

AMAZING GRACE --- CONSUMING FIRE



On Fire Eric Holmlund

From time to time it's important to take stock. To think about how we're doing, not in our own eyes, or in the eyes of other people, but in the eyes of God. To what extent are we allowing God's grace to actually shape our lives?

God's grace. Amazing Grace!

Only God knows how many lives were destroyed on John Newton's slave ships. The hunger, the thirst, the beatings, and the humiliation those people suffered meant nothing to John Newton. Who cared if they got sick? Who cared if they died? Throw them overboard!

Newton was just doing his job. As captain he had obligations to his investors. If you don't hustle, you don't survive.

Then one day in Africa John Newton's angry crew mutinied. They took off with the ship and left him stranded at the mercy of some nasty natives, who were as cruel to him as he had been to his slave cargos. Now John Newton got a taste of what it's like to be a slave, what it's like to suffer.

When God begins to show us what we're really like, mercifully, he doesn't throw the book at us all at once. He shows us only as much at a time as we can handle. He keeps showing us more and more until finally we see how vain and mean-spirited we have been beneath our smiles.

That's how God dealt with Newton, except, Newton didn't "get it." So God had to throw the book at him, until he finally had a good look at his own corrupt heart and cried out to God for mercy. Suddenly Newton was face to face with terrifying glory as the power of Jesus' cross set fire to his heart, and began to cleanse it.

Yes, fire from heaven came into Newton's heart---the same fire that Moses encountered at the Burning Bush, the same fire that came down on Elijah's sacrifice on Mt. Carmel, the same fire that fell on the believers on the day of Pentecost.

And because John Newton opened his heart and received it, that fire redeemed him. His encounter with God was so holy, so powerful, that John Newton was never the same again.

So when he sat down and wrote his famous hymn, Amazing Grace, it was a song of thanksgiving from the depths of his heart. And Newton backed up the words of that hymn by spending the rest of his life as a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the God who saved him.

Today the hymn, Amazing Grace, is sung all over the world as an echo of John Newton's overwhelming gratitude.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

When you and I begin to see what John Newton saw, we too behold God coming down and scooping us out of the mire and setting our feet on solid

ground! We too hear Jesus coming to us in our despair, “Take heart, Child, your sins are forgiven!” Grace is simply God reaching out to us, God overwhelming us with kindness.

You’re at the end of your rope. You don’t know which way to turn. You feel like you’re about to go down and never come up. Then out of nowhere comes supernatural help. God raises you up and saves you.

But suppose that when John Newton first encountered grace, he had said, “Bug off. I don’t need you. I’m going to make it on my own. I’m going to do things my way!”

Where was grace then?

Grace was still there, waiting outside the door. And it waits there at the door for a long, long time, before it turns and melts away.

Or suppose after you and I have been redeemed by God’s grace, we decide that following Jesus is fine---up to a point. But we have a life to live. We have stuff we want to do our own way. Plus there are a couple people we’re never going to forgive---ever.

Where is grace then?

It’s there, waiting at the door. But the day will come, when we look out the door, and all we can see is a bonfire. A bonfire? What does that mean?

Here’s the part many of us are missing these days. Amazing grace can only help us if we open the door, and let it come in and rule our lives. If we keep it outside the door, if we keep pushing it away, we can sing Amazing Grace till our lungs wear out, grace will eventually become for us a consuming fire.

Hebrews 12

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe;

.... *for our God is a consuming fire.*

Our God is a consuming fire?

The same Jesus who went up on the cross for the sin of the world...

The same Jesus who said to the paralyzed man, "Take heart, Son, your sins are forgiven."

The same Jesus who is saying to us right now, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"

.....that same Jesus tells us that grace is also a consuming fire.

It's the fire that baptized Jesus as he hung dying on the cross. *"I have come to cast fire on earth, and would that were already kindled. I have a baptism to baptized with, and how I am constrained until it is accomplished"*

Jesus was baptized with fire on that cross---a fire that consumed your sin and my sin and the sin of the whole human race.

But here's what we have to get clear: while Grace is the fire that burned up our sin at the cross;

Grace is also the fire of judgment, that divides good from evil.

It's all about what we do with grace, once it has come to us.

Matthew 25

When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left.

Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

*Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink?
And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee?
And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?'
And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'*

According to Jesus, everyone who ever lives on this earth will be given a John Newton moment. Everyone will be drawn to the cross and offered amazing grace, just like he was.

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth (on the cross) will draw all people to myself." (John 12)

All people. Muslims, Buddhists, anarchists, atheists. The final judgment is waiting until, somewhere, somehow, all have been drawn to the cross and offered grace.

The sheep at the King's right hand are those who like John Newton, received grace and walked in it. In thanksgiving to God they showed to the people around them the same kindness God had shown to them. They feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and reach out to the sick, the prisoner and all the forgotten ones out there. They were ruled by the love of God.

*"Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels;
for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'
Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?'
Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.'
And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

The goats on the left hand of the King also had their John Newton moment. They too were drawn to the cross and offered grace. But they sent it away. Or they received it and cried, "Thank you Lord, I'm saved!" But kept right on

living only for themselves. Willfully blind to the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the prisoner, the forgotten ones out there.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

Grace is a holy fire that saves, heals, redeems, but also judges.

“I came to cast fire on the earth.”

That fire, kindled at the cross, is burning its way across the centuries, across the barrier of death into worlds beyond our knowing.

That fire burns at the door of our hearts.
It burns within us as grace, *if we allow it.*

And grace will guide us and sustain us all through this life and the next---*if we allow 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.*

In, with, and under the holy fire of grace is Jesus himself.
Jesus is God's grace.

His Spirit is here with us now to help us in our need.

To give us strength.

To lift us to higher ground as we humble ourselves before him.

All we have to do is open our hearts to him, right now, and let him baptize us afresh with the fire of grace. So that when we finish reading these words, we go forth as sons and daughters of heaven, empowered to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, reach out to the sick, the prisoner, and all the forgotten souls who stumble across our path.

As we walk in God's grace, our hearts begin to hear the Lord saying to us exactly what he said to those seventy disciples who returned to the Master, amazed that spirits were subject to them. He said....

Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Luke 10

When the Day of the Lord arrives and we come before the King in his glory, God grant that we may recognize each other as we stand together at the King's right hand.

Prayer.

Lord Jesus, thank you for your Amazing Grace. We open the door to your grace that is waiting for us. Consume the sin within us, cleanse us. Consume our lives. Lord set fire to our hearts as we walk in your holy and powerful grace. May we be ruled by your love and grace. Empower us to go out and bring the same love and grace to all those we touch. May we continue to allow your grace to guide us and sustain us to the end of our lives and beyond.



THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN

Maranatha Mirror Messages

To learn about us or to explore our archives

www.mmirror.net

To receive bi-weekly messages or to contact us

Email- **MaranathaMirror18@gmail.com**