

Title: The Apostle Paul and the Miracle of Grace

Scripture: I Corinthians 15:9-11

Speaker: Vic Redding

Event: Sunday Morning Service

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**I Corinthians 15:9-11** *“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.”*

In verse 10 of I Corinthians Paul uses the word grace three times. Grace means “God’s unmerited and undeserving favor toward men.” Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” The apostle Paul was constantly praising and thanking God for his grace in times where he didn’t deserve it. Grace is the love, mercy, and kindness of God.

### **Why Paul Praised God for the Mercy He Received**

#### **1. Paul was not what he had once been:**

- a. Paul was a Pharisee who used to boast about his ancestry: He boasted about his religious standing and his family. Philippians 3:4-5 *“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;”* Paul said if anyone could have boasted about their upbringing, he could. He was from a predominant family and he had a high religious status.
- b. Paul had been a cruel persecutor of the church: Paul’s past life events can be found in chapters 8 and 9 in the book of Acts. We find his cruel hatred of Christians. If you read the latter part of Acts 7, a man named Stephen is being stoned for sharing the gospel with Jews. As he was being stoned to death he heard Stephen say *“And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”* In Acts 8:3 it says *“As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.”* Havock means more here in the scripture than how we use it. It means “a wild beast” in the Greek. He set out to put to death or put in prison anyone who claimed the name of Christ. Philippians 3:6 *“Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”*

#### **2. Paul was what he did not deserve to be:** Man by nature is proud and independent. We want to do things our way. We think simple actions and works are enough to qualify us as worthy to receive salvation. Nothing we could ever do could make us worthy of salvation. We can do nothing without Christ. Paul finally realized that the law that he was trying to enforce on people didn’t change them. They were still by nature trying to do things their own way. How are you trying to earn your way into Heaven? Are you thinking tithes and singing will get you there? Attending church? None of these will ever earn your way into Heaven. The law said to do and live by works. Grace said to believe and live by faith.

- a. Paul’s sins had been forgiven: Grace broke the slaveryhood of the law. God forgave Paul of his sins. He had murdered, blasphemed, caused trouble in the church, and did many other things but God forgave all of those sins. His heart was changed. This is where grace took place. No amount of works could ever qualify us to deserve God’s mercy and grace.
- b. The Spirit came to dwell in Paul: There was something that the law could not give Paul that is important to us today: Paul didn’t have good, clear, fellowship with God because he was of the law. When God broke that bondage of the law, Paul began a life of deep fellowship.

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### **3. Paul was what he never expected to be:**

- a. Paul probably never thought he would become the greatest missionary apostle to the Gentiles. Before he got saved he was a Jewish Pharisee who hated Christians and Gentiles. Paul was taught to put Gentiles on the same levels as dogs. He was supposed to persecute those people but God had something bigger in mind for Paul. Acts 20 describes Paul's desire to go to Jerusalem. He called together the elders and did something against all that he believed before he came to Christ.
- b. Paul probably never thought about how God would use him to write Holy Scriptures that would be read over 2000 years after his death. He wrote two-thirds of the New Testament. In 2 Timothy 4, Paul tells Timothy to preach the word. Paul never saw himself as deserving the things that God was doing in his life.

### **4. What God did by his grace for Paul, he can do for us:**

- a. Paul was an example of God's grace. If we are saved today, we are examples of God's grace. We are to live for the glory of God to let others see the grace of God done in our lives.
- b. Paul's life was preparing him daily to serve God. Being saved is an everyday commitment and surrender. We are to learn and grow each day.
- c. Paul's change prepared him for eternity. When we come to Christ, we have an eternal home prepared for us in Heaven. We have somewhere to spend eternity and the greatest thing will be getting to meet the one who saved us face to face.