

A Grace Encounter Part 4

It was the year 1748 when sailor John Newton was aboard a ship that had been thrashing about in a north Atlantic storm for over a week. Its canvas sails were ripped, and the wood on one side of the ship had been torn away and splintered. The sailors had little hope of survival.

On the eleventh day with the storm raging fiercely, Newton had time to think. His life seemed as ruined and wrecked as the battered ship he was trying to steer.

Sailors were not noted for the refinement of manners and John Newton was known as "The Great Blasphemer." So the story goes John Newton had a reputation for profanity, coarseness, and debauchery which even shocked many a sailor.

His mother had prayed he would become a minister and had early taught him the Scriptures. John Newton had rejected his mother's teachings and had led other sailors into unbelief. It seemed, he was beyond hope and beyond saving, even if the Scriptures were true.

Some of those early childhood teachings came to mind while in the midst of that storm. Newton's thoughts began to turn to Christ. One in particular was when Jesus said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

That day at the helm, March 21, 1748, was a day Newton remembered for ever and said, "On that day the Lord sent from on high and delivered me out of deep waters."

Only God's [**amazing grace**](#) could take a rude, profane, slave-trading sailor like John Newton and transform him into a child of God. Newton never ceased to stand in awe of God's work in his life.

Newton eventually left the sea, and in 1764 became an Anglican priest in the small English town of Olney. Newton wrote hymns as a means of teaching theology to his rural congregation.

It was out of the Olney Hymn that the song *“Faith’s Review and Expectation”* was written.

In Newton’s years as a minister his heart was filled with remorse for his past involvement with slave trade and the treatment of those people. His ministry influence was not only to the poor and the merchant class but also the wealthy and influential.

William Wilberforce, a member of Parliament and a prime mover in the abolition of slavery, was strongly influenced by John Newton's life and preaching.

“Faith’s Review and Expectation” - John Newton

Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now am found
T'was blind but now I see

T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear
And Grace, my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

When Grace comes near the Lord is near

Acts 9 - Saul’s Conversion

1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged

to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

- As Grace came near to Paul he saw Jesus...
- Jesus was not bashful...
- Jesus was not afraid of Saul...
- Jesus completely interrupted Saul's plans and this turn around took place quickly...

When Grace comes near the Lord is near

Grace comes for Serious Reason

The story of Saul's conversion came during a serious time of persecution for the church...

The story of John Newton's turn around came when he was facing death and very serious circumstances...

Grace comes for Serious Reasons

The Seriousness is not only for our current circumstances but more importantly our eternal circumstances.

Maybe that's why Newton wrote these words:

*T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear
And Grace, my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed*

Grace is the life preserver of heaven. For many people it comes when they need it most. It comes in the midst of Serious Circumstances.

I am so thankful the Lord is ready.
He is an ever present help in the time of trouble.

The Lord looks over us...
The Lord helps us when we call out to him...

You can tell when Grace is at work in someone's heart...
The heart is softened...
The person is sobered to spiritual things...
The soul is made keen to the Lord...
It is, as if new life coming in...
& the person is born again in spiritual awareness...

When someone shares their testimony, when Grace came it was a Serious thing. When they called out to Him with humble hearts and desperation Grace came.

Grace is a Serious Thing

Acts 9:31

Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the **fear of the Lord** and in the **comfort of the Holy Spirit**, they were multiplied.

Just before this verse:

- Saul the well known terrorist leader of the Christian Church encounters Jesus.
- Saul is converted to Christ and is baptized.
- Saul begins to preach the very gospel he once tried to destroy.

Then after this verse:

- A paralyzed man for eight years gets healed
- Peter raises a woman from the dead.

Then in Ch. 10 the first Gentiles receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

God is Moving Powerfully...

When God is moving in Grace and Power it is a Serious thing...

Ananias and Sapphira: Acts 5

2 Corinthians 6:1

As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's **grace** in vain.

2 Timothy 1:9

He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and **grace**. This **grace** was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,