



## **Unit 1: You on Mission**

**Sermon Series Title:** The Heart of a Disciple-Maker

**Sermon 5:** Confirmation of a Disciple-Maker

**Bible Passage:** 1 Corinthians 15:8-10; Acts 9:1-2, 15-16

### **Background/Context**

Having addressed some of the problems related to worshipping God committed by those in the church at Corinth, Paul turned his attention to some irregular views concerning the resurrection of the dead. First, he reminded the believers of the importance of the gospel they accepted. Then he confirmed the history of Christ's resurrection by naming the people or the number of eyewitnesses (vv. 4–11). He included the resurrection as an important element of the gospel. He added that believers will be resurrected based on the truth of Christ's resurrection (vv. 12–19). Christ's resurrection and the fact that He is the first to be raised from the dead, never to die again, guarantees the second coming of Christ (vv. 20–28). Paul dealt with the question of why Christians should be willing to suffer for Christ if the resurrection is not legit. He then called for the Corinthians to relinquish any reservations they had and to witness to their faith in a risen Christ (vv. 29–34).

At the end of Chapter 15, Paul discussed the nature of the resurrection body and the victory believers have over death that was afforded to them through Jesus Christ (vv. 35–58).

### **A. Present Position**

**(1 Cor. 15:8-9; Acts 9:1-2)**

At the end of discussing those who saw the risen Savior, Paul included himself, “one born at the wrong time” (v. 8). This is a designation he used to refer to his late arrival in the chain of eyewitnesses to Christ's resurrection (Acts 9:1-6). In his letter to the Ephesian church, he said, “This grace was given to me—the least of all saints...” (Eph. 3:8). He also told Timothy that he was the chief of all sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). We must understand that Paul came to the apostleship late because he was not one of the original twelve. Paul also considered himself least because of his past. He stated, “because I persecuted the church of God.” When he was still called Saul, he spoke threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, while also putting men and women in prison (Acts 9:1-2). No, he was not proud of his “pre-Christian” behavior. He looked at his actions not as something to boast about, but as something he regretfully carried out.

Paul was empowered to teach and practice that saints should not think of themselves more highly than they should (Rom. 12:3). He displayed the mindset that people should humble themselves under the mighty hand of God and allow God to exalt them in His own timing. Why? Because “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5).

Just like Paul, we all have pasts that do not give honor to God. Every one of us is an “ex” something, whether it’s a liar, backbiter, fornicator, adulterer, thief, gossip, etc. But, the good news is that we can use our past actions and conditions to help us appreciate where we are now, and to keep us humble before a God who looked beyond our faults.

**Application Point:** It’s important to remember how far we’ve come. How have you allowed your past to define your present situation? How do you show others you are confident in the power of God to change lives? Take the opportunity to share with others your position in Christ today.

## **B. Present Performance (1 Cor. 15:10; Acts 9:15-16)**

Paul was chosen by Christ to be His spokesman to Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel: “...this man is my chosen instrument to take my name to Gentiles, kings, and Israelites. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name” (Acts 9:15-16). Christ had many things that He would use Paul for in His name’s sake. This commission given by Christ fueled Paul’s present performance (work). He declared that he “worked harder than any of them” (the other apostles).

Paul established numerous churches including the churches at Philippi, Ephesus, and Corinth. Furthermore, the Apostle testified of his labor and his adversities. “Are they servants of Christ? I’m talking like a madman—I’m a better one: with far more labors, many more imprisonments, far worse beatings, many times near death. Five times I received the forty lashes minus one from the Jews. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day in the open sea. On frequent journeys I faced dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea, and dangers among false brothers; toil and hardship, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, cold, and without clothing. Not to mention other things, there is the daily pressure on me: my concern for all the churches.” (2 Cor. 11:23–28).

Yet, Paul declared that his performance was not his doing, but rather the grace of God within him. Grace made it possible for Paul to have joy to sing and praise in prison. Grace helped him have courage go to Jerusalem even when chains awaited him. Grace assisted him in being willing to sacrifice, to be beaten, and mistreated for the sake of the gospel. Grace made it possible for him to have faithfulness to write letters and go on missionary journeys. God’s grace enabled him to love the ungodly, the unlovable, and the sinful. God’s grace gave him steadfastness to finish the course God put before him. This is why Paul declared “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain.” The grace of God covers the sins of the believer (Rom. 5:20). The grace of God cleanses believers of their sins because the Lord has declared them righteous in His sight (Rom. 3:24).

**Application Point:** What has God’s grace accomplished in you? As you look back over your life, how have you not allowed God’s grace to work in you? It’s easy to under-perform in our Christian walk, yet we should remain determined to show evidence that God has changed us into a new creature in Christ Jesus.