



# 1 Timothy

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**And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 1:14**

Paul has explained his “from” and “to” status. He went from a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man. He went to one who was placed into the ministry because he was counted faithful. Now he attempts to explain the incomprehensible nature of what came about in that transformation by saying, “And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant.” The single Greek word translated as “exceedingly abundant” is found only here in Scripture. It gives the sense of superabundance. It is as a number which cannot be counted.

In other words, Paul is stating that the grace upon him could not be properly explained. Only a descriptive word which asks the mind to reach off into infinity could be used in an attempt to describe it. And then along with that, he adds, “with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” These are the two principle tenets which came to exemplify the life and apostleship of Paul. They are set in contrast to his former life.

He was a blasphemer, now he was a man of faith. He was a persecutor and an insolent man, and now his life was marked with love. The transformation was as complete as that of going from utter darkness to brilliant light.

Life application: How did coming to Christ change you? Did you simply go from being a regular person, stepping from unbelief in His work to a belief in it, calling on Him as Lord? If so, you are saved by that belief and the call that you made. Or, did you go from being a really wicked person to a person who was completely transformed? If so, you are saved as well, but you probably have a burning desire to serve the Lord. The fact is that all, those who felt they were

just regular folks, and those who felt they were the worst of all people, were in exactly the same boat. In both, there was an infinite separation from God, and in both, there is a complete reuniting to Him. Let us all come to the realization of this, and let us all be willing to expend ourselves in this life for the furtherance of the gospel. And in this, let us be people of faith and love which is found in Christ Jesus.

**This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 1 Timothy 1:15**

The words Paul opens with here are only found in the Pastoral Epistles, “This is a faithful saying.” Literally, the Greek states, “Faithful is the word.” He will use this same formula five times in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. There is also a similar saying used by Jesus in Revelation 21:5 & 22:6. It is a way of emphasizing what is connected to it, and it is rather similar to that which is found in the Old Testament, and in the sayings of the gospels, where a word is repeated for emphasis. For example, Jesus says “verily, verily” (literally “amen, amen”) many times in the gospels. In this same manner, Paul is making a statement of profound emphasis.

In it, he then adds, “and worthy of all acceptance.” This is only used here and then again in 1 Timothy 4:9. It is a phrase which indicates the exclusion of all doubt. It is to be accepted at face value. Understanding the emphatic and absolutely sure nature of what will be said, he then states what is on his mind – “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Here we have an implicit reference to the eternal nature of Christ. For Him to “come into the world” indicates that He was there before the world existed. He was in the position of glory in the eternal state, but stepped out of that in order to join with us in the stream of time. This is certainly the thought on Paul’s mind. That God Himself was willing to enter into this existence, become a part of it, and save those who were otherwise set to perish. The idea ties naturally back to the words “worthy of all acceptance.” In order for sinners to be saved, they need a Savior. Further, being saved implies “from” something. If there was no harm coming to sinners, then they would not need to be saved.

Further, as this is worthy of “all” acceptance, then it must apply to all sinners. If not, then it would not be an absolute statement. But because it is, Christ is fully capable of saving all sinners. And as all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), then Christ came to potentially save all. He did not come just for Jews, but for all – Jew and Gentile alike. All are destined for separation from God, but Christ is the means of rectifying that state. The purpose of Christ coming was not to take us to heaven, but to save us from hell. Heaven is merely a benefit of our salvation.

But Paul's thought does not end with this. As a note of the immensity of what Christ has done, he adds on (when referring to the word "sinners), "of whom I am chief." Albert Barnes notes that this "means that he occupied the first rank among sinners. There were none who surpassed him. This does not mean that he had been the greatest of sinners in all respects, but that in some respects he had been so great a sinner, that on the whole there were none who had surpassed him."

In Ephesians 3:8, Paul calls himself "the least of all the saints." His conduct in persecuting Christians, and thus Christ Himself (see Acts 9:4), led him to realize that he was indeed the first of all sinners. The reason for this is that he was schooled in the law. He was an Israelite, and he was a Pharisee as well. In his studies, he should have recognized Christ for who He is, and yet it took a supernatural appearance of the Lord to open his spiritually blind eyes. Surely no one could be more sinful than the man who used God's own law to pursue God's own Son!

But in understanding Paul's words, each and every Christian should be able to empathize with Paul and even to argue as to whether he or she is not truly the chief among the sinful people of the world. Our sin, no matter how large or how small, necessitated the crucifixion of Christ. All are guilty of the act, and all must acknowledge this in their hearts. "Lord, I am chief of the sinners." If we fail to understand this, then when we look at other sinners, we may find them less deserving of God's mercy than we were. May this never be!

Life application: Love sent Christ Jesus into the world. Our sin nailed Him to the cross. His perfection brought Him forth from the grave. We are the recipients of that which is wholly undeserved. Let us remember this, and then let us share this marvelous truth with all. May we never hold back the gospel because we feel someone else is undeserving. Christ didn't hold it back from us, and we were certainly undeserving.