

# Grace ... Transforming

## Part II

### 1 Corinthians 15:9-11

#### Sermon Outline

##### A. Guilty... Not Defining (v. 9):

1. I persecuted the church of God - Paul's persecution to the church left him a marked man:
  - a) His past haunted him because - Paul intensely in a hostile, oppressive manner harassed the New Testament believers
  - b) For Paul's work as a persecutor see Acts 8:1, 3; 9:1, 2; 22:4, 5; 26:9 ff.; Gal. 1:13; for the *church of God* see 1:2; also 12:28.<sup>[1]</sup>
  - c) The disciples did not want to associate with him if it wasn't for Barnabas (Acts 9:26-30).
  - d) People plotted to kill him (Acts 9:19-22). He lived constantly under this threat.
  
2. I persecuted the church of God - This was the one sin for which, though he knew that God had forgiven him (1 Tim. 1:13), yet he could never quite forgive himself (Gal. 1:13). In my 'Life of St. Paul' I have shown from the language used, that this persecution was probably more deadly than has been usually supposed, involving not only torture, but actual bloodshed (Acts 8:4; 9:1), besides the martyrdom of St. Stephen. We can imagine how such deeds and such scenes would, even after forgiveness, lie like sparks of fire in a sensitive conscience.<sup>[2]</sup>

3. I am what I am – Paul as a believer struggled with the flesh (Romans 7:14-25), even having a thorn in the flesh making him weak; his history dominated how people viewed him, even the disciples, to the point in the passage he would say ‘he is the least of the apostles.’ Paul accepts that he is weak (2 Corinthians 12:7-12), and no matter what he achieved in this life when it interferes with his walk with Christ, he counted it lost (Philippians 3:1-7 – when being least of the disciples he could not even bring his credentials to uplift his status). Paul now accepts who he is because it only energizes him to be faithful to his call.

a) Paul recognized there is no way to change who he now is. His past actions cannot be changed (His record is forever sealed), his role among the apostles is going to be the way it is, his development as an apostle is going to be what it is and what God has called him to be he is going to fervently work at it more than any of the other disciples.

4. For I am the least of the apostles – Paul’s past defined how people looked at him but he did not allow it to define how he allowed God direct his life because God clearly anointed him as an apostle.

a) Christ determined that he was an apostle and made sure there is no question about it (Acts 9:19; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8-9; 2 Corinthians 12:1-6).

b) Paul had to count his past loss (Philippians 3:2-7) in order to totally focus on his walk with Christ.

5. Church of God - The very God that we fight a losing battle against is the One Whose transforming grace empowers us to gain the best of the life He sustains.

6. Church of God - God is the one who defines us (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:1-2; 1 Peter 4:10).

## **B. Grace, Healing Power (v. 10):**

1. But by the grace of God – The same God that Paul aggressively opposed (we do not struggle with flesh and blood; Ephesians 6:12) extended to him a bountiful, free-hearted, generous favor as the supreme King of all Kings. Even after being saved, the Lord gave Paul a thorn in the flesh that made him weak. In the midst of all of this Paul was extended the Lord's spontaneous generous love.

a) Though “not meant to be called an apostle,” God’s grace has given him the meetness needed for the office (Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15). Translate, ‘His grace which was (showed) *towards* [εἰς] me.’ what I am—occupying the honourable office of an apostle. Contrast the self-sufficient prayer of another Pharisee (Luke 18:11). but I laboured—by God’s grace (Phil. 2:16).<sup>[3]</sup>

2. His grace towards me did not prove vain - God’s bountiful free-hearted generosity that was purposefully extended towards Paul, when created as a result of nothing Paul did, turned out not to be useless, absent of good works.

3. His grace towards me did not prove vain - God’s generous favor towards Paul, especially with all that he did against the very person who freely choose to extend kindness towards him, blessed the very community he persecuted because Paul worked intensely hard to serve God to the point of being poured out like a drink offering (2 Timothy 6:6-8).

a) We all have a spiritual gift that is deposited into us at the point of salvation (1 Peter 4:10). It is the use of our spiritual gift that defines us and builds up the body so

that we grow into the fullness of God (Ephesians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 12:14-27). It is this like in the case of Paul that blesses the kingdom work of God (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

b) The church of Laodicea did not see the point of this. They allowed the world to define them and the Lord viewed them as naked, wretched and poor (Revelation 3:14-18).

4. I labored even more – Paul decided once and for all to work to the point of exhaustion, no matter how difficult the circumstances he encountered (2 Corinthians 11:21-29; 1 Timothy 6:12).

a) He had worked harder than any of the other apostles, as he traveled more, suffered more opposition, wrote more New Testament epistles, and founded more churches. Yet Paul knew and ministered with the recognition that it was not his power but God's (2:4–5) which produced results (3:6).<sup>[4]</sup>

b) "Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men." (Acts 20:24-27; NASU)

c) Because God wrought effectually in him (Gal. 2:8). The word used for "labour" implies the extreme of toil (Matt. 6:28; Phil. 2:16). etc. But the grace of God. "It is God that worketh in you" (Phil. 2:13; Matt 10:20; Col. 1:29).<sup>[5]</sup>

5. Yet not I but the grace of God – God's matchless grace should inspire us to love and serve Him not make us apathetic so that we sin more (Romans 6:1-2) or live a carnal Christian life (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). His grace should inspire us to serve others just like it did for the folks in Macedonia (2 Corinthians 8:1-6).

6. Yet not I but the grace of God – Paul was able to labor to the point of exhaustion, even committed to die for the cause of Christ (Philippians 1:21) because of God's powerful gift of the Holy Spirit that mightily worked within Paul (Colossians 1:9-10).

a) It does not matter what anyone thinks. When we serve Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit our ministry transforms us and defines us.

b) Example: Peter went to the same people he cursed out and in the power of the Holy Spirit, won souls to Christ. There was no question that God used him and that established Peter as a leader in the church. His service for God, empowered by the Holy Spirit defined him.

7. God's grace should inspire us because when it does and we respond appreciatively in worship, in service, in giving we learn how He plans to use us, the more useful we become, the more we experience His movement in our lives that heals us from the memories of the past.

8. When we grow in God's grace we are better husbands, fathers, wives, mothers, singles being blessed while blessing others around us.

### **C. Renewed; Be A Blessing (v. 11):**

1. So we preached – Because of the powerful work of the Holy Spirit mightily working within Paul he was able to habitually proclaim with a very loud voice the word of God to everyone. He discharged the office of a herald continuously for the glory of God.

a) UNHINDERED

b) God's growth in Paul created a whole new reputation. He was once feared (Acts 9:26) now those he disciplined weep when he is leaving (Acts 20:37).

2. So we preached – What the Lord did for us should make us more passionate about serving Christ. When we allow the past to control us, rather than His grace bless us, we become buried in our memories and feelings of unforgiveness

3. So you believe – Because the Holy Spirit is the One who is mightily working within Paul those who heard the message were able to develop an unreserved commitment to God together with a deep conviction and confidence that His words are truth.

4. So you believe – When the grace of God transforms us, and the spirit gift He blesses us with transforms those around us, all those who experience the transforming work of God believe that the Lord is able to do exceedingly, abundantly all we can ask and think.” (Ephesians 2:20).

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<sup>[1]</sup> Barrett, C. K. (1968). [\*The First Epistle to the Corinthians\*](#) (p. 345). Continuum.

<sup>[2]</sup> Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [\*1 Corinthians\*](#) (p. 485). Funk & Wagnalls Company.

<sup>[3]</sup> Brown, D., Fausset, A. R., & Jamieson, R. (n.d.). [\*A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Acts–Revelation: Vol. VI\*](#) (p. 327). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

<sup>[4]</sup> Lowery, D. K. (1985). [\*1 Corinthians\*](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 542–543). Victor Books.

<sup>[5]</sup> Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [\*1 Corinthians\*](#) (p. 485). Funk & Wagnalls Company.