

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY



Wednesday, July 8, 2020 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

## PSALMS, HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS “A Bible Study Drawn from Old and New Songs of Faith” *Ephesians 5:18-19*

Music has a rich history in the story of God’s people beginning with the songs of the Old Testament called Psalms, and the rise and spread of Christianity around the globe with the great teaching hymns of faith. And even today, though music has sometimes been a point of contention and division centering on styles and methods of worship, many of the spiritual songs of our day are rich and power lyrics and sounds of worship that exalt our God and feed the souls of men. The Apostle Paul instructs us in Ephesians 5:18-19 to, *“<sup>18</sup>...be filled with the Spirit,<sup>19</sup> speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”* – Ephesians 5:18-19 We are actually commanded in God’s Word to dive head long into the music of faith... to be *“singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”* with all kind of expression of music (psalms, hymns and spiritual songs). What many miss in great hymns and songs of faith is the rich Biblical tradition and teaching embedded is many of those songs The Bible study will attempt to dig into some of those select songs of faith and the powerful Biblical truths and lessons those songs that generations have loved to sing may have for us. Perhaps this will change our worship as we begin to sing these lyrics with deeper appreciation and understanding for what they are actually proclaiming. We have looked at the great old hymn, “Farther Along,” then we looked at the subject of assurance of salvation by looking at the hymn “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine”. Then last week we took at that great hymn that some have called the Baptist Fight Song, *“Victory in Jesus.”* Let’s look at another great hymn of faith, one that some may consider to have a more somber feel to it, that speaks really to loss in life and how to deal with it.

### AMAZING GRACE – HYMN #330 “Amazing Grace How Sweet the Sound” *Romans 5:1-11 / Selected Scriptures*

Perhaps the most popular Christian hymn of all time and no doubt a favorite to many would have to be “Amazing Grace.” Believe it or not, this great inspirational hymn was born not from an experience of love, but from a sordid tale of human depravity and exploitation. However, if there were to be a “National/World Anthem” for Christians it would have to be “Amazing Grace.” This song titled with the word “amazing,” has an amazing accompanying story, some of which is quite well known to many, yet there may be some surprising and little known facts as well.

John Newton was born in London, England, on August 4, 1725. His father was a hardened sailor who owned a slave ship that sailed the Mediterranean. The elder Newton was gone from home for

months at a time. Mrs. Newton was a loving Christian mother who loved God's word, the church and was devoted to prayer. She love her son and took a vital interest in her son, in raising him up right and to know the Lord, praying for him often and pointing him to God. She was also know to be very sickly even as a young woman and was said to be chronically ill and physically weak. From the time that he could walk, John had the run of the house, and he was quite a mischievous and rambunctious child... always in trouble.

At the age of eleven, John followed in his father's footsteps and became a cabin boy on a ship. Even as a teenager Newton became hard drinking and ill tempered. His public brawls were legendary. He could often be found either in jail or in a ship's brig. Newton would later described himself as a "godless monster."

Newton's difficulty with the law and his attitude finally drove him out of Europe to the west coast of Africa where he discovered a group of men who were as wild and depraved as he. They were responsible for untold suffering and death during the next few years. Newton and his shipmates would seek out tribal chiefs and bribe them with guns, spices, liquor, etc. for strong young men and women to be sold as slaves. As many as six hundred of the slaves would be chained shoulder to shoulder in the hold of the ship and transported to the new world to be sold. Between 20 and 40 percent of them died on the journey. When a crew member would drag one of the dead prisoners across the deck to throw him or her into the ocean, Newton would simply say, "So be it." When the ones who survived were sold as slaves, Newton and his ship mates shared in the bounty, At this stage of his life, Newton was considered as the lowest of those who sailed the seas.

Newton's mother never quit praying for God to get a hold of John's heart and transform His life. Her tears shed over her son no doubt touched the heart of God, and the teaching she had instilled in him early on must have at least left a conviction mark on his life. In 1758 for some reason John Newton began reading a classic Christian work entitled "The Imitation of Christ" by Thomas A. Kempis. He was so engrossed in the book that he did not notice an approaching storm until it was too late. Newton really believed that his shipmates and the ship would not survive the storm, and all would be lost. While others cursed and cried, thinking the end was near. Newton thought back on his own miserable life. He then thought about the only one who had really loved him, his Christian mother, and how disappointed she would be. Holding onto a rope, Newton fell to his knees and prayed for God's mercy on his life... something he had never been willing to extend to others who he enslaved and sold into a life of slavery. But He vowed to God, that if God would give him a second chance he would change, he would become a better man, a moral man.

Miraculously, no lives were lost in the storm and the damaged ship was able to complete its journey and deliver its cargo. For the first time, when Newton was given his share of the profits, he did not seek out a bar to celebrate. Instead, he returned to his ship and read the Bible.

Within two years of the storm, John Newton became the captain of a slave ship. He could no longer look upon his trafficking in human cargo with a "So be it" attitude. Newton's Christian convictions caused him to resign his duties as a slave trade captain. He returned to England and he began to look for ways to make amends for his terrible crimes and failings. He vowed to begin to serve Christ.

Under the guidance of Charles Wesley, father of the Methodist movement, John Newton, the former drunkard and slave trader gave his life to the Lord and God truly began to transform his life.

His testimony of God's change in him became particularly gripping to others who would hear what God had done in his once vile and evil life. Many were changed by his story. John Newton, so changed by God's grace, more and more became a preacher of the transforming gospel. Twenty years after John Newton was literally and spiritually saved, he was pastoring a church in Olney, England. One Sunday morning as he was preaching a sermon on the grace of Jesus, Newton spoke about his life at sea and admitted his past sins. He told the congregation how the Lord had come to him during a violent storm. He completed his message by singing an autobiographical song. The song began with this now forgotten verse, "In evil long I took delight, unawed by shame or fear, till a new object struck my sight, and stopped my wild career."

Although Newton might have composed the song for a single service, it quickly made its way into song books and eventually into the United States. In America Newton's song was matched to a folk tune called both "Kentucky Harmony" and "Virginia Harmony." The final verse was added by an unknown American. By the start of the Civil War, "Amazing Grace" was one of the best known Christian songs in the world. It was so closely associated with the early American missionary movement and America in general, that most believed that the song was composed by an American author, In 1971 "Amazing Grace" climbed out of the song books and into the mainstream. Among others, Hank Williams and Elvis Presley sang "Amazing Grace" at many of their concerts.

Although John Newton did not have America or Americans in mind when he wrote "Amazing Grace," at the age of eighty-two, he said something that all Christians can cling to in times of both triumph and trial, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things — that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior."

### **7 FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT "AMAZING GRACE"**

- (1) John Newton wrote "Amazing Grace" for a New Year's Day church service in 1773**
- (2) Newton later helped William Wilberforce end the British slave trade**
- (3) Newton died in 1807, the year the slave trade was abolished in England**
- (4) William Walker added the current melody, "New Britain" to the lyrics in his 1835 hymnal** *(Note: Virginia Harmony is the first American Shape-note Hymn Book where a recording of Amazing Grace with the New Britain tune appeared, that arrangement was written by Edwin O. Excell)*
- (5) There are 972 known arrangements of the song and over 3200 recordings.**
- (6) "Amazing Grace" is considered to be the anthem of the Cherokee nation because this was the song they sang on the Trail of Tears in 1838-39.**
- (7) The hymn's final verse was not written by Newton. It was added by Harriet Beecher Stowe to a version she included in her novel, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" which was an anti-slavery abolitionist novel.**

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.

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

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

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.

- (1) **Why do you think Newton would describe “grace” as a “sweet sound”? What “sound” do you think grace makes? Give the story of John Newton’s life, what might have been the “sounds” he was most familiar with... the sounds of a mother praying, the sounds of the church early in his life, the sounds of a profane father, then the sounds of sailors and shipmen (cursing, coarse talking, profanity, vulgarity), sounds of barking orders from a commanding officer, sounds of drunken cries from years of drinking and carousing, sounds from a life lived in unsavory places, bars, saloons, and mean streets, then the sounds of cries of children ripped from the arms of their mother, mothers crying for the loss of their children, the cries of pain and suffering from men, women and children in torture, pain, chains, brokenness of slavery, pain and suffering, the cries of the auction block where men, women and children were sold as slaves to brutal slave holders... there may be some of the sounds of John Newton’s life. Contrast that with the sounds of grace that came to Newton’s life.**
- (2) **Given that what do you think that Newton may have been telling us about “grace” when he mentions it saving a “wretch” like himself (originally “worm”)?**
- (3) **In verse 2, how does “grace” teach our heart to fear? In what way? Fear what? Why fear?**  
*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.  
How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.*
- (4) **According to verse 3 what role does “grace” play in our lives even before we come to know the Lord? What is grace doing before we even know it and see it?**  
*Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come.  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home.*
- (5) **In verses 4 and 5 what are some of the accompanying promises of “grace” in our life?**

Let’s talk about grace a little bit. The gospel message is the good news of God’s grace, so it is important to know what grace is and to constantly seek to get a better view of what grace does in our lives. Grace is key to understanding faith, salvation and Christianity. **READ: Romans 5:1-11**

## WHAT IS GRACE?

**Write your own definition of grace –** Grace is the free, underserved and unearned “just because I love you” gift of God

**Listen as the following verses of Scripture are read and answer the corresponding question –**

- **Ephesians 2:8-9** – *“For by grace you are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast.”*  
-Who is grace from? GOD, it is the gift of God  
-What is grace? A free gift (Greek word for grace is “charis” or “karis” and can be translated either as the word “grace” or “gift.”
- **Romans 6:23** – *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

-What is the free gift of God or the grace of God? Eternal life (grace = eternal life/salvation)

- **Romans 5:1-2** – “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”

**True or False (circle one) – Christians are constantly moving in and out of a state of God’s grace.** \*Answer: False, Christians are “standing in grace and not constantly moving in and out of a state of grace according to Romans 5:1-2.

**Understanding grace** – Some good definition of grace for our own understanding.

- (1) **Webster’s Dictionary** – “Unmerited divine assistance given man for his regeneration and sanctification.”
- (2) **Dr. John MacArthur** – “Grace is God’s unmerited favor by which he saves us and makes us righteous. It is based solely on His sovereign love, which is manifested in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sin. It is not the result of any worthiness on our part. Once we are saved we stand in grace.”
- (3) **Grace Acrostic** – Each letter of the word “GRACE” stands for a part of the definition and understanding of what grace is.

G - God’s

R – Righteousness

A – At

C - Christ’s

E - Expense

Grace is an essential part of God’s character and is closely related to God’s benevolence, love, and mercy. Grace can be variously defined as “God’s favor toward the unworthy” or “God’s benevolence on the undeserving.” In His grace, God is willing to forgive us and bless us abundantly, in spite of the fact that we don’t deserve to be treated so well or dealt with so generously. *How might this be seen in the story of “Amazing Grace” and John Newton’s life?*

To fully understand grace, we need to consider two things:

## 2 Things to Consider in Understanding Grace:

### (1) Who we were without Christ –

- **Psalm 51:5** – We were born in sin  
“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.”
- **Romans 3:23**- We were guilty of breaking God’s holy laws  
“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
- **Colossians 1:21** - We were enemies of God  
“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled.”
- **Romans 6:23a** – We were deserving of death  
“For the wages of sin is death....”
- **Romans 3:10** – We were unrighteous  
“There is none righteous, no, not one.”
- **Romans 3:20** – We were without means of justifying ourselves  
“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

Spiritually, we were destitute, blind, unclean, and dead. Our souls were in peril of everlasting punishment.

(2) **Who we become with Christ** - But then came grace. God extended His favor to us.

- **Ephesians 2:8** – Grace is what saves us  
*“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”*
- **Acts 20:24** – Grace is the essence of the gospel  
*“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”*
- **James 4:6** - Grace gives us victory over sin  
*“But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists that proud, but give grace to the humble.’”*
- **2 Thessalonians 2:16** - Grace gives us “eternal encouragement and good hope”  
*“Now many our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace.”*
- **Romans 15:15**- Paul repeatedly identified grace as the basis of his calling as an apostle  
*“Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God.”*
- **John 1:14** - **Jesus Christ is the embodiment of grace, coupled with truth**  
*“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

## GRACE AS A GIFT

The Bible repeatedly calls grace a “gift.” In that familiar passage in **Ephesians 2:8-9** we read, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”* And in **Ephesians 4:7** Paul would write, *“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”* We call “grace” the free gift of God. This is an important analogy because it teaches us some key things about grace:

### What Grace As A “Gift” Teaches Us About Grace?

- (1) **Grace as a gift means that nothing is owed in return** - First, anyone who has ever received a gift understands that a gift is much different from a loan, which requires repayment or return by the recipient. The fact that grace is a gift means that *nothing is owed in return*.
- (2) **Grace as a gift means it is free to the recipient** - Second, there is no cost to the person who receives a gift. A gift is *free to the recipient*, although it is not free to the giver, who bears the expense. The gift of salvation costs us sinners nothing. But the price of such an extravagant gift came at a great cost for our Lord Jesus, who died in our place.
- (3) **Grace as a gift means that ownership of the gift has been transferred and it is now ours to keep** - Third, once a gift has been given, ownership of the gift has transferred and it is now *ours to keep*. There is a permanence in a gift that does not exist with loans or advances. When a gift changes hands, the giver permanently relinquishes all rights to renege or take back the gift in future. God’s grace is ours forever.
- (4) **Grace as a gift means the giver voluntarily forfeits something he owns so that the recipient of the gift will profit from it** - Fourth, in the giving of a gift, the giver voluntarily forfeits something he owns, willingly losing what belongs to him so that the recipient will profit from it. The giver becomes poorer so the recipient can become richer. This *generous and*

voluntary exchange from the giver to the recipient is visible in Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 8:9... just listen to these words, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."

- (5) **Grace as a gift means that grace is completely unmerited** - The Bible teaches that grace is completely *unmerited*. The gift and the act of giving have nothing at all to do with our merit or innate quality (Romans 4:4; 11:5–6; 2 Timothy 1:9–10). In fact, the Bible says quite clearly that we don't deserve God's salvation. Romans 5:8–10 says, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. . . . While we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son."

## GRACE THAT FOLLOWS US

The last three verses of our hymn, "Amazing Grace" state an interesting concept concerning grace that isn't often explored. Here are verses 3,4 & 5 of "Amazing Grace" again:

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

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

*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.*

Newton speaks of "grace" that not only saves us, but that follows us, will lead us home, will stay with us as long as life endures, and will be use as fresh in eternity as when we'd first begun. He is simply reminding us that "grace" never runs out, that it doesn't stop, that it saves and then follow us.

Grace does not stop once we are saved; God is gracious to us for the rest of our lives, working within and upon us. The Bible encourages us with many additional benefits that grace secures for every believer:

### 12 Enduring Benefits of Grace According to Scripture:

- (1) **Grace justifies us before a holy God (Romans 3:24, Titus 3:7)**

Romans 3:24, "<sup>24</sup> Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Titus 3:7, "<sup>7</sup> That having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

- (2) **Grace provides us access to God to communicate and fellowship with Him (Ephesians 1:6)**

Ephesians 1:6, "<sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved."

- (3) **Grace wins for us a new relationship of intimacy with God (Exodus 33:17)**

Exodus 33:17, "<sup>17</sup> So the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name."

- (4) **Grace disciplines and trains us to live in a way that honors God (Titus 2:11–14)**

Titus 2:11-14, "<sup>11</sup> For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, <sup>12</sup> teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly,

righteously, and godly in the present age,<sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,<sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”

**(5) Grace grants us immeasurable spiritual riches (Ephesians 2:7)**

*Ephesians 2:7, “<sup>7</sup>That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”*

**(6) Grace helps us in our every need (Hebrews 4:16)**

*Hebrews 4:16, “<sup>16</sup>Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

**(7) Grace is the reason behind our every deliverance (Psalm 44:3–8)**

*Psalm 44:3-8, “<sup>3</sup>For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, nor did their own arm save them; but it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, because You favored (graced) them. <sup>4</sup>You are my King, O God; command victories for Jacob. <sup>5</sup>Through You we will push down our enemies; through Your name we will trample those who rise up against us. <sup>6</sup>For I will not trust in my bow, nor shall my sword save me. <sup>7</sup>But You have saved us from our enemies, and have put to shame those who hated us. <sup>8</sup>In God we boast all day long, and praise Your name forever. Selah”*

**(8) Grace preserves us and comforts, encourages, and strengthens us (2 Thessalonians 2:16–17)**

*2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, “<sup>16</sup>Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace,<sup>17</sup> comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”*

**(9) Grace is actively and continually working in the lives of God’s people (1 Corinthians 15:10)**

Paul credited the success of his ministry not to his own substantial labors but to “the grace of God that was with me.” *1 Corinthians 15:10 says, “<sup>10</sup>But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”*

**(10) Grace is the ongoing, benevolent act of God working in us, without which we can do nothing (John 15:5)**

Jesus said in *John 15:5, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”*

**(11) Grace is greater than our sin and more abundant than we expect (Romans 5:20; 1 Timothy 1:14)**

*Romans 5:20, “Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.”*

*1 Timothy 1:14, “And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”*

**(12) Grace is too wonderful for words (2 Corinthians 9:15)**

Paul said in *2 Corinthians 9:15, “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”*

## CONCLUSION

A final thought/word concerning this “Amazing Grace” that can’t be too overstated really. As the recipients of God’s grace, Christians are to be gracious to others... to extend that grace that we have been shown to others. Grace is given to us to serve others and to exercise our spiritual gifts for the building up of the church... the body of Christ, other believers and serving others.

#### **4 Closing Thoughts Concerning the Extending of Grace to Others:**

- (1) **We are to use the grace we've been given** - *Romans 12:6*, <sup>6</sup> *"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them..."* Grace is a gift, not to be hoarded and kept to ourselves. It is a precious treasure not meant to be kept in a lock box and only pulled out that we may open it and peek inside to admire it's treasure. It is to be used, worn, displayed... humble used. But how?
- (2) **We are to use the grace we've been given for others** - *Ephesians 3:2*, <sup>2</sup> *"if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you..."*
- (3) **We are to use the grace we've been given in the same measure it has been given to us** – Wow! *Ephesians 4:7*, <sup>7</sup> *"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."* How much "grace" has Christ shown you? That's how much "grace" you are to show others."
- (4) **We are to use the grace we been given as good stewards of that grace** - *1 Peter 4:10*, <sup>10</sup> *"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*