

# A Dark City

by Steve Gallagher

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*Steve Gallagher's sermon explores Paul's impactful ministry in Ephesus, emphasizing the spiritual battles and the establishment of the early church amidst significant opposition.*

**Duration:** 58:02

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 4:11

**Topics:** "Persevering Faith", "Christian Service"

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## Description

This sermon delves into Acts chapter 19, highlighting the intense and sacrificial life of the Apostle Paul during his time in Ephesus. Despite facing afflictions, persecutions, and trials, Paul's ministry was marked by deep care for the churches he established, house-to-house ministry, and a relentless dedication to spreading the Gospel. His life exemplified a profound gratitude for God's saving grace and a selfless love for Jesus Christ, inspiring believers to follow his example of unwavering faith and service.

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## Transcript

Okay, today we're going to cover Acts chapter 19. And before we get into the story, I want to just make an observation on this chapter. Basically, nearly half the chapter is devoted to one story, meaning the second half of the chapter, is devoted to the riot that happened in the theater there in Ephesus.

And you know, when you think about that story, in light of all of the important things that were going on in Paul's life and ministry and so on, really that story is not that important. You know, when you look at it, I mean, telling everything that the city clerk said to the people, and just all the different stuff about it. I mean, it's like 18 verses that Luke used on that one story.

Now think of what that means, how much was left out, because this chapter covers two and a half years, probably the most intense activity the Apostle had, two and a half years. And he takes one incident that happened in, you know, part of one day that Paul wasn't even really, at least not physically, affected by, and he devotes almost a half a chapter to it. Think of all that was left out.

Wouldn't it have been nice if perhaps he would have shared the testimony of Epaphras, or someone who got saved there at Ephesus, their life completely turned around, and then they went out and started preaching around Asia, affecting other people. What a blessing that would have been to hear that story, his testimony, or how Timothy was being used there. Timothy's hardly even mentioned.

Actually, I don't think Timothy's even mentioned until it says Luke mentions that Paul sent him away. Or what about the miracles? I mean, it does, he kind of blows through it here in a verse or two, we'll get to pretty soon, some of the ways that God was touching people, but man, he could have devoted some of that space to some of these stories of powerful miracles that happened. Or what about some of the beatings that Paul took? Probably some of those things that he enumerates in 2 Corinthians, probably some of that happened while he was here in Ephesus.

You know, it would have been nice to hear about some of that. Why much space is devoted to this story? Well, if you go all the way back to our introduction to the early church series, you remember one of the primary motivations or purposes that Luke had in writing the book of Acts was to offer an apologetic of Christianity to the Roman world. And so, why did Luke do this? Undoubtedly, because he wanted to show once again another occurrence of a city official basically exonerating Paul.

You know, that's all I can think is why he would devote so much time to it. But, you know, I'm not going to second-guess Scripture. There's also the Lord's involvement in it and so on.

But I'm just making an observation there with chapter 19. And actually, I'm not even going to cover the story other than I have one comment I'll make when we get to that part. Mostly, I want to talk about Paul's life during his time in Ephesus.

Ephesus was the commercial capital of the province of Asia, which was the richest and most important of all the Roman provinces Asia was. And Asia had three cities that all claimed to be the most important cities of that province. You had Smyrna, which was undoubtedly the most beautiful city.

Smyrna is situated on a hillside overlooking a bay that is almost completely surrounded by land. You have to go through an inlet and then there's this big bay. And when I was there, I think I spent a couple of days there in the modern... I can't think of a modern city.

It's a big city there in Turkey. But we took a boat all the way across that bay in the evening. And you look back and you can see the city lights going upside that hillside.

It's really a very beautiful site. It's a beautiful location. So that was kind of Smyrna's claim to fame was the beauty of that city.

Pergamum was the Roman seat of authority. And it even looks powerful. It's shaped just like Masada.

You can hardly tell the difference. It's a flat plain and there's this mountain or whatever you want to call it that goes straight up, you know, and then a plateau on the top. And they have a temple of Zeus and so on.

And I can't remember how we got up there. I think maybe there's a road that goes up there now. But, you know, anyway, that was the seat of Roman power for Asia.

That's where the governmental offices were and so on. So their claim to be in the most important city was the fact that it was the Roman government located there. Ephesus could claim greatness because of her commercial value.

It was a thriving, prosperous city. And there were natural reasons for this, probably primarily the port that was located there and the road that went from there straight across Asia and, you know, Turkey, all the way over to Pisidian Antioch and so on, the cities in there. So there was a commercial, I don't know,

junction right there.

And there were other reasons, no doubt. But for the superstitious people that lived in those days, they thought that it had to do with Artemis. Artemis was the goddess that supposedly came down from heaven centuries before.

There had always, well, for centuries there had been a temple to Artemis and up on a mountaintop there. And then later they brought it down and they built this spectacular temple right on the outskirts of town there. It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

For instance, it had 127 marble columns 60 feet high. Now I wish someone here, we don't have any engineers here, but I wish someone could explain to me how people way back then could put together one column 60 feet high. How do you do that in those days without cranes and all? I don't know how they did it.

I don't know how they built those things. But anyway, it had 127 of those. It was bigger by far than a football field, the temple of Artemis.

This temple was so famous and had so much prestige and had had for several hundred years. When Alexander went on his campaign plundering across Turkey a couple of hundred years before this, he went to the Asian authorities there and he said, listen, I will give you all the riches that I accumulate in my campaign if you will inscribe my name on this temple. That's how powerful that was considered.

And they said no, they turned him down flat. But that temple was considered by the people then to be like a place of great power that emanated. And then perhaps that's why partially that the occult and the black magic just thrived there in Ephesus.

It was definitely the most, I don't know what you would say, a center in the Roman world for the black arts. They probably had all kinds of different sorcerers that had different locations throughout the city and so on in their own adherence and all of that. This place was a powerhouse for demonic activity.

No question about that. And of course, that's what the whole riot was about that we'll touch on later. So it was probably in 53 AD that Paul arrived in Ephesus.

Some three years since the Holy Spirit forbid him to go into the province of Asia. Remember when he was going across on the second journey and he wanted to get to Ephesus right then and the Lord said no and diverted him up north to Troas and then up to Philippi, Thessalonica, and so on. Diverted him.

So now it's been three years. Why did the Lord do that? I don't know. Maybe there were some things that needed to happen there in the city first.

I don't know. But anyway, he comes into Ephesus and this will be probably the most fruitful and also emotionally painful period of his life. About two and a half years there.

I say two and a half years because at one point Luke says it's two years and Paul later says three years. It was just their way of reckoning time in those days. It was probably two and a half years, give or take.

Anyway, the chapter opens up with this story about these 12 men who only knew the baptism of John the Baptist, which is interesting. You know John the Baptist is one of those people that had a very important vital role to play, but as soon as he had accomplished his task, God took him out of the picture and you never hear from him again. But here's some people who had gone to Palestine during John's ministry

days, had some kind of an experience with the Lord, came back to their home in Ephesus and continued on that way, not realizing all that happened with Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

All these years later, you know, all these years they had been trying to live the, I don't know, Christian life or whatever you would call it. But anyway, they had walked in that life of repentance, but without the Holy Spirit. And Paul, you know, comes along and the Lord, I'm sure mercifully, directs him to these men, these 12 men, and leads them to the Lord.

They have a powerful experience of getting baptized in the Holy Spirit and that was probably the nucleus of the new Ephesian church right there. So I'm going to pick up the story in verse 8. And he entered the synagogue. That sounds a little familiar, doesn't it? Right away, that's where he's headed.

And continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, now he's been speaking in the synagogue for three months. How in the world did that happen? I mean, usually it only takes one service on a Sabbath day before the Jews are so infuriated they're looking to kill him.

Somehow, for three months, he's able to exposit the word and teach them. And, you know, so it doesn't say it, but you know that there was a gathering of believers that came out of that effort there. But let me just read something that McLaren says about this word disobedient here.

It teaches that the moral element in unbelief is resistance of the will. That is a very profound statement. Let me read it again.

It teaches that the moral element in unbelief is resistance of the will. The two words are not synonyms, though they apply to the same state of mind. Rather, the one lays bare the root of the other and declares its guilt.

Unbelief comes from disobedience and therefore is fit subject for punishment. So, in other words, people are unbelievers by choice. It's a, how do you say it? It is a purposeful premeditated decision.

I will not obey God. Now, where does that put heathens who've never heard the message? I don't know. That's a mystery that scripture doesn't answer for us.

And I'm certainly not going to try to answer it. But anyway, I just felt like that was a worthy comment. Let me continue on here.

But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples' reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. All right. So, the Western text here in this verse 9 says that he ministered from the 5th to the 10th hour every day, which corresponds to 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. in our time.

So, in other words, he was tent-making probably from like 6 in the morning till 11, stopping that, teaching in the school of Tyrannus. It was probably some hall that this man owned. He probably taught philosophy or science or something, you know, some part of the day.

So, Paul had it during that siesta time, and he would teach out of the scriptures or go down to the marketplace, the agora, and preach there, you know, ministering and going around, interacting with people and so on from 11 to 4, and then from 4 o'clock on into the night, working again with his hands. He

told the Thessalonians, you know, which no doubt was also true here, for you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaim to you the gospel of God. So, there it is.

You know, he's got a full-time job and is also totally devoting himself to ministering to others. Verse 10, this took place for two years so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. All? This whole province of Asia? All? How could he say all? Well, I think I may have touched on this in an earlier message, but the answer is found in the fact that we all need to eat, and where do we go shopping at? You know, for us in this area, it's Walmart is the local place, and if you want to touch every single person in Grant County, Kentucky, you set up a soapbox right outside the door of Walmart, and you preach there for two or three weeks, and I guarantee you, you will speak to every person in this county because everybody goes to Walmart at some point unless they just have some purpose.

They don't want to go there, but how much more back in those days where you didn't have the luxury to just drive another 10 miles up the road and go to Kroger's? You know, you had one place to go. That was the marketplace, the Agora, which is kind of like a flea market, you know, from our perspective. It wasn't a grocery store, of course, but anyway, that's the way that they reached the entire province of Asia.

He told the Corinthians, for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. Now, I thought about this thing, there are many adversaries, and I started thinking what did he mean by that? Because, you know, definitely human beings, but I think it was more than that. Let me just read a couple of verses here, things that he said about this time, and to the Corinthians, he said later that, I'm sorry, 2 Corinthians 10, for though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses, and that was definitely a fortress of demonic activity there in that area.

Well, he wrote this right after he left Ephesus, and later, of course, much later, 10 years later, or whatever it was, he wrote to these Ephesians in Ephesians 6-12, for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, excuse me, in other words, humans, but against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Again, Paul is recognizing that this is spiritual warfare. His adversaries were demons, and he knew that.

He could feel the opposition to everything he tried to do, and, you know, now we know what we experience at pure life. If other people, maybe watching by video or whatever, if you have been involved in a powerful work of the Lord, you know also what I'm talking about, where you can feel the enemy opposing and resisting and trying to hinder you and trying to stop your efforts. You can feel the resistance, and it's like how many times we've tried to do something and the enemy was right there to counter us, to cause problems, to, you know, just all kinds of problems.

For instance, this is just one small example out of hundreds if I had the time to think about it and tell you about it. I remember going to a radio station one time, and I was going to go in there and just really share my heart on that radio program that day, and right before I went in there, the entire board, whatever that means on a radio station, Mike could tell you, the entire board burned up, you know, and they said, we have never seen anything like, we never even heard of this happening in the, you know, radio industry before, and I said, yeah, well, you know, that's pure life ministries because the enemy hates what we're doing here. I think also about that young guy that was, had applied to come to Pure Life.

He was a mess, of course. He went to some fortune teller, some demon-possessed lady, you know, I don't know what he, who knows what his thinking was, and this lady got, went into a trance, and he, somehow she knew that he was going here to Pure Life, and she said, I hate that place, you know, and it was a demon speaking. Well, do I believe that story? Yeah, I believe it, you know.

I mean, I don't know for sure, but it would not surprise me because I know the enemy hates what goes on in this place because souls are being turned around, saved for the kingdom of God, and that's what was happening with Paul. Can you imagine the effect his life was having on the kingdom of darkness right in the midst of their, you know, the seedbed of demonic activity? He went right into the middle of it and stayed there and lived in it for two and a half years and, you know, did tremendous damage to the kingdom of darkness during his time there. Saved many souls, and that church, Ephesus, became the main church for many, many years after Paul's time there.

It kind of switched, as I mentioned before, from Jerusalem to Antioch, Syrian Antioch, and then from there to Ephesus, and that's where it stayed until later it kind of moved to Rome. But, man, praise God. Well, during his time there, also the seven churches, you know, that you find in Revelations 2 and 3, they were probably formed during Paul's ministry time there, and other churches, Colossae, Hierapolis, who knows what other cities and towns and so on.

All that came about his time there as he courageously fought the enemy right in his own backyard, and as we'll get to here in a minute, he paid a price for that. Let me read something that Coney Beerhausen said. The subject of his teaching was ever the same, both for Jews and Greeks, repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

Labor so incessant, so unselfish, and continued through so long a time could not fail to produce a great result at Ephesus. A large church was formed over which many presbyters were called to preside, nor were the results confined to the city. Throughout the province of Asia, the name of Christ became generally known both to the Jews and Gentiles, and doubtless, many churches were founded, many daughter churches.

Okay, let's get back on track here. Verse 11, God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul. What miracles, Luke? I wish you would have told us more.

So that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out. Man, you think that didn't make the enemy furious with him? But also some of the Jewish exorcists who went from place to place attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches. In other words, they saw that the power of God was attached to that name.

Paul, no doubt, used the name of Christ in his preaching, in his prayers, in casting out devils, and so on. He did it, and these men watched him, and they thought, well, if I just use that name, you know, the enemy has to listen to me too. Or the enemy, you know, they would look at it differently, of course, but they thought they would have the same power.

But let's see what happens here. Verse 14, seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. All right, now before we get into the story here, let me just read a couple of comments.

Dr. Polehill says this about the exorcists of that time. He said, in the Greco-Roman world, Jewish exorcists were held in high esteem for the venerability of their religion and the strangeness of their Hebraic incantations. Ancient papyri have been discovered, one of which reads, quote, I adjure thee by Jesus, the God of the Hebrews.

Another one read, quote, Hail, God of Abraham, God of Jacob, Jesus Christus, Son of the Father. So in other words, people were grabbing these Jewish or Christian kind of phrases and trying to use them to gain more power over the spirit realm and so on. Longenecker says this, the use of magical names and incantations to exercise evil spirits was common in the ancient world, and it seems to have been especially prominent at Ephesus.

In addition, Jewish practitioners of magic were highly esteemed in antiquity, for they were believed to have command of particularly effective spells. Those connected with the Jewish priesthood would have enjoyed great prestige in magical circles, since they were the most likely ones to know the true pronunciation of the ineffable name, and therefore most able to release its power. All right, so, you know, this guy Sceva probably took upon himself the name, the title, he was a chief priest.

He probably wasn't, or maybe he was part of the chief priest family or something, but anyway, he did it to enhance his prestige amongst these people, these superstitious people, and obviously he wasn't walking with the Lord, because he's involved in all kinds of stuff, but people held the Jewish traditions in real respect. They had heard the stories and so on, so it kind of gave people like him a little added prestige. All right, verse 15, And the evil spirit answered and said to them, I recognize Jesus and I know about Paul, but who are you? And, you know, this kind of refutes the notion that you hear in certain circles that, you know, if you are a Christian, then you can name the name of Christ and all the devils have to obey you, and, you know, it's like, it's kind of the same superstitious, magical thing.

Now, I mean, there is something to it if you're a true believer and you name the name of Christ, absolutely, there's some power there, but authority in the spirit realm comes through your life. You know, they recognize Jesus, of course, because he was the king of heaven way back when in eternity when they were part of that great celestial city, you know, these evil spirits. He was their king at one time until they rebelled.

So they knew about Jesus, they recognized him, and they knew about Paul because he was completely possessed by the Holy Spirit. Let me put it this way. In the church realm in America and the western world, fame comes about by the size of your ministry.

That's how we operate. It's all an outward thing, but in the spirit realm, fame comes about by your level of consecration. So you can be, in the world's eyes, a nobody, a praying grandmother who never does any great thing, but you've allowed God to really deal with you and your inner man, all your issues, all the little petty selfishnesses and pride issues and so on.

You've repented of your idolatry. You've repented of besetting sins. You've really done your utmost to serve the Lord with a clear conscience, and you pray and you intercede for people.

All this is interior, quiet, behind-the-scenes work to the Lord, but God sees it and the spirit realm sees it, both angelic and devilish. They see it. And so you can have a person who's a nobody in the church world, but who holds great authority in the spiritual realm.

And yet, how many of these big-name, big-shot radio, television preachers who have practically zero authority in the spiritual realm, but we count them with all great esteem because they have charisma, they can do this, they can do that, they've worked their way up to the top, and so on. Now, there are times that the two can coincide, of course, but usually it doesn't work that way. And just as we just heard over the weekend, success is your enemy and failure is your friend when it comes to your spiritual life.

That was a good saying. I like that. All right, so let's continue here.

Verse 16, and the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded. I mean, can you imagine? He just attacked them and started ripping their clothes off and beating them. He's just a wild man.

They couldn't control him. They were just lucky to get out of there alive. That's how they saw it.

This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks who lived in Ephesus, and fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified. Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing, and disclosing their practices. Do you get that? Many of those who had believed were coming forth, confessing, and disclosing the things they were doing that no one knew about.

And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone, and they counted up the price of them and found it 50,000 pieces of silver. Books in those days were very expensive. It's not like today.

You can get a book for a penny on eBay or Amazon, but in those days it wasn't like that. The thing that's interesting to me here is that these people had had some experience with the Lord, and yet continued dabbling in the occult at the same time. How could it be? Because in that Ephesian culture, it was as common and as normal in everyday life as drug use and pornography is in our world of today.

But of course, the Lord is watching these people, and they're going through this process of coming into faith. Is this before conversion, after conversion, or whatever? I don't know. But they're in this process, and the Holy Spirit is dealing with them and showing them, revealing to them the terrifying reality that they are in league with the devil.

And once they see it, then they take their books and burn them and renounce it and walk away from it, and hopefully all of them did that. But the interesting part to me was that we need to get the romantic idea out of the first century church, because they were people, and people have issues. And even though the power of God was more prevalent in those days than what we witnessed, they were still people, and they had to work through things just like you and I have to work through things.

So that was just interesting. Let me read Coney Barron Howson again. Though it was a Greek city, like Athens or Corinth, the manner of its inhabitants were half oriental, and the enemy, which St. Paul had to oppose, was not a vaunting philosophy, as at Corinth, but a dark and Asiatic superstition.

The mysterious symbols called, quote, Ephesian letters, were engraved on the crown, the girdle, and the feet of the goddess Artemis. When pronounced, they were regarded as a charm and were directed to be used especially by those who were in the power of evil spirits. When written, they were carried about as amulets.

The study of these symbols was an elaborate science, and books, both numerous and costly, were compiled by its possessors, professors. So in other words, it was a whole science, the study of all this, you know, these deep things of Satan, as Jesus would call it later. It was a, and you could get into this stuff right now on the internet if you wanted to, of course you don't, but you can start going deeper and deeper and deeper into these deep things of the black arts, if you so chose, but you better be prepared to be completely controlled by the enemy if you want to go that route.

Verse 20, here's one of Luke's summary statements. So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing. I'll just read the pulpit commentary.

Actually, I think I'm going to skip that. We're kind of getting short on time. He just makes the point that what Luke says here, growing, and he compares it to a plant that is growing and bearing fruit, and it's a, you know, it's a good thing.

Look up the pulpit commentary, you'll see it. All right, verse 21. Now, after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, in other words, north and south Greece, saying, after I've been there, I must also see Rome.

Now, if you want to look further into this, you can look at the second half of Romans 15 as kind of a commentary on that statement there. He's sharing with the Romans that it's really his desire to go there, etc. And Romans was written not long after this.

We'll get to that in a couple of weeks. But let me just read what Polehill says here. Paul's decision to go to Rome marks a major transition in the storyline of Acts.

From this point on, the narrative will continually drive toward Rome as Paul's final destination. Throughout Acts 20, verse 1 to 21-16 is an ominous note concerning what awaited Paul. All right, so, you know, it's just good to note those kinds of things.

Verse 22, and having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus. Okay, so here he's finally mentioning Timothy, who's been with him or probably was there in Ephesus all this time. He himself stayed in Asia for a while.

About that time, now let me just stop there for a second. This whole riot thing probably happened during the month of May, which would make sense in the chronological order of events that we're going to get into next week, but also just the way this all happened. The month of May was dedicated to Artemis.

It would be comparable to our Mardi Gras, you know, or down in Rio, whatever it is in Rio, I can't remember. But what's it called? Carnival, right. Carnival down in Rio.

Same sort of thing. It's a month of just totally giving over to all kinds of stuff. People would, by the hundreds, would be coming in, you know, to this festival, and there's horse races and probably spectacles in the Colosseum, all that kind of stuff going on.

Mainly, it's just a party for a month. So this is a great opportunity for these people who have these booths all outside and around the Temple of Artemis. You know, there's all these guys with selling, it's the same over, actually, it's the same right now in Ephesus, but more I'm thinking of in Jerusalem, where you have all these Palestinians selling their little olive wood figurines and the little stone things, and, you know, all that kind of stuff to the tourists.

Same thing that goes on now in Jerusalem was going on back then. But anyway, it was their time of the year to, it's kind of like for the, for merchants today, how they look forward to the Christmas season all year long. This is their opportunity to make up their losses and to really put themselves out ahead with their profit line and all that.

That's how it was for these guys. And here's this guy, Paul, who's preaching what? That there are no gods, as he's quoted saying in verse 26. That's exactly what Paul preached.

And if you go back to Acts 17, where he's preaching to the Athenians, you know, he says it right there, that God does not reign in a place, you know, in something made out of stone or however he says it there, or in temples made by man's hands. You know, God is outside of all that. So we know that he was preaching that way.

This guy was quoting him correctly. And he was also correct in the sense that a lot of people were getting saved and walking away from that whole life that, you know, was represented there. So these guys were seeing their business affected by that, and so this whole riot came about because of that.

All right, so what I want to focus on for the last few minutes here is Paul's life in Ephesus. And I'm going to look mostly at 1 and 2 Corinthians here. 1 Corinthians was written during his time in Ephesus, probably towards the end.

And 2 Corinthians was written right after he left Ephesus. Okay, so some of the things he expresses here very much describe what his life and those who were with him, what it was like for them day in and day out. 1 Corinthians 4, verses 11 through 13, Paul says this, to this present hour, we are both hungry and thirsty.

Now, think about that. Hungry and thirsty. When's the last time any of us have really been hungry and thirsty? You know, I mean, if nothing else, I can go to the jar of peanut butter and get a spoonful of peanut butter if I'm hungry.

You know what I mean? We don't experience that. But that was part of Paul's regular life, was to go without food just because he didn't have the money to buy food, or maybe there wasn't fresh water available always or whatever. I don't know.

Poorly clothed. That doesn't exactly fit in with the message from the prosperity preachers, does it? In fact, if you listen to any of them, they will tell you that Paul and Jesus were both very rich, and, you know, that's why Jesus needed a treasurer because he had so much money that he needed a treasurer. Do these people even read what the Bible says? You know, talk about a delusion.

No, these people were poor when it came to the things of this earth. Their life was not focused on the temporary earth life. Life was focused elsewhere, as we'll see here in just a minute.

Roughly treated. What does that mean? Roughly treated. I don't know what that means, but I can imagine, you know, maybe there were times when he was preaching in the Agora, and maybe some of these tradesmen beat him up one time or something, or more than once.

I don't know, but this is kind of what went on for him. Homeless. That one kind of surprises me because I would think he would be staying with someone, but, you know, probably he was going from house to house and just kind of moving around, you know, but the bottom line is he didn't have his own home.

Paul never had his own home once he turned his life over to the Lord. We toil working with our own hands, and we've already seen that. Now look at how he handles his interactions with people.

When we are reviled, not if, when we are reviled. It happened regularly, and I could see it again, preaching at the Agora, you know, all these crowds of people coming by, and he's pouring his heart out to them, and people are ridiculing him, laughing at him, calling him names, and how does he respond? We bless, you know, and I could just see Paul was so meek and humble and so full of the love of God that even when people would get in his face, he just didn't have that fight thing in him to react in kind, and I thank God that that is very much the way it is here at Pure Life. You know, when people get in our face, generally speaking, you guys, it's true of you, it's true of all of us, generally speaking, we react in the right way.

Now, you know, what goes on inside of us afterwards, that's another matter, but we still struggle with all the feelings and so on, but we've learned how to at least to respond outwardly in the right way, and then ask the Lord to help us inwardly. Inwardly. When we are persecuted, we endure.

In other words, quietly endure. They didn't rise up in pride and retaliate and so on. Paul and these other guys that were with him were facing persecution.

We don't know exactly what that means here, but we know that they faced it, probably from the Jews, from the tradesmen, from people in the market, who knows what. When we are slandered, slandered, what does that mean? That means people are going around lying about him. They're misrepresenting the things he's teaching and saying and so on.

You know, just telling outright lies about him, just kind of like what they have done with us here in northern Kentucky, just making up fables about Pure Life ministries, and we've had to live with that here for 25 years. Look at how Paul responds to that. When we're slandered, we try to conciliate.

In other words, he would just try to make friends with these people instead of lashing out at them, rebuking them, or whatever. Paul was just a nice man. That's the bottom line.

He was just a very nice man to people. We have become, as the scum of the world, the dreg of all things, even until now. And, you know, in the next chapter, chapter 20, when Paul, he goes on his trip up to northern Greece, Philippi, and so on up in there, and then he goes down to Corinth, and he ends up coming back through Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem.

He stopped by and he spent a little time with the Ephesian elders. Do you remember that? It's some passage in Acts chapter 20. Actually, the Lord used that passage to call me into ministry way back in 1982.

But anyway, he said to them, he reminded them that night and day for a period of three years, I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. You know, so I could see Paul going from house to house of the believers, and just, you know, if he saw stuff in their lives that was keeping them away from a vibrant life in Christ, he would go to them and pour his heart out to them and say, brother, can't you see how this is holding you back, or whatever it was he was dealing with. That's the way Paul handled it.

Second Corinthians, he had some things to say, chapter 1, verse 8, for we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction, which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life. What does that mean? Burdened excessively. Now, some of you bear burdens, real burdens in this place.

You counselors bear burdens. Ed and Carla bear burdens, very real burdens. I understand what that's like, to just have to bear the weight of people, issues, finances, all the stuff that you have to stay on top of, depending on what your job is, bearing weight for God.

But for Paul, it was so much weight that he despaired of even, you know, not breaking down completely. In Second Corinthians 4, verses 8 through 10, he expresses a kind of a hopeful side to it, a positive take on it. He says, we're afflicted in every way, but we're not crushed.

You know what I mean? There's a difference. The Lord allows affliction, and he can even allow a lot of affliction, but not to the point of crushing our spirit. Perplexed means not knowing which way to go.

How do I handle this? Yeah, perplexed, but not despairing, not going into complete blackness over it. Persecuted, yeah, people are treating us this way, but God has not forsaken us. Struck down, but not destroyed.

Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus. Why? So that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. You know, and there's that inexplicable contradiction that we are dying in some sort of a way, physically.

Our bodies are, you know, just our emotional makeup even. I don't know how to express it. There is a death process that goes on if you're really walking on the narrow way pursuing God, but through that comes life in the spirit.

Who can understand such things? You know, you have to just live it. And then down in verse 16, therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. Praise the Lord.

That's because the Lord indwells us. For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory. Wow, what a great name for a website.

Someone ought to make one. Far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, that's not what their eyes were on, the problems, but at the things which are not seen. And, you know, not years later he would tell the Colossians, keep looking above at the things above and so on.

For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal, you know, etc. All right, now I'm going to close out with a couple of quotes, and they're lengthy, but they are very good. The biblical expositor said this, Paul perpetually bore about in his bosom anxious thoughts for the welfare, trials, and sorrows of the numerous churches he had established in Europe and in Asia alike.

He was constantly in prayers for them, mentioning the individual members by name. The first epistle to the Corinthians, written to them from Ephesus, shows the minute care, the intense interest he had for his distant converts, all the while that the work at Ephesus, controversial, evangelistic, and pastoral, to say nothing at all of his temp making, was making the most tremendous demands on body and soul alike, and apparently absorbing all his attention. It is only when we thus realize bit by bit what the weak, delicate, emaciated apostle must have been doing that we are able to grasp the full meaning of his own words to the Corinthians.

Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. And I understand that a little bit, you know, nothing like what he experienced, but I do understand it. Okay, and

let me read this quote from Farrar.

Had we nothing else to go by, we might suppose that until the riot, this was a period of almost unbroken success and prosperity. Such, however, as we find from the epistles and from the apostle's speech to the Ephesian elders, was very far from being the case. It was indeed an earnest, incessant, laborious, house-to-house ministry, which carried its exhortations to each individual member of the church, but it was a ministry of many tiers.

And though greatly blessed, it was a time of such overwhelming trial, sickness, persecution, and misery that it probably surpassed in sorrow any other period of St. Paul's life. And while he was taking his place like a general on a battlefield, with his eye on every weak or endangered point, while his heart was constantly rent by news of the defection of those for whom he would have gladly laid down his life, while a new powerful and organized opposition was working against him in the very churches which he had founded with such peril and toil, while he was being constantly scourged and mobbed and maltreated, and at the same time suffering from repeated attacks of sickness and depression, while he was at once fighting a hand-to-hand battle and directing the entire campaign, he yet found time to travel for the foundation or confirming of other churches and to write, as with his very heart's blood, the first letter to the Corinthians. In this letter, we find that at the very hour of apparent success, he was cast down, perplexed, persecuted, troubled on every side, homeless, buffeted, ill-provided with food and clothes, abused, persecuted, slandered, made, as it were, the dung and filth of all the world.

Nay, more, he was in jeopardy, not only every day, but every hour, his life an endless mortification. What wonder if, amid these afflictions, there were times when the heroic soul gave way. What wonder if he speaks of tears and trembling and desolation of heart and utter restlessness, of being pressed out of measure, despairing of life itself, tried almost beyond the extreme of human endurance, fighting without fears within.

And yet, in the strength of the Savior, how triumphantly he stemmed the overwhelming tide of these afflictions. In the grace of God, how dauntlessly he continued to fling himself into the never-ending battle of a warfare which had no discharge. That was the Apostle Paul and the way he lived his life.

He wasn't a great man because, you know, he wrote part of the New Testament or he founded churches. He was a great man because he had a great heart for God. You know, that's really what it's about.

And I don't know how you would think of Paul, what word might be, you know, writer or missionary, but really the bottom line with this man was that he was a lover. He loved Jesus Christ with all his heart and he would do anything for the Lord. He was a man who lived in perpetual and deep gratitude because he knew what he had been and what he was by nature.

He understood it very well and he knew what God had saved him out of. And because of that great gratitude, all he could think to do was to try to bring others into the life and the glory of, you know, that experience with Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord.

And we have the same opportunity as well. There's nothing stopping any of us from giving ourselves away like he did.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/V8bcJJp31b8.mp4>  
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