



Message Study Guide

Introduction

John Newton got it exactly right when he penned the words to one of the most famous songs the world has ever none - "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found, twas blind, but now I see". Throughout Scripture, God's grace stands like a city that has been set on a hill, which cannot be hid. It may be the single most important word in the Christian vocabulary. John Newton was a man who had personally experienced this amazing grace from God.

Before conversion, John Newton was a sea Captain of a slave ship. He would later feel tremendous conviction of his inhuman aspects of his work in the slave trade and become a strong crusader against slavery. In 1807, the year Newton died was the same year that the British Parliament abolished slavery. At age 23, he was on board a cargo ship on May 10, 1748 against heavy seas and turbulent weather. Worn out and almost frozen, it appeared that all would be lost. At that moment, he began reading Thomas Kemis's classic book entitled, "Imitation of Christ". The book and this near death experience turned out to be the turning point of his life. He was absolutely 'amazed' to be saved from certain death. He would soon leave this vocation and become a minister of the gospel of Christ and a hymn writer.

Sometime around Christmas, 1772, while preparing to preach a message concerning his own conversion entitled, "Faith's Review and Expectation", he penned the words to the song we all know to be "Amazing Grace". The words to the song were later found written on his sermon notes. The tune was added years later and may have come from a plantation melody entitled "Loving Lambs". This classic song was written as the total expression of John Newton's life. The song is based on 1 Chronicles 17:16, 17. This was the prayer of King David in which he marvels at God choosing him and his house. Other songs written by Newton include "How Sweet the Name of Jesus" and "Glorious Things of thee are Spoken", but he will forever be linked with "Amazing Grace".

In today's message, Pastor Ron begins a new series entitled "Grace Anatomy - Stories of Disqualified People". The first message will serve as an introduction by examining "What Grace is and Why We Need It". Join us during the coming weeks as we walk through the Scripture finding disqualified people who were shown amazing grace.

Discussion Points

While grace is certainly one of the most grand and glorious truths found in the Bible, it naturally carries with it a common problem when we are trying to understand it. The problem is clearly defined in Galatians 3:3 by Paul. We are all performance based Christians. Everything in our lives leans towards performance. Performance is the opposite of grace.

Discussion Questions

1. Most of us know grace to be "the unmerited favor of God". Using your own experience, define grace in your own words.
2. Performance based Christianity is the opposite of grace. Why do you think we are more prone to rely upon performance than on grace?
3. Make a list of individuals in the Bible that were performance based rather than grace based.
4. What different kinds of grace are found in the following Scriptures: Matthew 5:44-45; Acts 15:11; Romans 5:1-2; 1 Peter 4:10; 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Think About It

The Bible declares that if any of us make the slightest contribution to our salvation would be to completely rule out the possibility of God's grace being bestowed upon us. Grace is a sovereign act of God (Romans 9:15-16).

Do Something About It!

This is a strange statement in light of the subject, but there is something all of us can do; accept God's grace freely on a daily basis without trying to constantly perform for approval.

Be Willing To Change

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we do all fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away".