

1 Timothy 1.12-15 Overwhelming Grace

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 January 2026

Preacher: Dan Morley

[0:00] We're in 1 Timothy chapter 1, and last week we looked at verses 8-11 and delighting in the law, delighting in God's moral law and the uses of the moral law.

It includes restraining sin, restraining evil in society. It includes exposing and condemning sin by pointing out sin, and it also is a guide or a rule of life for the believer.

And what's interesting, if you recall at the end of having worked through the moral law, Paul then in verse 11, he says, In verse 11, he says, So in talking about the purpose or the use of the law and how the law exposes sin, Paul goes over the law, and the law does its work.

And then as he shifts his focus to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, we can see, this is quite interesting, we can see how the law has done its work. And Paul, having worked through it, that then Paul understands his sinfulness, and he just bursts out with thanksgiving because of the grace of God, because of the overwhelming grace of God to sinners, to those who are lawless, to those who are lawbreakers.

So let's take a look at overwhelming grace. Today we are going to look at verses 12 to 15, but we will first start by reading verses 3 to 17.

[1:44] Starting in verse 3. As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, remain in Ephesus, that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.

Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers.

And if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.

Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man. But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

[3:23] And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.

The Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 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.

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. Lord, we again thank you for this time we have this morning to look to you in your word.

And we pray that you would indeed meet with us and that you would speak to us through your word. That by your spirit you would illuminate your word to us and enlighten our minds, our hearts, our understanding. That you would lead us into all truth.

And I pray that you would use me in the preaching of the word for your purposes and the means of grace. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So this morning, as I said, we're going to be looking at verses 12 to 15.

[4:38] And in these verses, what's going on, what we see here is that Paul was an exceedingly abundant sinner who was overwhelmed by God's exceedingly abundant grace.

So I'll say it again. Paul was an exceedingly abundant sinner who was overwhelmed by God's exceedingly abundant grace. So we're going to look at enabling by grace. How Paul was enabled and put into the ministry by grace.

Second, recipient of grace. Paul as a recipient of grace. And third, the astonishment of grace. So enabling by grace, recipient of grace, and astonishment of grace.

So first of all, we're going to look at enabling by grace. Starting in verse 12, it says, And I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has enabled me, because he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.

Now, as I said earlier, in the previous text that we looked at, Paul goes over the moral law. And as he goes over the moral law, he addresses lawbreakers.

[5:49] And he addresses lawbreakers to even quite an extreme degree. Murderers of fathers, murderers of mothers. And as he examines the law, the moral law, and the purpose of the law, we see that the law is for the lawless and insubordinate.

And as Paul goes through the law, and the purpose of the law, and lawbreakers, of course, we all are sinners, and we all have broken the law.

And the law does its work. As Calvin says, when we look at the law, it's like we're looking in a mirror. And it points out the sin that is within us. And it convicts. And so Paul, having working through the law, having gone over the law, he bursts out in thanksgiving.

And this is one thing that I really like about Paul's style, that you'll notice when you read through Paul's letters, is that when he gets, his train of thought gets into something, and he starts explaining something, he often bursts out with gratitude, or thanksgiving, or with praise, or into a doxology.

Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. He just bursts out. He has to act upon it and praise God for this knowledge as he contemplates on it and works through it.

[7:07] And here, that's what happens. Paul bursts out in thanksgiving, marveling at the gospel, the glorious gospel of the blessed God, marveling at the gospel in his own personal experience of mercy, which is viewed against the background, or against the backdrop, of his past.

So, when he views the law, and the law points out lawlessness, he understands his sinfulness, particularly the sinfulness out of which he was saved. And against that backdrop of his sinfulness, of his past, which he was saved out of, he just sees the exceedingly abundant grace of God in the gospel, and it causes him to burst out in thanksgiving.

It's his own personal experience. And not only was Paul a sinner who was saved, it's not just the exceedingly abundant grace of God towards him in saving him as a sinner, but also in putting him into the ministry, enabling him to it.

Not only is a sinner saved by grace, but God's grace in entrusting him and appointing him to the service. Now, why was Paul entrusted?

He was entrusted not because he was worthy, because who was he before he was saved? He was a blasphemer. He was a persecutor. He was an insolent man.

[8 : 30] He wasn't worthy because he persecuted the church. He was unworthy. So, it wasn't his own worth in which he was entrusted. Rather, he was enabled and put into.

He was enabled and appointed. He was radically saved and divinely changed, equipped, and appointed to be a steward.

It's not that he was a steward, but that he was radically saved, divinely changed, equipped, and appointed to be a steward of the gospel. He was enabled.

To be enabled means you weren't previously able. He wasn't fit. He was enabled to be put into the ministry by bestowing grace and strengthening him. Now, in John 15, 16, Jesus is speaking of all believers.

Jesus is speaking of believers in general. So, Paul, being a believer, obviously fits into this verse. But in John 15, 16, Jesus speaking of believers, he says, you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.

[9 : 42] Paul's a believer. Paul fits in this category, but Paul very vividly fits into this category when we see his conversion in Acts 9, how he was a persecutor of the church.

He was a persecutor of Christ because he persecuted the body of Christ. But God chose him when he was not choosing Christ. And Christ chose him and appointed him that he should go and bear fruit.

So that brings up the question of who makes a man a minister? Now, we can consider this question in regards to Paul. Paul was enabled.

So who enabled Paul to be a minister? But also, with all of Christ's victory gifts, when we worked through Ephesians, in Ephesians chapter 4, we saw Christ's victory gifts, that he gives gifts to the church of prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

And who enables these people? Who makes a man a minister? Is it himself? Well, with the case of Paul, did Paul enable himself to be a minister?

[10 : 52] So also, with the rest of Christ's victory gifts, with pastors and teachers, do they enable themselves? Is it within a person that makes a man a minister?

And then also related to that question is, can anybody be a minister? If anybody can be a minister, does that person then enable themselves and make themselves to be a minister?

Namely, in the teaching ministry of the word, pastors and teachers. So to put it another way, is it, I don't know if this still happens with all that we have with online marketplaces and things, but I remember you used to go, if you went to the mall, there'd be a big cork board, and people would pin up like classifieds, and maybe they'd have puppies, there'd be a picture of puppies, and puppies for sale, and then they'd have tabs with their phone number.

If you're interested, if you, yeah, I want a puppy, then you'll take the tab with the phone number. Is that what it's like to be a minister? Is Christ's victory gifts like selling puppies? Is it just victory gifts available?

Come and take one if you want one. Or is there something more to it? So to answer that question, I think it's important to also ask the question, what is so crucial about the necessity of ministers being appointed and enabled?

[12 : 10] We see here that Paul, by the enabling of grace, he was enabled and appointed. What is so crucial about the necessity of ministers being appointed and enabled by God's grace via Christ's victory gifts of pastors and teachers?

The enabling is by Christ's victory gifts, the gifts that Christ gives, that Christ gives through the enabling. So what is so crucial about it?

Well, when we consider the significance of what actually occurs in the teaching ministry of the church and the means of grace and the preaching and the teaching of the word, what actually occurs is more than just what is visible with our senses or more than what just can be observed on an earthly level.

where in the church we have the promise and the visual of Christ's spiritual presence in the church and feeding the people through the means of grace by the spirit of God.

Now, for to this occur, can it just happen by any other way which anybody wants to? For example, if somebody who was not a believer, if somebody who hated God, can they step into the pulpit?

[13:23] Can they be a minister of the word? And as a result of that, is Christ spiritually present and is the spirit attending the preaching of the word and is it feeding and nourishing the sheep and is it convicting the lost?

This is a very important question not only for the feeding of the sheep but also for the advancement of the kingdom through the gospel proclamation. Because how does somebody who is a sinner become saved?

Is it by a person's coercion or persuasion? No, it's by the gospel. Paul's not ashamed of the gospel because it's the power of God's salvation or in Romans 10, faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of God.

It's the proclamation of the gospel attended by the spirit that converts and saves sinners. So, whether it's the advancement of the kingdom of sinners hearing the gospel and being converted or whether it's saints, believers who are edified and nourished and fed through the means of grace, that something specific that's beyond our senses, that's beyond that which is earthly, that is occurring.

So, for that to occur requires God's working. And so, for God's working to occur, it requires doing it according to God's way. In other words, it's not that God has to wait for somebody to step up and do something to do God a favor that he can then step in and use it for his good.

[14:52] Rather, it's according to God's purposes. For God to accomplish his purpose, God uses his means, so it's according to God's means to accomplish his purposes.

So, it is significant, it is crucial, it is necessary for ministers to be appointed and enabled by Christ. These victory gifts, for it to actually be Christ's victory gifts to the church.

So, if it is so important and necessary, how do we know? What are the evidences of a man appointed by Christ and enabled by Christ for putting into the ministry of the word?

Going back to what Paul said, and I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has enabled me because he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. So, the enabling of Christ, the appointing by Christ, and the putting into the ministry by Christ, what are the evidences of a man appointed and enabled by Christ?

So, we're going to rule out the extraordinary gifts that occurred during the times of the apostles and the ordinary gifts that continue in the church age of pastors and teachers.

[16:09] What are the evidences that a man has been appointed by Christ and enabled by Christ for the ministry of the word as pastors and teachers in the church age? This is as follows.

The first one is to have an aspiration. The person is to desire the ministry of the word. They're not to be put into it against their will or by, they're not to be coerced into it, but rather there is to be an aspiration.

Those whom Christ appoints and enables and gifts, he gives the desire. So, first is aspiration. And next is qualification. Just because somebody has a desire for the ministry of the word, just because somebody has a desire to preach, doesn't mean that they are actually appointed and enabled.

They must meet the qualifications. So, no, not anybody can be a minister. And Paul is leading into this because he is dealing with false teachers, counterfeit teachers.

So, not just anybody, because they desire to be a teacher, should be teachers. And eventually, in 1 Timothy 3, he gets into those qualifications. So, I'm not going to get into detail of those qualifications now, but let it suffice to say there are qualifications.

[17:26] We'll get to that and those qualifications must be present. Next is the affirmation of the church. The affirmation of the church that those qualifications are present in the man and that he possesses the gifts and that there is evidence of godly character.

So, aspiration, qualification, affirmation of the church and then providential opportunity. An opportunity where there is a need for somebody who aspires to the ministry of the word, meets the qualifications, has the affirmation of the church and the providential opportunity is present.

So, that leads us then to our second point. Exceedingly abundant grace overwhelms exceedingly abundant sinners as recipients of grace.

grace. So, Paul, who was an exceedingly abundant sinner, was overwhelmed by God's exceedingly abundant grace and he burst out with thanksgiving that he was appointed, that he was enabled, that he was put into the ministry, somebody who was blasphemous, somebody who was a persecutor, an insolent man.

And the enabling leads him to his conversion. It leads him to the fact that he was a recipient of grace. So, our next point is recipient of grace.

[18:51] Now, previously in the text we looked at before, Paul goes over quite extreme degrees of lawbreakers. He spoke of murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers.

This is extreme degrees of lawbreakers. He's speaking of the worst of sinners. And as he works through the moral law, the moral law which is codified in the Ten Commandments, as he works through the moral principles that we see in the Ten Commandments, and he works through these extreme degrees of lawbreakers, you might think he would say, and those are the worst of sinners, because they are.

He's talking about worst of sinners. But what he says, he says, the worst of all, after going through these extreme degrees of lawbreakers and sinners, he says, the worst of all is exhibit a, myself.

The worst of all is Paul of Tarsus, a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man. Insolent means he was violently arrogant. So Paul exhibits himself as a model of a sinner saved by grace.

He exhibits himself as a model of a recipient of overwhelming grace. Notice in verse 13b, he says, I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly and unbelief.

[20:18] Now, when we first read this, we might do a little bit of a double take. It's a little bit strange, isn't it? Because mercy, what is mercy? Mercy is the withholding of what is deserved.

Judgment is deserved. So mercy is the withholding of deserved judgment. Grace is the giving of what isn't deserved, is unmerited.

So mercy, if mercy is withholding deserved judgment, then we can say, I obtained the withholding of deserved judgment because, now the word because, it points to the cause of something, right?

It points to the merit of something. Because I did it ignorantly and unbelief. Unbelief is sin. And unbelief merits judgment.

So, we might be inclined in first reading to interpret in this way that I obtained the withholding of judgment that I merited based on the merit that I did it ignorantly and unbelief which merits judgment.

[21:25] So it doesn't make sense to read it that way because that's not true. So what does unbelief deserve? Does unbelief deserve mercy?

We might do a double take because we might think it says that at first. I obtained mercy because on the cause of I did it ignorantly and unbelief. So if somebody is in unbelief, does that merit the withholding of God's judgment?

Well, the answer is obvious and quite clear that neither ignorance nor unbelief excuses sin. Both are sin and both merit judgment, God's justice.

Paul wasn't saying that he was justified by his ignorance. Rather, what he is saying is that he was saved in his state of ignorance. Ask the question, why was Paul an opponent?

Why was Paul an opponent of the church? It was because of misplaced zeal. He thought that he was serving God and being an opponent.

[22:35] He was an opponent because of unbelief rather than presumption. There's sins of unbelief and there's sins of presumption. So presumption, for example, in this case, would be to know the gospel, to know of salvation in Christ, and to reject Christ, reject the gospel, and to therefore persecute the church because of the gospel message, because of Christ.

His violent oppression, his violent oppression was against man, which would be a violation of the second commandment to love your neighbor. But he didn't realize that his violent oppression of man, contrary to the second table of the law, was transgression against the first table of the law because his violent oppression against his neighbor was the body of Christ, and by oppressing Christ, the body of Christ is oppressing Christ.

If you remember in Acts 9, when Jesus said, why are you persecuting me? So, in persecuting the body of Christ, it's a direct opposition of God.

But it was not, Paul was not yet exposed to the gospel. So it's not like it was a rejection of the gospel resulting in oppression of it. And John 16, 1-4, listen to what Jesus said.

Jesus said, they will put you out of the synagogues. Yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor me.

[24:22] And after Jesus said this, unbelieving Jews thought that they were serving God and they murdered Jesus. There's a difference between a high-handed deliberate assault on God versus misplaced zeal.

Both are sin. There is no justification in sin because of unbelief or ignorance. But misplaced zeal is different than high-handed deliberate assault on God and Christ as God.

All sin is condemning, but sins that are presumptuous are more heinous. In Acts 9, verse 3, and speaking of Paul's conversion, it says, as he journeyed, he came near Damascus and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.

Then he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And he said, who are you, Lord?

He didn't know who he was. There was ignorance there. Now watch this, then the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

[25:38] No longer ignorance. And what happens? And then Jesus continues to say, it is hard for you to kick against the goads. And what happens immediately? Paul says, so he, Paul, trembling and astonished, Paul's response was he was trembling and astonished, and he said, Lord, Lord, he bows the knee, Lord, what do you want me to do?

He bows the knee and he turns to Christ, and what do you want me to do? He is at Christ's command. There's conversion. He now knows who he is, he trembles, he's astonished, and he bows the knee, and he does the Lord's will.

Now, Paul's sinfulness was exceedingly abundant. He was a blasphemer, he was a persecutor, he was an insolent man, his sin was exceedingly abundant, which is why he says that God's grace is exceedingly abundant.

In verse 14, Paul exemplifies a personal gratitude and amazement that such an arrogant sinner and vicious opponent of Christ would be a recipient of saving grace.

In Acts 8, 9, of course, we see the narrative of this occurring. So this brings us to our third point, that exceedingly abundant grace that overwhelms sinners produces astonishment of God's grace.

[27:12] Exceedingly abundant grace that overwhelms sinners produces astonishment of God's grace. So our third point is astonishment of grace. grace. So the overwhelming grace, the enabling of grace, a recipient of grace, and now astonishment of grace.

Picking up in verse 14, it says, And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That phrase, exceedingly abundant, what it means, what's at the root of it, is to experience extraordinary abundance.

Okay? Extraordinary abundance. And the Greek lexicon includes the example of a vessel that becomes too full. So a vessel that is running over or overflowing.

So exceedingly abundant is overflowing, running over, overwhelmed. And the grace of our Lord overflowed for me, overwhelming, grace.

Now imagine if there was going to be a lot of rain, there's going to be a lot of weather, there's going to be a storm, there's going to be a flood, so somebody thought that they were going to be able to withstand the flood by setting up sandbags.

[28:33] So one bit at a time, one shovel of sand full at a time, they fill the sandbags, they put the sandbags down, and they put up a wall, they fortify themselves with a wall of sandbags that was going to withstand the flood, sandbags, but what comes in is a tidal wave of water that obliterates this wall, obliterates every bag of sand, obliterates every grain of sand, and sends it all over the place.

It's overwhelmed by the tidal wave. It's overwhelmed. Paul is overwhelmed by the grace of God. God. And the astonishment of grace, the overwhelming grace that saves sinners, we see is accompanied with faith and love.

And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. The reception of grace is always accompanied with faith and love.

And then in verse 15, it says, this is a faithful saying. Now this phrase, a faithful saying, what does it mean?

A faithful saying, because Paul uses this five times in the pastoral epistles. A faithful saying, it means a short catchphrase that's easy to memorize.

[29:59] It's easy to remember. A short catchphrase that's pithy, it's concise, it summarizes, and it's easy to memorize. So this faithful saying that he's about to say, something that should be remembered, something that should be memorized.

And in this particular instance, in verse 15, this catchphrase, this faithful saying, is a summary of the main thrust of the gospel. Remember, after looking at the law, we want to have a right understanding of the harmony between the law and the gospel.

The law points out sin, it doesn't save. That's what he's saying about the false teachers, is they're misusing the law. The law is not intended to save. It points out sin, it drives to Christ, the gospel saves.

And here we have a summary of the gospel, the glorious gospel of the blessed God, and a catchphrase that's easy to remember, it's easy to memorize. So he says, this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.

This little catchphrase should be accepted as truth. It's worthy of all acceptance. Acceptance as what? Acceptance as truth. In other words, it is trustworthy.

[31:16] It is trustworthy. It is worthy of belief. It is worthy of your believing it, accepting it as truth. This is a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to be a nice guy.

If you've all been memorizing it, then that's probably some red flags going off in your mind. No, that's not it. It's not what it's saying. It's not what it says. That's not why Christ Jesus came into the world.

No, Jesus came into the world to exemplify moral living. It's not it either. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

That is a short, concise, catchphrase that's easy to memorize. It's a summary of the main thrust of the gospel. Christ Jesus, the word Christ, what does that mean?

It means anointed one, the Messiah, the one who was prophesied throughout the Old Testament, the Lord's Messiah. It's the promised skull-crushing seed of the woman in Genesis 3.15.

[32:26] It's the seed of Abraham through whom all the nations would be blessed. It's the lion of Judah. It's the descendant, the son of David and the Davidic monarchy whose throne and whose kingdom there would be no end.

We have the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Messiah king, the son of God. It's the Christ, the anointed one, Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, according to the human nature that the son of God came in human form.

He took to himself a body. He assumed our nature, was born under the law, born of the Virgin Mary, Jesus of Nazareth. And the human nature, the son of God, it was not converted into human nature.

It was not mixed. It was not confused. Rather, it was united. The divine nature, remaining as the divine nature, united to the human nature, unmixed, and the one person of Jesus Christ.

Christ Jesus came into the world. This is speaking of the incarnation. He came into the world for what purpose? What was the purpose of the incarnation?

[33:32] To save sinners. Sinners. That mankind, in a fallen, sin, cursed world, is unable to save himself, is under the condemnation and wrath of God because of sin, and stands condemned, and is unable to fix the sin problem.

And Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, to fix the sin problem, to perfect righteousness, which is required to be in a right standing before God, to suffer and die as a substitute in the place of his people who are sinners, to satisfy divine justice that we who are sinners might be reconciled to a holy, righteous, and just God.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And it goes on to say, of whom I am chief. Remember Paul, in going over the moral law, he points out some pretty heinous things.

The worst of sinners, murders of fathers and murders of mothers, but yet Paul exhibits himself as a model of a sinner saved by grace.

He exhibits himself as a model of a recipient of saving grace, of overwhelming grace. And this, remembering the greater context of what's going on in this letter, this makes it real to the counterfeit teachers, because the counterfeit teachers, they didn't understand the law.

[34:53] They didn't understand the things they were saying, but they wanted to be teachers of the law. And Paul, before his conversion, he was an expert of the law.

So if Paul, who was an expert of the law, is a chief of sinners, then what does that say about those who were lesser than him and their understanding of the law?

If they think they're saved by the use of the law, then that means that they're even worse off than the chief of sinners. So this really makes it real for the counterfeit teachers who did not understand the law, that they thought that they were teaching by misusing and abusing it.

They think that they are righteous by the law, but these counterfeit teachers, they were not experts in the law like Saul was. Saul was an expert.

He wasn't ignorant. He was the chief of sinners, therefore those ignorant counterfeit teachers, thinking that they were righteous by the law, as far as the law goes, were much less than Saul.

[35:55] Remember, the law does not save. That is not the purpose of the law. It exposes sin and it drives to Christ. It is Christ who saves. It is the gospel that saves, not the use of the law.

So I think this is a very important question to ask, whether you're, it's an examination of your life before you were saved, to drive you to thanksgiving as Paul bursts out in, or whether you are not yet saved.

This is a very important question to ask. Do you think you are too sinful to be saved? Or maybe have you ever looked at somebody and thought you never see them in church?

You thought they're just too ungodly to be saved. Do you think that you're too sinful to be saved, or do you think somebody might be too sinful to be saved? Well, Christ Jesus came into the world not to save the righteous, but to save sinners.

And when, remember that Paul just worked through examples of lawbreakers of the moral law. You could say, okay, well, what about the lawless and insubordinate?

[37:11] Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Okay, but what about the ungodly? What about sinners? What about the unholy? What about the profane? Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Well, what about murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers? Surely, surely not them. Surely they can't be saved. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. What about manslayers?

They don't deserve to be saved. No, they don't deserve to be saved. Nobody deserves to be saved, and that's why it's exceedingly abundant grace, and that's why Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

What about fornicators and sodomites? Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. What about kidnappers, those who steal people for the slave trade, or for other purposes, for the sex trade?

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. What about liars and perjurors and those who teach false doctrine? Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

[38:21] What about Saul of Tarsus, an expert of the law who persecuted the church severely? What about Saul of Tarsus who persecuted Christ?

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief. So back to that question I asked, do you think that you are too sinful to be saved?

What have you got that exceeds this category of sinners? What have you got that makes you worse than the chief of sinners? Grace is exceedingly abundant because sin is exceedingly abundant and Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

So some concluding uses that we can take of this. It's interesting that Paul says, he says, this is a trustworthy saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

He says, of whom I am chief. Now Paul prior to his conversion, what does he say about himself prior to his conversion? He was a blasphemous, violent sinner.

[39 : 35] Paul was a recipient of saving grace. When Paul writes this, when Paul writes chapter, or verse 15, he has been a recipient of saving grace. He has been saved.

He is a renewed man. But notice Paul doesn't say that he was the chief of sinners. Certainly before his conversion, he was the chief of sinners.

He was blasphemous. He was a persecutor. He was an insolent man. But that's not what he says. He doesn't say he was the chief of sinners.

He says, I am the chief. Now, that doesn't mean that he's continuing in those things. It doesn't mean that he has now a license for licentiousness, that he's continued to be the chief of sinners.

Rather, he says, I am chief. After Paul itemizes the moral law, after going through the moral law and law breakers, and the examples of the immoral, and having looked at the law and how the law exposes sin, the law does its work in Paul.

[40 : 46] And so Paul understands his own sinfulness, his unworthiness, and therefore the overwhelming grace of God to him. Paul, as a prototypical recipient of grace, Paul's response through all of this is gratitude.

Remember, he starts off by saying, and I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me. So if you're a believer this morning, what is your response to God's overwhelming grace?

When you look at the law, the law exposes sin, when you look at the law as a believer, when you look at the law as a rule and guide of life, of what is God moral standard, and you understand sinfulness, and you understand the exceedingly abundant grace of God in the gospel, what is your response to God's overwhelming grace?

Furthermore, to everybody, what is your view of yourself when you look at the law? When you look at the moral law of God, what is your view of yourself?

What do you think? Are you like those condemned counterfeits who exalt themselves through a misuse of the law? Or are you like Paul?

[42 : 13] Overwhelmed by the gravity of your sinfulness, that is lawlessness, overwhelmed by the mercy of God, and overwhelmed by the grace of God, this is the only true reception of the gospel, to say, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

If a person truly understands themselves by the light of faith, against the backdrop of God's moral law and our law breaking, that is in the mirror of God's law, then they will not say, I am worthy, rather they will say, I am chief, I am a foremost sinner.

sinner. And that means acknowledging your sinfulness, and acknowledging utter need of salvation, reception of undeserved saving grace, apprehension of mercy, and being overwhelmed with astonishment at the depth of God's grace to another chief of sinners.

Praise God for his grace in the glorious gospel of the blessed God, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Lord, we thank you again for your word and what your word reveals to us in your law, in revealing sin, and exposing sin, and condemning sin, and pointing and driving us to Christ.

We thank you for the gospel, for the glorious gospel of our blessed God. We thank you that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am!

[43 : 48] Chief. I pray, Lord, that your law would indeed do its work in pointing out sin, and driving us to Christ, and causing believers to burst out being overwhelmed with gratitude, and being a recipient of overwhelming grace, and Lord, for the unbelievers, that indeed they would be overwhelmed by the exceedingly abundant grace of the gospel in Christ, and that they would turn from a misuse of the law, and an assumption of being righteous by comparing against sinfulness in this world, but by the backdrop of the moral standard requiring perfect, exact, entire, perpetual obedience that lost sinners would indeed see the need of salvation and be driven to Christ, to receive and rest in Christ alone for salvation.

Pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.