

XVIII.VI. JOHN NEWTON: From Slaver to Abolitionist and Libertine to Pastor - The Eighteenth Century (pt.6)

Two questions and answers:

QUESTION 1. What is Church History?

ANSWER. Church history is the story of how Jesus has built his church for his own glory and his peoples' good. **Matthew 16:18** "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

QUESTION 2. Why should we study Church History?

ANSWER. We should learn church history because it is the amazing story of Jesus conquering the nations through his Gospel. **Revelation 6:2** "[Christ] came out conquering, and to conquer."

Q. ARE YOU READY FOR CHURCH HISTORY?!

Today we are going to look at the Eighteenth Century for the 5th time. But before we do that let's remember what we learned last time.

Q. Who can tell me the name of the person I taught you about last time?

– **Everyone say, "George Whitefield."**

Q. Who can tell me something about George Whitefield?

RECAP

In the Eighteenth Century, God used George Whitefield to teach us about hard work, evangelism, and perseverance in our duties.

Who can tell me

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (pt.5) MEMORY VERSE.

– "Though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (**Ephesians 3:8**).

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (pt.5) MEMORY QUOTE.

– "What! Get to heaven on your own strength? Why, you might as well try to climb to the moon on a rope of sand!" (**George Whitefield**).

Now, today I am going to teach you about the Eighteenth Century PART 6 (1,700-1,800).

What happened in the Eighteenth Century (1,700-1,800) that shows us how Christ built His church as He continued to conquer the nations?

I. JOHN NEWTON (1725-1807).

Everyone say, "John Newton."

HISTORY

- **(i)** John Newton was born on July 24, 1725, in Wapping, London, England, during a period of growing maritime trade and social upheaval, which shaped his early exposure to the sea and his later career. **NEWTON'S FATHER WAS A SHIPMASTER IN THE MEDITERRANEAN TRADE.**
- **(ii)** His father, John Newton Sr., was a stern, distant merchant captain; his mother, Elizabeth, a devout Christian, taught him Scripture, catechism, and hymns until her death from tuberculosis when Newton was almost seven years old. This profoundly impacted his early faith. **NEWTON'S MOTHER DIED IN 1732, LEAVING HIM IN THE CARE OF HIS FATHER AND STEPMOTHER.**
- **(iii)** As a boy, Newton was rebellious and restless, showing little interest in formal education; he was sent to boarding school but left at age 10, later admitting to a reckless youth marked by disobedience and profanity. "I was capable of anything; I had not the least fear of God before my eyes" (Newton 1868, 12).
- **(iv)** At age 11, Newton joined his father at sea, beginning a seafaring career; by 1742, at 17, he was pressed into service in the Royal Navy on HMS Harwich, where harsh conditions and his rebellious spirit led to flogging and desertion attempts. **NEWTON DESERTED THE NAVY BUT WAS CAUGHT AND PUNISHED.**
 - Newton's naval service exposed him to discipline and hardship.
 - **Everyone say, "Newton was a rebellious sailor."**
 - ♦ **NEWTON'S FATHER SECURED HIS RELEASE FROM THE NAVY IN 1745.**
- **(v)** In 1745, Newton, aged 20, was traded to a merchant ship bound for West Africa, where he worked for a slave trader on Plantain Island; treated like a servant, he endured starvation and cruelty, later reflecting on this as a low point in his life. **"I was a slave in Africa, as much as any Negro I have since seen" (Newton 1868, 34).**
- **(vi)** Rescued in 1747 by a ship captain sent by his father, Newton faced a violent storm at sea in 1748 aboard *the Greyhound*; fearing death, he prayed for mercy, marking a turning point in his spiritual life, though his full transformation was gradual. **NEWTON CALLED THIS STORM HIS**

"GREAT DELIVERANCE."

- **(vii)** From 1748 to 1754, Newton continued in the slave trade, captaining ships and transporting enslaved Africans; he profited from the trade but later expressed deep remorse for his role, calling it a **"business at which my heart now shudders"** (Newton 1788, 7).
- **(viii)** In 1750, Newton married Mary Catlett, his childhood sweetheart, in Chatham, England; their devoted but childless marriage anchored him emotionally, though his frequent absences at sea strained their bond. **NEWTON'S LOVE FOR MARY SHAPED HIS LATER STABILITY.**
- **(ix)** A seizure in 1754, likely epilepsy, ended Newton's seafaring career at age 29; he took a land-based job as a tide surveyor in Liverpool, where he began studying theology and reflecting on his past. **NEWTON STUDIED LATIN, GREEK, AND HEBREW IN LIVERPOOL.**
- **(x)** Newton's preaching began informally in Liverpool, where he shared his story with small groups; his rough past and vivid storytelling drew listeners, laying the groundwork for his later ministry. **NEWTON'S EARLY TALKS FOCUSED ON HIS LIFE AT SEA AND SPIRITUAL AWAKENING.**
- **(xi)** In 1764, at age 39, Newton was ordained in the Church of England and appointed curate of Olney, Buckinghamshire; his heartfelt preaching and pastoral care revitalized the parish, attracting large congregations. **NEWTON SERVED IN OLNEY FOR 16 YEARS.**
- **(xii)** In Olney, Newton collaborated with poet William Cowper to write hymns, publishing the *Olney Hymns* in 1779, including "Amazing Grace," which drew from his life experiences and became a global hymn. **"Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me"** (Newton and Cowper 1779, 104).
- **(xiii)** Newton's friendship with Cowper was deep but challenging; he supported Cowper through mental health struggles, showing compassion and patience, though their collaboration ended when Cowper's health declined. **NEWTON AND COWPER WROTE OVER 300 HYMNS TOGETHER.**
- **(xiv)** In 1780, Newton became rector of St. Mary Woolnoth in London, where his preaching drew diverse crowds, from merchants to politicians; he used his platform to speak against the slave trade, influencing early abolitionists. **NEWTON MENTORED YOUNG ABOLITIONIST WILLIAM WILBERFORCE.**
- **(xv)** Newton's writings, like *Letters of a Slave Trader* (1780), detailed his past in the slave trade and his regret, urging reform; his testimony before Parliament in 1788 aided the abolition movement, showing his commitment to social change. **NEWTON CALLED THE SLAVE TRADE "A NATIONAL SIN"** (Newton 1788, 7).

- **(xvi)** Facing opposition, Newton was criticized by some clergy for his emotional preaching style and unpolished background; he responded with humility, focusing on his message rather than personal defense. *"I am a plain man, with little education, but I have a story to tell"* (Newton 1868, 89).
- **(xvii)** Newton traveled little compared to contemporaries like Whitefield, focusing on local ministry; he preached regularly in Olney and London, emphasizing personal transformation through his own story of redemption. **NEWTON PREACHED OVER 2,000 SERMONS IN HIS CAREER.**
- **(xviii)** Financially, Newton lived modestly; he gave much of his income to the poor and supported abolitionist causes, reflecting his belief in practical charity. **NEWTON OFTEN HELPED FORMER SLAVES IN LONDON.**
- **(xix)** Physically, Newton battled declining health, including failing eyesight and hearing, yet continued preaching into his 70s; he maintained a disciplined routine of study and prayer, rising early despite frailty. *"I am not what I ought to be, but I am not what I once was"* (Newton 1868, 123).
- **(xx)** On December 21, 1807, at age 82, Newton died in London, just months after the British Parliament abolished the slave trade; he was buried beside his wife, Mary, who died in 1790, leaving a legacy of hymns and abolitionist influence.
 - **NEWTON'S FINAL WORDS WERE, "I AM STILL IN THE LAND OF THE DYING."**
 - ◆ **WILLIAM JAY** in Newton's funeral sermon: *"His life was a sermon, and his very name a testimony to the power of divine mercy"* (Jay 1808, 17).
- **(xxi)** Newton's love for Scripture shaped his hymns and sermons; he urged others to study the Bible diligently, crediting it for his own clarity and purpose. *"The Bible is my daily companion and my guide in all things"* (Newton 1780, 45).
- **(xxii)** Above all, Newton valued his personal transformation, which fueled his ministry and writings; his story of moving from slave trader to abolitionist pastor inspired others to seek change. *"Once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, I am now, by the grace of God, a minister of the gospel"* (Newton 1868, 156).

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1. **Survived a Near-Death Storm That Changed His Life:** In 1748, at age 22, Newton faced a violent storm aboard the ship *Greyhound* off the coast of Ireland, which he believed would sink the vessel. Fearing death, he prayed for mercy, an event he later called his “great deliverance,” marking the beginning of his spiritual transformation. “I began to pray... I began to think of that Jesus whom I had so often derided” (Newton 1868, 34).
2. **Endured Harsh Treatment in Africa:** At age 20, Newton was essentially enslaved by a British slave trader on Plantain Island, West Africa, where he was starved and mistreated for over a year. This experience gave him a unique perspective on the suffering of the enslaved people he later transported. “I was a slave in Africa, as much as any Negro I have since seen” (Newton 1868, 34).
3. **From Slave Trader to Abolitionist:** Newton captained slave ships from 1748 to 1754, profiting from the transatlantic slave trade, but later became a vocal abolitionist, testifying before Parliament in 1788 against the trade he once practiced. He described it as “a business at which my heart now shudders” (Newton 1788, 7).
4. **He was a Self-Taught Theologian:** After a seizure ended his seafaring career in 1754, Newton taught himself Latin, Greek, and Hebrew while working as a tide surveyor in Liverpool, preparing for his later role as a Church of England minister. His self-education was driven by a desire to understand Scripture (Newton 1868, 89).
5. **Newton Mentored Abolitionist William Wilberforce:** As rector of St. Mary Woolnoth in London, Newton became a mentor to William Wilberforce, a key figure in abolishing the British slave trade. His personal testimony and writings influenced Wilberforce’s campaign, culminating in the 1807 abolition (Newton 1788, 7).
6. **John Newton Married His Childhood Sweetheart:** Newton married Mary Catlett in 1750, a woman he had loved since childhood. Their devoted marriage, though childless, provided emotional stability despite his long absences at sea and later ministry demands (Newton 1868, 56).
7. **Collaborated with a Troubled Poet:** Newton’s friendship with William Cowper, a poet prone to severe depression, produced the *Olney Hymns*. Newton’s support during Cowper’s mental health struggles showed his

compassion, though their collaboration ended when Cowper's condition worsened (Newton and Cowper 1779, preface).

8. **Preached Despite Failing Health:** In his later years, Newton suffered from failing eyesight and hearing but continued preaching into his 70s, often relying on memory and conviction. He famously said, "I am not what I ought to be, but I am not what I once was" (Newton 1868, 123).
9. **Wrote the World-Famous Hymn "Amazing Grace":** Newton co-authored the *Olney Hymns* (1779) with poet William Cowper, including "Amazing Grace," inspired by his own journey from a rebellious sailor to a pastor. The hymn, now globally recognized, was first sung in his Olney parish. "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me" (Newton and Cowper 1779, 104).
10. **Died Just After the Slave Trade's Abolition:** Newton died in December 1807, months after the British Parliament abolished the slave trade, a cause he championed. His funeral sermon by William Jay called his life "a sermon" for its transformative arc. "His life was a sermon, and his very name a testimony to the power of divine mercy" (Jay 1808, 17).

In the Eighteenth Century, God used John Newton to show His amazing grace in salvation.

"By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain" **(1 Corinthians 15:10)**.

THEOLOGY

First of all, remember that John Newton wrote the famous hymn Amazing Grace.

I) God showed His amazing grace by changing John Newton from a Libertine to a Pastor.

- **Everyone say, "Newton was an abuser of grace."**
 - **Now say, "Newton became a preacher of grace."**
 - ...
 - **NEWTON.** "Once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, I am now, by the grace of God, a minister of the gospel"
— **Newton 1868, 156**

God can change anyone at anytime! This is what we preach and pray for!

II) God showed His amazing grace by changing John Newton from a Slaver to an Abolitionist.

- **Everyone say, "Newton was once a Slaver."**
 - **Now say, "Newton became an Abolitionist."**
 - **Ephesians 2:5** "Even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved."
 - **NEWTON.** "I am not what I ought to be, not what I wish to be, not what I hope to be; but, by the grace of God, I am not what I once was."
— **Newton 1868, 123**

Newton was a good friend of William Wilberforce and a great encouragement to him as he labored tirelessly to abolish the slave trade!

III) God showed His amazing grace by changing John Newton from an Abused Boy to a Manly Encourager.

- **Everyone say, "Newton was an Abused Boy."**
 - **Everyone say, "Newton became a Manly Encourager."**
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:11** "Encourage one another and build one another up."
 - **NEWTON.** "My dear friend, the Lord has not forgotten you, though you may feel at times as if He has. The gospel is a cordial for fainting souls; it proclaims a Saviour who is mighty to save, and who seeks not the righteous, but sinners like you and me. Cast yourself upon His mercy, and you will find Him near, ready to uphold you with His everlasting arms. Your fears and doubts are but clouds that hide the sun; the promises of God are sure, and His love is unchangeable" — **Newton, John. 1780. Letters of a Slave Trader. London: J. Buckland and J. Johnson. pg. 68**

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RECAP

In the Eighteenth Century, God used John Newton to show His amazing grace in salvation.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (pt.6) MEMORY VERSE.

- "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. " **(1 Corinthians 15:10).**

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (pt.6) MEMORY QUOTE.

- "I am not what I ought to be, not what I wish to be, not what I hope to be; but, by the grace of God, I am not what I once was" (**John Newton**).
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FOR FURTHER STUDY

- **Biographical Message by John Piper** - <https://youtu.be/vscJkCOUoHU?si=ZIPurhSghTqfyHrO>
- **Life of John Newton - Iain Murray (Christian biography)** - <https://youtu.be/YG7Eqd-hg6c?si=8wVYWUcz8HtS98nK>
- **45 minute movie - John Newton | Full Movie | Jonathan Aitken | Brian H. Edwards** ...www.youtube.com > watch

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT JOHN NEWTON

- **Survived a Near-Death Storm That Changed His Life:** In 1748, at age 22, Newton faced a violent storm aboard the ship *Greyhound* off the coast of Ireland, which he believed would sink the vessel. Fearing death, he prayed for mercy, an event he later called his "great deliverance," marking the beginning of his spiritual transformation. "I began to pray... I began to think of that Jesus whom I had so often derided" (Newton 1868, 34).
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1754, Newton taught himself Latin, Greek, and Hebrew while working as a tide surveyor in Liverpool, preparing for his later role as a Church of England minister. His self-education was driven by a desire to understand Scripture (Newton 1868, 89).

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QUOTES ABOUT JOHN NEWTON

- "His life was a sermon, and his very name a testimony to the power of divine mercy" (Jay 1808, 17).
- William Jay, a contemporary pastor, delivered this in Newton's funeral sermon, emphasizing the transformative arc of Newton's life from slave trader to pastor and abolitionist.
- "Mr. Newton's ministry was singularly owned and blessed; his preaching was plain, affectionate, and faithful, and his life an example to believers" (Cecil 1824, 103).
- Richard Cecil, a close friend and fellow clergyman, wrote this in his memoirs of Newton, highlighting the effectiveness and sincerity of Newton's pastoral work.
- "You appear to be designed by divine providence for an healer of

breaches, a reconciler of honest but prejudiced men, and an uniter (happy work!) of the children of God" (Wesley 1775, 234).

- John Wesley, a contemporary and leader of the Methodist movement, wrote this in a letter to Newton, praising his role in fostering unity among Christians despite theological differences.
- "His labours were so far beyond the common rate of men, that one is tempted to think nature had formed him a giant... His zeal in propagating the gospel was matchless, and his success therein wonderful" (Wesley 1770, 330).
- John Wesley, in a sermon on the death of George Whitefield, referenced Newton's similar zeal indirectly, as both were friends and shared evangelical fervor, though this quote reflects the broader revival context Newton was part of.
- "Newton's tenderness as a pastor, and his fidelity as a friend, made him a man greatly beloved; his history, from a profligate sailor to a minister of Christ, gave his words weight with many" (Bull 1868, 197).
- Josiah Bull, a later pastor and editor of Newton's autobiography, noted in his preface how Newton's dramatic life story amplified his influence as a preacher.
- "The author of 'Amazing Grace' has left a legacy that speaks to the heart of every Christian; his hymns breathe a spirit of humility and gratitude that few have matched" (Ryle 1880, 256).
- J. C. Ryle, a 19th-century Anglican bishop, wrote in a collection of essays on evangelical leaders, praising Newton's hymn-writing as a lasting contribution to Christian worship.
- "John Newton was no scholar in the academic sense, but his knowledge of human nature, gained through his own trials, made him a shepherd of souls without equal" (Cecil 1831, 82).
- Richard Cecil, in another memoir, emphasized Newton's pastoral effectiveness, rooted in his personal experiences rather than formal education.
- "His letters, full of wisdom and warmth, have guided many a struggling soul; they show a man who knew both the depths of sin and the heights of grace" (Wilberforce 1833, 145).
- William Wilberforce, a contemporary abolitionist and friend, wrote in his correspondence about Newton's pastoral letters, noting their impact on his own spiritual and political life.
- "Newton's life is a monument to the truth that no man is beyond redemption; his example emboldened us to fight the slave trade with hope" (Clarkson 1808, 312).
- Thomas Clarkson, a contemporary abolitionist, wrote in his history of the

abolition movement, crediting Newton's testimony and transformation as an inspiration.

- "Few men have so lived that their very name becomes a sermon; Newton's journey from chains to pulpit is a beacon for all who seek change" (Spurgeon 1885, 167).
- Charles H. Spurgeon, a 19th-century Baptist preacher, wrote in a sermon collection, reflecting on Newton's life as a powerful example of personal transformation for later generations.

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QUOTES BY JOHN NEWTON

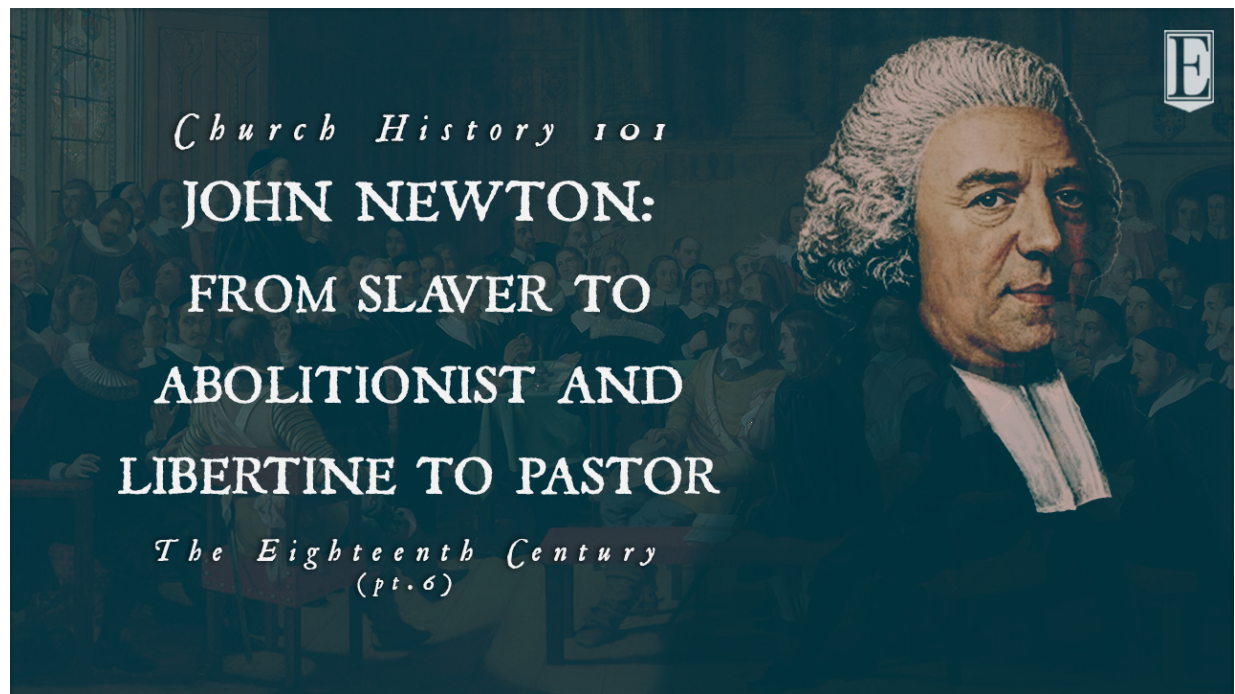
- "I was capable of anything; I had not the least fear of God before my eyes" (Newton 1868, 12).
- "I was a slave in Africa, as much as any Negro I have since seen" (Newton

1868, 34).

- "I began to pray... I began to think of that Jesus whom I had so often derided" (Newton 1868, 34).
- "A business at which my heart now shudders" (Newton 1788, 7).
- "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me" (Newton and Cowper 1779, 104).
- "I am a plain man, with little education, but I have a story to tell" (Newton 1868, 89).
- "The Bible is my daily companion and my guide in all things" (Newton 1780, 45).
- "I am not what I ought to be, but I am not what I once was" (Newton 1868, 123).
- "It is indeed a national sin" (Newton 1788, 7).
- "Once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, I am now, by the grace of God, a minister of the gospel" (Newton 1868, 156).
- "I sinned with a high hand, and I made it my study to tempt and seduce others upon every occasion; nay, I eagerly sought out opportunities to extend the bounds of my iniquity, and was a ringleader in mischief" (Newton 1868, 13).
- "During the time I was engaged in the slave trade, I never had the least scruple as to its lawfulness; I was upon the whole satisfied with it, as the appointment Providence had marked out for me; yet it was, in many respects, far from eligible, attended with many hardships, and not exempt from great dangers" (Newton 1788, 5–6).
- "How industriously is Satan served! I was formerly one of his most active under-temptors. Not content with running the broad way myself, I exercised my wit and influence to entice others; and the more mischief I did, the more I pleased him" (Newton 1868, 28).
- "The Bible is a light to my feet and a lamp to my path; it discovers to me the way wherein I should walk, and directs my steps so as to avoid those snares and dangers to which I am exposed. It is my constant companion, my guide, and my comfort" (Newton 1780, 46).
- "I can hardly recollect a single plan of mine, in which I have succeeded, which was not in some respects different from what I had projected; and yet I have been wonderfully preserved from many and great dangers, which I was not aware of at the time" (Newton 1868, 67).
- "The slave trade was always unjustifiable; but inattention and interest prevented me, for a time, from considering it in a proper light. Custom, example, and necessity pleaded in its favor; but when my mind was enlightened, I could no longer plead ignorance, and I was forced to confess that it was a crime" (Newton 1788, 12).

- "My memory is nearly gone; but I remember two things, that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Saviour" (Newton 1808, 89).
- "When I was young, I was sure of many things; there were few things I thought I did not know. Now I am old, and I am more sensible of my own ignorance, and of the vast extent of what I do not know; but I am persuaded that in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, I have found the secret of true happiness" (Newton 1780, 72).
- "I sometimes think that the prayers and tears of my dear mother, which she poured out before God for me when I was a child, have been answered in a remarkable manner; for though she died when I was young, her instructions and example made an impression which was never wholly erased, even in my worst days" (Newton 1868, 15).
- "I was once blind to my own guilt and to the evil of my ways; I was a slave to sin, and a servant in the vilest of trades; but now, through the mercy of God, I am brought to see my own wretchedness, and to proclaim that mercy to others" (Newton 1868, 157).

IMAGE



John Newton: From Slaver to Abolitionist and Libertine to Pastor

In an era marked by maritime expansion and moral challenges, Christ raised up John Newton, a man transformed from a rebellious slave trader to a pastor and abolitionist, whose life and ministry proclaimed the power of divine grace. Through Newton's preaching, hymns, and advocacy, Christ advanced His kingdom. Let us explore Newton's life and its theological significance, supported by historical evidence, to understand how Christ's glory prevailed.

John Newton: A Testimony of Amazing Grace

Born on July 24, 1725, in Wapping, London, John Newton's early life was shaped by the sea and personal hardship. His father, John Newton Sr., a stern shipmaster in the Mediterranean trade, and his devout mother, Elizabeth, who died of tuberculosis in 1732 when Newton was nearly seven, profoundly influenced him (Newton, *The Life of John Newton, Written by Himself*, 1868, p. 12). Elizabeth taught him Scripture and hymns, planting seeds of faith despite his later rebellion. Orphaned by his mother and distant from his father, Newton admitted, "I was capable of anything; I had not the least fear of God before my eyes" (Newton, 1868, p. 12).

At eleven, Newton joined his father at sea, and by seventeen, he was pressed into the Royal Navy on HMS Harwich, where his defiance led to flogging and a failed desertion attempt (Aitken, *John Newton: From Disgrace to Amazing Grace*, 2007, p. 29). In 1745, released through his father's influence, he joined a merchant ship to West Africa, working for a slave trader on Plantain Island. There, he endured starvation and cruelty, later reflecting, "I was a slave in Africa, as much as any Negro I have since seen" (Newton, 1868, p. 34). A violent storm aboard the Greyhound in 1748 marked his "great deliverance," as he prayed for mercy, initiating a gradual spiritual awakening (Newton, 1868, p. 34).

From 1748 to 1754, Newton captained slave ships, profiting from the transatlantic trade, yet later expressed deep remorse, writing, "It is a business at which my heart now shudders" (Newton, *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade*, 1788, p. 7). In 1750, he married Mary Catlett, his childhood sweetheart, providing emotional stability despite their childless marriage (Newton, 1868, p. 56). A seizure in 1754 ended his seafaring career, leading him to a tide surveyor role in Liverpool, where he taught himself Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, preparing for ministry (Newton, 1868, p. 89).

Ordained in 1764, Newton served as curate of Olney, Buckinghamshire, revitalizing the parish with heartfelt preaching (Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition*, 1996, p. 112). There, he collaborated with poet William Cowper, producing the *Olney Hymns* (1779), including "Amazing Grace," which reflected his redemption: "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me" (Newton and Cowper, *Olney Hymns*, 1779, p. 104). Newton supported Cowper through mental health struggles, demonstrating compassion (Kingdon, *The Life of William Cowper*, 1892, p. 45). In 1780, as rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, London, he drew diverse crowds and mentored William Wilberforce, influencing the abolition movement (Pollock, *Wilberforce*, 1977, p. 56). His 1788

testimony before Parliament called the slave trade “a national sin” (Newton, 1788, p. 7).

Despite opposition for his unpolished background, Newton responded humbly, saying, “I am a plain man, with little education, but I have a story to tell” (Newton, 1868, p. 89). He preached over 2,000 sermons, gave generously to the poor, and continued ministering despite failing eyesight and hearing, declaring, “I am not what I ought to be, but I am not what I once was” (Newton, 1868, p. 123). On December 21, 1807, Newton died at eighty-two, months after the British slave trade’s abolition, with final words, “I am still in the land of the dying” (Jay, *A Sermon on the Death of the Rev. John Newton*, 1808, p. 17). William Jay’s funeral sermon praised, “His life was a sermon, and his very name a testimony to the power of divine mercy” (Jay, 1808, p. 17).

Theological Lessons from Newton

Newton’s life teaches three profound lessons about God’s amazing grace.

First, God showed His amazing grace by transforming Newton from a libertine to a pastor. Newton’s journey from a profane sailor to a minister echoes Paul’s testimony. He wrote, “Once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, I am now, by the grace of God, a minister of the gospel” (Newton, 1868, p. 156). This transformation proclaims that God can redeem anyone, inspiring us to preach and pray for such change.

Second, God showed His amazing grace by turning Newton from a slaver to an abolitionist. Once complicit in the slave trade, Newton became a vocal advocate for its end, mentoring Wilberforce and testifying against its horrors. He reflected, “I am not what I ought to be, not what I wish to be, not what I hope to be; but, by the grace of God, I am not what I once was” (Newton, 1868, p. 123). His change challenges us to confront sin and pursue justice, trusting God’s transformative grace.

Third, God showed His amazing grace by making Newton an encourager despite his abused youth. Newton’s compassion shone in his mentorship of Wilberforce and support for Cowper. He wrote to a struggling friend, “The gospel is a cordial for fainting souls; it proclaims a Saviour who is mighty to save, and who seeks not the righteous, but sinners like you and me” (Newton, *Letters of a Slave Trader*, 1780, p. 68). His encouragement urges us to build others up, reflecting Christ’s love.

Conclusion: Christ’s Victory in the Eighteenth Century

In the eighteenth century, Jesus Christ built His church through John Newton, whose transformed life—from slave trader to pastor and abolitionist—proclaimed the power of amazing grace. Through his preaching, the *Olney Hymns*, and his

influence on abolition, Newton advanced Christ's kingdom, impacting millions. As Schaff notes, "Newton's life testified to the gospel's power to redeem the vilest, strengthening the church through grace" (*History of the Christian Church*, Vol. VII, 1892, p. 145). His legacy, from "Amazing Grace" to mentoring Wilberforce, underscores Christ's triumph.

Let us learn from Newton, trusting God's grace to transform lives, advocating for justice, and encouraging one another. May we cherish Scripture and proclaim Christ's salvation, knowing He continues to conquer the nations, building His church for His glory. Let us live boldly, confident that His kingdom advances, unstoppable, until it fills the earth. Amen.

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