

"The Story of Amazing Grace"

John Newton, the celebrated English preacher and hymn writer, realized that he was a trophy of divine grace. A while before his death, a brother minister came to have breakfast with him. Family prayers followed the meal. Mr. Newton's sight had almost failed him, and he was unable to read. He sat and listened to his friend as he read me 15th chapter of I Corinthians. When the tenth verse was read, "By the Grace of God I am what I am," Mr. Newton began to speak. "I am not what I ought to be. Ah! How imperfect and deficient! I am not what I wish to be. I abhor what is evil and I would cleave to what is good. I am not what I hope to be soon. Soon, I shall put off, with mortality all Sin and imperfection. Though I am not I what ought to be, nor what I wish to be, nor what I hope to be; I truly say that I am not what I once was, a slave to sin and Satan; and I can heartily join with the apostle, and acknowledge, by the grace of God I am what I am." John Newton could say that with conviction and joy. What had he once been? When he was seven years old he lost his mother. A little later he went to sea with his dad and learned all the evils of the seaman's life. Still later, he was forced into the Navy. He deserted, but was caught and stripped and beaten until the blood flowed from his Wounds. He had now become a hardened infidel. He fell in with African slave traders. He went from bad to worse, until he himself was sold as a slave. It was a Negro woman who bought him, and she gloried in her power over him. She made him depend for his food on the crusts she tossed under the table. He had fallen to the depths of human degradation. And yet the grace of God found him, and saved him, and made him one of the greatest ministers of Christ, and a writer of hymns that have stirred the hearts of men the world over. Truly he could say, "I am not what once was." And, truly he could say "By the grace of God I am what I am."

Knowing this do you wonder at John Newton's message in the grand old hymn:

"Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now see."

When we read this story of John Newton's life we can understand why he wrote the nine verses (along with the regularly sung verses) which are so seldom used today. We have gotten so busy that we do not have the time to sing all the verses of many of our grand old hymns, and many times we fail to get the message that the song writer meant to convey. This is certainly true of this great song. Read carefully the nine "missing" verses:

"AMAZING GRACE" (Last 9 verses)

In evil long I took delight,
Unawed by shame of fear;
Till a new object met my sight,
And stopped my wild career.

I saw One hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood;
Who fixed His languid eyes on me.
As near His cross I stood.

Sure, never till my latest breath,
can I forget that look;
It seemed to charge me with His death,
though not a word He spoke.

My conscience felt and owned the guilt,
and plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins His blood had shed,
and helped to nail Him there.

Alas, I knew not what I did,
But all my tears were vain;
Where could my trembling soul be hid,
For I the Lord had slam!

A second look He gave that said;
I freely all forgive!
This blood is for thy ransom paid,
I died that thou mayest live.

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

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
and mortal life shall cease;
I shall possess within the vial,
a life of joy and peace.

**The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
the sun forbear to shine;
But God who called me here below
shall be forever mine.**