

Amazing Grace!

In London, England, a son was born to Elizabeth and John Newton, Sr. This son, John Newton, Jr. has made an impact on the lives of people all over the world. But, you may ask, "Who was he, and what did he do?"

When John Newton, Jr. {we'll call him JN} was born on July 24, 1725, his father was the commander of a merchant ship and, at age 11, JN went to sea with him. Having made six voyages with his father, the elder Newton retired and, in 1744, JN was impressed into service on a man-of-war. Finding the living conditions so intolerable, JN deserted but was recaptured, publicly flogged, and demoted from midshipman to common seaman. As a result, JN requested a change of service and was transferred to the service of a slave ship. Here, JN became the servant of a slave trader and was brutally abused, transferred to another slave ship and ended up being left in West Africa with a slave trader and his wicked wife. After this time in his life JN recounted that he was once "once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in West Africa."

As fate would have it, JN was rescued by a sea captain who the elder Newton had asked to search for his son. Eventually, JN became captain of his own ship and was involved in the slave trade. JN had some "religious" instruction from his mother early in life; she passed away when he was very young. On a voyage that was homeward bound, the ship encountered a violent storm that threatened the ship to sink as it took in water. Out of desperation and fear, JN cried out "Lord, have mercy on us." And, the Lord did and they eventually arrived safely to port. The recorded date of this was May 10, 1748 and it was THE turning point in the life of JN. Exactly what took place in the heart of JN, what else he may have prayed, we do not know; however, the change in his life gave evidence that he had trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. For a brief period of time JN continued in the slave trade but treated the slaves in a humane manner.

There is much more to the life of JN, of how he began to read and study the Bible, educate himself, teaching himself Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. In 1750 he married his childhood sweetheart, Mary Catlett and later entered the Gospel ministry. From the pen of this former infidel, libertine, and slave trader came the words of the wonderful song, "Amazing Grace." JN knew better than anyone else when he wrote these words:

Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound)
That sav'd a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears reliev'd;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believ'd!

Friend, what God did for John Newton He has been doing for millions of others. He can and will do the same for you. It does not matter who you are or what you have done. Why? Because of His great love for you! "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." {John 3:16} We can never wear out this great Bible verse! While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." {Romans 5:8} Our redemption was not and is not because of anything we have done or can do; it was and is ALL of God by the blood of Jesus Christ. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:" {1 Peter 1:18-19} Jesus is called a lamb, "And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" {John 1:29} When Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross of Calvary, He was in fact paying our sin debt in full. Though He was buried, He bodily rose three days later and at this very moment He is in Heaven on the right hand of God the Father. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. ... For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true;

but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: ... Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." {Hebrews 9:22-26} "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." {Hebrews 10:12}

Say friend, are you willing to repent of your sin and by faith alone in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, trust Him as your personal Saviour? Are you willing to pray, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner and save me for Jesus' sake"? Can you, from the heart, sing this beautiful song, "Amazing grace! how sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me!"? This same Jesus who forgave and saved John Newton can do the same for you - TODAY - RIGHT NOW!

~Richard A. Ciarrocca/2017

All Scripture references are KJV