

8/12/2018

“Experiencing God’s Amazing Grace”

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 17:1-2; Mark 8:22-26; Ephesians 1:1-10

Series: Songs of Faith and Inspiration – “Amazing Grace”

Theme: The Bible and life offer examples and ways of experiencing God’s amazing grace.

Today, we continue our series of songs of faith and inspiration. Our theme song for today has become one of the most beloved and familiar Christian songs, lifting up a key theme of the bible, even a spiritual law ... that of God’s grace. The hymn of course is “Amazing Grace.” Today, we are also going to be hearing and singing a modern variation of it.

So today, we’re going to hear and consider examples and ways of experiencing God’s amazing grace.

The hymn “**Amazing Grace**” was written by John Newton, an Englishman who lived from 1725 to 1807.

Al Rogers, shares his version of The Story of Amazing Grace, taken from the July-August 1996 issue of “Away Here in Texas”:

“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound ...” So begins one of the most beloved hymns of all time, a staple in the hymnals of many denominations, New Britain or “45 on the top” in Sacred Harp. The author of the words was John Newton, the self-proclaimed wretch who once was lost but then was found, saved by amazing grace.

Newton was born in London July 24, 1725, the son of a commander of a merchant ship which sailed the Mediterranean. When John was eleven, he went to sea with his father and made six voyages with him before the elder Newton retired. In 1744, John was impressed into service on a man-of-war. Finding conditions on board intolerable, he deserted but was soon recaptured and publicly flogged and demoted from midshipman to common seaman.

Finally, at his own request, he was exchanged into service on a slave ship, which took him to the coast of Sierra Leone. He, then, became the servant of a slave trader and was brutally abused. Early in 1748 he was rescued by a sea captain who had known John’s father. John Newton ultimately became captain of his own ship, one which plied the slave trade.

Although he had some early religious instruction from his mother, who had died when he was a child, he had long since given up any religious convictions. However, on a homeward voyage, while he was attempting to steer the ship through a violent storm, he experienced what he was to refer to later as his “great deliverance.” He recorded in his journal that when all seemed lost and the ship would surely sink, he exclaimed, “Lord, have mercy upon us.” Later in his cabin, he reflected on what he had said and began to believe that God had addressed him through the storm and that grace had begun to work for him.

Newton later met, learned from and became friends of George Whitfield and John Wesley. He -also taught himself the biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek and eventually was ordained in the Church of England himself.

† **John Newton wrote those wonderful words expressing his gratitude for experiencing God's grace.**

He did so reflecting upon the words of King David from the bible. For ...

† David himself repeatedly expressed his gratitude in experiencing God's amazing grace. We hear these words from 1 Chronicles 17. "*Who am I, O God, and what is my house (my family) that you have brought me thus far?*"

I have often remembered and reflected with gratitude what God has done and continues to do in my life and the life of my family. God's amazing grace, how sweet the sound.

From stories of my grandparents and parents to my own life, God has always been present. God has always provided. God has always loved. God has always forgiven. God has always given direction. God has always given encouragement. God has always given hope.

I love hearing the stories of others, as well from those God has led to encounter and walk with in life's journey. How about you? How have you experienced God's amazing grace? Who have you told about it?

† The Apostle John said that Jesus came from God the Father full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

† The Apostles Peter and Paul had much to say about God's amazing grace, both in their lives personally, and for all who receive Jesus as savior and lord.

† And from the Gospel according to Mark (8:22-26), there is a story of a brief, yet, powerful experience of God's amazing grace in the life of a blind man.

They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"

He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go into the village."

It's, perhaps, not as familiar as one or two of the other healings of blind men recorded in the gospels – like the healing of the man born blind or the healing of Bartimaeus. This miracle is recorded only in Mark. Yet, this experience, as the others, is important, because it brings out the

unique circumstances of the person and the community in which he lives. You see, Jesus did what was asked of him, not for acclaim or popularity, but to show the love and grace of God.

Have your eyes been opened by Jesus? What was the first thing you “saw”? Other people? Yourself? How clearly did you see with your new spiritual sight?

Perhaps, the man was not always blind. He knew what trees looked like.

Perhaps, your sight given by Jesus was sight returned which once was “lost.”

The healing of this man took more than one touch from Jesus. Sometimes, our healing and new sight isn't instantaneous. Sometimes, it takes failing and learning over and over before we really understand or make a change in our lives. But, that's all part of God's amazing grace.

Would anybody here today like to share a witness to God's amazing grace in your life?

So remember, God's amazing grace is readily available to any of us. All we need to do is ask – for ourselves or those we care about.