

## SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY NOTES

— August 5, 2018 —

*Pastor Terry Brown, Guest Speaker*

**SERMON: Grace is Enough!**

**TEXT: I Corinthians 15:9-10**

Jesus Christ chose twelve disciples; these 12 men were just ordinary but chosen to fulfill an extraordinary task. For three and a half years, these men walked with Jesus Christ, worked with Jesus Christ and therefore were witnesses of Jesus Christ. 12 men with present sin in their lives, Jesus Christ called them and promised them that they would become fishers of men.

Jesus Christ didn't look at them and become turned off at what they were, Jesus Christ looked at them and got excited about who they could become. On His way to the cross, Jesus Christ would often speak of his forthcoming death, burial, and resurrection. These 12 men could not place into their imaginations that the One born of a virgin, the One approved by heaven, the One that gave sight to the blind, the One that called Lazarus from the dead, could die on a cross, be buried in a grave, and get up after three days. It happened church...scriptures recorded it, heaven recorded it, and even "HELL" recorded it.

After His resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared to many that would become witnesses of His resurrection. Jesus Christ ascended on a cloud into heaven, but He wasn't finished calling and confronting men to preach His word, works, and miracles. So, Jesus Christ personally visited a young man named Saul of the popular religious sect of Pharisees.

In Acts 9, Saul, while persecuting the church, encounters a light and it causes him to fall to his knees. God, whose love is unmatched, God whose mercy is unmerited, and God whose Grace is undeserving adds another apostle to preach the

resurrection, and that was Saul whose name would be changed to the Apostle Paul.

Grace had afforded Paul the opportunity to preach, pastor, and train others in ministry. Paul was fully aware of God’s undeserving favor on his life, but Paul also knew that just because Grace is free doesn’t make it cheap, just because it was free to Paul didn’t mean that someone else didn’t pay for it.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15, is preaching to the Corinthians about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul is defending the gospel now while he defied the gospel in his past life. Paul is preaching accurately, boldly, and passionately because many are doubting the death, burial, and resurrection Jesus Christ. Paul challenges them to hold on to what he had taught them in verses 1 and 2. Then, in verses 3 and 4, Paul says that, “Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, Jesus Christ was buried according to the scriptures, and Jesus Christ was resurrected according to the scriptures.”

Paul could have stopped at the resurrection, but Paul keeps preaching by saying that not only was He resurrected, but He appeared to the 12 apostles and 500 brethren. Then, in verse 8, Paul says Jesus Christ also appeared to him. He knew what it felt like to have an encounter or theophany with Jesus Christ. Paul knew what it felt like to live a life out of God’s will. Paul knew what it felt like to waddle in sin. Paul knew what it felt like to kick against God’s will. But, Paul also knew what it felt like for grace to slam him down, for grace to pick him up, and for grace to save him.

In these two verses, Paul gives us a portrait of his humility and an honest assessment of his life and ministry. What gave Paul the drive to trust God and walk by faith?

**I. In verse 9, Paul gives us an honest assessment of his past – “For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”**

**He gives an assessment of his place** – “For I am the least of the apostles....”

Paul didn't desire to place himself ahead or to be more deserving than others. Paul knew that God had spared his life, Paul knew that there is no place for title seekers in the Kingdom of God. Paul wanted those to whom he was preaching to have the proper view of him. He says, “No, I am not the best, I am the least of the apostles.” Paul knew that nothing in him qualified him to be saved, used and kept by God.

**He gives an assessment of his perception** – “...unworthy to be called an apostle.”

Paul's perception of himself didn't change; he didn't get the big head. Paul understood his unworthiness. Paul had preached in Corinth, Philippi, Galatia, Ephesus, and Rome. While Paul could have gotten the big head, we read Paul's humble speech in the text as he says it clearly, “I am unworthy.”

**He gives an assessment of his past** – “...because I persecuted the church of God.”

Paul had been taught wrong and therefore had done things in his past of which he wasn't proud. In Acts 7, Paul is there when the servant Stephen is stoned. In Acts 8, Paul is wreaking havoc on the church by persecuting Christians. In Acts 9, Paul has just received a letter to take Christians to jail to torture them, but God who is full of grace, mercy, and love interrupts Paul's life and changes the course and outcome of Paul's life.

That's what it means to have a theophany with God...when you can look back and say to yourself, “God has spared my life, God has saved my life, God is using my life to bring Glory to Himself.”

Paul was humble. With his humility came advancement and opportunity to preach God's word to the world abroad.

Paul, who once fought the church, is now preaching to the church. God, through the death, burial, and resurrection of His son, Jesus Christ, takes enemies and makes them his friend.

God takes great pleasure in saving and using people with pasts that are not spotless. Paul's humility is birthed out of his honesty. It takes an extremely prideful people to look at their past and still be prideful in the present.

You're never too contaminated or broken to be rescued by the grace of God.

**II. Paul gives an honest assessment of his present in verse 10** – "But by the **grace** of God I am what I am, and his **grace** toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the **grace** of God that is with me."

Paul speaks in verse 9 of who he was once, but shifts his language to giving God credit for who he has become and what God has achieved through his life. Three times in verse 10, Paul speaks of the word "Grace." Paul can't finish a sentence without thinking of how good God had been to him.

**Paul's awareness of grace** - Paul says, "By the Grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain." Here is a man that could have given credit to his education, economics, or ethnic background, but he says, "I am what I am by the Grace of God."

When you know what God has done for you, you can boldly declare "I am what I am by the Grace of God."

Have you ever helped someone, and it seemed as though it was a waste of time? The person seemed to still make bad choices and decisions? Paul says, "When God gave him Grace, it was not vain." God has never looked at anyone as though they were a waste of time.

**The English Standard Version says:**

"I **worked** harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me."

**The King James Version says:**

"...but I **labored** more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

The words "worked" or "labored" mean to toil until one is tired and fatigued. Paul is demonstrating to us that when we know we have received grace, we should give God our best and trust that God will renew our strength.

Because God had done so much for him, Paul worked ever so diligently for God. Note his statement that he worked more than all the others that served Christ. Why? Because he owed it to Christ: he had sinned so terribly against the Lord.

Paul was not in competition with anyone else, but Paul was grateful and appreciative for God's grace. "Paul served God out of gratitude and not obligation."

The word "Grace" means to be kind, loving, and courteous to someone when they don't deserve it. Grace is God's unmerited, undeserving, unconditional, and unwavering favor. God had been kind, loving and courteous to Paul, a sinner.

Look at God's grace in your own life. God has been kind, courteous, and loving. His grace was and remains sufficient to save lost souls.

When we get a full glimpse of how bad we have been, we can surely see how good God has been to us.

**Illustration:** A young man that desired a piece of candy rushed to the store, grabbed the candy, and placed it on the counter - only to discover that the candy costs .55 cent and he had only .45 cent. The young boy dropped his head and turned around to place the candy back on the shelf.

As he was walking back, an older lady who was behind him said, "Son, place what you need on the counter." The young boy responded, "Ma'am, I don't have enough."

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*"To Know God and To Make Him Known"*

The older woman looked at him and said, "Keep your money in your pocket. I will place your charges on my bill."

That's what grace is...God's way of saying, "You didn't have enough to get what you needed, but, at Calvary, I placed your charges on the account of my son, Jesus Christ."

When we couldn't afford it, Jesus paid it all and God's grace was, is, and shall be enough."

**Paul says, "When I was lost, God's grace was enough for me."**

**Paul says, "When I was tired, God's grace was enough for me."**

**Early in the morning, God's grace is enough for me!**

**At noonday, God's grace is enough for me!**

**In the evening, God's grace is enough for me!**

**In the midnight hour, God's grace is enough for me!**

**"God's Grace is Enough!"**