

Faith in Action – John Newton – Grace filled living**Background**

Born on July 24th 1725

Mum died when 6 years old.

11 years old - went to sea

"I am persuaded he loved me, but he seemed not willing that I should know it. I was with him in a state of fear and bondage. His sternness . . . broke and overawed my spirit."

18 years old - naval service

20 years old – slavery

Almost 21 years old (1747) - rescued.

The storm and God

"I thought I saw the hand of God displayed in our favour. I began to pray: I could not utter the prayer of faith; I could not draw near to a reconciled God, and call him Father . . . the comfortless principles of infidelity were deeply riveted; ... The great question now was, how to obtain faith."

"Thus, far I was answered, that before we arrived in Ireland, I had a satisfactory evidence in my own mind of the truth of the Gospel, as considered in itself, and of its exact suitableness to answer all my needs ... I stood in need of an Almighty Saviour; and such a one I found described in the New Testament. Thus, far the Lord had wrought a marvellous thing: I was no longer an infidel: I heartily renounced my former profaneness, and had taken up some right notions; was seriously disposed, and sincerely touched with a sense of the undeserved mercy I had received, in being brought safe through so many dangers. I

was sorry for my past misspent life, and purposed an immediate reformation. I was quite freed from the habit of swearing, which seemed to have been as deeply rooted in me as a second nature. Thus, to all appearance, I was a new man”

“I was greatly deficient in many respects. I was in some degree affected with a sense of my enormous sins, but I was little aware of the innate evils of my heart. I had no apprehension of . . . the hidden life of a Christian, as it consists in communion with God by Jesus Christ: a continual dependence on him. ...I acknowledged the Lord's mercy in pardoning what was past, but depended chiefly upon my own resolution to do better for the time to come. ... I cannot consider myself to have been a believer (in the full sense of the word) till a considerable time afterwards.”

Grace filled living

The Christian life ...

“He believes and feels his own weakness and unworthiness, and lives upon the grace and pardoning love of his Lord. This gives him a habitual tenderness and gentleness of spirit.”

“Mr Newton could no longer live than he could love”

“Whoever . . . has tasted of the love Christ, and has known, by his own experience, the need and the worth of redemption, is enabled, Yea, he is constrained, to love his fellow creatures. He loves them at first sight; and, if the providence of God commits a dispensation of the gospel, and care of souls to him, he will feel the warmest emotions of friendship and tenderness, while he beseeches them by the tender mercies of God, and even while he warns them by his terrors.”

Is your reaction to love people at first sight?

Grace filled pastoring

"I have seldom one-hour free from interruption. Letters, that must be answered, visitants that must be received, business that must be attended to. I have a good many sheep and lambs to look after, sick and afflicted souls dear to the Lord; and therefore, whatever stands still, these must not be neglected."

Qu: Do we pastor and care for each other equally with great grace?

A grace filled house

"for nearly 12 years we were seldom separated for more than 7 hours at a time when we were awake and at home."

"his house was an asylum for the perplexed and afflicted".

Qu: Is your house a place where gospel grace is displayed?

Grace filled truth

"I have been thirty years forming my own views; and, in the course of this time, some of my hills have sunk, and some of my valleys have risen: but, how unreasonable within me to expect all this should take place in another person; and that, in the course of a year or two."

"The Scripture, which . . . teaches us what we are to say, is equally explicit as to the temper and Spirit in which we are to speak. Though I had knowledge of all mysteries, and the tongue of an angel to declare them, I could hope for little acceptance or usefulness, unless I was to speak 'in love.'"

2 Tim 2:25, "Correct opponents with gentleness so that God will grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth"

Qu: Do we see each other as 'works in progress'?

Grace filled disagreements

"Under discouraging circumstances, I had occasion to call upon him; and his discourse so comforted and edified me, that my heart, being by this means relieved from its burden, became susceptible of affection for him."

A grace filled husband

So what kept him going?

a) Newton was realistic about the limits of life.

b) Newton knew Grace

1 Chronicles 17:16, ***"Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and he said: "Who am I, Lord God, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?"***

"A company of travellers fall into a pit: one of them gets a passenger to draw him out. Now he should not be angry with the rest for falling in; nor because they are not yet out, as he is. He did not pull himself out: instead, therefore, of reproaching them, he should shew them pity. . . . A man, truly illuminated, will no more despise others, then Bartimeus, after his own eyes were opened, would take a stick, and beat every blind man he met."

c) Newtons peaceful confidence in the pervasive loving providence of God

"his faith upholds him under all trials, by assuring him, that every dispensation is under the direction of his Lord; that chastisements are a token of his love; that the season, measure, and continuance of his sufferings, are appointed by Infinite Wisdom, and designed to work for his everlasting good; and that grace and strength shall be afforded him, according to his day."