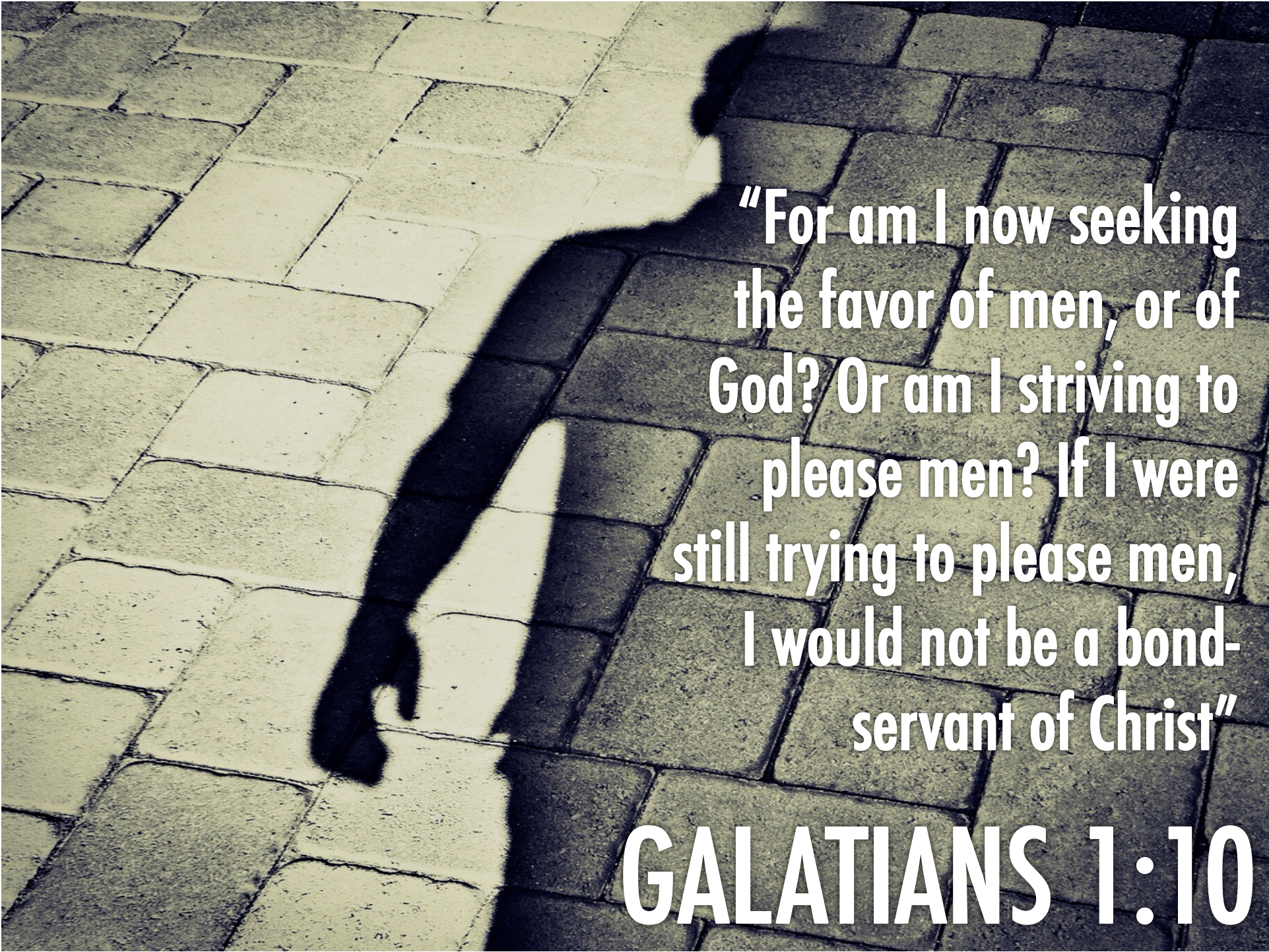
A high-contrast photograph of a person's shadow cast onto a cobblestone pavement. The shadow is dark and elongated, showing the person is walking. The cobblestones are light-colored and arranged in a grid pattern. The text 'PLEASING MEN OR GOD?' is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters on the right side of the image.

PLEASING
MEN OR
GOD?

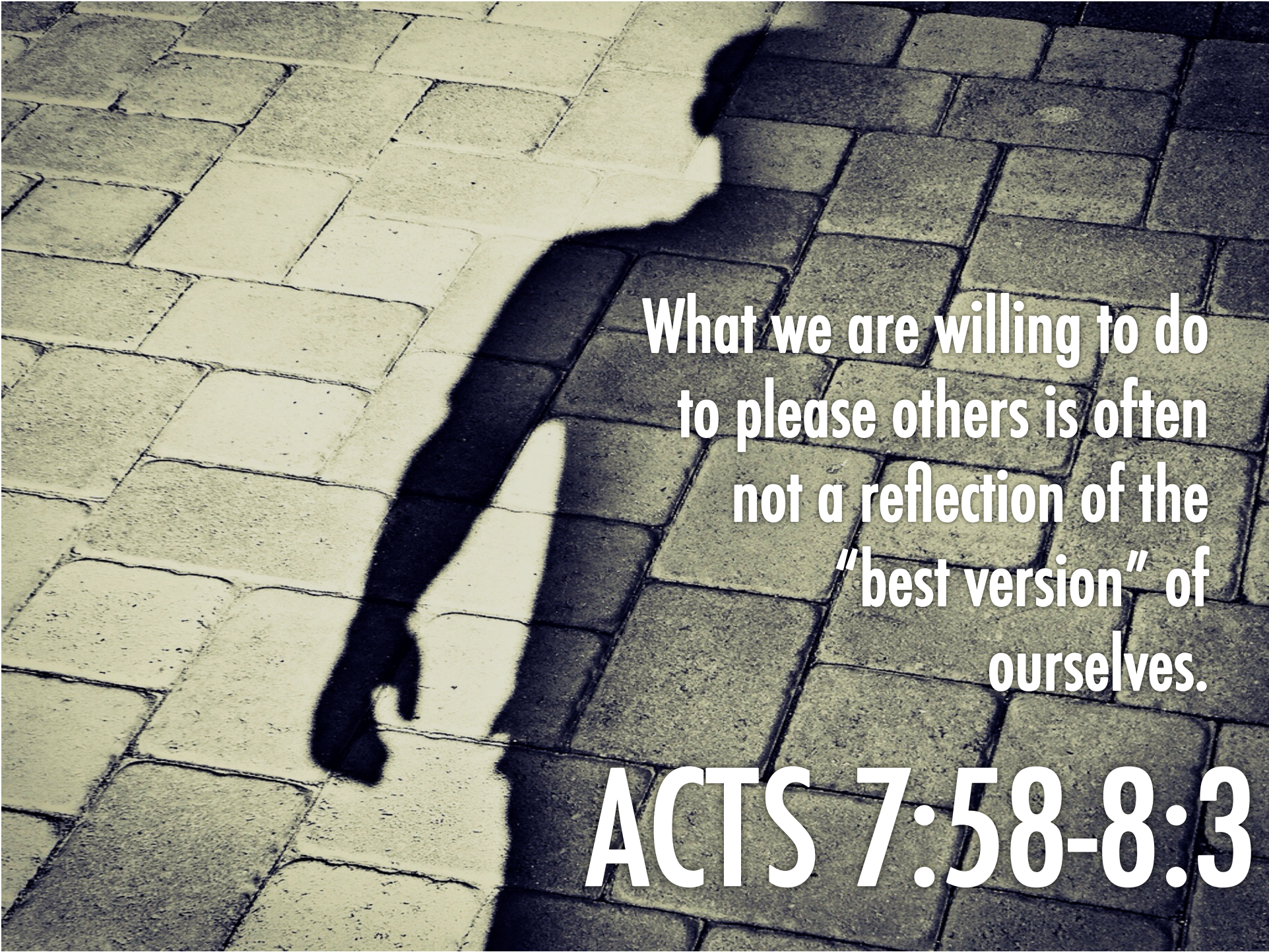
A high-contrast photograph of a cobblestone path. A dark, elongated shadow of a person is cast across the light-colored stones, moving from the upper left towards the lower right. The shadow is sharp and well-defined against the textured surface of the stones.

**"For am I now seeking
the favor of men, or of
God? Or am I striving to
please men? If I were
still trying to please men,
I would not be a bond-
servant of Christ"**

GALATIANS 1:10

PLEASING MEN

- The inference from Gal. 1:10 is that there was a time when he *was* trying to please men. His actions were dictated by his desire to impress and ingratiate himself to others, especially the higher powers in Jerusalem. He was a pupil of the famous Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), who held a senior position in the Sanhedrin, and Paul, then Saul of Tarsus, probably wanted to impress him.
- How many of our decisions have something to do with pleasing others? Parents? Teachers? A former boss? An ex-girlfriend? Quite frankly, we give far too much power to these individuals (even those we truly love).

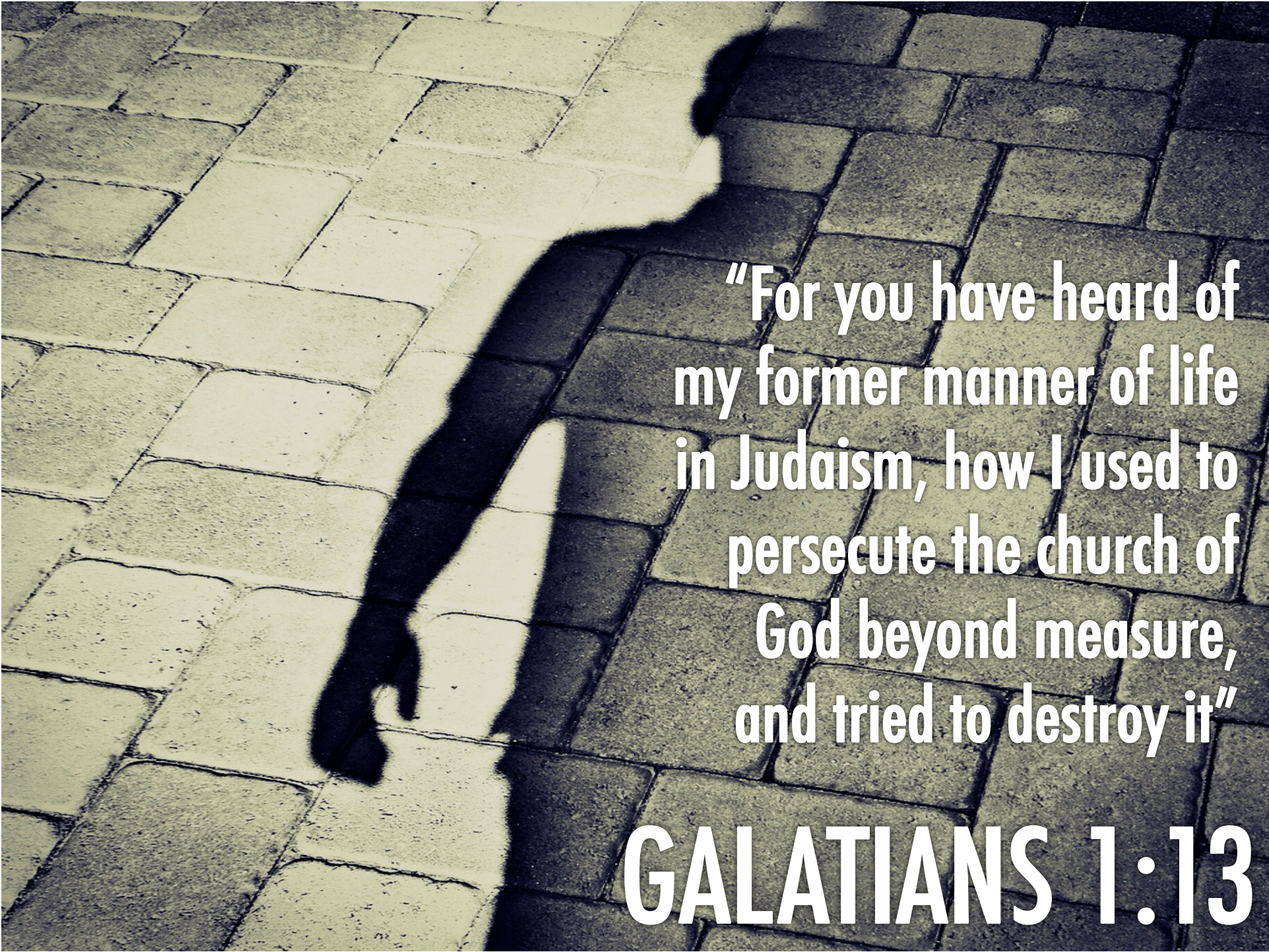
A high-contrast photograph of a person's shadow cast onto a cobblestone pavement. The shadow is dark and elongated, showing the person is walking away from the viewer. The cobblestones are light-colored and arranged in a grid pattern. The lighting is harsh, creating deep shadows and bright highlights.

What we are willing to do
to please others is often
not a reflection of the
“best version” of
ourselves.

ACTS 7:58-8:3

Oh, how ugly we become for others...



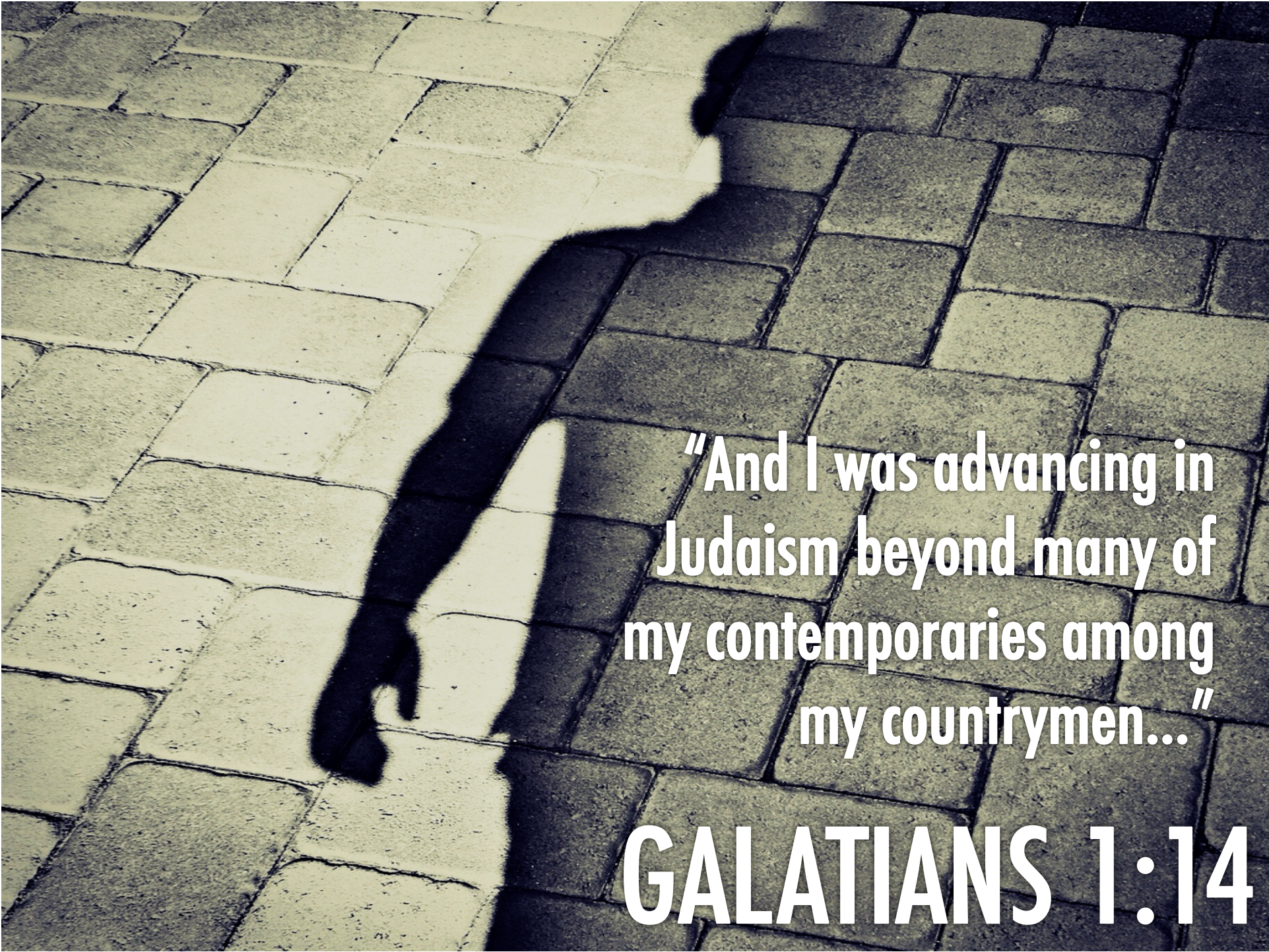
A high-contrast photograph of a cobblestone path. A dark, elongated shadow of a person is cast across the stones, moving from the upper left towards the lower right. The stones are light-colored and arranged in a grid-like pattern. The lighting is harsh, creating deep shadows and bright highlights.

**"For you have heard of
my former manner of life
in Judaism, how I used to
persecute the church of
God beyond measure,
and tried to destroy it"**

GALATIANS 1:13

GETTING AHEAD

- Paul went about his persecution of the church with the tenacity of one trying to prove himself. He was competing for the spotlight, attempting to get ahead, and he found his path – violent, ruthless, unflagging persecution.
- Acts 9:1-2, 22:3-4, 26:9-11
- Let us be clear: Saul of Tarsus felt like he was doing the right thing (Acts 22:3, 23:1, 26:9), but this only shows the numbing effect of “pleasing men” on his conscience. We end up justifying many things because of the positive side effects (“How can something so good be so bad?”).

A high-contrast, black and white photograph of a cobblestone path. A long, dark shadow of a person is cast across the stones, starting from the left and extending towards the right. The shadow is elongated and slightly blurred, suggesting movement. The cobblestones are arranged in a grid-like pattern, with some stones being lighter and others darker, creating a textured background.

**"And I was advancing in
Judaism beyond many of
my contemporaries among
my countrymen..."**

GALATIANS 1:14

ADVANCING? TO WHAT END?

- He had all the makings of a “rising star”, including all of the credentials (Philippians 3:1-6). He could have boasted (and perhaps did) about a resume that was the envy of his peers. In all likelihood, he would have gone on to become quite a powerful figure if he had not converted to Christ.
- But at what cost? What did pleasing men get him? What is the end result of a life that is filled with accolades but no salvation? See 1 Timothy 1:12-17.
- Pleasing God does not come with the same immediate rewards, but it is more rewarding (Matthew 10:24-33).