



John's Schedule

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## The Apostle of Praise: Paul



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### Acts 16:12-40

We are looking at the wonders of having the power of God through suffering.

#### ACTS 16 IS A MODEL OF GROWING THROUGH SUFFERING

Open with me to Acts 16. Here we find the events God used, that led to the founding of the church that received Paul's letter to the Philippians. Paul went to Philippi on his second missionary journey.

*"Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia."*

That is a significant event that determined the course of Western history that very moment because the spirit of God told the Apostle Paul not to go up into the Roman province of Asia and into what would be modern day Russia, China and Japan. He told him instead to veer left or go west.

*Acts 16:7, "After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia," "but the Spirit [1] did not permit them."*

(Paul was trying to do an "end run" and take the other route because he knew how populous the eastern countries in Asia and the far east)

*Verse 8 says, "So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas."*

(ancient Troy, as in the Trojan Horse—it is right at the end of Turkey facing Europe right on the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles).

*Verse 9, "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."*

You can almost see the figure motioning to Paul from the other side of the water on the European side.

*Verse 10, "Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them."*

"We" means that Luke was with Paul. Luke was the writer of the book of the Acts under the inspiration of God's Spirit)

You can see how the Apostle Paul was yielded to the Lord—and whatever God had for him.

*Starting at verse 11, "Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, <sup>12</sup>and from there to Philippi (where Paul wrote the epistle to the Philippians), which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony (This was on the coast of the northeastern part of what is now modern day Greece). And we were staying in that city for some days.*

*Verse 11, "And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there."*

As you can see as often is the case women are far more spiritually minded than

men—I am sure the men were at the game or something and the women were out praying.

*Verse 14, "Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God.*

"She was a seller of purple" which means she stained cloth with the dye of the murex shell to make it the lovely regal color of purple which is very valuable.

*Now listen to this, "The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.*

What is amazing is that the "man" from Macedonia was a woman and God chose her to be the first convert in Europe. The Spirit of God had this man say, "come on over here," and there were men saved but it is interesting that the first convert was this woman Lydia and the Lord opened her heart "to heed the things spoken by Paul." (God has to open the heart of anyone who gets saved).

*Verse 15, "and when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us."*

That is how we are introduced to this and what I am going to take you through tonight is the Apostle Paul as he goes through intense suffering as this church was founded. Again we are going to see the first element of suffering in the life of Paul - Suffering brings the power of God into our lives to praise His name. Especially as I have called this section,

## THE POWER TO SING THROUGH OUR PAIN

Let me show you what I mean. We are going to do a quick survey of these verses... by no means are we studying the Book of Acts but this is so beautiful I can't help but go through it.

Starting in verse 16 we are in Philippi, one lady has been saved and her family, the rest of her family has believed on the Lord, Paul gave them the Gospel—there is a lot that is not mentioned here, but we do know that they were not baptized until they had trusted Christ. All that had happened, now Paul is staying on in the city.

*Verse 16 "Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling."*

I have not seen many witches here in Tulsa, Oklahoma, but when I lived in Rhode Island, everyday I always drove by this witches house who had out all of her wares. She was one who could read tea leaves and your palms and she could look into her crystal ball and tell the future. She had a large shop on the side of a hill and she advertised all of her divination.

This girl in verse 16 was similarly under the influence of the demons and Satan's kingdom and she would make a profit for her masters by fortune telling.

## THE BACKGROUND OF SATAN'S WORK IN THIS WORLD

Now you say how does that work? How can they do that? One thing is for sure; they cannot bring people back from the dead. Also, they can't have those people come and speak. But what it is—demons are thousands of years old. These demons were around before the creation of the earth. They were around as a part of Satan's kingdom and his rebellion against God. One third of all the angels of God went with Satan (Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14). These demons went with Satan and sided with him. They became the forces of darkness with Satan, the angel of light as their head, and they for the past thousands of years, have been involved in deluding and influencing humanity. They can understand languages, they can travel freely, they are spirit beings, I am sure that there are some here tonight that are bothering around here and trying to distract people. They are at the business of distracting, diverting, they like to flash things across our mind and especially if you have something really awful that you never would have thought of and it just came into your mind like that, most likely that is just part of the work of Satan to distract us, to get us tempted and taken away. A lot of times when they are not doing that, they are actually indwelling human beings and using them as a channel. If the demons can get a bunch of people to sit around in a circle and hold hands and turn the lights out and burn candles and look in crystal balls, they will get right inside of there and talk to them - If the people want to hear something, the demons will tell them.

They can truly as we have seen in a lot of the articles published in magazines such as McCall's, Redbook and other worthless magazines that are out there, these demons inspire humans to write stories. When I was in high school, there was a best-selling book called Jonathan Livingston Seagull. The man that wrote that said that he was walking down the beach, he was a frustrated writer and all of a sudden he heard a voice behind him saying do you want to write a book? He said that he wanted to write a book. The voice told him to go home. The man took a pen put it between his hands and said "I yield to you spirit." And he started writing in perfect flawless English, page after page and wrote the entire book, which became a multi-million copy best seller. That is a demon-produced book. There are many others that are out there right now.

That is what we are talking about in verse 16. That is what Paul was confronting—head-on—the powers of darkness.

*Verse 17, "This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation."*

Now just as Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul did not like this kind of advertising. He said we don't need any promotion from Satan and his kingdom. So from the tenses of the verbs here, this was not a singular event.

*It says in verse 18, "And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.*

*Verse 19, "But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.*

This word "seized" is just what it sounds like—a very roughshod way of handling these men and they dragged them off.

- epilambano            seized
- helkuo                 dragged
- agora                  marketplace

*Verse 20, "And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city:*

Now that word is interesting—I want you to look at [Matthew 14:26](#) because I want you to see how serious this was. This same word is used there. The disciples when they were paddling out there in the middle of the sea and the storm and they saw Jesus walking on top of the water in the dark-- you could just see the glowing white of His deity shining through-- you could see every time His foot touched the waves they were like glass.

That was quite a sight. I hope He will walk on the sea for us in Heaven. There is no more sea in Heaven - maybe He will make one for us temporarily. Just to see Him walking on the water

*Verse 26 of Matthew 14 says, "And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled (Greek: tarasso), saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear."*

Troubled = tarasso—there was more of a storm in them than there was outside. They said "it's a ghost!" and they screamed for fear.

That word "troubled"—look back in [Acts 16:20](#), the very same Greek word is used but it is "ektarasso" here or exceedingly troubled. That is what these ungodly people said in [Acts 16:20](#).

Here is what is troubling them, Verse 21:

*"...and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe."*

The Greek word for customs is "ethos" or ethics, a way of life. These men had probably heard Paul's teachings—I am sure that he had taught in the market place at times. They said that these men were teaching us customs: they are telling us to change our lives. And we are Romans and we are not going to observe that. What are they talking about? Well, the Apostle Paul said that there is one Lord and it is not Caesar. He said that all men are to worship and follow this one Lord and be His servants and not Caesar's and not to worship the false gods.

*Verse 22: "Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes..." Tore off in the Greek is perirrhagnumi which means from every side their clothes were torn from them—just ripped off.*

I remember when I was enrolled at a state university a bunch of guys were at a hazing and tore this guy's clothes off. It looked really dreadful. They actually ripped his clothes. I can picture in my mind these men tearing Paul's and Silas' clothes off and commanding them to be beaten with rods.

Do you ever see people out with walking sticks because they are afraid of dogs? They usually don't pick out a tiny stick, but a big one. The word used in this verse is "rhbizo" a walking staff, a rod.

Verse 22 again: "...and commanded them to be beaten with rods."<sup>23</sup> And when they had laid many stripes on them, (the Greek word for stripes is "plege" or deep furrows or wounds. We are not talking about red marks or black and blue marks. They would strike them with these rods until the skin would break open and it would make a little crevasse type wound that they could see and that is how they knew that they were getting through to them.

And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. The Greek word for threw is "ballo" or to toss like trash. I was thinking about that today—I had to change a diaper today and oh what a mess it was. I put it in a plastic bag, tied it up, opened the door to the garage and tossed it out. I didn't care where it landed—it smelled so badly—and I pulled the door shut. That's the exact word, the word for throwing trash out. They threw Paul and Silas down into the prison not caring where they landed to keep them securely.

*Verse 24, "Having received such a charge, (the jailer) put them into the inner prison (after they had been in a heap, bleeding, thrown into the prison—he drags them further down into the prison) and fastened their feet in the stocks." (Greek word for stocks: kulon or logs with holes in them).*

In this time period, even though it says the jailer put their feet into stocks, most often in Roman prisons, there was also a bar that was pushed into the stomach of the prisoner and they were bent over like a horseshoe and their wrists were also held so they were in an unnatural bow shape with their feet out and their hands out with that bar pushing them in the stomach so the prisoner would get the maximum painful effect of the beating. And what is that? The skin would start healing as they were bent over, then when they were let out of the stocks and stood up, the skin would all break open again and start bleeding because it would change it's configuration.

Well, that is the condition they are in down in this filthy pit in the prison. I want you to get this point: You can sing through your pain by the power of God—whatever pain you might be going through.

*Verse 25: "But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and "hunmeo" singing hymns (Greek: hunmeo) to God...*

Isn't it interesting how many words we pulled right out of the Greek language into English? Hunmeo—what does that sound like? Hymns—they were singing hymns to God. And what is amazing is the prisoners were listening to them.

You say, "What were they singing?" We know what they were singing because hunmeo doesn't just mean randomly singing, it is the same word that is used at the Last Supper with Jesus Christ. It says in that Scripture that when they had sung a hymn (hunmeo) they went out. In the Greek language translating the Hebrew events that always means that they were singing from the Psalms.

Look at Psalm 113 with me because we know what Paul was singing in the prison. And I know, growing up for years, I wondered what would they have been singing? What songs were popular back then? Well, the word that is used tells us. That is one of the blessings of the Greek language—it gives us insights that we can enjoy even in English.

In Psalm 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118 and 136 were the "hunmeo" (hymns) that the Jews sang at special events. Remember they did not have the New Testament yet. This book of Acts is a very early part of the canon of the New Testament. The Gospels came later, most of them and Paul's Epistles followed. So there is no New Testament—they don't have "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" yet. They are singing the Old Testament.

In Psalm 113 I want to show you how to praise the Lord even through the pain. Now I don't know what pain you are going through. You might be going through family pain, or social pain, or physical pain, emotional pain. You might be going through financial pain. You can sing through the pain if you get these words. You can imagine Paul bent over and bleeding in a dark stinky prison with no ventilation, no sanitary facilities, no pest removal service to kill all the vermin.

This is what Paul is singing: Psalm 113

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD!

Praise, O servants of the LORD,  
Praise the name of the LORD!

<sup>2</sup>Blessed be the name of the LORD  
From this time forth and forevermore!

Paul said I want to praise the Lord right now and always.

**1.** Do you know how to praise the Lord through pain? Praise Him when you are not in pain. Praise Him when things are going well. Praise Him right now before the pain starts and you will be able to praise Him always.

**2.** Again in Psalm 113: <sup>3</sup>From the rising of the sun to its going down

Don't just praise Him sporadically, praise Him not only right now and all the time but praise Him throughout the day. Don't compartmentalize your life. Don't say my life belongs to the company I work for and God gets Sunday. Praise Him from the rising of the sun to it's going down. This morning as the sun was coming up, as I was driving down the street, I could see the beautiful sun rising and my heart was praising Him and I will tell you that I will be praising Him tonight. I will praise Him from the rising to the setting of the sun.

So not only now and always, but all day long.

**3.** Verse 3 of Psalm 113: *"The LORD's name is to be praised."*

Focus on God's immutable character. God does not change. My circumstances do. My conditions do. My life changes. My health changes. My "ups and downs" come and go. But God is always the same.

You know, most of us live between downs and ups. Aunt Mary died- we are down. But Aunt Mary left us and inheritance- we are up. We hope to settle in between. Praise not what I am going through, not what I feel right now, not what I hope is going to happen. Praise something that is changeless. "The Lord's name is to be praised." God is immutable. His Word does not change, his character does not change, His Christ does not change. God does not change.

How do you sing through pain? By realizing that God is sovereignly in control, He is omnipotently able to take me right out of the prison of my pain if He wants to. If I am in it, I need to be in it because it is part of his plan.

Continuing here in verse 4:

*"<sup>4</sup>The LORD is high above all nations,"*

(He is in control, He is higher than the doctors and the politicians and the business owners and the tax collectors or whoever is on you right now

*"His glory above the heavens. "*

He is not only in control, He is the greatest, He is above them all.

*"<sup>5</sup>Who is like the LORD our God,  
Who dwells on high,"*

He is majestic, He is awesome, He is beyond our comprehension and He wants us to know about Him and sometimes that is why we go through pain. If life is all perfect and good we would not have time for Him. That is why He sends pain and suffering into our lives. That's why He sends those events that are so hard to understand because we need to come to Him if we cannot understand them. If we cannot endure them, if we cannot make it through, we need to come to the One who is higher than us. That is what He wants us to focus on in our pain.

He is in touch with us. Verse 6 of Psalm 113:

*<sup>6</sup>Who humbles Himself to behold  
The things that are in the heavens and in the earth?*

"Who" (is a question actually in the Hebrew language) humbles Himself to know... It says that He bows down His ear to hear. He opens His eyes to behold what is going on in our lives. He is the One who wants to get our attention. That is what Paul is singing about down in the prison.

Can you imagine him down there in the stocks, bleeding, bugs crawling on him, saying "God is in control, God knows all things, He owns all things, He can set me free in an instant if He wants to. Wait a minute, we haven't come to the end of the story because it is going to happen.

Psalm 113, verse 7—look at God's compassion that Paul is meditating on in that prison.

*<sup>7</sup>He raises the poor out of the dust,  
And lifts the needy out of the ash heap,  
<sup>8</sup>That He may seat him with princes--  
With the princes of His people.  
<sup>9</sup>He grants the barren woman a home,  
Like a joyful mother of children.*

You know, there aren't many things that are as strong as a woman's desire to have children but cannot. They will go to any length-- they will go to a fertility doctor, they will take all the tests, they will be totally uncomfortable and go through all the ups and downs and hopes.

Do you know what this Psalm says? He will satisfy even the deepest needs. You cannot think of a deeper need than that of a woman who wants to be a mother. "He grants the barren woman a home, like a joyful mother of children." **Praise the Lord.**

Now, in the Hebrew economy, there was no higher or greater desire than to have children. Then, your worth was in your children. What a wonder it was to have children. God says that a Godly woman's worth is in raising and cultivating Godly children. If God does not give physical children, He says you ought to have spiritual children.

But what we see here in the 9<sup>th</sup> verse of the 113<sup>th</sup> Psalm is that the God who is the God that were to praise now and always and the God that we are to praise from the sunrise to the sunset is to be our focus.

### **Focus on His immutable character,**

He is in control,

He is the greatest,

He is majestic, awesome,

He is in touch,

He is compassionate,

He can satisfy our deepest needs what ever they are.

We could do this through all those Psalms (113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118 and 136). God is the one who can help us to sing through our pain.

Go back to Acts 16. Paul is praying and "hunmeoing"—he is singing these special Psalms, (113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118 and 136). He did not by rote say every word but was singing these ideas. Look at verse 26 because he is singing about the

changeless God that is in control. He is singing about the One who can give them their heart's desire. The desire of Paul's heart, I am sure, was not to get out of that jail, his heart's desire was to see Philippi come to Christ.

God won't take us out of our prison if it is just to get out of our prison. God will do anything to cause His kingdom to go forward. Paul's heart desire was for people to hear about Christ.

*"<sup>26</sup>Suddenly there was a great earthquake (Greek: megas seismos),*

When we were in California and when the earth starts moving, there is nothing like it. In tornados, you can hide in the bathroom with a mattress over your head. But when you are in an earthquake, where the ground is convulsing, there is no place to hide and no place to go.

I remember the first earthquake I experienced, it was early in the morning and my wife Bonnie went to take shelter under a doorway. They say never go outside but I went outside because I wanted to see the ripples, the waves in the ground. I remember watching the houses in our development going up and down. A "megas seismos" went through there.

*"so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened..."*

Now remember that this is not any normal earthquake, this is God visiting this place.

*"and everyone's chains were loosed. <sup>27</sup>And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.*

The jailer had been listening to Paul and Silas, too. Paul presented the Gospel to him; he and his family received Christ, and they were all baptized. A happy ending.

### What is the lesson?

1. We can sing through pain. How? By focusing on the eternal, changeless God.
2. By praising Him now when things are not bad and always.
3. By praising Him all day long,
  - Praising Him because He is the greatest
  - Praising Him because He is in control
  - Realize that He can satisfy the deepest needs of our heart

That is the God that wants to take us through pain and suffering. Not remove us from it, but let us learn through it.

Let us bow before Him.

Father, we thank You that you are the great God: You are higher than the Heavens. You can satisfy the deepest desires of our hearts. We worship you. We ask You O Father, let us learn to praise You, to sing through our pain. And may we see people around us come to Christ-- like the Apostle Paul and Silas saw that night—because they cannot understand how we can have a soul in which all is well when everything is horribly devastated around us. Let us have that supernatural peace that passes understanding in our lives. For Jesus' sake we pray, AMEN.

### "It is Well With My Soul" by Horatio G. Spafford

*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

*Refrain*

*It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

*Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.*

*My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!*

*For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:  
If Jordan above me shall roll,  
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life  
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.*

*But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,  
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;  
Oh trump of the angel! Oh voice of the Lord!*

*Blessèd hope, blessèd rest of my soul!*

*And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;  
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,  
Even so, it is well with my soul.*

## PAUL IN THE MAMERTINE PRISON

Here, in the late Autumn of life sits the Apostle who dominates the early years of the church. Here awaiting execution in this most undesirable spot, is Saint Paul. Look at his last words from this very spot ... [2 Timothy 4:6-8](#) *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.* (NKJV)

## SIX SECRETS OF TRUE CONTENTMENT

How did he make through so many terrible situations? Six secrets we would do well to hear and learn:

- His Contentment was from God For I am now ready to be offered
- His Confidence was in God and the time of my departure is at hand
- His Courage was for God I have fought a good fight
- His Faithfulness was to God I have finished my course
- His Fidelity of God I have kept the faith
- His Focus was on God Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing

Paul had learned the lesson of TENT STAKES. God tells us we live as it were in our earthly life dwelling in tents. A few years ago we went camping with friends on Prince Edward Island. They were first time campers and so we advised them "don't pound your stakes too deep"! But since it was a bit insecure being in a tent for the first time ever they hammered them below the surface for extra measure.

At 4 AM on our departure day, the ferry boat was departing and we had to make it. The look on their faces said it all as they excavated the tent stakes with great labor while next door we pulled ours out by hand so quickly. Christians need to learn it is hard to leave all this behind when we pound our tent stakes too deeply into our careers, cars, homes, investments and so on.

## LESSONS IN SUFFERING FOR GOD'S GLORY

Now, please open with me to Paul love letter to the saints at Philippi. If you look closely with me, this letter is replete with signs of suffering, struggle and pain. Twenty of the 104 verses reference some source of trials [1:13,15,16,19, 20, 23, 28-30; 2:8, 14, 17, 27, 30; 3:2, 6, 8; 4:6, 12, 19].

All this leads to joy:

- [Philippians 2:17-18](#) *Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 18 For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.* (NKJV)

Let us examine the life of praise in the Apostle Paul, from his conversion at about 29 years of age, to his death at age 62. Paul lived 33 years of praise to God.

## A BRIEF PRAISE BIOGRAPHY OF PAUL

Let us draw on those abiding truths which produced such a life in him And then, why not be one of those for whom it is said, "Their life is a life of praise."

- **PURPOSEFUL:** promised by the Lord, a life of hardship [Acts 9:16](#)
- **RESILIENT:** driven out of a city only to minister in the next [Acts 13:50-51](#); [14:5-7, 19-21](#).
- **FEARLESS:** whipped, beaten, stoned and left for dead [Acts 14:19-20](#)
- **STEADFAST:** public assault and beating [Acts 16:19-24](#); [21:27](#)
- **PEACEFUL:** constant danger of renewed injury from bitter enemies [Acts 20:23](#)
- **FOCUSED:** unswerved by tearful warnings from close friends [Acts 21:13](#) Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (NKJV)
- **UNWAVERING:** faithful to old age in serving God [Acts 28:17](#). [Psalm 92]
- **UNDAUNTED:** an unbelievable list of untold months of hardship and pain [1 Cor 11:23-27](#).
- **UNSTOPPABLE:** unmoved by personal weakness [2 Corinthians 12:10](#) Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (NKJV)
- **UNOFFENDABLE:** unappreciated by those he deeply invested in [Galatians 1:6](#); [4:14-20](#). [[Ps 119:165](#)]
- **UNEARTHLY:** giving up personal safety, pleasure and pursuits for the advancement of God's kingdom [Phil. 1:20](#); [3:8](#). [[Revelation 17:8](#)]
- **UNATTACHED:** unafraid of losing all that is precious on earth [Philippians 2:17](#) Yes, and if I am being poured out [as a drink offering] on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. (NKJV)
- **UNDISCONTENTABLE:** [Philippians 4:18](#) Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things [sent] from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. (NKJV)
- **UNYIELDING:** deserted by all friends in ROME [Timothy 4:10, 16](#); [11 Timothy 4:17](#) But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and [that] all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. (NKJV)

## "The Apostle of Praise"

Finally, in the late Autumn of life sits the Apostle who dominates the early years of the church. Here awaiting execution in this most undesirable spot, is Saint Paul. Look at his last words from this very spot...

Sometime in the year AD 64, Paul the apostle looked out of the tiny grate that let in light to his subterranean dungeon. The Mamertinum prison was only a stones throw from the epicenter of the world, the Roman Forum.

Outside could be heard the crowds surging to the circus maximus, the games and the great festivals. The mighty legions returned from victory after victory with dazzling displays of plunder and captives.

But in that solitary dungeon of dampness, deprivation and discomfort, once again the spirit overshadowed the great apostle and began to breathe through him the very Word of God.

From the bone-weary journeys across the rugged terrain of Asia Minor, Greece and northern Syria, to the perilous sea crossings that marked Paul's travels, comes a theme that flavored his life - praise. Paul's praise to God through Christ welled up from the depths of a Roman dungeon in II Timothy 4 as he neared life's end. Stripes beaten into his back by a pagan jailer in Philippi could not muffle that melody. It swelled out in the darkness of Acts 16. The crushing rocks of Lystra only pushed his praise to the God of all grace and peace and hope deeper, into the very fiber of his life. In the few moments we share by means of these printed pages, let us examine the life of praise in the Apostle Paul, from his conversion at about 29 years of age, to his death 33 years later. Let us draw on those abiding truths which produced such a life in him. And then, why not be one of those for whom it is said, "Their life is a life of praise."

As missionary faces: [Stoning 14:19](#); Threats; Deprivations. In fact he wrote a travel diary - let me read it to you: 2 Cor. 11. "But whatever anyone dares to boast of...I also dare to boast of that....Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one--I am talking like a madman--with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches." Most of those events are not in Acts so this is such an intimate look!

Add to this the constant walks up and down those Roman roads and all that it entailed of over 1200 **WALKING** miles.

On top of all that we noted early the cruel beating in Philippi... 97 miles on foot and Thess. that's devotion!

As you follow Paul from country to country ([Rom. 15:19](#)), mark how he suffered for Christ's sake in his missionary labors. Here is a list for you to ponder over with your open Bible -

Enduring every species of hardship, encountering every extreme danger ([II Cor. 11:23-27](#)). Assaulted by the populace, punished by magistrates ([Acts 16:19-24](#); [21:27](#)). Scourged, beaten, stoned, left for dead ([Acts 14:19-20](#)). Expecting wherever he went a renewal of the same treatment and the same dangers ([Acts 20:23](#)). Driven from one city, he preached in the next ([Acts 13:50-51](#); [14:5-7,19-21](#)). Spent his whole time in missionary work, sacrificing to it his pleasures, his ease, his safety ([Acts 20:24](#); [Rom. 1:14-15](#); [Phil. 1:20](#); [3:8](#)). Persisted in this course to old age, unaltered by the experience of perverseness ([Acts 28:17](#)); ingratitude ([Gal. 1:6](#); [4:14-20](#)); prejudice ([II Cor. 12:15](#)); and desertion ([11 Tim. 4:10](#), [16](#)). Unsubdued by anxiety, want, labor, or persecution, unwearied by long confinement, undismayed by the prospect of death ([Acts 21:13](#); [II Cor. 12:10](#); [Phil. 2:17](#); [4:18](#); [11 Tim. 4:17](#)).

At his conversion, Paul was warned of the many things he would have to suffer for Christ's sake ([Acts 9:16](#)), and as he came to suffer he never sighed or moaned but gloried in his tribulations and was prouder of his scars in battle than a soldier of his medals and decorations ([Gal. 6:17](#)). What a warrior-missionary he was! The world has never seen his like (All the Apostles of the Bible [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972], 219-20).

Let me share F.B. Meyers, a choice servant of the Lord of last century in England's words:

- "He loved me, He gave Himself FOR me," is bound by a golden link to the words, "I have been crucified WITH Christ." He is always clear in saying,
- "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us... We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." But he is as clear and emphatic in saying,
- "When we were dead through our trespasses, He quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenlies, in Christ."
- "That one died for all" was an undoubted article in his creed; but this was another,
- "Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away, that we should no longer be in bondage to sin."
- He loved to reckon that he had died with Christ, and to claim that he should daily receive the power of his risen life. He longed to know Jesus Christ, and the power of his resurrection, being quite prepared to taste the fellowship of his sufferings and to become conformed unto his death, if only he might day by day attain unto the resurrection from the dead [Phil.3]... It was a radiant vision, and one of which the apostle never wearied. It was attributable to nothing less than the great love with which God had loved him, when he was a blasphemer and a persecutor, and injurious;



living, as he confesses he did, in the lusts of his flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and by nature a child of wrath even as the rest [[Eph 2:3](#)]. For us too, that vision waits; and in battling against the lusts of the flesh, the fascinations of the world, and the power of the devil, there is no position more fraught with the certainty of victory than this of our resurrection standing and privilege!

Well - what's the handle we can grab hold of and keep it in our grasp? It's this - Paul was a forgiven sinner and knew it for one reason. He met Jesus Christ that day. Looking up from the dust of that Roman road to Damascus, He saw Jesus.

**Jesus forgives sin. That's a mark of deity. If you fall before the Lord Jesus Christ today and ask - He can and will forgive**

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