

## IN CLOSING

On December 21, 1807, John Newton exited earth and entered eternity. At the age of 82, his flesh and heart failed and his mortal life ceased but his soul and spirit found everlasting rest and eternal rewards inside the celestial gates of heaven.



John & Mary Newton's Grave

Dear reader, I trust that the story of this repentant sinner, who became a rejoicing winner, will cause your mind to ponder over your life and legacy, and challenge your heart to prepare for your death and destiny.

Doomed without His grace and damned without His mercy, Jesus Christ is the only hope you have and the one help you need to obtain eternal salvation.

"The Lord Jesus says ... **"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."** (John 14: 6)

The Holy Bible also says ... **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."** (Ephesians 2: 8 - 9)

Newton's life, as sinful as it was, clearly demonstrates that the grace of God is greater than our sins. Just as he sought God's mercy and was saved by God's grace, you too can come to the Saviour, right now, just as you are. To do this, the Bible says that you simply need to:

**A**cknowledge you are a sinner (Psalm 32:5)

**B**elieve Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again from the dead (1 Thessalonians 4:14)

**C**all on His wonderful name, this very moment, to save you in time for eternity (Romans 10:13)

Here is a suggested prayer

Dear Lord God,

*I am sorry that I have sinned against you; I turn away from my sins.*

*Please forgive me, and be merciful to me a sinner.*

*I believe Jesus Christ died for my sins and rose from the dead.*

*I now receive you Lord Jesus in my heart as my Saviour and Lord.*

*Thank you for saving me and for giving me new and eternal life.*

*Make me the person that you want me to be. In Jesus Name, I pray. Amen*

With the love of Christ  
Peter Rahme - AD 2005

A Gift From...

500,000  
in print

## The Man & The Story Behind **Amazing Grace**

From  
The producer of  
The Life & Legacy Of Mr. Eternity



**Amazing Grace** has proven to be the most popular song of our time!

Its simple style and sweet sound is sought and found in almost every situation possible:

*From* the president's acceptance speech *to* the preacher's anointed sermon.

*From* the simple harmonica in rural outback *to* the stately harp in royal operas.

*From* the first rejoicing moments of weddings *to* the final reflective minutes of funerals.

*From* the tiny tune of a mobile phone *to* the powerful production of an Olympic ceremony.

*From* the slide guitar of the American blues *to* the sustained notes of the Scottish bagpipes.

**Amazing Grace** is hummed and heard on every continent in this world!

It transcends race, religion and even record categories. It takes in its stride all nations, regardless of colour, creed or culture. Whether presented in churches, performed in concerts or played in clubs, this Song of Songs touches the hearts of those who listen to its tune and learn its truth; this Hymn of Hymns transforms the souls of those who hear its message and heed its meaning.

**Amazing Grace** is high on the list with movie studios and a hit on the music scene!

The long and exhaustive index of films that have included its reassuring presence is a testimony to its remarkable popularity in the entertainment world. Also almost every major artist, whether secular or spiritual, on stage or in the studio, has at one time or another referred to, rehearsed or recorded **Amazing Grace** - with over 2000 different releases available currently.

Let's turn the clock back to the 1700's and take a closer look at the man and the story behind this well-known song and greatly-loved hymn: the late Rev. Dr. **John Newton**



© Peter Rahme AD 2005; (*Amazing Grace - the song by the late Rev. John Newton*)

**Resources:** Out Of The Depths by John Newton; John Newton by Richard Cecil; Amazing Grace by Steve Turner; Through Many Dangers by Brian H. Edwards; How Sweet The Sound by Noel Davidson; Plus others

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*John Newton*, an only child of John Sr. and Elizabeth Newton, was born on July 24, 1725 in London, England. Thirteen days before his seventh birthday, his devout mother died of tuberculosis. His father, a commander in the Mediterranean trade, remarried the following year. At the age of 11, the young boy was taken on his maiden sea voyage. Over the next seven years he made several more trips.

### 1. MAN OF THE SEA

At the age of 18, John - a confused adolescent, was press-ganged on board HMS "Harwich", a man-of-war. Unable to hold up under its rigid discipline and unwilling to handle its daily routine, the defiant sailor deserted ship. He was sought and found, stripped and flogged. Filled with bitter rage and full of black despair, the demoted midshipman was eventually discharged from the British Royal Navy and dispatched onto a slave trading ship.

After he enjoyed six months of freedom on the open sea, the twenty year old then endured a long year of captivity in West Africa. There his dream of work and wealth turned into a nightmare of sickness and starvation while he served a cold-hearted English master and suffered at the cruel hands of his African mistress. Soon after his release, the man of the sea became a master of slaves.

### 2. MERCY IN THE STORM

At the age of 22, John - a wretched sinner, was converted from a daring blasphemer of God into a devout believer in Christ. His "great deliverance" took place on March 21, 1748 while sailing back to England from Africa. He and the crew of the "Greyhound"- a cargo ship were caught in a violent storm. Battered by monstrous winds and beaten by mountainous waves, the tired sailors, like their torn sails, were helpless as they battled against the raging seas, trying desperately to save their badly leaking boat and rapidly sinking vessel.

For the young seaman, however, the day of salvation was here; the hour of decision had arrived; the moment of truth was at hand. In the midst of the chaos and the confusion, the frenzy and the fear, Mate John Newton called on the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, crying out in genuine repentance for the Redeemer's tender mercies. AND GOD SAVED HIM!

### 3. MAJOR SURRENDER

At the age of 29, John - a growing disciple, turned his back on the sea and "the business at which his heart shuddered". Over the next four years, he searched the scriptures daily and studied its truths diligently. On December 16, 1758, he surrendered his life to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

At the age of 40, after some religious opposition, John was eventually ordained as a curate. He was appointed to the parish church of Olney, near Cambridge. This working class village, in the county of Buckinghamshire, was known for its bobbin lace manufacturing and Shrove Tuesday pancake race.

### 4. 'MAZING SONG

At the age of 45, John - a singing preacher, was enjoying a harmonious life at home and exercising a holy leadership at church. Conservative and reformed he was, but conventional and rigid he was not! Being a man of innovation and initiative, he searched for different means to reach his community and sought dynamic methods to teach his congregation. In the midweek service for example, he introduced his evangelical "low Anglican" parish to new hymns and spiritual songs, some he wrote himself and others he co-wrote with his friend William Cowper.

**Amazing Grace** was one of those fresh compositions that God inspired his dedicated heart and instructed his disciplined mind to complete in late December of 1772.



John Newton

Originally entitled "*Faith's Review and Expectation*", the prayerfully chosen lyrics were carefully written for a New Year's Day service. After reading the Biblical passage of 1 Chronicles 17:16-17 and reviewing his own life in the light of David's response, John reflected on how far he had come since his seafaring days of sinful lifestyle, self-indulgence and slave trading.

The Vicar of Olney, like the King of Israel, was overwhelmed by God's amazing goodness and awesome greatness. It was right at this point, what would eventually become his best-known work was born. Here is how it appeared in Olney Hymns, 1779 (but in today's text).

*Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound) that sav'd a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.  
'T was grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears reliev'd;  
how precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believ'd!  
Thro' many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come;  
'T is grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.  
The Lord has promis'd 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 veil, a life of joy and peace.  
The earth shall soon dissolve like snow, the sun forbear to shine;  
But God, who call'd me here below, will be for ever mine.*

*The Church at Olney*



In 1835, "Faith's Review and Expectation" found its soul mate in "New Britain" and was born again as "Amazing Grace". The seed was conceived and a song was delivered after the spiritual message from England's central east met and married a simple melody from America's deep south.

In 1900, American composer and successful publisher, Edwin Othello Excell (1851-1921) added the finishing touches with his musical arrangement. He also removed the final verse from the original poem and replaced it with the following stanza from "Jerusalem, My happy 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 first begun.*

### 5. MINISTRY OF SIGNIFICANCE



The Newton's Residence

At the age of 57, John - an accomplished author, found himself standing at a ministry crossroad and staring at a major dilemma. The Newtons were forced to make a decision to leave the "Olney community" that they had come to love and serve for nearly sixteen years. The veteran childless couple moved their home from the small village of Olney to the big city of London. On December 19, 1779 John preached his first sermon as Rector of the St. Mary Woolnoth Church.

God blessed Newton's ministry and enlarged his coast from England's banking district to Australia's Botany Bay. As leader of "the Eclectic Society" (a practical group of evangelical clergy and Christian laymen) John approached Rev. Richard Johnson on September 23, 1786 to consider the chaplaincy on the first fleet to the land Down-Under. Rev. Johnson accepted, and the rest is *Australian* history.

The earlier work of Newton's excellent writings, "Authentic Narrative"- a personal testimony, continued to challenge more hearts for God and change many lives for good. So did also his newly published and necessarily controversial "Thoughts on the African Slave Trade". The latter equipped and empowered his newfound disciple, William Wilberforce M.P., who after 20 years of faithful campaigning to abolish slavery, finally succeeded in 1807 in passing an act of parliament in all British colonies.