

AMAZING GRACE

The gift of forgiveness is often best appreciated by those who need it the most. The Reverend John Newton experienced this truth firsthand. His tombstone tells the story: "John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and Libertine, a servant of slavers 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 so long labored to destroy." These words were written by Newton himself, a testimony to God's transforming power. After years as a hardened slave trader, that "wretch" met Jesus Christ and abruptly turned to defend the gospel he had so long despised.

Throughout Newton's years of ministry, God's amazing grace remained central to Newton's thinking. When it was suggested he retire (at age eighty-two!) due to poor health and a failing memory, he responded, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Savior!"

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Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound-
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

John Newton (1725-1807)
John P. Rees (1828-1900), stanza 5
United Methodist Hymnal #378