

God's Amazing Grace

John Newton was born in 1725. On September 3, 2020, my favorite blogger, Jim Denison, wrote about an event which occurred in Newton's life on September 3, 1748. That day, Newton who was the captain of a slave ship encountered such a violent storm he feared he and his crew would die. Amid the howling wind and towering waves, Newton recalled what his godly mother had taught him before she died when he was just a boy. He begged, "*Lord, have mercy upon us.*" He believed God spoke to him through the storm. From that day forward he was a changed man.

Often people praying during a crisis, are primarily asking God for help. Those prayers rarely result in major changes. When Newton committed his life to Christ that day, however, his life changed. He stopped being a slave ship captain and became a disciple of well-known preacher, George Whitefield. He taught himself Latin, Greek, and Hebrew believing God was calling him to be a minister.

Remarkably, his ministry not only made an impact during his life but continues to touch millions 215 years after his death. His most lasting legacy was not the sermons he preached, but the hymns he composed. Although he wrote 280 songs, he is best known for the most beloved hymn ever written, *Amazing Grace*.

That is far from the only impact of his ministry. Newton eventually pastored a church in London, where he deeply influenced William Wilberforce, who became the driving force behind the movement to outlaw slavery in England.

In his blog, Denison shared how he visited Newton's grave and read these words on his tombstone: "*John Newton, Clerk, Once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy.*"

Newton never forgot how God changed his life. He understood what the Apostle Paul wrote about not deserving God's forgiveness, "...*God's kindness, then it is not by their good works. For in that case, God's grace would not be what it really is—free and undeserved.*" (Romans 11:6, NLT)

God's Amazing Grace changed Newton and it still changes people today. God offers mercy not because we deserve it, but because his grace is freely given to anyone who confesses their sin and commits to following Jesus.