## **Amazing Grace**

John Newton (1779)

"Most of us have heard the familiar words, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me."

The author of the hymn was, by his own admission, a "wretch." He was a slave trader, a blasphemer, a rebel, an immoral man, a torturer, and as far from grace as anyone could ever be. As a boy, John was captivated by the adventure and risk of life on the high seas. When he was eleven, young John Newton launched into that exciting life of voyaging, sailing, and living his dream. But the dream turned out to be a nightmare.

Later in life he wrote, "I sinned with a high hand, and I made it my study to tempt and seduce others." Newton lived a hard life with hard consequences. God got his attention though.

In 1748, Newton's slave ship was nearly wrecked by an intense storm. In the tempest, surrounded by crashing waves, cutting winds, creaking timbers, and the cries of onboard slaves, John fell to his knees and pled for mercy, and for grace. God's grace, which reaches anyone, anywhere, saved a wretch like John Newton.

Newton wrote the song years later while serving as a pastor in Olney, England. During America's Second Great Awakening, the song was paired with its familiar tune and was widely used in camp meetings and revival services.

Today, its lyrics still inspire, encourage, and instruct people about the radical reality of God's amazing grace."

