



World Christian Fellowship

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The Chief of Sinners: Paul's Testimony of Radical Grace

1 Timothy 1:12-14

1 Timothy 1:12-17, *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, ¹³ although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. ¹⁴ And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Introduction: When Theology Becomes Biography

The most powerful apologetics for the Gospel is not a philosophical argument or a historical proof. It is a life!

When Paul shifts from doctrinal instruction in **V 1-11** to personal testimony in **V 12-17**. He is not abandoning theology for sentiment but demonstrating theology.

He is showing Timothy, the Ephesian church, and every subsequent generation, what the Gospel looks like when it lands on the worst sinner imaginable and transforms him completely.

Paul's testimony in these six verses is one of the most theologically rich autobiographical passages in the entire New Testament.

It contains doctrines of

- election,
- calling,
- grace,
- mercy, and
- glorification.

It demonstrates the logic of the Gospel. That the most dramatic transformation of the most dramatic sinner becomes the most dramatic advertisement for the power of divine grace.

Paul did not merely preach the Gospel, he was the Gospel, walking and breathing proof of its transforming power.

For Timothy, surrounded by false teachers who were impressive in their confidence and elaborate in their theology but hollow in their character, Paul's testimony

pointed to the only credential that ultimately matters in ministry:

- not education,
- not eloquence,
- not social status,

but the transforming work of God in a surrendered life.

The person who has been genuinely saved by grace cannot be imitated by those who merely perform religion.

I. Gratitude: The Foundation of Ministry.

A. I Thank Christ Jesus Our Lord

Paul begins his testimony not with his conversion experience but with gratitude. And the gratitude is specifically directed to Christ Jesus our Lord, not to God in general or to the church.

This is significant. Paul does not thank the Damascus Road experience or the years of formation in Arabia.

He thanks a Person.

His gratitude is relational, not abstract.

This is the characteristic posture of the genuinely saved person.

They do not merely appreciate what God has done. **They love the God who did it.**

They are not merely grateful for forgiveness, but **they are grateful to the Forgiver.**

The difference between functional religion and genuine Christianity can often be detected by **does your thanksgiving go to God Himself, or merely to the benefits He provides?**

The early church father **Ignatius of Antioch**, writing on his way to martyrdom in Rome around **110 AD**, expressed this Pauline gratitude in unforgettable terms.

I am the wheat of God. Let me be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of God. He was not grateful for his comfortable life, he was grateful for the privilege of belonging to Christ, even at the cost of his life.

This is the gratitude that Paul models.

B. Who Has Enabled Me

The phrase who has enabled me is theologically loaded. The verb **Endunamoo** means to infuse with power, to impart strength from an external source.

This is not self-confidence or natural talent, but it is the supernatural enabling of the Holy Spirit.

Paul uses the same word in **Philippians 4:13**, *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

The power for ministry is never generated internally, and it is always received from Christ.

This is a profound corrective to two common errors.

- The **first** is the **error of self-sufficiency**: The minister who serves from his own strength, his own charisma, his own intellectual capability. He will eventually be depleted, because human resources are finite.
- The **second** error is **false humility** that refuses to serve at all. I am not capable. I cannot do this. To which Paul responds of course you cannot do it in yourself. But Christ enables. And that enabling is sufficient.

John Newton expressed this truth with characteristic insight: *I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I wish to be. I am not what I hope to be. But I am not what I once was. And by the grace of God, I am what I am.*

This is the testimony of the enabled servant, transformed, empowered, and deeply conscious that every capacity for ministry is a gift of grace.

II. The Reckoning: Counted Faithful.

A. He Counted Me Faithful

The phrase he counted me faithful does not mean that God observed Paul's natural faithfulness and rewarded it with ministry.

The word ***Hegeomai*** means to reckon, to consider, to evaluate and declare. This is imputed faithfulness, not intrinsic faithfulness. God did not find Paul trustworthy and therefore entrust him with ministry.

He reckoned him trustworthy, just as He reckons righteousness to those who believe (**Romans 4:5**).

This is the logic of grace applied to calling and ministry.

Just as justification is not the reward of righteousness but the free gift of righteousness to the unrighteous, so the call to ministry is not the recognition of existing faithfulness but the impartation of faithfulness to those who have none of their own.

God called Moses, who said he was not eloquent.

Exodus 4:10, *Then Moses said to the Lord, “O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”*

God called Gideon, who was the least in his father's house.

Judges 6:15, *So he said to Him, “O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.”*

God called Jeremiah, who said he was only a youth.

Jeremiah 1:6, *Then said I: “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.”*

God called Paul, who was the chief of sinners.

The qualification for ministry is not natural capability or moral record.

It is **divine calling, divine enabling, and divine reckoning**.

This is simultaneously humbling and liberating.

- Humbling, because no one can claim to deserve the trust placed in them.
- Liberating, because no one is disqualified by their past failures from being reckoned faithful by the God of grace.

B. Putting me into the Ministry

The word for ministry here is **diakonia**, service.

Paul was placed into service the same word used for the deacons of the church (**1 Timothy 3:8-13**).

The word does not carry the connotations of honour and status that we sometimes attach to ministry positions. It means serving, waiting on tables, caring for the practical needs of others.

Paul, the former chief persecutor, was placed by God into service not elevated to celebrity but commissioned to serve.

This is a corrective to every ministry culture that treats leadership as status and service as the junior role. In the New Testament, the greatest leaders are those who serve the most.

Jesus himself embodied this paradox.

Philippians 2:5-8, *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

The reckoning of faithfulness leads not to a throne but to a towel.

III. The Confession: Blasphemer, Persecutor, Insolent

A. Three Words of Self-Disclosure

Paul names his pre-conversion self with three carefully chosen words:

- Blasphemer,
- Persecutor, and
- Insolent man.

Each word is damning, but together they form a portrait of comprehensive moral failure at the highest level of the spiritual, the physical, and the attitudinal.

Blasphemer: He had spoken against the name of Jesus Christ and urged believers to blaspheme under torture.

Acts 26:11, And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

In the Jewish world, blasphemy was the most extreme religious offense, punishable by death (the same charge that had sent Jesus to the cross). Paul, the zealous Pharisee, had employed blasphemy against God's own Son. This was not ignorant irreligion, and it was informed, intentional defiance of the Messiah.

Persecutor: He had systematically hunted down Christians, entered their homes, dragged them before courts, imprisoned them, and consented to their deaths.

Acts 8:3, *As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.*

Paul savaged it, like an animal attacking prey.

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was stoned while Saul stood by in approval, holding the coats of the executioners.

Acts 7:58-8:1, *and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Insolent: The Greek word describes more than arrogance. It denotes the kind of contemptuous violence that humiliates its victims for the pleasure of the perpetrator.

- Paul was not merely wrong, but he was proud of being wrong.
- Paul was not merely violent, but he enjoyed the power that violence gave him.

This is the most chilling of the three words. It speaks to a character deformation that went beyond conduct into the realm of identity.

B. Why Paul confesses this publicly?

Paul did not share this portrait of his past for dramatic effect. He shared it because Timothy, and the Ephesian congregation, needed to understand the mathematics of grace.

The magnitude of the grace received is proportional to the magnitude of the guilt acknowledged.

- A person who minimises their sin receives a small Gospel and gives a small testimony.
- A person who honestly reckons with the depth of their rebellion receives and communicates the enormous grace of God.

This is why Paul's testimony was such a powerful tool in his evangelistic ministry. He could say to the most hardened Jew, the most respectable Pharisee, the most zealous persecutor of Christians: *I was worse than you. And I am living proof that grace reaches further than your worst sin.*

The testimony of radical sinfulness is not self-flagellation. It is doxology.

It is the glory of God on display in the transformation of the ungodly.

C. Present Tense: I am the Chief of Sinners

V 15, Paul identifies himself as the chief of sinners in the present tense, not the past.

But the logic begins here: even as he confesses his past, the present tense confession is implicit. This is important.

Many Christians speak of their pre-conversion sin as safely in the past, as if salvation has raised them to a level of spiritual achievement that no longer requires daily dependence on mercy.

Paul takes the opposite position:

The closer he walked with Christ, the more clearly, he saw his own unworthiness.

C.S. Lewis captured this **paradox** in **The Voyage of the Dawn Treader**, where the character **Eustace** has layers of dragon skin removed by **Aslan**. Each layer removed reveals another layer beneath.

The process of sanctification does not make us less aware of our sin, but it makes us more aware.

The person who claims to sin less the longer they are a Christian is either not examining themselves closely enough or not growing. The person who grows in holiness grows simultaneously in humility.

IV. The Mystery: Mercy given to ignorance

A. I did it ignorantly in Unbelief

Paul offers a crucial qualification:

I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

This is not an excuse. Paul is not claiming innocence.

His ignorance was culpable. The Scriptures he knew so well had pointed to Jesus (**Luke 24:44**), and the witness of Stephen's death had challenged him (the prayer Lord, do not charge them with this sin (**Acts 7:60**) would have echoed in his conscience.

But his unbelief was genuine.

He had not yet had the eyes of his heart opened by the Holy Spirit.

The theological distinction here is between sins committed knowingly (in the full light of conscience and revelation) and sins committed in the darkness of genuine spiritual blindness.

The New Testament does not eliminate guilt in ignorance (**Romans 1:20** says even those without special revelation have enough light to be accountable), but it acknowledges that the degree of guilt is related to the degree of light available.

Jesus himself made this distinction.

Luke 12:47-48, *And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. ⁴⁸ But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*

Paul was not beaten with few stripes because he was innocent, but because his sin, however severe, was not committed in the full light of the resurrection revelation he would later receive.

B. Mercy Greater than the Sin

The operative word of **V 13** is the great word of contrast:
but I obtained mercy.

After the three words of self-condemnation, this one word of divine response reverses everything.

Blasphemer, persecutor, insolent man but mercy.

The pattern is the same as **Ephesians 2:1-4**, *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of*

our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

The word obtained is passive voice.

- Paul did not grasp mercy, he received it.
- Paul did not earn it, it was granted.
- Paul did not seek it, but it found him on the road to Damascus.

This is the character of divine mercy.

It is not a reward for the deserving but a gift to the helpless. Paul's experience on the Damascus Road was, in a sense, the dramatization of every conversion.

The sinner is going in entirely the wrong direction, the light of God stops him in his tracks, and mercy redirects the trajectory of his life.

C. The Fullness of Grace

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

Adds the dimension that qualifies the mercy.

The Greek **hyperpleonazo** is a word Paul appears to have coined for the occasion, combining **hyper** (beyond all measure) with **pleonazo** (to abound). There is no English word adequate to the concept.

The **ESV** uses overflowed.

The **NIV** uses poured out abundantly.

The **Phillips** translation says grace blazed out at me.

The grace that came to Paul did not merely cover his sin, but it transformed his character.

It came with faith (the ability to trust Christ that Paul had previously lacked) and love (the agape love that had previously been counterfeit in him, expressed through religious zeal rather than genuine devotion to God).

- The grace of God does not merely pardon but it produces.
- The grace of God does not merely forgive, but it transforms.

Paul went from an enemy of Christ to a bondservant of Christ because grace did not stop at the pardon it kept working until it had produced a new person.

2 Corinthians 5:17, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."*

V. Theological Themes in Paul's Testimony

A. The Sovereignty of Grace in Conversion

Paul's conversion illustrates the sovereignty of divine grace in unmistakable terms.

- He was not seeking God, but he was fighting God.
- He was not open to the Gospel, but he was violently opposing it.
- He was going in exactly the wrong direction when God intervened.

This is not a testimony of a sensitive religious seeker who finally found what he was looking for. It is the testimony of a hostile rebel who was arrested, disarmed, and transformed by a force he could not resist.

This is why Paul is so emphatic throughout his letters that salvation is entirely of grace.

Because his own experience demonstrated it beyond all possible argument. He had nothing in his character or conduct that would have attracted divine favour.

On the contrary, he had done everything in his power to destroy the church.

If grace could reach him, grace can reach anyone.

If mercy came to the chief of sinners, there is no sin too great, no heart too hard, no rebellion too extreme for the grace of God.

B. The New Creation as the Evidence of the Gospel

Paul's transformed life is presented here not merely as a personal testimony but as theological evidence.

He says in **V 16** that God's purpose in transforming him was to display Christ's patience as a pattern, a model, a prototype for all who would believe afterward.

Paul's life is a demonstration piece, an exhibit of what grace does, placed on public display for the instruction and encouragement of every subsequent generation.

This has implications for every believer's understanding of their own testimony.

Your transformed life is not merely a personal benefit. It is a public demonstration of the Gospel's power. When people who knew you before Christ see who you have become, they are seeing evidence for the Gospel.

When your marriage is healed, when your addiction is broken, when your character is transformed these are not just personal victories, but they are arguments for the reality and power of the grace of God.

VI. The Doctrine of Election in Paul's Testimony

A. Chosen before the Foundation of the World

Paul's conversion was not the result of a spiritual search that finally found its object. It was the outworking of an election that predated Paul's birth, his sin, and even the creation of the world.

Ephesians 1:4, *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.*

Paul was not converted because he deserved it, or sought it, or cooperated with it. He was converted because he had been chosen in Christ before time began.

This doctrine, which Paul develops most fully in **Romans 9-11** and **Ephesians 1-3**, is not abstract predestination disconnected from pastoral reality.

For Paul, it is the source of unshakeable security.

If God chose me before I existed, my salvation does not depend on my performance after I came into existence.

Romans 8:29-30, *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

Paul traces the golden chain of salvation from foreknowledge through predestination through calling through justification to glorification, and every link is secure because every link is held by God.

For Timothy, surrounded by false teachers who were imposing additional requirements for spiritual security, special knowledge, genealogical lineage, esoteric initiation, the doctrine of election was a liberating pastoral weapon.

You do not need what they are offering.

Your security is in the One who chose you before the world began.

His electing love is the foundation on which you stand, and it does not shift with your performance or their speculations.

B. Election as Doxology

Paul's characteristic response to the doctrine of election is not intellectual satisfaction but worship.

At the conclusion of the great section on Israel and the Gentiles that includes the fullest treatment of election in all his letters, erupts into doxology.

Romans 11:33-36, *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ³⁴“For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counsellor?” ³⁵“Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?” ³⁶For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

The doctrine that leads to doxology is the doctrine correctly understood.

The false teachers in Ephesus, with their elaborate genealogies and speculations, were pursuing knowledge for the sake of spiritual advantage.

Paul pursues knowledge for the sake of God's glory.

The distinction is everything.

- Theology done for self-advancement produces pride and controversy.
- Theology done for God's glory produces worship and love.

This is why Paul can move, in a single chapter, from careful doctrinal instruction (**1 Timothy 1:1-11**) through personal testimony (**1:12-16**) to doxology (**1:17**) without any sense of discontinuity. For Paul, doctrine and doxology are a single movement.

VII. Mercy and the Pastoral Care of Fallen Leaders.

A. The Restorative Purpose of Mercy

The mercy Paul received I obtained mercy has direct implications for how the church treats those who have failed in ministry.

Paul was not merely forgiven and left to rebuild from scratch. He was forgiven, called, equipped, and deployed for the most demanding ministry of the apostolic age.

The mercy of God did not merely cover his past, but it redirected his future.

This pattern has implications for how the church deals with leaders who have fallen.

1 Corinthians 5:5 and the discipline passage in **2 Corinthians 2:6-8** together establish the principle: discipline to produce repentance, then restoration to the community of love.

The church that never disciplines enables sin.

The church that disciplines but never restores contradicts the mercy of God that Paul experienced and describes.

The qualification of **1 Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9** — above reproach, the husband of one wife, managing his household well establish the standards for appointment to ministry leadership.

These standards are not automatically waived by repentance and restoration. They are the ongoing requirements for those in public leadership.

But the mercy of God does not limit the restored person to a lesser standing before God. It limits, in some cases, the form of public ministry they may return to. There are more ways to serve than the pulpit.

B. The Ministry of Reconciliation as the Context for Mercy

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 describes the Gospel as the ministry of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20, *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word*

of reconciliation. ²⁰Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

The Gospel community is the community of the reconciled people who have all received mercy they did not deserve, all been restored from positions of rebellion to positions of sonship and service.

This shapes the culture of the church.

A church that understands the depth of its own corporate need for mercy will be marked by a culture of grace:

- slow to judge,
- quick to restore,
- unwilling to treat the current moral failure of any member as the final word.

Not because sin does not matter Paul's catalogue of sins in **V 9-10** demonstrates how seriously he takes it but because mercy is more powerful than sin, and the community of the redeemed is the community that has staked its life on that conviction.

VIII. The Transforming Power of Grace — Theological Synthesis

A. Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification

Paul's testimony in **1 Timothy 1:12-14** is a compressed narrative of the order of salvation.

He was

- called (**V 12**, who has enabled me, putting me into the ministry),
- justified (he obtained mercy, **V 13**), and
- being sanctified (the grace that came with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus, **V 14**).

The trajectory of his life points toward the glorification that he will describe in **V 16** as a pattern for all who will believe for everlasting life.

Justification is the instantaneous legal declaration that the sinner stands righteous before God on the basis of Christ's imputed righteousness.

It is not a process, but a verdict.

Romans 5:1, *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

A completed past act.

Sanctification is the ongoing process by which the justified sinner is progressively conformed to the image of Christ.

Romans 8:29, *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

It is not completed in this life. It is the work of a lifetime.

Glorification is the final act. The resurrection and complete transformation of the believer into the fullness of Christlikeness which is the destination toward which justification and sanctification together move.

Paul's testimony encompasses all three.

- He was justified on the Damascus Road.
- He has been progressively sanctified through decades of suffering, prayer, and ministry.
- He will be glorified when Christ returns.

Every step of the journey is by grace, not by merit.

- ✓ Grace saves.
- ✓ Grace sustains.
- ✓ Grace will complete.

B. The New Creation and Its Implications

2 Corinthians 5:17, *if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

This is the theological summary of everything Paul's testimony demonstrates.

The new creation is not a moral makeover, but an ontological transformation.

- The person who is in Christ has been granted a new nature (**2 Peter 1:4**),
- indwelt by a new Spirit (**Ezekiel 36:26-27** — a new heart also I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you),
- enrolled in a new covenant (**Hebrews 8:6**), and
- assigned a new identity (**Galatians 2:20** — it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me).

This new creation reality is the ground of Timothy's authority in Ephesus. He is not standing before the congregation as the clever young protege of a famous apostle.

He is standing as a new creation in Christ, a genuine son in the faith, the living embodiment of the transforming power of the Gospel he has been charged to preach.

His very existence is an argument for the Gospel's truth. The false teachers could offer elaborate theology.

Timothy could offer transformed life. In the end, the life is always the more compelling argument.

CONCLUSION: A Story for the Heart

*In the 1970s, in a maximum-security prison in **Lorton, Virginia**, a man named **Harold Morris** was serving two life sentences for armed robbery and murder. He had grown up in poverty, made choices that led him deeper into crime, and eventually committed acts that took human life. By any standard, Harold Morris was beyond redemption.*

*In 1973, a volunteer came into **Lorton Prison with a Bible study**. Harold attended not out of religious interest but because it broke the monotony of the day.*

*What he heard was **1 Timothy 1:15**: 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.*

The volunteer explained Paul's past — the persecution, the violence, the blasphemy. And then he said: The chief of sinners. That is who Jesus came for.

Harold Morris said later: I thought about everything I had done. I thought about the families I had destroyed. I thought about the two lives I had taken. And for the first time in my life, I did not feel angry at God.

I felt found. I was the chief of sinners. And Christ came for the chief of sinners. I received Him right there in that prison cell with absolute certainty that He had been looking for me longer than I had been running from Him.

Harold Morris was **paroled in 1975**. He became an **author**, a **speaker**, and an **advocate for prison reform and youth mentoring**.

He spoke at hundreds of high schools, colleges, and prisons. His testimony led thousands of young people away from the path he had taken. He appeared before **Congress to advocate for changes to the juvenile justice system**.

He co-authored several books.

He established programmes that changed prisons across America.

He was once asked by a journalist whether he felt his life had been wasted.

He replied: **I wasted part of it. But God does not waste what He redeems. The chief of sinners became the chief exhibit of grace. And if one man can be transformed the way Paul was transformed, and the way I was transformed, then there is not a person alive today who is beyond the reach of Jesus Christ. Not one.**

This is what Paul's testimony in 1 Timothy 1:12-14 declares. Not merely the story of one man's conversion. But the permanent, universal testimony that the grace of God is sufficient for the worst sinners, the greatest rebels, the most hardened hearts. You are never too far. You have never done too much. The chief of sinners is exactly the person Christ came to save.

APPLICATION FOR DAILY LIFE

1. Take thirty minutes this week to **write out your testimony in three parts:**

Who you were before Christ,

How you came to faith, and

Who you are becoming by His grace.

Be honest about the depth of your sin — not to wallow, but to magnify the grace.

2. Paul's gratitude was directed to a Person, not merely to blessings. This week in your prayers, spend at least **five minutes thanking Christ Jesus** specifically for enabling you for the work He has called you to.
3. Identify one person in your life who seems too far from God to be reached. Pray for them daily this week, using Paul as your reference: if grace reached the chief of sinners, it can reach them.
4. Meditate on **Ephesians 2:1-10**. Note the pivot in verse 4: But God. Journal your personal but God moment, the point where divine mercy interrupted the direction your life was taking.
5. **Paul confessed his past not with shame but with doxology.** Consider sharing one element of your before Christ story with someone who needs encouragement that grace reaches everywhere.
6. The Greek ***hyperpleonazo*** means super-abundant grace. Read **Romans 5:20** and journal what it means that where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.

Let this verse answer the voice of guilt in your life today.

7. **2 Corinthians 5:17** declares that in Christ we are new creations. What is one specific way your life now is concretely different from your life before Christ? Give God thanks for that transformation and share it with someone this week.