
Why Is God's Amazing Grace So Amazing?

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).*

*"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand;
and we exult in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1, 2).*

Wyatt Sawyer, a preacher of the gospel for more than half a century, in a devotional at a Saturday morning breakfast in Fort Worth, Texas, asked, "Why is God's amazing grace so amazing?" The more than seventy people who were gathered before him gave two answers: "First, because His grace is free, and second, because we do not deserve it." All of us concluded that the last of the two stands higher than the first. In extending salvation to us God has given us His hand of mercy that we must have but do not deserve. How amazing!

John Newton, a man who had gone deeply into sin, wrote the wonderful song "Amazing Grace" as he rejoiced over the transforming power of God's grace. He penned it in 1779, and it has stood the test of time, perhaps even growing in popularity year by year. Its profound teaching and moving lyrics have reached across language, cultural, and social barriers. The four stanzas of it give us four powerful, biblical reasons that His grace is amazing grace.

The first reason that Newton gave is *the depth of His grace*. He wrote:

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.¹

How far down does His grace go? Does it

¹John Newton, "Amazing Grace," *Songs of Faith and Praise*, comp. and ed. Alton H. Howard (West Monroe, La.: Howard Publishing Co., 1994).

go to the worst and to the best and to all those who are almost bad and almost good? Yes, it even goes down to those who have reached the lowest depths of sin all over the world and to all who are sinners everywhere—the wretched, the spiritually blind, the degraded, the sin-polluted, those for whom all hope seems to be gone. With a hope that grows brighter and brighter as it shines over the depths of the darkness, Paul wrote: "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all" (1 Timothy 1:15).

The second reason is found in the second stanza: God's grace is amazing because of *the height of it*. Newton looked back as well as up as he wrote:

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.²

His cold, dark heart, through the presence of God's grace, was brought to fear the horrid tragedy of sin. Then, in its remedial power, God's grace turned his heart into a heart that found solace and peace in what God has done for the human race. The salvation of the Lord teaches the fear of sin as well as the love of God. Paul combined both thoughts into one comprehensive affirmation:

²Ibid.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds (Titus 2:11–14).

Newton's third reason for the greatness of God's grace was *the width of it*. This grace of our God goes out to all of our needs, all our sins and weaknesses—the “dangers, toils, and snares” that have and will plague us.

Thru many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come.
'Tis grace hath bro't me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.³

No roadblock, no obstacle of Satan, no mountain of struggle is too big, too powerful, too overwhelming to counter the reconstructing character of God's grace. Those who stand in it cannot be overcome or snatched away from the Father's hand. Paul said, “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). God comforted Paul regarding the painful thorn that would be his companion for the remaining part of his life. He said to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9a). Paul yielded to God's plan, and he was able to tell the Corinthian brethren, “Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:9b, 10).

Furthermore, what this grace has done for us in the past, we can count on it to do for us during the remaining part of the journey until we safely arrive at home in our Father's House.

Then, Newton sung of another reason that God's grace is so amazing: His last stanza stressed *the length of it*.

When we've been there ten thousand years,

³Ibid.

Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.⁴

The Lord in His wonderful mercy will not only take us through life, but He will lead us into eternity. We cannot speak of living *through* eternity, but we can anticipate living continually in it. His grace will be a focal point in our songs, praises, and our service in that celestial city. The story of His saving grace will never grow old to us, not in this life and not in the next one.

One stanza of Newton's hymn that does not ordinarily appear in our hymn books emphasized also the length of God's grace:

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.⁵

Around the throne of God we will sing of His grace with all the redeemed and all the heavenly host. John heard a song about the Lamb's redemption coming from the court of heaven:

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever” (Revelation 5:11–13).

Why is God's grace so amazing? John Newton pointed to its depth, height, width, and length. He said it goes down to the lowest sinful life, up to all the glories of heaven, out to every circumstance and snare that may face us, and on to the end of life and into the immeasurable living that we will do in eternity at our Savior's side. We are pulled to Christ through God's grace, we stand in it as we live

⁴Ibid.

⁵Al Rogers, “Amazing Grace: The Story of John Newton” (http://www.anointedlinks.com/amazing_grace.html; Internet; accessed 5 September 2008).

in Christ, and His grace will surround us as we receive everlasting life. This great grace is received through obedient faith. We remain in it as we walk in the light. Salvation, then, is from faith to faith and from grace to grace.

Eddie Cloer

❖-❖-❖-❖-❖

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).