

Acts 18_pt1

by Bill Gallatin

Bill Gallatin's sermon explores Paul's mission in Corinth, highlighting the city's moral challenges and the transformative power of God's grace.

Duration: 57:04

Scripture: Acts 17:18-19, Romans 1:22-23, Romans 5:20

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher describes the city of Corinth during the time of the Roman Empire. He emphasizes how the people of Corinth had turned away from God and worshiped creatures instead of the Creator. The society had become morally corrupt, with rampant lesbianism and the worship of the Roman god Bacchus, associated with alcohol and sexual pleasure. The preacher also highlights the tolerance and acceptance of all religions in Corinth, which led to a society where all paths were believed to lead to God.

Transcript

The book of Acts, God's really directing Paul now. You remember he, again by persecution, people not responding in mass, yet God touching a life here or there in important places. We know in the Areopagus, a very powerful man and woman, but then it ended in the debate as, you know, the philosophers, the Stoics, the Epicureans, wanted to debate with Paul over Jesus Christ and the resurrection because they didn't believe in those things.

And then some believed, and the way it is today in mankind, some believed, some didn't. Some said, well, we'll hear you again on this matter. And so after that, he moved down to Corinth, which is one of the major cities of the world outside of Athens and Rome.

Now remember, the world was under a one world government at this time. Rome had conquered the world, Pax Roma. There was a, because of the power and the military threat of Rome, there was a peace all over the world, and it was ruled by Rome.

And there was the Roman government over Greece, and at the southern portion of Greece was Corinth. And it was probably the most famous city on earth for its debauchery, its sensuality and perversion of all the cities of the world, a major city. Now, it was right on an isthmus.

As you go down to the southern tip of Achaia, which was Greece, you'd see a five-mile portion of the country that separated the Adriatic and the Aegean Sea. And then it would balloon out beneath Corinth into a large portion or remaining portion of Greece. It was the trading center of east and west outside of Ephesus of the known world.

And your Arabian balsam would come through there on the way to Italy and west into Europe. Your Phrygian slaves, the Arabs were, as they do today, the Arabs were the leaders in the slave market. In fact, the leaders, in fact, the Muslims today are selling by the hundreds of thousands the black Africans as slaves.

It's a real flourishing trade. UN doesn't say anything about it, but it's still, the Muslims to this day are still doing it in the Arabs. The Babylonian carpets, the famous carpets would come through, have to go through Corinth.

Egyptian papyrus, the Libyan ivory from Africa, all these things, the Phoenician dates, the Cilician goat's hair, the famous Cilician goats from Turkey had that special fiber in their hair in the oil that the people would make their tents out of that could actually breathe, air could get through, but it would retain heat because it would be black and it would repel moisture, snow and rain. It's amazing, but fresh air would come through and it would be like an air conditioning. Amazing, the Cilician goats hair.

So, all these different cultures and all this wealth pouring through Corinth. Now, the reason they stopped at Corinth, the port of Sanctuary on the eastern side, if they went down below the southern tip of Greece, the currents were so terrible, the word was if a sailor went south rather than through Corinth, they might as well say goodbye to their families, you'll never see him again. It was much like Cape Horn, and I think in Africa, the deadly current says the Aegean Adriatic Sea would meet in the Mediterranean, and so no shipper would go that way.

In fact, it would even take much longer, several days, even weeks longer to go that way. So, they would unload all their lading in Sanctuary on the eastern side of the five-mile Isthmus, and then they would have porters that would haul all the goods across the five-mile portion of land and reload it in the ships and send it toward Rome across the other side of the sea, the Adriatic. Now, because of all the different cultures and the wealth, debauchery set in.

Not only did they have drunkenness, in fact, in Greek theater all over the world and in Rome in those days, whenever a Corinthian was portrayed on the stage, he was portrayed as a drunkard. When someone was living a licentious, perverted life, they're referred to as playing the Corinthian. It was worldwide famous.

Not only were they perverse, but their religion was debauched. A thousand feet or more above Corinth was a necropolis with the Temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of sex, with over a thousand prostitutes. And they would come down into the city every night and ply their trade in religious services, the prostitutes.

A Greek man had a wife, but she was not allowed in the public. She would stay home and raise the children and cook and keep the house. It was accepted in society the Greek man would have a mistress, concubines for sexual pleasure.

It was accepted in society that the Greek man also would have a beautiful woman just to take around and be seen in the public with him. That was that society. Another principal god that they worshiped was the Roman god Bacchus, or the god of alcohol and sexual pleasure.

So here's a society after Paul leaves Athens, the city of the great universities of the world, now the Spirit of God leads him in God's providence down to the most debauched, sensual, perverted, wealthy city of the world other than Rome. Now it's interesting, you remember when Paul's writing to the Romans in chapter 5, he says, where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. Now it's interesting, as Paul was in this city and began to see the culture and what the people allowed, the freedoms that they have, he wrote two letters, you remember five years later after he has left and initially started the gospel in Corinth, you remember he is writing to Rome and he writes in his Roman letters and he describes the Gentile world under the one world government as he saw it depicted in Corinth.

So turn to Romans chapter 1 to show you what Corinth was like. Paul described it, writing and describing the Gentile world as he was in Corinth. Verse 22, he says, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

They were very intelligent people. Again, remember they had great universities. If you travel and one of the greatest sources of income of Rome and Greece are the archaeological remains of Paul's day, the buildings, the genius of their engineering, their buildings.

If the Lord leaves the door open, we're going to Ephesus, we're going to visit a city of marble larger than Canaan and Dagua and see the very judgment seat where Paul defended himself from the silversmiths. We're going to be able to walk the street. It's amazing.

I've been there before. It takes your breath away, the beauty of these cities that remain today. But since professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

They changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. In other words, they became tolerant. They were an advanced society and they allowed all faiths, all religions.

There were no such thing as hate crimes. All paths led to God. And so to have a society, they were tolerant of everything.

And they began to depict God in all kinds of various forms. Wherefore, and idolatry always leads to sexual perversion. When a society leaves the truth concerning God, a society becomes perverted.

Sexual perversion is the next stage. So God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts. When Satan can get someone into idolatry, then Satan can draw someone into some religion, into some sexual perversion.

Because that religion that Satan has designed will allow it and promote it. And so then there's no conviction of sin. Sin is thrown out of the language.

And so they began to defile themselves. They dishonored their own bodies between themselves. They changed the truth of God into a lie.

Now, remember, Paul's writing this from Corinth. He's living in Corinth, seeing it. This is the great Roman empire, the one world government that ruled the world.

And they changed the truth of God into a lie and worshiped and served the creature more than the creator who was blessed forever. Amen. They became more enamored with nature than with God who created

the animals.

For this cause, God gave them up. In other words, no more conviction. God turned them over.

They became reprobate. In other words, God considered them worthless, many of these people, as human beings. He gave them up for their vile affections.

For even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. Lesbianism was rampant. They began to tolerate it.

And then so the young children began to experiment with it. It began to be portrayed in their entertainment, in the Greek theater. So, lesbianism spread.

And likewise, also the men, leaving the natural use of women, burned in their lust one toward another. Men with men working that which is unseemly. And notice this, and receiving in themselves the reward of their error which was necessary.

They deserved what they got because of their sodomy and their homosexuality. They deserved the disease and the trouble they brought upon themselves by living like animals. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over.

In other words, they're worthless as human beings. To a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient. In other words, as remember, Isaiah declared the sin of Israel, remember, before this.

It says that the Jewish citizens, as they departed from God, went the same road. It says they declared their sin openly as Sodom. Now, these are very intelligent people.

This is Corinth. This is what Paul sees when he gets there. This is the fruit of a one world government under Rome, with tremendous universities, tolerating and giving everyone freedom to do their own thing.

Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, not much marriage anymore. A lot of sex, but no marriage. Wickedness, covetousness, selfish greed and desire for more money.

Maliciousness. People could be very, they were just malicious, angry, violent, nasty, dangerous, full of envy, murder. Murder was rampant.

Debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God. Religious, let's see, haters of the true God, tolerant of all religions, but the one true religion toward God. Despiteful, proud, probably had stickers on the back of their camels and their burls, I'm proud to be a Corinthian.

Inventors of evil things. All you had to do was look at their, the Greek theater, the perversion, disobedient to parents. The family began to break down, and so parents lost control of their kids, and kids lost their respect for their parents.

Without understanding, covenant breakers, you couldn't trust anybody with their word. Without natural affection, you know, even nature picks someone from the opposite sex. But these people were so sick, they didn't have natural affection even for their own babies.

Because of Roman law, if a man didn't want his baby, he would just throw it out in a field for and it was legal, Roman law. Or he'd throw a baby that he didn't want into a pool of lampreys. It's documented.

This is the Corinth that Paul walked into. Highly intelligent people, implacable, unmerciful. That's Corinth.

That's why it says, when they saw a human being, they say it was just out of control. They say, he's a Corinthian. He's playing the Corinth, Corinthian.

Now, he's in Ephesus, and this is after the church is formed, five years later, and he writes back to Corinth. And this is interesting. Turn to 1 Corinthians to show you that grace does abound.

There are people that will respond to the gospel. So turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 6. And this is five years later. After the third missionary journey through Corinth, the church has been established, home Bible studies, and people are leading people to Christ.

And Paul is writing back to the city of Corinth now to encourage them, to remind them of something. The church was letting its guard down. You remember the Corinthian church, when they began to experience the Holy Spirit, became more enamored with the gifts and the external things of the Spirit than Jesus Christ Himself.

And the church got carnal and out of control. And so Paul had to write the Corinthian church the longest letter to correct them for their error, because they didn't know how to operate. They never learned to walk in the Spirit.

They were enamored with the sign gifts, and their services were always being disrupted and chaotic and confusing. And because they couldn't control their own lives and yield and learn to walk in the Spirit, even though they had the gifts of the Spirit, then they couldn't control their flesh. And so here you had people that were experiencing the gifts of the Spirit, but were still having drinking problems, they were fornicating, they were gluttons, and all they wanted to do was party.

And so Paul's writing again to this very city. He's writing back to Corinth, and notice what he tells them in verse 9. Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators. Now remember, he saw when he first went there, you know, five years earlier that we're going to see tonight, they were all involved in this.

But many of these people responded to the gospel. Now it's five years later, and so many people say, well, you know, I don't know if I'm in this Christian thing anymore. And maybe they started to fool around with the wrong crowd again.

Or maybe they weren't as choosy as they should have been with some of their friends, and they began, instead of changing their friends to Christ, they were starting to let their guard down and go back to the old life. And so Paul's hearing about it, and it's creeping into the church in Corinth, and they were doing nothing about it. They knew what was going on, and maybe the, you know, the local pastor of that church or the leader of that home Bible study was so concerned about people keep coming to his house, he knew what was going on.

He wasn't teaching against it or being honest and faithful with the Word of God. But he'd hurt someone's feeling, and maybe they wouldn't show up next week. And so here Satan is getting a foothold again in a place where Paul risked his life, and the Spirit of God began to touch lives.

He says, hey, be not deceived, neither fornicators nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor pedophiles. It's translated effeminate, but it's effeminate because of the people, the type of a person that would go after a

little boy. There were pedophiles accepted in a Corinthian society.

Nor abusers of themselves, a man got homosexuals again. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards. Notice he didn't call it a disease.

God doesn't see these things as a disease or you're a victim. Nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such, now look it, here's the glory of the gospel.

These people say, oh, I can't change. My psychiatrist told me I was born this way, and I can't change. No, a person doesn't want to be changed.

They want to continue on the way they are, and they want God to accept them the way they are. No, you can change. Paul says, such were some of you.

That's us. That's me. That's you.

Paul's writing back to him and says, some of you were living this way. Don't go drifting back or fooling around with those people again. Don't put yourself in that dangerous position to have those old things stirred up again.

Make no provision for the lusts of the flesh. You've been delivered from that. Some of you, but you are washed.

You gave your life to Christ. You've been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. He's cleansed you and forgiven you of all sin.

You are sanctified. God has set you apart. He's responded to your sincerity, to wanting a new life, realizing that it's sin.

It's not a disease. No matter what your society, no matter what the Corinthian society or the Corinthian Constitution says your legal right as a Roman citizen is, and the privacy of your own home. The Bible says you won't see the kingdom of heaven.

And you came under conviction, Paul says, and you changed. You were washed. You were sanctified.

You are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. This is the city that he's going to, Corinth. This is the society.

This is the Gentile world that the gospel is going into. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. What an opportunity to share Christ in a debauched, sick society.

And that's where Paul was, Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla. Now, isn't it wonderful that when we are led by the Spirit, we respond.

God always has someone there. It just seems like, wow, fellowship. God will always have someone there for you to fellowship with.

He won't isolate you. Remember, Jesus said, where two or more are gathered in my name, I am there in your midst. And knowing that truth, Jesus, when he sends us somewhere, you can be sure you're going to bump into someone.

You'll be like-minded. You'll have that unity of the Spirit. You'll be able to fellowship.

May not be a church yet, but he may want to start it with you in your house. Remember, it wasn't until 300 years later that churches actually began to have buildings and auditoriums. The church for the first 300 years was just this beautiful body of believers gathering from house to house, all over cities, spreading all over the world.

It wasn't easy to rent a building, you see, because the Christians were the ones that were the hateful ones, the narrow-minded ones. They were pushed out. They didn't get the jobs.

They couldn't own the property. They wouldn't be able to rent the buildings. And so the church met from house to house on a regular basis.

And it didn't take long. Paul no sooner got there, he's alone at this point, and he meets them. God has someone there coming from another direction.

You can be sure he'll have someone there for you. The reason he was there, now notice this, because Claudius, that was the emperor of Rome at that time, had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome and came in. So here God's using persecution in Rome to send Aquila and Pontus down to Athens.

They don't know that, you know, and this is what I like about the Lord. Now sometimes God may, in a marvelous way, speak and tell you, now I want you to go in such and such a city because such and such is there, and I want you to meet him. No, God in this particular case, and here again, God has so many marvelous ways to direct and bring people together.

Now, he didn't tell Paul to go to Athens because he was going to have Claudius, you know, make an edict to drive the Jews out, and he was going to send Pontus and Aquila to meet him there. I'll have someone there for you, Paul. No, he just said, go to Athens.

And the same thing with, you know, Pontus and Aquila. They didn't know that God had their future all in it. This is the neat thing.

You don't have to worry about the future with God. You may not know what the next day holds. You may not know what the next week holds, but God does, and God's got it under control, you see, and he knows who you need to meet.

He knows what circumstance to design to protect you, to keep you always, and he will. You never have to fear. He may not tell you who the person is, but he'll have that person there.

Now, boy, what a way to go. You know, oh, we're being driven out of our home. We've lost our home, and we're, oh, you know, Rome.

Where are we going to go? What are we going to do? And you meet Paul, the apostle Paul. God has it all lined up, you see, and maybe if he had just simply, in a dream, in a vision, said, Pontus, I want you to take your wife and go to Athens. No way.

It's the devil. I just finished the addition on the house. I just got a raise.

What do you mean you want me to leave? That's not the Lord. No way, and so what's God do? He forces it sometimes, because he says, any other way, you won't respond to me, and it may seem painful and

negative and frightening, but God's still got it under control for your benefit. You never have to worry.

Just trust. Obey, and God always rewards that. He rewards faith tremendously with his own person, and so they get down there, and they meet Paul.

It just happens to be a coincidence. They both have the same trade. They're tent makers, and because he was of the same craft, he abode with them and wrought, for by their occupation, they were tent makers.

Isn't this neat about Paul? Here's a man that he, if he didn't have any money, he didn't take an offering for himself. He didn't write a book to make a quick buck, because he was well known. You know what he did? He went out and got a job.

Until God provided some other way, he went and got a job as he traveled. I remember not too long ago, a young man. He doesn't live in the area anymore, and he didn't understand, evidently.

He came to me, and he was so concerned. It just felt like the people at church didn't love him and didn't respect his efforts to be the pastor. And I said, well, what's the matter? He said, well, they just don't understand what I'm going to do for them.

He had a job at Kodak, and he quit it, and there were 12 people in the church, and he was upset with them, because they weren't meeting his financial needs, weren't paying him a salary, finding him a place to live, and paying his insurance, and taking care of his wife and kids. Twelve people in his church. Since then, he's tried it again, and it hasn't worked.

Now he's got a job somewhere. He's back doing what he should be doing, working and providing for his wife and kids. But the Apostle Paul, if he didn't have any money, he went out and got a job.

You remember he said to the Corinthians, I would not be accountable to any of you. I don't know if I'd buy a tent from him, because you know he didn't have very good eyesight. I mean, I imagine some portions of that tent would really be breezy.

But he worked, and he was an older man. He wasn't a young 20-year-old. And he didn't manipulate the people to give him money, because he was anointed.

He went out and he worked. And then when he wasn't working, he went on the weekends. When he had time off, he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath.

Again, Paul's, you know, the way he worked, to the Jew first and then the Gentile. His tremendous desire and concern for the Jew, his own people, to know Messiah, to know who Jesus Christ was. And he persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. And so he even had more. Now, if we, if you look at the scriptures and the other letters Paul has written, they had, when they showed up, they had a love gift for Paul from one of the churches, the saints in Macedonia.

And he said, not that I even looked for it, but since I've got it now and my needs are being met, I can go to full-time preaching again now. And so here Paul's really out in the streets now, in the synagogues on Saturday, in the streets, going after the Greek Gentiles, preaching the gospel. And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment and he said unto them, your blood be upon your own

heads.

I am clean from henceforth. I'll go unto the Gentiles. Now he pulls from, you remember in Ezekiel chapter three, verse 17, I think through 21, Ezekiel was called to be a watchman for the nation Israel while they were in Babylon, to warn them of the coming judgment.

And God said, I've called you to be a watchman. And if you warn the sinner of the coming judgment faithfully, I will not require their blood at your hands. If they reject your message, if you fail to warn them of my coming judgment, their blood will I require at your hands.

But if you share the truth and warn them of the consequences of their sin and the coming judgment, and if they can turn to me, even if they disregard it and you have no results, their blood will not be required upon your head. And so Paul's drawing from this, he's saying, you know, I'm not going to be responsible what your life ends up as. You've heard the truth.

I've been faithful to share the truth with you. If you perish, if something happens, it won't be my fault. I've shared the truth.

And Paul was so frustrated, you know, because if they would come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, what it could do for them, the deliverance, the power, the life. And he departed thence, and he entered into a certain man's house named Justice, one that worshiped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house, and many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized.

And I would imagine, I would venture a pretty safe guess that when he writes five years later back to Corinth, that the people he's writing to were some of these very same people. These very same people that when he initially went to Athens, heard the gospel, and their lives were turned around. And he said, some of you were this type of a person, and you've been set free, you've been justified, you've been washed.

Stay clean. Stay in the blessings of the Lord. Enjoy the blessing of answered prayer, of fellowship with your Father in heaven, with peace that passes understanding, with the freedom of fear.

You know, my heart goes out to Christians that are tormented. Always the anxiety of the future when they can have such rest and peace because of their relationship with the Lord. Don't let Satan take that from you.

Don't fool around. Stay in fellowship with the Lord that you won't have the anxiety and the fear of the future as a believing child of God. That the blessings of God can come upon you abundantly.

And no matter what happens in your life, then God says, you know, I promise you, I'll give you peace that passes understanding. You'll have the assurance of my presence. You won't need to be discouraged or fearful.

You'll know that I'm with you. God wants that for all of you, all of us. Now notice even Paul gets to a point, and I'm sure he's reflecting back since he first had the vision, come over and help us.

Remember, he's not really well accepted in Jerusalem. In fact, if you really study the life of Paul, he didn't have many friends. He was so in love with Jesus Christ, so faithful to speak the truth of Jesus Christ, he

made lots of enemies.

And a lot of the enemies were people in the church and even his own countrymen because, you know, he's left the faith, he's left Judaism, and he's, you know, forsaken Moses in their eyes, accepting this Jewish Messiah, Jesus. And so by the time he gets there, remember, he's already been stoned to death. He's started several riots.

He's on the go. He doesn't have a wife to go home to and cry and have her pray for him. He doesn't know where his next bed's going to be.

And it's probably just getting to the point where he's going, is it worth it? Am I going to make it? Is this what God wants me to do? And there are legitimate doubts sometimes as a believer. God understands these things, and he'll never, and this is a wonderful thing, and Paul again writes back to Corinth, and I'm sure Paul is speaking to them and always through his own experience, he says, God will never give you more than you can bear. And with every temptation he allows to come into your life or difficulty, he will always make a way of escape for you.

God, you know, will never overdo it to the point where you'll be discouraged. The smoking flax he will not put out. A bruised reed he will not break, Isaiah speaks of the Lord.

How gracious he is. He'll never push us beyond the point where we can't, you know, maintain. He's perfect in his designs for our life to cause us to need him, to want him, to cause our prayer life to increase, to know more of him, to realize more of his personality, who he is, what he's like, to be aware of his presence, assured of it.

And these things he designs causes that to happen in our life. Now notice, here's Paul. Now, the very statement that is made here shows that he was coming to a point in his life, he says, I don't know if I can go on.

You ever felt like that? I don't know if I can go on. There are people, you know, people are lying about him. People are rejecting him.

Instead of responding to the gospel, he's being arrested, run out of town. His friends are turning on him. Sometimes he feels alone.

He's in the midst of this sensual, debauched society. And Satan's probably saying, why even try to hang on? Enough of this holiness. Why don't you just let go a little bit and relax? Just have a couple of drinks and just, you know, have at it.

Is it worth it? And notice, here's the faithfulness of the Lord, and the Lord will be just as faithful with you and I. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision. He said, be not afraid. Well, that absolutely proves that Paul was afraid.

Maybe he felt like, you know, maybe what's next? Am I going to be thrown in jail again? Satan has a way that when your trial's over and God begins to work, you know, things calm down for a while, and you start to see things stir up again, and you go, oh no, here we go. What's, now what? What's next? What's God going to do next in my life? And you wonder, what's Satan, what's he going to allow? And Satan has a way of coming and saying, man, God's really going to wipe you out this time. You've got a trial coming.

You aren't going to make it in this one, you know. And it can almost paralyze you. You go, that's it.

I've had it. This is as far as I go with faith. I don't want to go anymore.

I just want to take it easy until the rapture. And you get a little gun-shy. You think, I just don't know if I can go through another thing like this last one I went through.

The thing is, you got through it. That's what we forget. And Paul was there, as James writes, even concerning Elijah.

Remember, we are subject, we are men, women, subject under the control of the same passions, the fears. We're human, and God understands that. Now, many times in my own life, I've discovered that where there's an area of self-confidence, God begins to allow a breakdown.

Where I won't trust in myself, or I think it's going to be easy, or some area where I'm taking it for granted, God designs something to force me to depend upon Him, and a weakness comes out that I'm not aware it was there, because I've been avoiding it. And I can deceive myself into thinking I have more strength than I really do, because I'm avoiding, I'm running from it. And so God knows that.

And sometimes He'll design something, and He'll bring out the weakness. Never be afraid of the thing He's bringing out of you, because once He brings it out, it's gone, and He replaces it with Himself, with His victory. And once He replaces it with Himself, you never have to go through it again.

And you always come out stronger, conform more into the image of Jesus Christ. But you see, many times I'm guilty of self-confidence, because I'm avoiding certain things, and I think, well, hey, I'm on a roll, things are easy, and I'm not growing, and I don't realize it. The weakness is still down in there, and I'm not identifying it, I'm not admitting to it, I'm just avoiding every situation that might reveal the weakness, because I don't want anybody to know about it.

God says, no, I want to use you more. I want to give you more faith. I've got more for your life.

And so God designs something, and all of a sudden, my self-confidence is gone, and the weakness comes flying out, and it's like, Lord, I don't like this. God says, when I'm finished with you, you will, because it'll never be in your life again. I'm going to replace it with more of Myself, and you'll be more effective as My child.

And the very thing you desire, the very thing that you may see in some older saint or someone else that God is using that you know you don't have now, it'll be in your life. And you don't have to be afraid about admitting being afraid. That's not my problem anymore.

You know, Satan gets you out of this lie, well, that's not faith. It takes more faith to be honest than to lie about how you really are, because God knows already you're scared inside. Why not just admit it? Because He'll come to the rescue.

Be not afraid, but speak. You see, he's probably, you know, wondering, you know, am I gonna make it? Am I gonna get out of this city alive? Am I gonna survive this thing? And notice what he says, but speak, and hold not thy peace. Don't be afraid.

So evidently, Paul's getting to the point where he's saying, you know, I'm just gonna cool it. I just can't handle the stress anymore. I can't handle the rejection for the people that get saved.

I can't handle the lies. I'm tired of it. It's getting the best of me.

And God knowing that saying, I will not give you more than you bear, and God himself came to him in the vision. He said, I am with thee. Man, that's all you need to hear.

I am with you. That's all Moses needed to hear to spend 40 years with a lot of whiners and complainers, unthankful people, because the Lord said, I will be with you. I'll go with you.

Remember Moses said, hey, if you don't go, I'm not going. I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee. Now I'm sure, you see, Paul was thinking, I'm gonna get stoned again.

My body's a mess already. I've got scars. I'm crippled.

I'm half blind. I've been scourged, beaten. I have nowhere to live.

I'm losing my friends. I'd like to have a wife. I'd like to have a house to go home to, to relax a little bit, and so he's probably really having a difficult time.

The Lord says, Paul, I'm with thee. No man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city. Remember, now look at, we just read about that city.

He hasn't led everybody to the Lord yet. He hasn't met everybody yet, but God says, I have much people in this city waiting. They need your life.

You don't know who they are yet, and Satan's doing his best to discourage you, to drive you out, or get you to quit through fear. I have much people. Now, who are these much people? They're the elect.

They're the people that God has known from before, the foundation of the world, that are there in that city, in different places, in different parts of the government, and at different social strata, are waiting to hear Paul preach and respond to the gospel. I have much people in this city, where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. So, what does that tell us? Oh, I'm not going to work here.

There's another believer in the plant. I'm not living in this neighborhood. I'm the only Christian here.

It's amazing what we do. Yet, in the same breath, we go to a meeting. We get all charged up by a real great speaker, and we say, and he says, we want to see someone who wants to be used of God, and they raise their hand, and then God says, I'm going to move you to a neighborhood, and you're going to be the only Christian family on the block.

Start sharing with everybody. Oh, there's another believer here. This is Corinth.

There's too many sinners here, but that's what God does, you see. That's what Paul was facing. Oh, no one's going to get saved in this town.

You see what's on their television? You see what they listen to on their radios? Look at the way these kids are dressing. They got so much metal hanging out of their body, it's the only way they don't get electrocuted is walking under a power line. I mean, and look at the adults.

Violent, angry, nasty. I want to go somewhere where everybody will listen and accept it. No, where sin abounds, that gives God the opportunity through you, through me, to share our faith even more, because He has much people there.

See, they may be perverted. They may be sick, but God loves them. He hates what they're doing, but He loves them, and the gospel can set them free.

This is what did you and I. You see, well, you say, well, I was never like that. You may have been a slave to your own morality. You may have been under your own self-deception of your own morality, because you didn't do some perverse thing like someone else.

And Satan had you just as trapped as the guy that was out of control. He had you trapped in a false sense of security, because you don't do certain things. But we all need to be set free, because remember, Paul, right into the feet, and said, we were darkness.

Every single one of us belonged to Satan. Pawns, whether he made us an upstanding citizen involved in the community, or in a social program, or lying in the gutter, Satan had each one of us run in his kingdom with his morality, his philosophies, his businesses, keeping his system going. Anything.

You could build your building, build a park, be a good painter, be a good philanthropist, do social work, and help the poor, and feed the hungry, but still you don't know Jesus Christ. And you're trapped in a false security of morality, and Satan can send you to hell just as quick, with a white collar around your neck, as a priest, or a minister, or a social worker, as the drunkard, or the drug addict, or the sodomite. If you don't get to Jesus, he's got you, no matter how religious and moral you are, you see.

So Paul says, sin is abounding, but my grace can abound even more. The message of the gospel, the cross, that Jesus Christ died for people like this, people like us, me, you. And that's the light, that's the beauty, that God would love someone like me.

That God was willing to become a man and die for me. And then doing it in the past, dying for me, knowing he's going to offer me salvation, and allowing me to do what I did for 30 years, and still plan to save me, and love me, and forgive me. How can you figure that out? Who can comprehend that love? You see, the deception is, in the beginning, is, well, I must not have been that bad.

That's why God saved me. No, I was very bad. I had an Adamic nature, very easy to sin.

I was a born sinner. I came forth from my mother's womb, speaking lies. And sin did my mother conceive me, David said.

And so God says, Paul, no one will harm me. Please speak your faith. Please speak to these people.

Please let someone know that you know me. And he continued there a year and six months. It could be it had been an hour and six minutes, he was ready to leave town.

He may have been thinking of buying a ticket in Centuria and going to Ephesus then. But you see, God is so faithful. We ask to be used of God, and then we run from an unclean situation, where God maybe has placed us, to reach the very people around us.

Thinking, and maybe Paul thought, I don't have the strength. I'll give in to the sin. Maybe that could have been his fear, too.

Satan's too powerful. I know my flesh. I know my weakness.

But when you're in God's perfect will, you see, nothing can harm thee. So whatever the fear was, whether he'd fail, whether he'd be beaten again, he was just tired, God said, Paul, I'm with thee. And whoever you are tonight, he's with you.

I'm with you. I have much people here. And it's all Paul needed.

That's all you really need, see, is that one little touch from the Lord. And man, he continued there a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them. And so five years later, look at the fruit.

Five years later, he's writing back to them, and many of them are walking with the Lord. A church, houses, house church, people all over the city. Now, are you still with the Lord? Would Paul's letter in Corinthians apply to you? Are you struggling? Are you starting to go back after what God's done for you years ago? Is Corinth starting to get a hold on you again? Or can Paul say, some of you were like that, but you're not like that anymore.

I thank God I'm not like that anymore. I thank God for the work of the Spirit. His faithfulness to keep me, and He's faithful to keep you.

You don't need to run. And God may be putting you somewhere where you are right now, and they need to see your love for Jesus Christ. To see that you love Jesus Christ so much, you're not going to watch it.

You're not going to listen to it. You're not going to talk that way. You're not going to dress that way.

Not to be self-righteous and be high and mighty and make someone feel bad. You're just going to live for Christ, and they're going to see it. And you can share the gospel.

Say, yes, Christ can change you. If you want to change, Christ has the power. The cross has the power.

The cross defeated Satan. You don't have to live this way if you don't want to. You don't need any more deliverance than just coming to Jesus Christ.

He did it for me. He'll do it for you. And He loves you enough that He wants to do it.

Because He says, He who comes unto Me, I will no wise cast out. There's no ritual, no routine you have to go through after you get to Him. Just come to Him.

Get to Jesus, and I will not cast you out. And when you get to Jesus, then it's a new life. Shall we stand? It's very assuring, Father, to know that we can be at a point where we're fearing and doubting, discouraged, and yet you'll be there just as you were for Paul.

And greatness doesn't free us from weakness and fear and doubt. No matter how you've used us, Lord, there are those times when our humanity gets the best of us, and we're left to ourselves and realizing our own weaknesses. We thank you, Father, that you have a design for that, and that you'll always be there for us.

When we're afraid, when we're doubting, when we're discouraged, you'll never forsake us. You're a wonderful, loving, heavenly Father that has sent your Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us. To shed His blood for us, to cleanse us from all iniquity, to deliver us from evil, to justify us, and present us without fault to you at that day.

We thank you, Lord, that you will keep us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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