

Study and Discussion Guide for Amazing Grace (Faith's Review and Expectation)

Who wrote Amazing Grace?

John Newton

When did John Newton live?

He was born in 1725 and died in 1807. He probably wrote "Amazing Grace" around Christmas of 1772.

Who was John Newton?

Newton was a slave-ship captain who was saved by God's "amazing grace." He was an Anglican minister. He wrote hymns with his friend, William Cowper. He joined his friend William Wilberforce in his campaign to abolish the slave trade.

What is significant about the hymn "Amazing Grace"?

It is probably the most well known Christian hymn in the world.

Stanza 1

Recite stanza one.

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.

What is grace?

Grace is kindness from God that I do not deserve.

Why is God's grace "amazing"?

God's grace is amazing because through it he saves wretches.

What is a wretch?

A wretch is a miserable, wicked and vile person.

Are you a wretch?

Yes, the Bible tells me that I am born a sinner, dead in trespasses and sin. Left to myself, I will not love God or my neighbor as I ought.

What does such a wretch deserve?

A wretch deserves to go to hell, a place of where unrepentant sinners are punished forever by God.

What does God give to rescue us from his wrath?

God gave his Son, Jesus Christ.

What did Jesus Christ do?

He lived a life of perfect love and obedience to God. He died on the cross in the place of sinners. He rose from the dead. He now sits at God's right hand in glory.

How does Jesus Christ rescue us from the wrath of God?

When a sinner repents of his sin and trusts in Jesus' life, death and resurrection, God forgives all his sin and considers him to be as righteous as Jesus.

How does a sinner come to believe in Jesus Christ?

God must find him and give him sight.

How is a sinner "lost"?

Before salvation, a sinner walks away from the Lord and his paths, like a sheep that is not part of a flock.

How is a sinner "found"?

Through the Gospel, Jesus Christ speaks like a shepherd calling his sheep. By God's power, when we hear his voice we are drawn to him. We turn away from our sin because we trust the voice of our shepherd.

How is a sinner "blind"?

Both Satan and our sin blind our eyes to the Gospel so that we may not see Christ as precious and powerful to save.

How does a sinner "see"?

God, through the working of the Holy Spirit, unveils our faces so that we can see Christ's glory. He does this through "regeneration," which is a big word that means to give something life a second time.

Stanza 2

Recite stanza two.

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

What does it mean that grace “taught my heart to fear”?

It means that the Holy Spirit convicts a sinner of his sinful nature, of God's righteous character and demands, and of the judgment that is coming upon all God's enemies. The convicted sinner begins to fear God and the coming judgment and desires to be saved.

Why is that gracious?

It is “grace” because I do not deserve to know of my wretched condition. I deserve to go immediately to hell.

Does grace leave a sinner in this fear?

No. After teaching a heart to fear, grace relieves its fears.

How does grace relieve fears?

It teaches the believer about what God gives to him in Jesus Christ. Jesus was judged for sins on the cross. Therefore, the believer need not fear God's judgment. Christ's righteousness is given to him as a gift through faith. Therefore, he need not fear falling short of the righteousness that God requires.

What does this grace appear “precious” at the hour of believing?

It relieves all the sinner's fears of God's judgment. It assures him of a right standing before God. Therefore, it is the most valuable thing in all the world.

Stanza 3

Recite stanza three.

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

Through what “dangers, toils, and snares” must a sinner come?

Even though we will be saved, Jesus did not promise us that we would be safe in this world. Paul told the early Christians that “through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”

Christians will be hated by many people because they love Jesus. Some Christians will be put in prison or killed. Satan tempts and afflicts. False teachers will try to get them to follow different gospels. Their own hearts will be tempted by the world and its enticements.

How does the Christian escape these dangers?

The Christian perseveres by grace. God preserves his faith, corrects his sin, and encourages his heart. The Holy Spirit causes the Christian’s heart to desire his heavenly Father. God uses his word, the Bible, and his church to help believers continue following Jesus.

What do these experiences teach the believer?

Past deliverances give us assurance that “grace will lead me home.” The good work that God began in his people he will bring to completion. Amazing grace promises that God will never, ever forsake his people.

Stanza 4

Recite stanza 4.

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

How can we be certain that “grace will lead me home,” as the end of stanza 3 says?

As a Christian, I can be certain because the Lord has promised good to me.

What good has he promised to his people?

He has promised to be their shield and portion.

How is God a “shield”?

Through Christ, believers are shielded from the wrath of God. Neither Satan nor the world can harm God's people, unless God allows it for their good.

How is God a “portion”?

God is a believer's life, his hope and his great reward. What God gives us in Jesus is more satisfying than all the world can offer.

For how long will God be the “shield and portion” of his people?

God will be the “shield and portion” of his people for as long as life endures.

For how long will life endure?

For eternity.

Where do we find such promises of hope?

In God's Word.

How does his Word secure our hope?

God is truth and in him there is no falsehood. What he says, he will do. He cannot lie.

What is God's Word?

God's Word is his Bible, in which is found the story of redemption.

God's Word is also his Son, Jesus the Messiah, who is the Word made flesh. In him we see all that God has done to redeem sinners. His presence before the throne of God makes a believer secure forever.

Stanza 5

Recite stanza 5.

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.

What is meant by “this flesh and heart shall fail and mortal life shall cease”?

Death.

Will you die?

Yes. Scripture says that “it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment” (Heb 9:27).

What does the believer expect after death?

The believer has certainty of “a life of joy and peace.” He will live in paradise, which is the presence of God.

Where will the believer have this life?

“Within the veil.”

What does that mean?

After Adam and Eve fell, they were cut off from the presence of God, being cast out of the Garden of Eden. This was symbolized in the temple by a veil that hung before the Most Holy Place, where God’s glory dwelt. For a sinner to enter God’s presence is certain death.

How does the believer then have life “within the veil”?

At Christ’s death, the veil was torn into, symbolizing that Christ had made a way for us to enter into the presence of God. Since the believer’s sin was placed on Christ, and God’s wrath satisfied in his death, the believer need not fear the wrath of God. His conscience is cleansed with Christ’s blood so that he may go before the throne of grace with boldness.

Stanza 6

Recite stanza 6.

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

What will happen to this present world?

“The earth shall soon dissolve like snow, the sun forbear to shine”?

What does that mean?

One day, the Lord will destroy the present heavens and earth.

What will then happen to all one’s earthly possessions?

All our earthly possessions, such as houses and toys and cars and money, will be destroyed too.

Does that cause sadness to the believer?

No! According to God’s promise, his people are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

What will the believer have in that new world?

The believer will have the best possession anyone could ever have—God. As the hymn says, “God, who called me here below, will be forever mine.” If I believe the promises of the Gospel, God is ours, now and forever.

What should we think of God being ours?

It is kindness that we do not deserve. It is grace—amazing grace, how sweet the sound!