

Amazing Grace

Lyrics by John Newton and William Cowper between 1760 & 1770, set to a traditional tune, "New Britain" by William Walker, 1835

D D⁷ G D
Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
D A A⁷
That saved a wretch like me.

D D⁷ G D
I once was lost, but now am found;
B^m A G D
Was blind, but now I see.

D D⁷ G D
'Twas grace, that taught my heart to fear,
D A A⁷
And grace my fears relieved.

D D⁷ G D
How precious did that grace appear;
B^m A G D
The hour I first believed.

D D⁷ G D
Through many dangers, toils and snares,
D A A⁷
I have already come.

D D⁷ G D
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
B^m A G D
And grace will lead me home.

D D⁷ G D
The Lord has promised good to me,
D A A⁷
His word my hope secures;
D D⁷ G D
He will my shield and portion be,

B^m A G D
As long as life endures.

D D⁷ G D
Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
D A A⁷
And mortal life shall cease;
D D⁷ G D
I shall possess, within the veil,
B^m A G D
A life of joy and peace.

D D⁷ G D
The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
D A A⁷
The sun forbear to shine;
D D⁷ G D
But God, who call'd me here below,
B^m A G D
Will be forever mine.

D D⁷ G D
When we've been there 10,000 years;
D A A⁷
Bright shining as the sun.
D D⁷ G D
We've no less days to sing God's praise,
B^m A G D
Than when we first begun.



Scripture and History

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

"Amazing Grace" was written by the English poet and clergyman John Newton (1725–1807), published in 1779. With the message that forgiveness and redemption are possible regardless of sins committed and that the soul can be delivered from despair through the mercy of God, "Amazing Grace" is one of the most recognizable songs in the English-speaking world.



Newton wrote the words from personal experience. He grew up without any particular religious conviction, but his life's path was formed by a variety of twists and coincidences that were often put into motion by his recalcitrant insubordination. He was pressed (forced into service involuntarily) into the Royal Navy, and after leaving the service, he became involved in the Atlantic slave trade. In 1748, a violent storm battered his vessel so severely that he called out to God for mercy, a moment that marked his spiritual conversion. However, he continued his slave trading career until 1754 or 1755, when he ended his seafaring altogether and began studying Christian theology.

Ordained in the Church of England in 1764, Newton became curate of Olney Buckingham, where he began to write hymns with poet William Cowper. "Amazing Grace" was written to illustrate a sermon on New Year's Day of 1773. It is unknown if there was any music accompanying the verses; it may have simply been chanted by the congregation. It debuted in print in 1779 in Newton and Cowper's *Olney Hymns* but settled into relative obscurity in England. In the United States however, "Amazing Grace" was used extensively during the Second Great Awakening in the early 19th century. It has been associated with more than 20 melodies. In 1835 William Walker joined to a tune named "New Britain" to which it is most frequently sung today. It appeared for the first time in Walker's shape note tune book *Southern Harmony* in 1847.

Author Gilbert Chase writes that "Amazing Grace" is "without a doubt the most famous of all the folk hymns," and Jonathan Aitken, a Newton biographer, estimates that it is performed about 10 million times annually. It has had particular influence in folk music, and has become an emblematic African American spiritual. Its universal message has been a significant factor in its crossover into secular music. "Amazing Grace" saw a resurgence in popularity in the U.S. during the 1960s and has been recorded thousands of times during and since the 20th century, occasionally appearing on popular music charts.

Wikipedia

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