for Jesus to come and die on the cross.

He came and died on that cross to save us from the pit of hell. He came to save us from what we truly deserve.

In today's age, there's a lot of entitlement going around. People think they deserve happiness. They think they deserve whatever they want. Listen, the only thing any of us truly deserve is spending an eternity in hell.

Paul tells us in Romans 6:23, *"For the wages of sin is death."* Here, in Romans, Paul makes it clear that we've all sinned and the payment for sin is death.

Paul isn't talking about just an Earthly death, where we have a big funeral and people sing and cry, but a death where we spend an eternity in hell.

That's what we really deserve, but thankfully we have a loving and merciful Father. Titus 2:14a, *"Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness."*

Jesus died to save us and rescue us from an eternal torment in hell. The grace of God is a saving grace and we're all in need of saving.

There's no one who can save themselves or can be saved without Jesus Christ.

Titus 3:5, *"He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit."*

Being a good person won't get you into Heaven. Doing and saying the right things and being nice to others won't get you in Heaven.

Knowing about God and sitting in a church pew every Sunday won't get you in Heaven.

The only way to get into Heaven is through Jesus Christ. It's not knowing about Him, but it's about knowing Him and having a relationship with Him.

Too many people today think they're saved because they've spent the last 30 years in a church somewhere. That'll get you nowhere; you must know Jesus.

Titus 3:3, *"At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another."*

If you're a Christian, you're no longer enslaved to your sin. You're no longer going to get what you truly deserve. The love and grace of God is a saving grace. He can save you right where you're at.

*"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."*

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Verse 2:

*"Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!"*

The grace and love of God is also a calming grace. John Newton was worried and anxious and, as soon as God's grace fell over him, it says, *"And grace my fears relieved."*

He was finally at peace and God can give you the same peace. A peace like you've never known before.

Isaiah 26:3, *“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You.”*

Those who fully trust in God will have peace. They’ll have peace because they know that no matter what happens: He’s in control, and He has a plan.

In John Newton’s mind, he was worried. He probably thought the end was near. He said his fears were relieved when he believed in Christ.

You don’t have to understand God’s plan, you just need to trust it and have faith in it.

Even in your darkest times and in situations where you find yourself disappointed because of something, God’s still good, God’s still in control, and God still has a plan.

Trust in God. Like what we sang earlier:

*Have faith in God, He’s on His throne
Have faith in God, He watches o’er His own;
He cannot fail, He must prevail;
Have faith in God, Have faith in God*

The grace of God is a calming grace. He can give you the calmness that nothing else in this world can.

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Verse 3:

*“Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
‘Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.”*

Before writing *Amazing Grace*, John Newton faced a lot of danger and hardships. He knew that only through God's grace, would he be safe and make it through.

He said that grace had brought him safely through many dangers, toils, and snares. The God that did it for John Newton is the same God that can do it for us.

2 Thessalonians 3:3, *"But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one."*

God will guard you against the devil. Now, that doesn't mean you'll not go through hard and difficult times, it just means that in those difficult times God is still with you and protecting you.

Look at Paul for example. Paul was arrested, beaten, stoned, and thrown in jail.

Yet, even in those hard and difficult times, Paul wrote the book that we call *Philippians* which is considered Paul's happiest letter, and he wrote it while enduring harsh conditions in jail.

Even though we are surrounded by darkness and troubles, God still protect us. He's with us in every situation.

No matter how dark, hopeless, or impossible a situation may seem, God is with us every moment.

The song *Whom Shall I Fear* reminds us of this:

*"You crush the enemy
Underneath my feet
You are my sword and shield
Though troubles linger still
Whom shall I fear..."*

*My strength is in Your name
For You alone can save
You will deliver me
Yours is the victory
Whom shall I fear”*

The grace of God is a protective grace. He protects us because He loves us.

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Verse 4:

*“The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my Shield and Portion be,
As long as life endures.”*

If God promises to do something, He’ll fulfill that promise... in His time. Not our timing, but His timing.

Yes, we’ll face hardships and difficulties in this life, but it’s worth it. The Bible tells us that those who believe and trust in Jesus will one day spend an eternity in Heaven with Him.

2 Timothy 4:7-8, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

We’ll be in a place with no more suffering or pain. A place where we don’t have to worry about making ends meet. A place where we don’t have to worry about politics. A place of eternal paradise.

That's what we're promised if we truly believe and trust in God. Now, listen closely to this next part...

Your parents' faith will not get you into Heaven. Your children's faith will not get you into Heaven. Your sibling's faith will not get you into Heaven. Only your faith will do that.

You must personally believe and trust in Jesus and live your life like you do. Nobody can do it for you, you must do it yourself.

The grace of God is a rewarding grace. He'll reward those who believe and trust in Him. The question is, do you believe and trust in Him?

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Verse 5:

*“When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’d first begun.”*

The grace of God is a persevering grace. Perseverance can be described as continuing in a course of action even in the face of difficulty with little or no prospect of success.

God loves us and gives us grace even in times when it would probably be better if He didn't. John Newton said, *“When we’ve been here ten thousand years.”* Think about how long humanity has been on this Earth.

Some say millions or billions of years and some say only a few thousand years. Regardless, if the Earth was created about 6,000 years ago or 60 billion years ago, either way, that's a long time.

Humanity has given God reason after reason to give up on us, but God never has. Think about some of the major events that have happened.

The Holocaust. Both World Wars. The way that nation after nation has treated Israel and are now treating Israel. The way the homeless and the poor have been forgotten and left behind.

Day after day. Year after year. Decade after decade, we've given God a million reasons to give up on us, but He doesn't.

In Luke 15, Jesus tells the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The younger son gets his inheritance from his father before the father even dies and then leaves home.

While gone, he wasted every penny he got with nothing to show for it. Ending up on "skid row," so to speak, he decided to come home and face his father.

Now, the son had basically told his father that he wished he were dead. You know that he must have broken his father's heart.

It was a tradition in that day that if a son ever left home, like this prodigal son did and came back, he was to be stoned by the entire town.

The son was walking home and as soon as he got into the father's view, the father ran to the son. He hugged and embraced him, shielding him in case any stones were thrown.

The son had disrespected his father. He had wasted his entire inheritance by partying and drinking. He made a mockery of himself and the entire family.

Yet, as soon as his father saw him, he ran to him and hugged him and welcomed him back home into the family.

Jesus does the same for us. We venture far away from God in our sinful lifestyles, breaking His heart.

We completely deserve death in hell for eternity, but Jesus steps in and when He sees us making our way back home to Him, He immediately runs out to embrace us.

Even when you were far way off, He was waiting for you because He loves you. When you take one step toward Jesus, Jesus takes every other step toward you.

The grace of God is persevering grace and a persevering love. Even when we give Him a million reasons to turn away from us, He never leaves. That's a God of love.

*“When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’d first begun.”*

Slide 7

Conclusion

The beautiful message from John Newton in *Amazing Grace* is that he was saved right where he was; in the middle of something he shouldn't have been doing.

He wasn't saved when he returned home after giving up slave trading. He wasn't saved after he got his life together. No!

He was saved right where he was. In the middle of his brokenness. In the middle of the darkness. He was saved in the middle of chaos and sin.

I don't know where you are today in life. Maybe you're struggling. Maybe you keep making mistakes and you feel ashamed or guilty.

Like John Newton, God can save you right where you are, in your brokenness and your sin and your shame. God can reach down and save you. He's calling for you. Will you answer?