

I Am What I Am

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[0 : 0 0] Corinthians chapter 15, 1 Corinthians 15, and it's been a few Wednesdays, but we'll get back into our series on the Apostle Paul and the I Ams of the Apostle Paul.

And this is the passage that we started off with and introduced this series probably, I don't know, three months ago or two. It feels, it's been a while, and if I have it down right, this will be the ninth sermon in this series about the Apostle Paul.

The first one was really just kind of explaining that Paul was one thing, but now he's another. He's an apostle of Jesus Christ. He was a persecutor of the church of God.

And what we did was that we established his authority in that first message some months back. And what we saw was this phrase in verse number 10 where he says, But by the grace of God, I am what I am.

And while we're studying what I'm calling the I Ams of Paul, this is a real popular one-liner that you kind of associate with the Apostle Paul. And I have to remind you that when he says that phrase, it is not meant to be an excuse for any weakness in you or any sin to be allowed.

[1 : 1 8] You just don't get to say, well, that's just how I am. And Paul said, by the grace of God, I am what I am. That's not what he's saying at all. It's actually a statement of victory. And so let's read these two verses again together.

If I could just get your bearings in a chapter. The Apostle Paul is declaring the gospel to this church at Corinth. And he's expounding on the death, burial, resurrection of Christ.

And he's just using that as a springboard so that he can get to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which he's going to cover in detail. And while he's talking about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, he's telling witnesses, one after the other, and naming them even, of people that have witnessed alive that Jesus Christ, witnessed that he is alive.

And he himself, Paul himself says, I saw him too. I know he's alive. And then he goes into some doctrine about the resurrection and about our resurrected bodies. But let's just read verse number 9 and 10 in 1 Corinthians 15, where the Bible says, 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 labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I.

[2 : 3 6] But the grace of God, which was with me. So let's pray, and then we'll get into this week's message. Father, it's my prayer right now that you'll still our hearts and our minds and just distract us from all things that would take us from the word of God right now.

I thank you for each one that's here and that has made it out on a Wednesday night to come together to church, to come apart, and to just be exposed to your words and to your truth.

I pray that your spirit would take this message and these thoughts and these truths the apostle Paul experienced in his life. And Lord, let it bear witness in ours and make it real to each one tonight.

I pray that you'll deal with every heart and remind each one of us some things that you've done for us and some things that you want to do with us. And help us not to have excuses and not to let our flesh rise up in any way.

But God, just please get something from us out of this time. I pray in Christ's name. Amen. So, as I said, this is often quoted where he says, I am what I am.

[3 : 3 9] And remember that he's declaring that he is an apostle. That's what the I am was in verse 9. I am the least of the apostles. He's humbly saying, I'm the least because, you know, I persecuted the church of God.

I'm not even mean to be called an apostle. And that's just Paul's humble way of approaching it, which is fine and accurate. But as we studied, no, God calls him a chosen vessel unto me.

He handpicked him and liked something about him and called him. He says that he was chosen. He says in another passage that he was ordained to be a preacher and teacher of the Gentiles.

He was appointed to this position. He even calls himself the apostle of the Gentiles. And so, as we covered all that ground months ago, understand that when he says, I am an apostle or the least of the apostles, we're not going to just try to drag his name through the mud.

But as a matter of fact, if we do him justice from the scriptures, we elevate him pretty high. He's our authority. He's the one that God placed over us and fed us the word of God.

[4 : 41] And he made the preaching known and the preaching of the cross. And the gospel of Jesus Christ even goes so far as to say it's my gospel. And so, we owe a lot to the apostle Paul in the sense of God using him for us today.

Now, he was Saul. Remember that? Back in the book of Acts, he was Saul, a persecutor of the church. But now, he is Paul.

Called, in Romans 1, Paul, an apostle or a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle. And there's a bit of irony in all of this, that in this 180 degree turn that this man made, because now he's building up something that he wants destroyed.

Now, he says that he cares. One of the things he says in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, that one of the things that comes upon him daily is the care of all the churches. Now, he's caring like a nurse or a mother or father for all the churches.

But before, he was persecuting and attempting to just completely eliminate these churches. It's a complete 180 degree spin on this man and his ministry and his calling.

[5 : 55] But in this passage, what he says, By the grace of God, I am what I am. You could also say it or think like this, that he's saying, What I am today is because of the grace of God.

That's all he's saying in that statement. I was least of the apostles. I was a persecutor of the church. But by the grace of God, I am what I am today. And what are you? Well, you're an apostle of Jesus Christ.

He's a changed man. But also know that he's still the same man. Like he didn't morph into some angel because he has revelation of Jesus Christ or because he saw Christ and because he's been born again and alive in Christ.

He didn't morph into anything else or transform. Paul still had issues. We studied this in Romans chapter 7. One of the I am's of Paul was, I am carnal.

And in that passage, I owe wretched man that I am. And so Paul's not an angel. He's not holier than thou. He even showed us in that passage that we studied that he has evil dwelling in him, sin dwelling in him, or evil present with me.

[6 : 59] He struggles. There's things that he does not allow. And he says, That do I. And so he's just like you and I when it comes to dealing with this flesh and this wretched man. And so he's the same man.

But he's a man now that God's using. He's got the same personality. He's got a sharp intellect. He's aggressive. He's not intimidated by others.

He's the kind of guy that's full of zeal. Before it was to persecute the church of God. Now it's to work for Jesus Christ and to minister the gospel and to go, go, go from town to town. Just kind of like the same MO.

But what made the change? What made all of this change in this man from being what he was to what he is? And the easy answer is, well, he met Jesus Christ. I mean, apart from meeting Jesus Christ, he's not any different than he was.

He didn't transform his life. He didn't quit smoking. He didn't change things that were harmful to him. He didn't go through that kind of thing. There's no metamorphosis of Saul.

[7 : 58] It was a meeting with the Lord Jesus Christ. A conversion. And Jesus Christ changed him. Now that's kind of the broad answer there. And it's not a bad one to say because Jesus Christ will make a change in anybody that comes to him.

Amen, amen, amen. Well, I should add this. Somebody that will meet him but will also submit to him. Because I'd say there's probably a handful to a thousand, hundred thousand Christians that have met the Lord Jesus Christ and taken the gift of God, the free gift of salvation, and believed on him, but they haven't submitted to him to allow him to change their life and clean up their life and get the garbage out.

So there's a difference there. But nevertheless, let's take a look at tonight what I believe are some things that made the change in the Apostle Paul from being what he was as a persecutor to being now where you can say he's an apostle of Jesus Christ.

So the first thing's right here in this passage, and it's in verse number 10. We read at the beginning, it says, but by the grace of God, I am what I am. By the grace of God.

He says, His grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain. It's not, the grace of God is not just some, something that's out there in the nebulous that, that is just exist and we can talk about it and sing about grace, grace, God's grace.

[9 : 26] But no, it's something that was bestowed upon the Apostle Paul. Like he could hold on to it. He could feel it. He, he knew what it meant to have God's grace in his life.

He goes on in that verse and he says, it was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me. And so the grace of God was something special and it's something that made a change in the Apostle Paul.

It was bestowed upon me. No other writer in the gospel, in the Bible, no other author talks about the grace of God like the Apostle Paul does. Not one anywhere, nowhere near, not just in quantity as far as the amount of mentions of the grace of God, but in the language that he uses to describe his heart toward what he's calling the grace of God.

And what I'm trying to show you is it wasn't just some vague thing to him. It was real. It was alive.

And he boasted of this and lived in this. He preached the gospel of the grace of God.

I mean, this guy was a menace and he was an opponent to Jesus Christ and now he's a huge fan of the grace of God. He opened and closed every epistle he wrote with mention of the grace of God in an introduction or in the conclusion.

[10 : 46] Somewhere within the last verse to two to three verses, he's going to mention the grace of God. It was a theme of his in his writing and in his ministry. He tells of God's exceeding grace.

Did you ever read or hear the term abundant grace? You got it from the Apostle Paul. He talks about the riches of his grace. The Apostle Paul wrote that God, that there was a dispensation of the grace of God and he says, it was given to me and it's so big that he says that the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.

Paul was into this thing. He even coined this phrase saying, to the praise of the glory of his grace.

You got to think on that for a second.

He thinks that God's grace is glorious. Even praiseworthy to say to the praise of the glory of his grace.

When Paul talks about the grace of God, it's not some vague thing that just, yeah, we're saved by grace and move on. No. He says, it was bestowed upon me. He had it.

[11 : 57] He lived in it. And it's what changed his life. It changed him from being a persecutor of the church to being the apostle that God called him to be.

It was by the grace of God. Paul's such a believer in displaying God's grace that he admonished the church to sing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord.

He said, to let your speech be always with grace. He said, to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, even saying later that it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.

He was all about it. I think it was very, very special to Paul. And he says, I am what I am by the grace of God because of the grace that God bestowed upon me.

Now, I want to look quickly at this grace of God here and just show you how that operated. Here in this verse, we noticed in verse number 10 again, but by the grace of God, I am what I am.

[12 : 59] And by his, and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me.

And first of all, the grace of God enabled Paul to labor for Jesus Christ. Why do you need grace to labor? Because I know why. And some of you may too.

Because the tendency in you is when opposition rears its head in any form, your tendency, your flesh is like, I'm done. I quit. This is supposed to be easy.

God's supposed to bless this, right? It's supposed to be easy. And when opposition shows up and you want to talk about somebody who knew what it was like to have opposition, to minister for Jesus Christ, to labor for Jesus Christ, this is the guy.

You better believe he needed the grace of God. It enabled him to labor. You men, myself included, you get frustrated when you don't see results. When you labor and you labor and you put your time

and your effort into and you pray and then you just don't see results.

[14 : 03] You know what happens inside? You start to get frustrated. And you know what you need? The grace of God. Just bestow it upon you. The grace of God can just settle all that anxiety, all that inner fear and things of that nature.

And yet today, there's just, there's shallow Christians that if they don't even get recognition, much less opposition, they're done. They're out. They'll quit.

And walk away. And I think that anytime somebody quits laboring for Jesus Christ in whatever capacity it is, and maybe there's exemptions and certain reasons to consider, but in a broad thought, in effect, if they're walking away from serving and laboring for Jesus Christ before their time's called, there's something wrong with them because it's not because the pressure's too hard. because God gives grace to labor for him. If it gets tough, he gives the grace. And I showed you, we're not going to turn to 2 Corinthians 11 to go over that list again of all the beatings and all the shipwrecks and all the trials.

I mean, it was intense stuff. But Paul continued to labor. Why? Right there, you got the reason why in verse 10, because of the grace of God that was with him. So the grace of God enabled Paul to labor.

[15 : 24] I believe God gives all of his servants grace to overcome any opposition that God calls you to, any frustration, any fear, any anxiety that comes with the territory.

With the calling comes the grace. And if God's asking you to do something, he'll give you the grace. You can say, I just can't do it. No, God will just give you that measure of grace to do what he's calling you to do.

So Paul is what he is. The apostle of Christ, not the persecutor of the church, but a different man by the grace of God. At first, it enabled him to labor. Secondly, the grace of God empowered him to endure his infirmities and his weaknesses.

Again, I'm not going to turn for time's sake, but in 2 Corinthians 12, we read about that thorn in his flesh. And it was bad, the messenger of Satan that buffeted him.

He besought the Lord, and I believe he was as earnest as he could possibly be with a God that he was close to. I mean, like in such a fashion that the God that revealed himself to him on multiple occasions.

[16 : 33] And he talked to this God and said, would you please take this thing? But what was his answer? You know it. In short terms, no. I'm not taking it to you, but what will I give you instead?

I'll give you my grace. My grace shall be sufficient for thee. The grace of God empowered Paul to endure infirmities or weaknesses.

And there, you talk about a reason to give up. That's an excuse that it's been used and probably abused. And it's easy for me just to say that. It's not so easy if you're in the position that you have some physical thing or something that's really a taxing thing on you and it makes it hard to serve God.

It makes you hard to just get up and keep going. Well, understand this. Paul experienced sufficient grace for the trial and you will too.

And so, why is Paul different than he was? Why is he what he is? I am what I am by the grace of God. It's the grace of God that enabled him to labor and to continue laboring. It's the grace of God that empowered him to get over his weaknesses and over those trials and over the infirmities and the thorn in his flesh and you're not going to have an excuse.

[17 : 45] This is what I'm trying to get across to you. God will give you grace but I just don't know how to talk but I'm just afraid I get all worked up inside. God will give you grace but I'm afraid of rejection or I'm afraid I'm going to get arrested or whatever the thing is.

God will give you grace. I believe this. I haven't had to taste this yet and I say yet. I'm not prophesying. God knows. But it crosses my mind all the time is if this land keeps going the way it's going and if things carry on the way it carries on how long is it going to be until certain things are restricted, until certain things are forbidden, until it comes, push comes to shove like it has for our fathers in the past on different continents to where you're not allowed to mention this.

You're not allowed to speak the word of God or the name of Jesus Christ or whatever the case may be. Well, I have the guts to do what God's called me to do. And if I do have the guts, I trust in my heart that no matter what happens, the outcome could be, God knows I don't want to deal with anything crazy, but if that day comes, I believe it, he'll give me the grace.

You read about any of those martyrs? How could they stand there and have fire burning their skin and creeping up on their bodies? How could they do that and stand there and sing? I'll tell you, the answer is right there, the grace of God. That person gave their life for Jesus Christ, God just poured out his grace on them in that moment. And we'll get to that in a minute again. [19:18] So Paul says, I am what I am by the grace of God. But there's other attributes that are at work here in Paul's transformation. Flip over to 1 Timothy chapter 1.

I'm going to show you another one just as important as the grace of God. The grace of God that was bestowed upon him, enabling him to be the man he was versus the man that he wasn't anymore.

1 Timothy chapter 1. And as we read this passage, you'll notice right away that we're looking at that old guy again, that old guy Saul that was a persecutor and then the transformation into who he is as the apostle of Jesus Christ.

And as we read, you're going to catch another attribute of God, another thing he puts on Paul that's enabling him to be what he is today. I'll begin in verse number 12.

He says, I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who hath enabled me that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious.

[20:35] But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly and unbelief and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

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. How be it for this cause I obtained mercy that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

You notice him say it two times. I obtained mercy. I was a blasphemer. I persecuted the church of God but by the mercy of God I'm not that guy anymore.

Now I'm preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ declaring Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. While the grace of God enabled him to labor it enabled him to endure hardships it's because of the mercy of God that Paul is not burning in hell because he's rejected Jesus Christ because he was kicking against the pricks and persecuting the Lord Jesus Christ and his body. And in fact it's the same reason you're not in hell today too. It's the mercy of God. His mercy is what holds back his judgment against your sins. The Bible says according to his mercy he saved us.

[22:06] It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. The Bible says in Ephesians 2 but God who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together in Christ.

What kept David from suffering eternal judgment from God because of his adultery and murder? It wasn't because he brought a bullock to the high priest and said hey will you allow it just this once? I know it's not permitted in the law but would you just allow this? I'll give you 10,000 bullocks and sheep and offerings. No it wasn't any offering that he brought to God. What was it that got God to pardon and not judge his sins?

It was a covenant that God had given to him that's called the sure mercies of David. The sure mercies. Flip back to the Psalms. I got to show you two verses.

Two quick little spots back here. Psalm 51 and Psalm 103 If you could find both of them quickly Psalm 51 and Psalm 103 While we're talking about David and let this apply to every single sinner on the planet that's gotten to understand God's mercy this is some precious stuff.

[23:27] These are precious words precious statements in your Bible and I recommend you get familiar with them. In Psalm 51 we'll begin verse just number 1 here to begin and he cries this is after this very act of the adultery after the confrontation with the prophet Nathan after having the former husband put to death in life what's his name?

Uzziah? No. Uriah. Thank you. Have mercy upon me O God according to thy loving kindness according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions David was he had no he had no offering to bring all the wealth all the everything all the cattle nothing was going to appease God's wrath not according to the law and so what could he do?

Have mercy just cry for mercy from God and he says according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies flip over to Psalm 103 and while we're here let's read a few verses if Paul was the chiefest of sinners like he said he was then he's going to need a multitude of those tender mercies just like David cried for and I imagine that if you and I are as sinful as God knows we are as we are then

we're going to need a multitude of those tender mercies and here's a passage that just blesses my soul it has for a long time I have to start in verse 1 I'll get to where we want to be but verse 1 says bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me bless his holy name bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all his benefits who forgiveth all thine iniquities and he just goes off for a while but when he gets to verse 8 this is where it starts jumping out the mercy of God verse 8 says the Lord is merciful and gracious slow to anger and plenteous in mercy he will not always chide neither will he keep his anger forever he hath not dealt with us after our sins he nor rewarded us according to our transgressions why not for as the heaven is high above the earth so great is his mercy toward them that fear him as far as the east is from the west so far hath he removed our transgressions from us like as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him for he knoweth our frame he remembereth that we are dust as for man his days are as grass as a flower of the field so he flourisheth the wind passeth over it is gone the place thereof shall know it no more but the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear it him the Lord is merciful he's plenteous in mercy and it's displayed by how he has not dealt with us after our sins he hasn't rewarded us what we deserve why?

because he's merciful he pities us he knows and remembers what we are and he has mercy upon us this is true this is true in my life and yours and I I've proved this I need this to be true I need this mercy to be true in my life and Paul says I am what I am what are you Paul?

well you're not a blasphemer anymore you're not a persecutor of the church of God you're an apostle of Jesus you're a servant of Jesus Christ why? by his mercy it's because he was merciful to him that man deserved to be in hell he deserved to suffer for the havoc that he made of the church of God instead God had mercy I obtained mercy as a personal testimony in front of you all today I hope you could all give your own personal testimony that I am what I am to borrow Paul's wording if you don't mind not meet to be a pastor not meet to be in the ministry although God has enabled me and placed me in the ministry but I'm not trying to pretend I'm something like Paul or anything but I would I'd echo his voice and say I'm not worthy for this I'm not meet for this as a man and so I fully recognize and appreciate and depend upon the mercy of God

[28 : 15] I need the mercy of God that word is special to me it's very special to me these passages in the Psalms are very special to me I've wept over those passages in my life they've been they just they get inside the Bible says to sow to yourselves in righteousness reap in mercy and I remember the days where I was sowing to my flesh and reaping corruption and found out that God's merciful and if I'll start sowing in righteousness and walking with him and living for him well he won't he won't reward me after all my transgressions and so I'm pleading and I'm depending upon the mercy of God Paul is what he is because he obtained mercy I am what I am you are what you are in church on a Wednesday night with a King James Bible in your lap with full assurance of your salvation and forgiveness of sin knowing that you're accepted in the beloved and you don't fear hell do you

I don't know does anybody in here fear that you may drop into hell if you die one day not if you're saved not if you've got that book right boy God has been merciful to us and Paul is what he is by the mercy of God there's one more thing I want to point out as to the difference in the Apostle Paul and one more thing we can accredit this change to look at Acts 26 Acts chapter 26 is by the grace of God that was evident it was by the mercy of God again evident and very necessary and you'll notice that in the first two and the third will just match the same none of these things have to do with the Apostle Paul's performance nothing to do with his resolve and who he is it's all what God has bestowed upon me what I obtained of the Lord and you'll see it again here in Acts chapter 26 and we're going to read through this passage because it's putting us in the very same context of what he was to the change that was made in his life

Acts 26 starting in verse 9 he says I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth which thing I also did in Jerusalem and many of the saints did I shut up in prison having received authority from the chief priests and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them and I punished them often every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme and being exceedingly mad against them I persecuted them even under strange cities whereupon I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests and then he gives this instance of meeting Jesus Christ and surrendering to him and Christ revealing his calling in this moment look at verse 16 Christ said rise and stand upon thy feet for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee delivering thee

from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom now

I send thee to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me he tells the king I obeyed I followed Jesus Christ and notice in verse 21 now for these causes the Jews caught me in the temple and went about to kill me now look at the next verse having therefore obtained help of God I continue unto this day witnessing both to small and great and on he goes about Jesus Christ right there in verse 23 and forward he wants to even persuade this man Agrippa to be a Christian what is this this is the apostle Paul getting something else from God to get him from who he was to who he wants him to be and in verse 22 I obtained help of God help of God and because of that help

I continue unto this day and I keep doing what I'm doing for the Lord Jesus Christ because God has helped me now I want you to understand there's something real specific about this help that I haven't run it through the Bible like cover to cover full on but I was seeing it and I think this is accurate enough to say this that God helps when the help is needed meaning he doesn't carry you all the way all along that's not what God does it's never been his if you could picture a babe that's what the picture is of the Christian one of the pictures of the Christian life is a babe being born and then growing desiring the sincere milk of the word and growing and by the end he's told to stand having his loins girt about with truth so that Christian is supposed to grow up and take a stand on his own and to be strong in the Lord and in the new man inside but you're never meant to bring a baby into the world and just carry it all of its life 20 years old still carrying this little thing that's not supposed to be that way and it's not supposed to be that way in a Christian life and so God is not going to carry the believer it's not his intention to carry you all the way through his intention is to get you on your feet to get you to grow to where now you turn and start doing things that are right it's what every parent wants for their kids train them in the right way they start to do it for themselves and so

[34 : 15] God doesn't carry you and he doesn't hold you above the clouds of sorrow he allows that in your life he doesn't take you above all the trials he allows that to come in your life he even lets you get knocked down doesn't he he does why because he wants you to learn from it he wants you to grow from it he wants you to get stronger from it it's all the parallel matches so clear but when you're serving God and when the world comes up against you and the devil comes up against you and has your back against the wall and in a corner that's when God's going to step in so for the apostle Paul he's got his back into a corner here the Jews assembled around him and they're ready to take him by the take his head off and he said having therefore obtained help of God I continue unto this day when Peter was locked up in prison in Acts chapter 12 and his execution was scheduled for the very next day help from God showed up and opened that prison burst those bands asunder and out he came because it was the time of need right there you read in the Psalms the psalmist records a consistent cry for help that's David innocently on the run from this psychotic king that wants to murder him and David's on the run for his life crying for God to help because he's in big trouble and he says in some of those

Psalms he said I was brought low and he helped me God is our refuge and strength a very help a very help in trouble sometimes we get this idea that God just helped me this and helped me through that and helped me do this and I'm not trying to take it away but I don't want to take too much time on that thought you can let it run for yourself there the Bible says the spirit also help with our infirmities my help cometh from the Lord let me take you to one more passage and then we'll be done look at 2nd Timothy chapter 4 2nd Timothy 4 the very end of Paul's life and he recounts a few thoughts here as he says I've fought a good fight I've finished the course I've kept the faith I'm ready to be offered my time of my departure is at hand and then he recalls a few things here about how the Lord helped him when he needed to help in 2nd Timothy 4 and come to verse number 16 very end of the book probably some of the last words that he wrote at my first answer no man stood with me but all men forsook me because the psalm says that vain is the help of men all men forsook me I pray God it may not be laid to their charge notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me that by me the preaching might be fully known and that all the Gentiles might hear and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion as a matter of fact the Lord shall deliver me from all evil every evil work and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom to whom we glory forever and ever amen Paul knows and you do too that he's been through much grief through much peril and just over the top stuff that he's had to endure and go through the grace of God was sufficient for all

of that but there's something more when there's certain times that it's needed Paul says I am what I am and continue to serve God because of the helping hand of God along the way when there was no way and there was no help I obtained help of God the Lord knows them that are his the Lord sees he's fully aware and when push comes to shove and he's not finished with you and the world comes up against you and you're in a lion's den and there they are the hand of God can come in to help well I'm not going to bow down and worship these gods and I'm just going to stand and do what I know is right my Bible tells me thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them and so I can't bow down to this image that Nebuchad set up and I know it's going to be a fiery furnace for me and they're going to eat it seven times more than it was wont to be heated and then the helping hand of God shows up not even a smell of smoke on you but you never would have saw that from before you never would have anticipated

God to do that he didn't promise he didn't show you he didn't reveal he wasn't doing that every day of your life but when the time was necessary when the help was needed when there was no help from man and when you did all you could do to stand then comes the help of God I obtained help of God what an amazing thing so Paul is not the persecutor that he once was he's now an apostle and he's laboring and he's loving and he's living for Jesus Christ and he's doing it by the grace of God he's doing it because of the mercy that he obtained of God and along the way there was times where he needed the help of God and when he got it he continued serving and to close this and conclude this Christian you can live your life for Jesus Christ too I mean your life can be surrendered to Jesus Christ it can happen you can do it you think in your mind

I can't do all the pressure all the temptation all the people I work with that's too much for me no you can do all things through Christ and you can live your life for Jesus Christ and he'll give you the grace that you need to overcome every fear that comes up against you and every issue that you'll face trying to do what's right he'll give you grace he'll just he'll pour it right out on you you can go to the throne of grace for that matter and find grace mercy and grace to help in time of need he'll give you the grace to overcome your fears and infirmities he'll give you mercy to forgive your sins and all along remembering you're just flesh you're just a man you're just a woman you're not Jesus Christ you're not the Holy Spirit you are with you God knows exactly what he puts on you and asks of you and you can do it he's merciful to you when you fail and on top of that as we finished here he'll give you the help when you need help he'll step in and he's done it in my life and he'll do it in yours you can you can just commit to him you can trust him you can stop leaning on your own understanding and imagining

[40 : 53] I know my limitations just stop it and just start trusting God the apostle Paul did he's not what he used to be because of those three things the mercy the grace of God when he said I am what I am those were the things that got him to be what he is and those very three things are open and available to you too so amen amen alright let's close it down tonight we'll be dismissed and thank you for being out here tonight and I hope this kind of stuff helps you this is our apostle these things are written for our understanding and our learning and let's get into it and apply it now and not be afraid let's trust the Lord father thank you for the night study thank you for the apostle Paul and for the life that he lived for for his courage and for his zeal and God there's probably those two things we lack a lot of us lack in this Christian life today in the church today

Lord may we come to understand these attributes that you hold and have are available for us today and help us to take advantage of it help us to learn to rely and to lean upon your mercy and your grace and the help that you give when it's needed and Lord may we may we not lean on our own understanding as it's a temptation to do and also a temptation to quit when there's frustration and when we don't see results in what we want Lord we pray for your grace thank you for being merciful and saving our souls thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ that willingly gave himself to pay for our sins Lord if anybody here has not taken Jesus Christ as their savior and doesn't know the peace inside of their heart and the forgiveness of their sins and doesn't even have a relationship with you Lord just please convict them of that please just reveal to them and don't give them any rest or peace in their soul but let them understand what you offer them and what you've done and Lord I'm thankful that I'm saved and I'm thankful to know that my brothers and sisters here love you and they love your book and so please give us courage and strength to continue on for this in Jesus name amen you are dismissed tonight