



HG264: Amazing Grace (Verse 2)  
***'Twas Grace That Taught My Heart To Fear***

Ephesians 2:1-10

Home Group Study Notes

24 September 2023 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN  
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION  
**BEFORE THE MEETING!**

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group  
with you, along with any previous notes and other  
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



**Welcome** (10 mins)  
*Ice Breaker*

What is your phobia?



**Looking Upwards** (10 mins)  
*Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



## HG262: Amazing Grace (Verse 2) ***'Twas Grace That Taught My Heart To Fear***

Ephesians 2:1-10

Home Group Sermon Notes

24 September 2023 - Revd Paul A. Carr

**Introduction** People are often afraid of the strangest things, aren't they? I've had a few scary moments in my life: getting married, being involved in a riot situation in Liverpool Prison, being ordained into ministry, becoming the father of two children ... The Bible teaches that God's people should not be a people of fear. Psalm 118:6 tells us WHY we should not fear: *"The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"* Proverbs 9:10 says *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom ..."* Ecclesiastes 12:13: *"... Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."* In fact, there are 365 references when God tells us 'Do not fear' or 'Fear not' or something similar. 365 times – that's one for every day of the year.

Newton was a notorious slave trader. He was known to be a wicked man without any redeeming qualities. In fact, his wickedness was so obvious, that when his ship, the *Greyhound*, was caught in a terrible storm, the captain considered throwing him overboard, like Jonah, because he believed Newton's wickedness was the cause of all their misery.

It was during this storm that Newton – along with the rest of the crew - started to pray. Newton said: *"I concluded my sins were too great to be forgiven. I waited with fear and impatience to receive my doom."* This concept of Zeusophobia - fearing God - was very real to John Newton because when he wrote the second verse of 'Amazing Grace' he included these words: *"'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed."*

Newton later came to believe that his fear was God's tool to get his attention. Newton believed God had to bring him to his knees in FEAR before he would ever give his life to Jesus. But once he did so, he became a passionate evangelist. He was determined, focused, and unstoppable.

According to one author: *"To London's 'smart society,' John Newton was ... an evangelical, but the 'worst' kind: a fanatic who denounced all the self-indulgences and pleasures that society loved the most."* But Newton didn't care what they thought. He wasn't in love with the world around him, he was in love with Jesus. But he got that way because *"... it was grace that taught his heart to fear."* Revelation 14:7 *"Fear God and give him glory ..."*

**1. You Were Dead In Your Sins (vs 1-3)** Paul was writing to Christians who were members of the church in Ephesus. And he is speaking of their lives prior to faith in Jesus. Paul magnifies the grace of God by revealing to us the severity of the situation from which Jesus has rescued us. Verse 1: *"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins ..."* Verse 2 KJV *"... in which you once walked ..."*

Walking is often used in the scriptures as an image for one's way of life. And here Paul says that these Christians once walked in constant rebellion against God. And concerning their condition, Paul says they were "dead". This is a strange way to talk about people who only a few words later are said to have been 'walking' but the meaning is clear. They were dead, spiritually speaking, in their transgressions and sins.

This idea shouldn't surprise anyone who is familiar with scripture. In fact, the notion of spiritual death as the consequence of sin is established very early in the Bible. In Genesis 2:17, God said to Adam: "... *but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*" Both spiritually and physically – though this was never God's plan.

Paul, in seeking to awaken the Ephesians to the grace of God shown to them in Jesus, informs them of the hopeless and helpless situation that they were rescued from. Notice he doesn't say they were sick, wounded or weak. He doesn't say they were ignorant, as if what they needed was an education. Nor does Paul say that they were immoral, as if they only needed to learn to do what is right. No, Paul says they were dead in their "transgressions and sins." This means that they were spiritually lifeless, dead to God, and to the things of God, unable to help themselves in any way. Newton found himself in such a position when he cried out to God in prayer. What Newton, as well as the Ephesians, needed, was to be revived, born again, regenerated. Clearly, they could not do this for themselves, for dead men cannot make themselves alive. They need to be resurrected!

The rest of verses 2&3 helps to clarify what this spiritual deadness involves. Those dead in sin follow "the ways of this world." and according to its values "... and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient." The same one who tempted Adam and Eve in the garden and destroyed their relationship with God is still at work in the world today to destroy people's relationship with God.

**2. But God Made You Alive (vs 4-7)** The bad news turns to good news in verse 4&5: "*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Jesus even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved.*"

Here Paul magnifies God's grace by revealing that it was God who took the initiative to save us through Jesus. There are some who think of God the Father as being angry and stern, and Jesus as the one who is merciful and kind, who somehow managed to convince the Father to have mercy on us, to forgive us and to receive us as his own. To the contrary, the mercy, grace and love of the Father was the cause of our salvation in Jesus. But it was the Father who sent the Son. We see this clearly in John 3:16: "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*" And 1 John 3:1: "*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.*"

But that doesn't change the fact that the love of the Father was the fundamental cause of our salvation in Jesus, and our adoption as sons and daughters. By nature, we were all children of wrath, but in love the Father adopted us as His children through faith in the risen Jesus. Again, Paul says that the Father: "... *being rich in mercy and because of his great love ...*" You can almost feel Paul straining to communicate to us how magnificent God's love is! His love is great! His mercy is rich!

Verse 5: "*even when we were dead in our transgressions*" we could not help ourselves. But this is when God "*made us alive together with Jesus ...*" Just as God breathed life into Adam's body at the time of creation, so too God breathes spiritual life into the souls of those who are dead in their sins at the time they trust in him.

Notice how Paul again emphasizes that this new life is ours by faith in Jesus. It is because Jesus *lives*, that we live. It is because Jesus was *raised*, that we are raised. It is because Jesus was *glorified*, that we are glorified. And it is this truth that makes light of those religions who contend that Jesus failed in his mission when he was crucified.

Aren't you glad to know the truth about God's plan for His world? We have to admit this truth can be hard to swallow. This truth is humbling. This truth is a bit troubling. But it is the truth! And it is this truth concerning the helpless and hopeless situation that we were in that enables us to most fully appreciate the marvellous grace that has been shown to us and bestowed upon us by God. The grace that is life changing for you, for me and for slave traders like John Newton.

If you are in Jesus, God has given you new life in him. God has raised you to a newness of life now and will raise you from the grave at the end of time. And because Jesus is glorified at the right hand of the Father now in the high-heavenly places, you also are glorified with him. And in him you will be glorified for all eternity. And why did God make these who were dead in their sins alive in Jesus, co-raise them and co-seat them in the heavenly places? What was God's reason for doing this? Verse 7 answers this question "*in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*" You were dead in your sins, but God made you alive:

**3. So That You Might Live For Him (vs 8-10)** Paul writes how our believing, and our good works are themselves gifts from God. In verses 8 to 10 we learn that God has saved us so that we might live for him. "*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*"

'Saved' is a rather generic term which encompasses the many benefits that are ours in Jesus. In him we are justified, redeemed, sanctified, forgiven, cleansed and adopted, to mention a few things. And if we wish to speak generally of all of this (and more) we can use the word 'saved' which means to be delivered or made safe. We are saved by the grace of God alone. But notice that this salvation is received "by faith". When a gift is exchanged the gift is presented by one, and then it is received by another. And how do we receive God's gift of salvation? We receive this gift of grace by faith. We lay hold of our salvation and all that it entails by believing in Jesus and trusting in him. We don't just leave to one side for a rainy day!

And in receiving this gift, we must say from heart, I am a sinner deserving of God's righteous judgment, but I know that Jesus has paid for my sins so that I might be forgiven, and I trust in him. "*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*" No wonder Newton wrote the line: "*How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed.*"

If faith were something that arose from within us, as opposed to a grace or gift imparted to us from God, then there most certainly be some room for boasting. But there isn't. *In Christ alone my hope is found.*

### Conclusion

Ephesians 2:1-10 gives us two definitions of grace - it tells us what it is, but it also tells us what it isn't.

**What grace is not** *Following the ways of this world (vs2); it is not: gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature (vs3); it is not: following our desires and thoughts (vs3); it is not: earning our salvation through works (vs9); it is not: boasting in ourselves (vs9).*

**What grace is** *It is being made alive in Christ when we were dead in sin (vs1&5) it is: being saved by grace (vs5); it is: being raised up with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly realms (vs6); it is: showing the incomparable riches of his love (vs7); it is: the gift of God (vs8); it is: to show good works (vs10).*

Without God's grace we have no hope. Without his grace we are lost and blind. But because of his grace we are found – because of his grace now we can see. That rings true for each of us. We all know and recognize what hopelessness feels like. We understand what it's like to be trapped. And while we may have never physically been slaves to another human being, each of us can identify with what it means to be enslaved to sin. But when God's grace reaches out to us, new life is breathed into us. His grace brings us not only salvation but hope and faith and love and purpose and forgiveness. It teaches us to live righteous and godly lives. It doesn't matter where you are in your life or what you've done, God's grace is so amazing that it can reach you no matter how far you've gone.

John Newton was responsible for the deaths of countless people that he transported on his slave ship, yet he found hope and forgiveness through the grace of God. It is by God's amazing grace that each of us can find new life when we follow Jesus.

The root word for grace in Greek is *charis* (where we get 'charismatic'). It's a verb (a doing word), which means: *I will rejoice and be glad*. God, through Jesus, actually rejoices, and is glad, when we receive Jesus for ourselves. And, if that is so, then we, as recipients of that same grace, are to *rejoice and be glad too*.

We should be nothing but overwhelmingly grateful for God's amazing grace in our lives. Pouring his love and mercy out through Christ on our behalf can change the hardest heart. It can mend the most broken life. It can rescue the most lost soul.

Grace is God's gift to us. *God's Riches At Christ's Expense*. It's not something we gather together, for if it was, we would find a way to try to take credit for it. Grace grants us the opportunity for salvation, but it doesn't end there. Ephesians 2:10 tells us that he created us and poured his grace on us for a purpose: so, we could do the good things he planned for us. In other words, so we could pour grace out on others. Grace is what sets us apart and make us distinctively different (or at least it should) from the world.

In the world of injustice there is a God of justice who wishes to bring rescue, to set us free from being a slave to fear and to make us child ren of God. There is a God of amazing grace who wishes to bring hope to a hurting world. Philip Yancey: *"Grace is the most perplexing, powerful force in the universe, and, I believe, the only hope for our twisted, violent planet."* Be sure you play your part.

*"Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed."*

## Emmanuel Church Text 2023



*The LORD bless you and keep you: the LORD make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you: the LORD turn his face toward you  
and give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26*

**Emmanuel Church, Laindon Road, Billericay, Essex. CM12 9LD**

**P** 01277 632120 **E** [Emmanueloffice@billericaychurches.org](mailto:Emmanueloffice@billericaychurches.org) **W** [Emmanuel-church.info](http://Emmanuel-church.info)  
**FB** Emmanuel Church Billericay **T** EmmanuelCM12 **YT** Emmanuel Church Billericay



## **Looking Upwards** (40 mins)

### *Bible Study*

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

**1:** What was the trigger point for you becoming a Christian?

**2:** What is an area where your new nature is battling the old? In what area is it difficult for you to please God instead of yourself? What do you need to do in order to get victory?

**3:** If we are already made alive, have already been sealed with the Holy Spirit, and already possess eternal life, what does it mean “that in the ages to come He might show us” more? What does He have left to show?

**4:** What is one area of your life that God has helped you change after bringing you to Him? Share about your change in attitude toward this sin and any steps taken to help achieve victory.

**5:** God wants us to learn from His model of generosity. As He has graciously shared with us out of His immeasurable riches, so we should generously share with others. What is one resource God has given you that you can generously share? How will you do this?

**6:** What is a good deed you think God wanted you to do this past week? Did you, do it? What is something you think God wants you to do in the coming week for Him? Write down one good deed which you should do in the coming week.



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



## Looking Inwards (15 mins) Caring For Each Other

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



## Looking Outwards (15 mins) Concern For Others

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

**Emmanuel Church, Laindon Road, Billericay, Essex. CM12 9LD**

P 01277 632120 E [Emmanueloffice@billericaychurches.org](mailto:Emmanueloffice@billericaychurches.org) W [Emmanuel-church.info](http://Emmanuel-church.info)  
FB [Emmanuel Church Billericay](http://Emmanuel Church Billericay) T [EmmanuelCM12](http://EmmanuelCM12) YT [Emmanuel Church Billericay](http://Emmanuel Church Billericay)

Part Of The Billericay & Little Burstead Team Ministry