

## Daily Devotional, February 19, 2021 This is Amazing Grace

***“But now we have been given a brief moment of grace, for the Lord our God has allowed a few of us to survive as a remnant. He has given us security in this holy place. Our God has brightened our eyes and granted us some relief from our slavery. For we were slaves, but in his unfailing love our God did not abandon us in our slavery. Instead, he caused the kings of Persia to treat us favorably. Ezra 9:8-9 (NIV)***

Grace, God’s amazing grace—I can’t think of anything more powerful or humbling to receive. When I think of grace, the words to a favorite hymn come to mind:

***Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,  
that saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost but, now I’m found,  
was blind but now I see.  
T’was grace that taught my heart to fear.  
And grace, my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear,  
the hour I first believed!***

Amazing Grace is easily one of the most recognizable hymns, even to non-believers. It has been played or sung at countless funerals over the years. Estimates claim that the hymn is performed roughly 10 million times per year. Over this time, musicians and singers from Elvis Presley and Andrea Bocelli to Celine Dion have performed Amazing Grace. Even former President Obama used this hymn during the eulogy for Rev. Clementa Pinckney, a victim of the Charleston church shooting in 2015.

This is a powerful song that tells of the writer’s journey to discover this grace. After learning of the song’s history and the story of its author, John Newton, I have come to appreciate this powerful hymn in a different, deeper way.

John Newton wrote Amazing Grace in 1779 after a lifetime of tumultuous experiences. John had a troubled childhood; his mother died when he was six. He was a sailor in the British Navy, only to go AWOL and be punished for deserting. He said that he contemplated a murder-suicide of his ship captain, but he didn’t go through with it. He was so fond of profanity, that he made sailors around him uncomfortable. And he was such a bad shipmate that one crew chained him, starved him, and sold him into slavery. But after being freed from slavery, he became a captain of a slave ship himself. He was most definitely the “wretch” that he wrote about in this song.

As I read about his life and his journey toward finding Amazing Grace, I now understand and appreciate the depth of his gratefulness when he wrote these words: “*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me*”. Newton understood that nothing he could ever do would justify God’s gift of grace. The gift we have all been given has already been paid for with the death and resurrection of God’s son, Jesus.

The last verse has always been one that has stood out to me. It gives us a glimpse of heaven – and how long we will be able to praise God for God’s wonderful gift! Of grace to us.

***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’ve first begun.***

***Prayer: Lord, God, You are so incredibly good to me. I did nothing to earn Your love and yet You love me still. By extending Your grace and mercy to me, You have forgiven my sins and cleansed me. I thank You for this amazing grace. Let me not remember my transgressions except to remind myself how You have saved me. I am so grateful to Your Son, Jesus, who bore my sin and shame for me on the cross. I look forward to the day when by your grace, I will enter Your eternal kingdom. Amen.***