

1 Timothy 1:12-17 (Part I)

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"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service; even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are *found* in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*."

Introduction

The title of this morning's message is *Thankful for the Grace of God* and the subject for the next two weeks will be 1 Timothy 1:12-17. The crux of what we will be discussing is the topic of God's grace towards us. When we think about God's grace (and I think as we consider Paul and just his thankfulness for the grace of God in his life) there ought to be a sense of awe that overwhelms us to some degree. If the grace of God is just a concept to you that is distant and unimportant, then there is something wrong. I would say that there are several possible attitudes or responses to the concept of the grace of God:

- There are those that would say "amen" to what Paul was thankful for in his life and how in the same manner God had saved Paul the apostle (out of everything that was destitute, wrong, and sinful) He had rescued us;
- There are those who may have never really considered what the doctrine of Grace means for their lives. For those people, I would pray that through the course of studying the Scriptures over the next couple of weeks that they might see firsthand what it means that God is good to us through His grace and that it might unveil for them an opening by which they might learn to worship the living God;
- There are those who stand in that "in-between ground" which is the most dangerous of all. What I mean by that is that these people are those who ought to know better, but for whatever reason the doctrine of Grace had lost its meaning to them. It's just kind of something they know in their minds, but their hearts no longer sing it. It's something that they have come to appreciate (in terms of their intellect and doctrine and theology), but it is cold and lifeless (in terms of their passions). To those people, I would beg for the mercy of God on their behalf that He might break the callousness of their hearts before it's too late.

There's no doctrine of Scripture that is more significant to us as individuals than the doctrine of Grace and when we look at what Paul says about grace in his life, what grace means for us, and how pervasive the grace of God is, then hopefully, it might refresh us unto salvation and unto the goodness of our God. Let's have a word of prayer as we look this morning at why Paul was so thankful for the grace of God in his life.

Heavenly Father, we come before You.

We have been able to sing together songs that honor and praise You.

We have been able to lift up together one voice, as we have sought Your blessing upon our missionary endeavors, as we try to share the Gospel across the world.

Lord, we have done much as we have gathered as a fellowship; as we have encouraged each other, but now Lord, we ask that You lay our hearts bare; and as we come before Your Holy Word this morning, that we would examine for ourselves what the grace of God meant for the great apostle Paul's life and more importantly Lord, what the grace of God means for our lives, as we look upon this great doctrine Lord.

This is what separates all religion from the true religion. This is what separates all things that are just a religious and external practice from the transformation that comes by the power of Your Holy Spirit through the Word of God.

So Lord, we beseech you, that You might have mercy upon us; to reveal to us what the Word of God would teach us today; that we would bear fruit in such a manner that would bring great delight unto You; that we might bring not just worship Lord, but a reputation—a glorious reputation of the men and women who love their God because His grace has been extended to us.

So as we look to this passage Lord, we ask that You would open our eyes and open our hearts that we might gain the insight of the grace of our great God, now and always.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Definition of God's Grace

Grace is defined as “an undeserved merit or favor.” When we look at it as something undeserved, I think the emphasis needs to be placed on the “undeserved.” Frequently, when we think about God's undeserved favor or blessing upon us, we emphasize the “favor” or the “gift.” We do that all the time and it's not wrong. For instance, if someone has to pay for a gift given to them, then it is not a gift (which is appropriate and right way of looking at the concept of grace so far as the “favor” part is concerned). But there is another element that makes the grace of God remarkable—it is absolutely and intrinsically, undeserved. It's a blessing that we cannot by any means earn in of ourselves.

I wanted to open with the middle portion of this passage (v. 15) because in my mind that is the heart of this passage. It says this: *“It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.”*

Paul is saying that Jesus came to die for sinners, among whom he is the “foremost of all.” When he says that “he is the foremost of all,” he's saying that he is the first; the number one sinner. He is the worst amongst all sinners. Some suggest that Paul is exaggerating for dramatic effect; that he is *claiming* himself to be the worst when in reality, he knew there were far worse sinners than himself. That's disingenuous.

I think Paul is taking the grace of God in its proper application of personal inspection. In other words, no one knows your sin better than the God of this universe; Him first, then yourself. It's that realization of our sinfulness which makes the grace of God that much more overwhelming and when we forget that (that we ourselves ought to look at ourselves as the foremost among sinners), then we eliminate the necessity of grace in our lives. Grace is undeserved favor.

So when we look at this particular portion of Scripture (v.12-14) we'll see that Paul recounts why he ought not to be saved and why it is that the grace of God in his life is indeed so undeserved. We will see what the grace of God accomplished in his life and what that mean for us and also, how the grace of God should permeate through the course of our existence.

The Grace of God & Paul (v. 12)

“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service”

The concept that he wants to emphasize is our sinfulness and the undeserved nature of God's grace. It occurs to me that when we think about all the atrocious sins that have been committed, all the horrific things one person has done to another, what you find is that they people are not these demons. They are just regular human beings. In fact, it is not necessarily the individual who is fully convinced that they live for evil that commit the worst crimes. It is normally the half-hearted individual who commits the grossest atrocities.

If you look through the history of mankind, there may have been rulers that were insane, men in charge that were just nuts. I believe Adolf Hitler was either nuts or demon-possessed. But Hitler did not round up entire families into gas chambers and turn on the switch. It was a bunch of men that just kind of went along with him. They were not brainwashed or forced by other men with guns to commit genocide. They were just half-hearted in what they believed and that is what you will find in this world; that it is not the crazy, wild, demon-possessed individuals who commit these types of atrocities. It is normal people like you and me, who are half-conscious of the sinfulness of our actions, half-conscious of the realities of what we wreak on others. And all the while, we participate wholeheartedly.

Paul was an example of such a man. He was a normal, zealous Jew and yet, he began to vehemently persecute the Church. After Stephen's martyrdom (where Paul was collecting everyone's cloaks so that they can kill Stephen) it says:

“But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.” (Acts 8:3)

Saul was so committed to stamping out what he saw as error in Christianity, of this Messianic false hope, that he was hunting them down house to house. He would go door to door to take them to prison—men and women, all.

“Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.” (Acts 9:1-2)

He asked for letters because he wanted to expand his search. He already went door to door in Jerusalem and now wanted to go to Damascus and bring some of those that followed “The Way” and bring those men and women to Jerusalem to be tried and put into prison.

“And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who art Thou, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but rise, and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do.” (Acts 9:3-6)

From that moment on, Saul of Tarsus becomes Paul the great Apostle who can't speak enough of the grace of God in his own life and it is with this heart of thankfulness he begins this particular portion of this letter.

There is rarely a letter that Paul writes that doesn't have the concept of thankfulness in it. He is so thankful because of what Christ has given to him. He is thankful to Christ Jesus because He empowers Paul to do the work of ministry. The grace of God has come to Paul and part of what the grace of God has been to him is an empowerment, a strengthening; it gives him vitality and strength to go and accomplish something.

“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me”

The verbal idea of **“has strengthened me”** is really a participle; a verbal noun. It's a description of Jesus Christ our Lord which says He is of such character that He is the One strengthening Paul. This is an attribute of Jesus Christ. The term used for “strength” in the Greek is *endunamoō* (ἐνδυναμώω), which is the same one used for the word “dynamite.” It means something that is strong or powerful. In the Greek they add a prefix “en-” the same way we add in English “em-” to the word “power” to get the word “empowered.” That's the same principle here. It's not just talking about Christ Himself being strong, but the fact that Christ's nature is such that He strengthens those that He gives unto service. This ought to be a great delight to us because how often have you felt defeated? How often have you felt empty? How often have you thought “if I only had a little more spiritual strength, a little more spiritual energy”?

Who is Jesus Christ? According to Paul, He is the One that is so gracious that He empowers us. He gives us strength and vitality to accomplish everything that needs to be done. And He does this for individuals for who do not deserve His grace and goodness, but rather the absolute opposite.

Think about how Paul must have been tortured, at least in some area of his life, whenever he thought about what he was before Christ. Not many of us before we became Christians used to haul off other Christians so that they could be killed. That's not true for any of us. None of us were part of the “Secret Service” going after Christians making sure that families were broken up, children were killed and making sure that their faith was completely obliterated. That was not our conviction and training and occupation before Christ. But, that was Paul's life. That's what he did.

As a Christian, even as an Apostle, he's fond of calling himself the “worst among sinners, the chief among sinners.” He often calls himself “the least among the apostles” because I am sure that as he evaluated himself, he knew for a fact that he deserved nothing of God's goodness because he killed people; and not just any group of people, but those who were most cherished to the living God, Christians.

“because He considered me faithful, putting me into service”

The second thing about the grace of God in Paul's life is that God entrusted the things of Christ to this Saul of Tarsus; this blasphemer; this murderer; this horrible individual. Paul is praising or thanking Christ specifically because **“He considered me faithful”**.

This term **“faithful”** is the term *pistos* (πιστός), which means “faith” or belief”. Unfortunately, there are some that have suggested that *pistos* is only used for the concept of belief in the New Testament and that it is never used for a description of faithfulness or trustworthiness. They are absolutely wrong. We'll give you one example in 1 Cor. 7:25 when Paul talks about both the advantages of singleness and the delightfulness of marriage.

“Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy.”

If its “trustworthy” here means just “belief” that is a weird statement. It would be like Paul saying, “Now the Lord didn't say anything about this, but I'll give you the Apostles' opinion. It's an opinion that by the mercy of the Lord is true belief.” If you held to understanding the term “pistos” to mean only belief, you would wonder what he meant. Only when we define the term as “faithful” or “trustworthy” does this statement make sense.

“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord... because He considered me faithful.”

Similarly, Paul uses the same term here to mean that Jesus considered him to be trustworthy. This presents however, an interesting question: Just when did Christ consider Paul faithful? He wasn't very "faithful" when he was killing Christians, but Christ in his sovereignty considered Paul to be trustworthy and that's probably the best translation.

George W. Knight (adjunct professor of New Testament at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary) says "it's not that Paul at the time of his conversion had already proved his faithfulness, but that the Lord was willing to consider him then and there worthy of trust and therefore as one who would be faithful."

The grace of Christ is such that not only He empowers us for ministry but He also entrusts us with that which is the treasure of Heaven. It is ridiculous that God would trust men like me to preach the Word of God to you; that you on your part should be able to read the Scriptures and understand the things of faith; and that He would entrust you to take that truth and not only apply it to yourself, but to give that to others that they might apply it as well. It is unfathomable that He would trust twelve of the most bumbling individuals in the course of His earthly ministry with the message of salvation for all time. It's remarkable that He trusts us. And Paul says this is why he was thankful—that He would think of him in such a way to entrust him with the Gospel of Truth.

"putting me into service"

The New American Standard Bible does a good job with this translation; for after Jesus considered Paul faithful, the next idea or subset of that idea mentioned is that Jesus put Paul into service. The term for "**service**" is *diakonia* (διακονία) which is associated with the term for "deacon" or *diakonos* (διάκονος). Here, when it talks about service, it's talking about the concept of "the minister." How is it that the term "deacon" has come to take the place of someone that is prominent in the Church? Or that a minister is someone who holds a great office as if it were a term for power or rank? That is ridiculous. The term itself means "a house slave, a manager of the things of the household."

When the grace of God comes to us, not only does it result in Christ strengthening us or empowering us, but it also results in Him entrusting us with the Gospel. He considers us faithful and He puts us into ministry; service. That's what Paul says he's thankful for because that's what Christ had done in his life. He goes on to say that this is the exact opposite of what people should have expected from the life of Paul. He goes on to tell us that Grace prevails over everything that is sinful.

Victory of Grace over Sin (v. 13)

"even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor."

The apostle John in both his gospel and letters talks a lot about the love of God. For instance, if you hate your brother, then you do not have the love of God (1 John 2:9-11). He likes to use the present tense which indicates that if this is your habitual nature or if you are constantly in sin, then you are not a believer; you are not a child of God. In that same way, Paul uses the present tense to say that back then, I am being (a present tense participle) "**formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor.**"

He does not say that "I was" but that "I am." It's clear that Paul understood how bad and wickedly sinful he actually was. He doesn't pretend that it was just a "bad time" in his life. He puts the blame on himself and he doesn't make excuses for his behavior. He says that these are the things that I actually was; this was my occupation in life. This is how one might have defined him. He was "**a blasphemer.**" Not just one who occasionally spoke against God, but someone who spoke evil against the living God and his Christ. He was "**a persecutor.**" Not someone who committed a persecution over a known enemy, but one who persecuted and sought out those who followed The Way (Acts 22:4). He was "**a violent aggressor.**"

The term for "**violent aggressor**" is the Greek term *hubristēs* (ὕβριστης) which is where we get our word "hubris" which means a sense of pride that is so insolent and prideful that it's injurious. In literature, when a guy has a lot of hubris, it means he is so arrogantly proud that he disdains everything else and as a result, causes calamity to fall upon himself and others. But the idea of the word is more fixated on someone who is violent; someone who does something mean and aggressive. So I think the term is properly translated. It means one who doesn't care at all about someone else and he'll treat them in whatever horrifying manner he feels appropriate to the moment. It is an exceeding sinfulness that is wrought out of pride.

Paul says "I am being a blasphemer, I am being a persecutor, and I am being a violent aggressor. I am the worst among men." We need to internalize what Paul says of himself and see if we might be able to look upon ourselves and recognize that upon reflection, we also should conclude that there is no one quite as sinful as ourselves.

"And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief"

Thomas Watson (English Puritan preacher and author) in his exposition of "The Beatitudes" wrote "I was bemercied." In other words, mercy was given unto me. This concept of mercy is seen in the parable of the tax-collector in Luke 18. Paul says the reason why he was allowed this kind of mercy was because what had done in the past was on the basis of unknowledge and unfaith or unbelief. He didn't know better. Note that he didn't say he was innocent. At first reading, you

might think he was implying that he was innocent, but that's not what Paul is saying here. He was not rejected from the possibility of receiving mercy because he didn't know better and he lacked a full appreciation of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In Numbers 15, it talks about how the people of God were to come and sacrifice for unknown sins. Later in the chapter, it describes "high-handed sins," which is that attitude that takes God and reduces Him to someone that we go to only when we decide it is necessary. It is the paradoxical position of believing and yet absolutely rejecting God. In the New Testament, we call that apostasy. Apostates or those who commit "high-handed sin" can be characterized by the following:

- They are individuals who have tasted the gift of the Holy Spirit and understand what it means to be in the fellowship of the saints
- They are individuals who have taken in what the Gospel is and have acknowledged it in their hearts
- They are individuals who proclaim belief, yet they will have no desire to follow Christ to the point that they have to believe *everything* He says
- They are individuals who eventually walk away from the faith and embed themselves into what they really want—their sin
- This process of apostasy is "high-handed sin" and according to the New Testament and the many warning passages in Hebrews, such sin is unforgivable.

Paul is not saying that he deserved mercy; he is saying that he wasn't disqualified from receiving the mercy of God because at least he committed those sins from a position of unknowledge and unfaith as opposed to those who commit "high-handed sins." Later in verse 15, Paul tells us what's in his heart. He says "Do you know how wicked I was? I'm thankful that I did it from not a position of apostasy, but from a position of an unbeliever because at least it didn't disqualify me from receiving the mercy of Jesus Christ—He who enjoys to strengthen ones to put them into service; He who looked upon me and for some reason thought that I could be entrusted with the truth of the gospel. Jesus Christ our lord. Him whom I blasphemed, persecuted, and pursued in violence. Such grace is so abundant that it exceeds all appreciation."

The Abundance of Grace (v. 14)

"and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are *found* in Christ Jesus.

The word for "**abundant**" is the Greek word *hyperpleonazo* (ὑπερπλεονάζω) which means "super-abound." He says that the grace of Jesus Christ super-abounds. He takes a word that means "to be full" or "to be abundant" and he adds the prefix *hyper-* (in the English, we use hyper-). For example, we can say that after eating we are full. If we were to say that we were "hyper-full," then we are so full that we are at the point of gluttony, or sin. It is that "hyperfilled" or "overflowing." He says "the grace of our Lord was overflowing. It was so excessive for me. The grace of God was so incredibly rich that it kept flowing out." It is that beautiful concept of the sufficiency of our Lord for all things.

You may know somebody who in their heart of hearts are fairly sincere and decent; someone who would like to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, but something holds them back—a deep element of guilt. They feel that in some sense God cannot forgive them or at least that the grace of God is not fitting for an individual like themselves. They are so mistaken. Perhaps, some of you here are thinking that same thing. There is a mistaken notion that we must make ourselves a little more "savable" and then come and accept Christ. What does the Lord think about you trying to smuggle in a little bit of your own virtue? We call that legalism and according to Galatians 3, God hates it.

Because His grace is such as it is described here, it overflows. It is more than sufficient—it is excessive and that is the nature of Christ's grace towards us. One of my favorite phrases in the Scripture is from Romans 6:10, where it says that Christ died as a sacrifice for our sins "once for all." If it had said that he died for our sins once, then we would be in a world of trouble. In that instance, it would mean that He died for whatever sins that I had committed up to the point that I understood the gospel, but from then on, if I ever sinned again, even once, then I would fall back under the weight of the Law and I would be judged eternally. Instead, it says that He died for sins "once for all," so that all my sins may be forgiven, so that His onetime sacrifice is enough to cover all things. That's excessive grace. [1 Peter 3:18](#) says:

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,"

The grace of God is excessive for us; super-abounding if you so desire to call it. It is a beautiful expression. It means that you can be forgiven. It means that I can be forgiven. Imagine a message that says that those who have lived an incredibly wicked life in the eyes of God can walk out of this room and be absolutely forgiven for all the sins that they have committed and all the sins they will commit in the weakness of your flesh from this moment on and you have the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You can be forgiven only because the grace of God is excessive, it's super-abundant. It's illogically overflowing. The beauty of God's grace to us ought to compel us to thank Him for being such a God that would strengthen us despite our sin and our weakness. The grace of our Lord was more than abundant and it remains more than abundant for all of us and for anyone who would hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and believe on Him unto salvation. What a blessed thing is the doctrine of grace and the excessiveness of it that it would overflow into every sphere and into everything.

He says that the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, **“with a faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.”** Before Christ, Paul had lived the life of unfaith and unknowledge. As he is found in Christ (in the sphere or realm in the things of Christ, in union with Christ), now he understands faith, now he understands love.

Martin Luther once said this:

“Just as the sun is not darkened by the whole world enjoying its light and could indeed light up ten worlds, just as one hundred thousand lights might be lit from one light and not detract from it; just as a learned man is able to make a thousand others learn and the more he gives, the more he has, so is Christ our Lord an infinite source of all grace so if the whole world would draw enough grace and truth from it to make the world all angels, yet it would not lose a drop. The fountain always runs over full of grace.”

The grace of God is not just sufficient for your sins—it overflows, it is excessive, it is superabundant to cover all sins and to make us not just rescued from the moment, but to live in the realm of that which is faith and love in Christ. In other words, not only are we rescued from the jaws of death to be left to our own design, but God rescues us and puts us (not back into the same realm that we lived in) into the realm of faith and love in Christ Jesus.

What we experienced in our Christian lives after the abundance of grace is a life that is filled with understanding more thoroughly what it means to trust Christ, to walk in faith, to love Christ, to worship him, and to love others as Christ has loved us. On this basis we go to the crux of this section.

The Power of Grace (v. 15)

“It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.”

When he says, **“It is a trustworthy statement,”** he is saying that this is something that is true; it is the pervasive grace of God. Let me tell you a story of a particular individual because it reminds me of how powerful the Word of God is. This one verse was responsible for the salvation of a number of people and quite possibly this one verse was responsible for the Reformation in England.

In England, the Reformation began with this one verse. The greatest and most prominent preacher in England during the Reformation time was Hugh Latimer. What’s curious about him is that he came to faith through the preaching of another, lesser known preacher, Thomas Bilney. It was Bilney who was basically responsible for the Reformation in England. He was born in 1495 and at the age of 25, he studied law and at Cambridge he became a fellow of Trinity Hall. That’s quite an honor. It means that he was a man of great intelligence. But for all his intelligence, his life was unsettled and without peace until he began to read the Latin translation of the Greek New Testament and he chanced upon this particular verse. This is what he says about that particular moment.

“I chanced upon this sentence of St. Paul—Oh, most sweet and comfortable sentence to my soul—in 1 Timothy 1: *‘It is a true saying and worthy of all men to be embraced that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the chief and principal.’* This one sentence, through God’s instruction and inward working did so exhilarate my heart being before wounded with the guilt of my sins and being almost in despair that even immediately, I seemed unto myself, inwardly, to feel a marvelous comfort and quietness, in so much that *‘my bruised bones leapt for joy’* (Psalm 51). After this the Scripture began to be more pleasant unto me than the honey of the honeycomb.”

He then became a central figure in a group of theologians that prepared England for the Reformation. He was arrested in 1527 and told to stop preaching (which he did not do). Four years later, he was arrested again and tried as a heretic and burned at the stake. Hugh Latimer was the most famous convert of Thomas Bilney. Latimer, himself, would be burned at the stake in 1555. All of this because of one verse!

So you may ask yourself, “How powerful is this verse?” Well, look upon it. It is undeniable. It is a statement so trustworthy that you can rest your entire soul upon it. It deserves the full acceptance of mankind, that no one should refute such a thing because it is so acceptable and clear.

“that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, whom I am foremost of all.”

Paul could have been exaggerating the point, but I sincerely doubt that. I don’t think anywhere does the apostle Paul exaggerate. If he was not exaggerating, how was it that he would consider himself the worst of all sinners of all time? Because he is the only one who knows himself (apart from God). He’s not worried about how sinful the entire nation is or how sinful all of these different people are or how someone might do something that is more atrocious than himself. He’s only concerned about himself and his own heart and soul. Isn’t that so for every convert of Christ that at some point that they come to the end of themselves and they can honestly say without exaggeration, “I am the chief of all sinners. Forgive me if you can.”?

The apostle Peter's initial response to Christ in Luke 5:8 was "*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!*" The tax-gatherer in Luke 18:13, "*was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'*" Any translation that leaves out the article "the" is wrong (e.g. ESV, NIV, KJV, ASV). He's not concerned about being a sinner, but he was worried about being *the one* sinner. We can go on and talk about many more examples like John Newton, a former slave trader, who was the author of the well-known hymn, *Amazing Grace*. But for all of their testimonies, it is not as glorious as your testimony.

Why? Because if you call yourself a Christian, you have found yourself at some point at the end of yourself and you begged upon the mercy seat of Christ and you have said, "Lord, be merciful to me because I am the sinner, the foremost of all." And what you have found is that the grace of our Lord is so overflowing and excessive that not only were you rescued from the depths of your sin, but you were placed into His very kingdom as a child of God. What a blessed grace our God has for us in Jesus Christ! What a shame as Christians that we forget that truth which should motivate us the most.

It is the crux of Paul's ministry. It's the reason why he's so thankful; the reason why he will endure all things; the reason why among all the things he fears is failure in the eyes of God; that he might let down his Lord. That's all that he lives for. May the grace of God be that excessive unto us that we live our lives in the same manner. Let's close our time in prayer.

Heavenly Father,

As we consider just these words of Scripture and we consider the greatness of the grace of God for us,

Lord, we are overwhelmed. We are overwhelmed at the idea that You could love us; each one of us that we can say our amens to.

Not that Paul was the greatest of sinners; not that someone else was the greatest of sinners, but that we ourselves were the greatest of sinners in Your eyes, and yet Your grace super-abounded to give us forgiveness.

Lord, we thank You for Your goodness to us in such ways that are inexpressible we can only thank You. We can only praise You.

But Lord, may the worship of our lives be acceptable unto You. We can honor our God with only that with which we have—our lives, and we ask that You would imbue us with the power of Your grace again that we might live and serve; that we might make a difference; that we might share the Gospel; that we might live for something greater than for our normal creaturely comforts; that we would be overwhelmed and astounded by the grace of God in us; and by that, we might serve and live a life that would magnify the glory of Jesus Christ in all things.

We thank you Lord for the privilege to be called Your children because of grace, because of Your goodness, because of Your mercy.

We extol You and ask that You might help us to minister as we ought to, live as we ought to, worship as we ought to, and all by the power of Your grace.

We pray these things in His holy name, Amen.