

Amazing Grace!

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Ephesians 2:1–10 (NKJV) *“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

There is little doubt that the most beloved hymn of all time is “Amazing Grace” which was written by John Newton (1725-1807). [Verse 5 was written by John P. Rees (1828-1900)] K. W. Osbeck writes of this hymn, “Calling himself a “wretch” who was lost and blind, John Newton recalled leaving school at the age of 11 to begin life as a rough, debauched seaman. Eventually he engaged in the despicable practice of capturing natives from West Africa to be sold as slaves to markets around the world. But one day the grace of God put fear into the heart of this wicked slave trader through a fierce storm. Greatly alarmed and fearful of a shipwreck, Newton began to read The Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis. God used this book to lead him to a genuine conversion and a dramatic change in his way of life. Feeling a definite call to study for the ministry, Newton was encouraged and greatly influenced by John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. At the age of 39, John Newton became an ordained minister of the Anglican church at the little village of Olney, near Cambridge, England. To add further impact to his powerful preaching, Newton introduced simple heart-felt hymns rather than the usual psalms in his services. When enough hymns could not be found, Newton began to write his own, often assisted by his close friend William Cowper. In 1779 their combined efforts produced the famous Olney Hymns hymnal. “Amazing Grace” was from that collection. Until the time of his death at the age of 82, John Newton never ceased to marvel at the grace of God that transformed him so completely. Shortly before his death he is quoted as proclaiming with a loud voice during a message, “My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: That I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior!” What amazing grace!”¹

Consider the words of this great hymn:

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.

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!

Verse 3

Thru many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come; 'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

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.

Verse 5

¹ Osbeck, K. W. (1996). Amazing grace: 366 inspiring hymn stories for daily devotions (p. 170). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.

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.

So how amazing is God's grace? God's grace is amazing because He reached out to us while we were still sinners! He came to us in His Son, Jesus Christ. He did not wait for us to come to Him. He came to us while we were still dead (separated from God) in our trespasses and sins, while we still walked according to the course of this world (living like the world), and while we still walked in accordance to the will of Satan. Jesus died for us while we were still disobedient and while we lived to fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind. He died for us while we were determined to get what we wanted, when we wanted it, the way we wanted it. Our sinful nature made us deserving of God's wrath rather than His mercy.

God's grace is amazing because God loved us while we were yet unlovable! John 3:16 (NKJV) says, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* 1 John 3:16 (NKJV) says, *"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us..."* God does not love us because we deserve it but because we need it!

God's grace is amazing because God did not give us what our sin deserved! God showed us the riches of His mercy rather than His wrath. In His mercy He does not give to us what our sin deserves. Romans 5:20 (NKJV) says, *"Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more."* He does not extend His mercy because we deserve it but because we need it!

God's grace is amazing because God gives us what we do not deserve! God made us, who were dead in trespasses and sins, alive together with Christ. He gave us eternal life. In addition, God raised us up together with Christ in heavenly places and seated us together with Christ in a seat of honor. Imagine that kind of grace! God does not extend His grace to us because we deserve it, but because He wants us to know how much He loves us!

God's grace is amazing because it will never end! God will never stop displaying His grace to us! In the ages to come He will show the exceeding (overflowing) riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Consider what Paul is saying. First grace is *timeless*: "in the ages to come". Second grace is *limitless*, "Exceeding riches of His grace". Third, grace is undeserved favor: "In His kindness toward us". Fourth grace is found in Christ: "In Christ Jesus". The eternal, limitless, undeserved experience of His grace in Christ will truly keep us singing for ten thousand years just as an introduction to eternity!

God's grace is amazing because it is a gift! Salvation is a gift of God's unmerited favor. No one deserves it and no one can earn it: *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*² Although grace is a free gift, it must be received before it is ours. It must be received through faith. Salvation is not something we earn by our own merit. It is not based upon our good works of righteousness. No one will be able to boast that they earned their own salvation. Grace is always a gift. Anything else is an insult to God's grace.

God's grace is amazing but it is a limited time offer. We must never presume upon God's grace. We must never procrastinate receiving God's offer: *"We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain."* ² For He says: *'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.'* Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.³ The offer of God's amazing grace must be received "NOW". It must be received "TODAY". There is no guarantee that the offer will be available tomorrow!

God's grace is truly amazing! If you have never been saved by grace, then you still are dead in your trespasses and sins. You may think of yourself as a good person but that is trusting in yourself. You are living for yourself under the deception of Satan. You cannot save yourself. You will never be good enough. In His great mercy, God offers to you the gift of His grace. John Newton once said: "I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior!" God's offer of grace is before you. Will you turn from your sin and receive His grace by faith? Will you be saved today?

² Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

³ 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 (NKJV)