

1 Timothy 1: 12-14; “Grace; Special and Particular”, Sermon # 6 in the series – “Honoring God in the Church”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 18th, 2011, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

Grace is always something that surprises the believer in Jesus Christ. It is something which no person has a right to expect. By nature, before conversion, the person who will be saved is a child of wrath, even as the rest. And so, when God sovereignly comes and works in their heart, it surprises them. When they first believe and begin to grow in grace, they learn that God had set His infinite love upon them long before they ever considered loving Him. As they read the Word of God they come to realize that they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; they were underserving and unworthy of His saving help. And as they grow up a little more in the Christian life, they find it hard to believe that He could so change them, that they would now love to serve Him more than they once loved the service of sin. The Christian life is full of surprises because our God is a God of infinite wisdom and powerful grace. But not only is God’s favor towards sinners surprising; but the quality and the quantity of the on-going grace of enablement is even more surprising. Grace is not only God’s favor; it is also His enablement. It is His giving you, the believer, the power to become a child of God, and to live the Christian life. This grace, as it is described for us here by the Apostle Paul from his own experience, is termed “exceedingly abundant”. Paul will go on to describe what this grace is like in succeeding verses. What I would like for us to realize, this afternoon, is that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is exceedingly abundant towards all believers, both in our conversion to Christ, and in our service to God that follows our conversion. It was not just exceedingly abundant toward Paul, but it is also exceedingly abundant toward each one of you who believes in Jesus. The truth that will cause us to realize how exceedingly abundant the grace of our Lord is toward us who believe; will be when we realize how special and particular His grace really is. God’s design in the gift of His grace is special, and it is particularly suited to your case. The Apostle Paul, here, speaks not only for himself, but for each person who believes. And he describes this grace in these 3 ways. 1st – God’s grace is special and particular in that He was the One who knew all of our motives and still drew near to save us. (Verse 13) 2nd – His grace is special and particular in that God through Jesus is the One who gave us faith. (verse 14) And 3rd – His grace is special and particular in that God through Jesus is the One who teaches us love. (verse 14b)

1st of all – God’s grace is special and particular in that He is the One who knew all of our motives and still drew near to us to save us.

“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.” I hope that you know, that God knows all your motives for doing everything that you do at any given time. When the risen Christ confronted Paul on the Damascus Road it was not because He didn’t understand Paul perfectly, when He said to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ “Is it hard for you to kick against the goads?” This was not a question that the Lord needed to be informed about. He already knew the answer. He spoke the question for Saul’s sake. There was zeal in Paul’s heart before conversion, but it was a murderous zeal; to attack anyone who identified themselves with Jesus Christ; anyone who said that salvation was found in Him alone; anyone who said that Christ’s righteousness was necessary to find favor with God. There was righteousness in Saul’s heart and life before conversion, but it was his own righteousness coming from his outward obedience to the requirements which the Law sets forth. But our text states that even though Saul was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent, injurious man, he obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly in unbelief. Now Paul is not trying to justify or excuse his sin. His sins was very real, it was very grievous, it would have been damning had not the grace of Christ intervened. Paul was a blasphemer in the particular sense that he spoke evil of Christ – the 2nd Person of the blessed Trinity. He would dismiss the claims and evidence that Jesus was indeed the true Messiah, and he would slander and revile Christ to everyone he could. Paul was not a blasphemer in that he spoke evil of God; misusing and taking His name in vain. He was against the idea that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. He was a persecutor. He wanted to force Christians to blaspheme, as well as his voting against them, and agreeing to, and planning their punishment. The Lord Jesus knew the thoughts and the intents of Saul’s heart, and our Lord knew that Saul was truly and sincerely ignorant of the outstanding facts of Christ’s death, and especially, Christ’s resurrection. He did not know anything about the death of Christ, or the power of His resurrection. He had heard, no doubt, that Jesus had claimed to fulfill the law, and had by His perfect obedience purchased salvation for all of God’s people; but he could not believe that it was true. How could he believe such a thing? His sinful unbelief and self-righteous zeal were not the sin unto death, as grievous as they were. He was not sinning against what he knew was true, but he was sinning against what he believed was false. This is why he obtained mercy; not that he merited it, but because Christ took pity on him to show him the truth. The one who was breathing threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, would find mercy. One who was so exceedingly enraged against Christ would find His grace exceedingly abundant. In the Greek it reads, “I was mercied”.

*Marvelous grace of our loving Lord; grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt.”
“Yonder on Calvary’s mount outpoured, there where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.*

Now ask yourself; what are the motives which kept me, or keep me, from becoming a Christian? How do I justify my unbelief, my anger, my skepticism? Perhaps I am just the opposite of Saul. Instead of being exceedingly enraged at Christ; you were, or you are, exceedingly complacent. You don't think that you need to make any response to the great things which Christ has done by His obedience unto death on the cross. O my dear friends. Would it not be better for you to be zealously trying to find and to promote the truth, than to be utterly passive and neglect so great a salvation? You say – "I do not sense faith at all at work in me". Then stay with me a little longer while I show you how special and particular His grace really is.

2ndly – God's grace is both special and particular in that God is the One who has given us faith.

Faith itself – the ability to believe – comes from Jesus. Do you see it in the text? Verse 14 – "And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." The faith is found "in Christ Jesus". It is not found in yourself. It is truth that your faith is in Christ Jesus. But that is not the emphasis in what Paul is talking about. Whenever you find that you do not have faith, or whenever you sense that you cannot exercise faith because it is low or lacking in your heart; you must come to Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the source and origination of your faith. If you come to Christ for salvation, you must realize that you did not just come for a one time gift of grace. You have come to Jesus for forgiveness, and strength to do God's will in every particular. You come to Him each and every day for the faith to go on.

"I know not how this saving faith to me He did impart, nor how believing in His word wrought peace within my heart." "I know not how the Spirit moves convincing men of sin, revealing Jesus through the Word, creating faith in Him." "But I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able, to keep that which I've committed unto Him against that Day." (Hymn 712 in the Trinity Hymnal)

If you lack faith and would greatly like to see more faith being exercised by yourself, then you must look to Jesus. Faith begins, and continues to grow, by looking at Jesus as He is portrayed in the Word, and looking to the risen Jesus who is now seated at the right hand of God. We cannot see Him with physical eyes. But with the eyes of our heart, we can. Hebrews Chapter 12, verse 2 – "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." The grace of faith comes to each believer based upon the perfect faithfulness of Jesus; to have first of all, lived a perfect life of faith in the sight of His God and Father, and then having so loved us, that He died for

our sins upon the cross. By faith Jesus kept every commandment of the Father perfectly. From the merit of His righteous life came our spiritual life. From the sacrifice of His death, came the forgiveness of our sins; the greatest of which was unbelief. And so the spiritual life that has been given to us by the Father and the Son is primarily the grace of faith; the enablement to trust in Christ for the grace and strength to do the will of God as we find it written in His Word. This trust is an on-going faith in Christ to be able to do all things through Christ who strengthens me. It is His life in my life, enabling me to walk by faith, and to go about to do and keep the commandments of God by faith in Christ Himself. Galatians 2: 20 – “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” “I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.” O that you and I would see how faith comes to us, and how it grows! Paul says in Galatians 3: 1 – “O foolish Galatians!” “Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?” “This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” You see, obeying the truth comes from the hearing of faith. But the enablement to hear by faith is a grace given to us by Christ. O may your seeing Christ with the eye of faith be established and develop more and more. “Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11: 6) And then the writer goes on to describe the great things that were done for God and for Christ by faith. Let me ask you whether you are diligently seeking God? Do you see Christ as the author and perfecter of your faith? All the grace which will lead you to a greater obedience to God is found in Him.

And then 3rd – God’s grace is special and particular in that God through Jesus Christ is the One who teaches us love. (verse 14b)

“And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” Biblical love is no sentimental thing. It is a very practical matter, of having your heart go out to the Lord Jesus; to ask Him what you might do for Him, because you have come to know the reality of His great love for you. Strong feelings and emotions of love to God the Father for sending His Son; strong convictions that you desire to walk worthy of the calling wherewith He has called you. Look at Ephesians 5: 1. “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.” “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” This grace of love is very special and very particular. “We love Him because He first loved us.” “Love is a giving our of ourselves, our lives; in the small things and small actions in life. And these acts of love lead to the greater acts of loving obedience to God and to Christ. The love of Jesus was like this. Turn to John 13: 1 – “Now before the feast

of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” Jesus had loved the disciples in many ways already. He had taught them and shown them by His example, what love was. It was putting God first in everything; obeying Him in things small and great; loving Him with all His heart; keeping His commandments in all the particulars; but in all of that devotion, not losing sight of the needs of people all around Him. He was getting ready to go to the cross, but look at verse 3. “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.” “After that He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.” It is very interesting; Christ’s obedience of love. He loved God with all of His heart, and yet, when He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands, because of this perfect devotion to His Father; His very next act was not to say to His disciples: “Wash my feet now, for I am weary and going to be going to the cross.” His very next act of love was toward His disciples; to wash their feet. This is called, “Loving them to the end.” This was the love that was in Christ Jesus then. And it is the basis of the love which Christ has toward us now. A living faith must have works and those works are done out of a love which was first found in Christ. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything (nothing sacramental) but faith working through love.” (Galatians 5: 6) Christ showed this kind of love to His disciples when He took up the basin and the towel and loved them to the end of His life. And He, by His grace, leads us on to do the same; to be enabled to serve Him by coming to the place where we will serve others; to glorify Christ by the way that we live. Do you know by experience, the grace of the Lord Jesus to be exceedingly abundant? And that with it comes the reality of faith and love in exercise because of the life of the Lord Jesus which is in your life? It is He who is really communicating these graces to us.