

## Deliverance, Devotion and Revival

Text: Acts 18:12-23

### **1.THE JUDGEMENT SEAT**

Acts 18:12-19

Since the conversion of Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, the Jews became very nervous. It is reminiscent of what the Pharisees said when Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on that fateful Passover in which our Lord was destined to die. John 12:19: "The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after Him."

Paul is brought before the Judgement Seat, where Gallio, the deputy of Achaia was presiding. Lucius Junius Gallio is an interesting character. Fragments found at Delphi in 1905 document his installation into proconsulship beginning on July 1, 51 A.D. and serving for only two years. Gallio was the half brother of Seneca, the great philosopher who was a favorite of emperor Claudius. Seneca wrote of his brother, "No mortal is so pleasant to anyone as Gallilo is to everyone." The Jewish leaders, knowing Gallio's reputation, were no doubt hoping Gallio would be pleasant to them and get rid of Paul.

Upon what grounds did the Jews file a prosecution against Paul? What did they accuse him of? Acts 18:13: "Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law." During those days of testifying in the Corinthian synagogue, it appears that Paul was quoting the famous Hebrew Shema, the monotheistic prayer to the One and Only God. Deuteronomy 6:4:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." However, it appears that Paul had updated the Shema by praying, "But to us there is but One God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him; and One Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we by Him" (I Corinthians 8:6). Think of what Paul was saying, "One God, the Father...and One Lord Jesus Christ." Paul aligns Jesus as equal with the Father, while he is naming Jesus the Messiah!

The Jews were permitted to worship in Judaism by Roman law. So, what the Jewish residents of Corinth were trying to do was to separate Christianity from Judaism, thus making Christianity illegal. And there may have been the attempt to throw in the fact that Jesus is being called "Lord" and "Son of God," in hopes that the Jews could sell Gallio on what the Pharisees were trying to do in the crucifixion event, i.e., preaching insurrection against Rome. Then the most marvelous thing took place! As Paul started to speak on his behalf, Gallio interrupted him. Gallio objected to this prosecution, telling the Jews that no crime had been committed, that they were merely arguing semantics. Then Gallio forcefully had the accusers thrown out of court. This was one of the most powerful legal decisions to be made on behalf of the early church and her evangelism. Gallio, knowing that Judaism was legal to practice, placed Christianity as another interpretation of the same faith. In this act he declared the practice and preaching of Christianity legal! Now this decision was not always respected everywhere afterwards, but in Corinth it made a big difference.

## **2. THE UNLIKELY CONVERT**

Acts 18:17

Crispus, the former ruler of the synagogue in Corinth had received Christ and Sosthenes took his place as the chief ruler. Occupying that office meant that he was the one leading the charge against Paul. Surprisingly, when Gallio drove them out of the Judgement Seat, the Greeks took advantage of the moment and, it is believed, he was given forty stripes, save one. Why the Greeks were the ones doing this, we are not sure, but we could assume the Greeks were antisemitic and since Gallio had treated the Jews so rudely, they could get away with a little persecution. Therefore, they chose the representative of the Jews, Sosthenes. I bring to your attention the most remarkable verse: "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother" (I Corinthians 1:1). Sosthenes became a Christian! I am going to speculate on something that may have taken place that would have been precious and so Christ-like. You see, humanly speaking, it doesn't make sense. The man who led the prosecution against Paul (Sosthenes) became the victim. Sosthenes was maligned and mistreated for trying to get rid of the Christian influence in Corinth.

What changed Sosthenes' mind? I would ask you to consider the teaching of Jesus. Matthew 5:44: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Please notice how Paul followed in the footsteps of his Lord. Romans 12:14: "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not." Romans 12:17a: "Recompense to no man evil for evil...." Romans 12:20a: "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink...." Romans 12:21: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." I can envision Paul going over to Sosthenes and helping him up from the beating, then taking him aside and washing his wounds, cleaning his clothes and bringing him something to eat. Again, we only hypothesize, but something happened that arrested Sosthenes' attention that caused him to repent and believe on the only begotten Son of God. Romans 2:4: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

## **3. THE VOW**

Acts 18:18-22

Acts 18:18 informs us that Paul is about to launch on a very personal, but meaningful pilgrimage. He is going back to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. But he is going as one who has taken the Nazarite vow. According to the practice, he has shorn his hair and is going to Jerusalem to cast his hair into the sacrificial fires. It was a very Jewish thing to do; the requirements are found in Numbers 6. So, Priscilla and Aquila accompany Paul and leave Corinth and head to Cenchræa where Paul cuts his hair. Then they cross the Aegean Sea, to Ephesus. While at Ephesus he reasoned with the Jews in their synagogue. They wanted him to stay, but he told them he must go to Jerusalem to attend the feast. He did assure them that if God was willing, he would return to them. Now Paul sails from Ephesus over the Mediterranean Sea to Caesarea, then up to Jerusalem. While at Jerusalem he fellowships with the brothers and sisters in Christ at the church. Although he probably attends some of the festivities, he is a man on a mission. He held to one last practice of Judaism by taking the Nazarite vow. And in

my imagination, I see Paul going to the place of Golgotha and contemplating what Christ has done for us. I see him venturing beyond Calvary to the empty tomb where Christ had been lain. I see him rejoicing with tears. Then as evening is approaching, he finds the believers and joins them for the Lord's Supper. I think this trip to Jerusalem was to show His deep appreciation for the way God has led and taken care of him and the team. I see this also as time of rededication to his Lord, a fresh re-committal to the task of getting the Gospel to the world.

#### **4. THE REVIVAL**

Acts 18:23

“And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.” In this journey back to Ephesus, he doesn't take the ship over the Mediterranean Sea, but travels first to Antioch and spends some time there with God's people. He then he travels on to Derbe, Lysrtra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch, finally arriving in Ephesus. The Bible tells us that on this trip he was, “...strengthening all the disciples.” Paul had a personal revival and now he takes it to the other churches he helped start. Yes, Paul needed revival and the disciples in every place he ministered needed a revival as well.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

As we approach our Missions Conference, I encourage us to pray for Brother Bonner as he comes to minister. Let us pray that we all will be revived. If Paul needed a revival from time to time and all of those great Christians in the early church needed revival, so do we! Ezra 9:8

“And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.” The bondage we are in is a different type of bondage that Ezra spoke of, but there is a sad plethora of bondages in our modern culture that we need deliverance from. Revival is not just a deliverance from, but a new dedication to our living, loving Lord.

-Pastor Pope-