

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 57

I. Exposition of Chapter Eighteen (Continued).

A. Verses 12-17 – Gallio the Proconsul of Achaia.

1. Who was Gallio? He is a well-known historical figure showing, once again, the historical accuracy of Luke. Gallio was also the brother of a well-known philosopher of that day, namely, Seneca. Dr. Bob Utley makes the following comments:

“From biblical and extra-biblical sources we learn that this was a fair and competent political leader. His brother, Seneca, says of him, ‘Even those who love my brother Gallio to the utmost of their power do not love him enough’ and ‘no man was ever as sweet to one as Gallio is to all.’ This political appointee helps us to date Paul’s journeys. He was a proconsul for two and one half years starting in A.D. 51.”¹

2. Verses 12-13 – **“...the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, saying, ‘This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.’”**

- a. It seems the encouragement the Lord gave Paul in verses 9-10 came just in time before persecution rose up again. Regarding this, Grant Osborne gives us insight:

“The Lord had promised that no lasting harm would result, not that no charges against Paul would be raised. The animosity of the Jews reaches new heights, and they try a new strategy, going to the Roman proconsul rather than to the rabble. In other words, now Paul is facing legal opposition, as his opponents bring up official charges similar to Jesus before Pilate.”²

- b. This was a very important trial which would potentially affect all other Christians due to setting a precedent. Dr. Thomas Constable states:

“A ‘proconsul’ was the governor of a Roman province, and his legal decisions set precedent for the other proconsuls throughout the empire. Consequently Gallio’s decision in Paul’s case affected the treatment that Christians would receive throughout the Roman world. This was the first time that Paul (or any other apostle, as far as we know) stood trial before a Roman provincial governor.”³

3. Verses 14-16 – **“And when Paul was about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, ‘If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look *to it* yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such *matters*.’ And he drove them from the judgment seat.”** – Gallio was not interested in this case because he didn’t consider any Roman law being broken by Paul. Judaism was a legal religion in the Roman Empire and Christianity was seen as a branch of Judaism. Dr. Utley offers some interesting thoughts:

“This Jewish claim that Christianity was a violation of their laws and therefore not a part of Judaism, was a very important legal issue. If Gallio had ruled on this charge, Christianity would have become an illegal religion. But, as it was, Christianity enjoyed political protection (it was seen as a sect of Judaism, which was a legal religion) under Roman law until Nero’s persecution, 10–12 years later. It is even possible that one of Luke’s purposes in writing Acts was to document that Christianity was not a threat to Roman authority. Every Roman official is recorded as recognizing this fact.”⁴

4. Verse 17 – **“Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.”** – In an attempt to get Gallio’s attention, some of the Greeks decided they would take the new ruler of the synagogue and beat him in Gallio’s presence but it did no good. Gallio remained indifferent to these things. Dr. Stanley Horton shares some interesting comments:

“The whole incident must have had a deep effect on Sosthenes...Finally Sosthenes must have yielded to the truth of the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 1:1 ‘our brother Sosthenes’ joins Paul in greeting the Corinthians. Though we cannot prove it with certainty, this must be the same Sosthenes. It would be unlikely that there would be another prominent Sosthenes who was well known to the Corinthian church. Truly the grace of God is marvelous: The

¹Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 215.

²Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 331.

³Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 365.

⁴Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, 215.

leader of the opposition, a man who must himself have blasphemed Paul and the gospel, became a brother in the Lord. With this victory before Gallio and the conversion of Sosthenes, there must have been more freedom than ever for the Christians to witness for Christ in Corinth.”⁵

B. Verses 18-23 - Paul returns to Antioch in Syria and Beyond.

1. **Verse 18** – “So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila *were* with him. He had *his* hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow.” – We can definitely conclude that, at this point, Priscilla and Aquila are now believers because they went with him. There is an odd mention here of Paul having his hair cut off because he had made a vow. No one seems to really know what this vow was about. Some suggest that it was an expression of thanksgiving to God for keeping him safe in Corinth. Others think it may have been an act to identify with the Jews who made Nazarite vows of dedication to the Lord. There are a variety of ideas. “Cenchrea” was a port town about seven miles from Corinth.
2. **Verses 19-22** – Paul goes to Ephesus and after staying a short time and preaching in the synagogue, he leaves Priscilla and Aquila there and goes on to Caesarea, which was a port city where he would have landed in order to travel up to Jerusalem, where he “...greeted the church...” (verse 22). He then went back to his home church in Antioch (cf. 13:1-3).
3. **Verse 23** – “After he had spent some time *there*, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.” – After spending some time in Antioch, he goes back to the Provinces of Galatia and Phrygia where he was “...strengthening all the disciples.” (cf. 16:6). This verse introduces the beginning of Paul’s Third Missionary Journey. Stanley Horton writes:

“Paul spent some time, probably about six months, in Antioch encouraging and teaching the church. Then he went north by land on a fifteen-hundred-mile journey ‘throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia.’ One after another he visited the churches founded on his first and second journeys. Paul never started churches and forgot them. Always he sought to go back to give further teaching and to establish and strengthen new believers. That is, he was always as much concerned with follow-up as he was with evangelism.”⁶

C. Verses 24-28 – The Ministry of Apollos.

1. **Verse 24** – “Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man *and* mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.”
 - a. Apollos is a remarkable man. He is mentioned several times in the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians and then also in Titus (I Corinthians 1:12; 3:4-6; 22; 4:6; 16:12 and Titus 3:13). Dr. Thomas Constable asserts:

“‘Apollos,’ whose formal name would have been Apollonius, may have arrived in Ephesus after Paul had departed for Jerusalem on his previous journey. That is the impression Luke gave. In any case, he was from Alexandria, the capital of Egypt. Furthermore, he was a Christian Hellenistic Jew, ‘an eloquent man,’ who had a thorough understanding of the Old Testament, a gift for communicating and defending the faith, and enthusiasm (cf. Rom. 12:11).”⁷

- b. “...an eloquent man...” – The word “eloquent” means; “pertaining to attractive and convincing speech”⁸ This word can also include the idea of “educated.”
 - c. “...mighty in the Scriptures...” – The word “mighty” means; “powerful”, “strong” and “capable.”⁹
 2. **Verse 25** – “This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.”
 - a. He had been taught by someone and now was teaching others (cf. II Timothy 2:2).
 - b. He taught accurately but there was some areas he was not knowledgeable of because it states that “...he knew only the baptism of John.”
 - c. He was “...fervent in spirit...” – “In the NT this is only used figur. of being stirred by the

⁵Horton, 310.

⁶Ibid, 312.

⁷Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 371.

⁸Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 392.

⁹Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

Holy Spirit.”¹⁰ It also means literally “**to boil in the spirit**” and “**to show enthusiasm**”¹¹

¹⁰Albrecht Oepke, “Ζέω, Ζεστός (χλιαρός, Ψυχρός),” ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 875.

¹¹ Louw and Nida, 296.