

## March 19

**1 Corinthians 15:9-10 (NIV)** <sup>9</sup> For I [Paul] am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

She entered the Target store to purchase a few items. The day was progressing “normally” until she spotted a display case of COVID masks. Something snapped inside of her as rage exploded in her heart and mind. Using her phone and Instagram Live, she live streamed what followed. She began to rant and rave, using expletive-filled statements as she began pulling masks from the display and throwing them to the ground. Store personnel tried to stop the woman, but her violent behavior stopped them. They called the police and presented the video. Since that incident, the video has been watched over 8.4 million times. Instantly, the woman became the object of ridicule, condemnation, and vitriol from people around the world.

Needless to say, her life was ruined as she lost her business, her family, and her friends. No one seemed to have any compassion for her because of her horrifying actions. Months later, Melissa Lively chose to speak. She shared that the pandemic hit home when her brother and his wife were stranded in China at the outbreak of the pandemic. Subsequently, Melissa developed a fear that caused her to retreat behind a mask and from friends and family. She found QAnon and fell victim to their dire forecasts of economic doom. Fear of death, the future, and her livelihood escalated, until, as she put it, the dominoes began to fall, leading to her uncontrolled behavior in the Target store. Melissa is now in therapy, trying to put her life together and trying to repair the damage her actions caused. When I read the “rest of the story,” I remembered I was one who mocked, criticized, and judged her when I first saw the video. Sadly, I probably would have done the same to Paul. When we reach such judgments, we remove God’s grace from our lives and the lives of others. Our present world cares little about showing grace, forgiveness, and restoration. Instead, it judges, condemns, and tosses people aside based upon one moment. This is not the way of the Kingdom of God. We all are recipients of His grace that redeemed us from pasts that were as destructive as Melissa’s. Jesus did not give up on us; we must not give up on others. We are to seek the way of grace, not the way of judgement and condemnation.