

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 18:14-23 | Session 49 | Paul's 2nd Journey Ends

A.D. 54

When we left Paul last time he was standing before Gallio, the governor of Achaia, being accused by the Jews of *persuading men to worship God contrary to the Law*. That is exactly what the gospel of grace is about. Salvation is by grace through faith and not of works. While Paul will continue to preach the Kingdom message for the nation of Israel, individual salvation comes only by belief; “Grace through faith and not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works” Ephesians 2:8-9.

Verses 14,15,16—

Paul was ready to give his response to the accusations but as he was **about to open his mouth**, **Gallio** ignored him and spoke directly to the **Jews**. As the governor representing Rome he was only in the position (or only desired) to deal with matters that pertained to all the citizens of Corinth, i.e., **wrong or wicked lewdness**. Had Paul been reckless in his actions in and around Corinth it would have been a different story. Gallio was not about to get dragged into a religious spat when it came to the **Jews** and their **Law**. Therefore, he threw out their case and **drave** (past tense of drive) **them from the judgment seat**. Whether he had them forcefully removed or he did it verbally, he took action to kick them out.

Verse 17—

Paul evidently walked away, but the Hellenistic Jews, the **Greeks**, were fired up and **took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat**. The **Greeks** were the Jews who had adopted the Greek culture. Why the Greeks beat Sosthenes and not the *Judeans* is not known. It is not clear who **Sosthenes** was, but he may have taken over the position of **chief ruler** after *Crispus* and his *household* left the synagogue and became believers in the Lord (Acts 18:8). Why they took out their aggression on him is not clear either. Could it be that **Sosthenes** too, was sympathetic to Paul and his gospel? Did Sosthenes believe? See 1 Corinthians 1:1. And **Gallio cared for none of those things**.

Verse 18—

And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren. We should suppose this means he stayed in Corinth for a while yet for how long we do not know. But it appears he wasn't being bothered any longer by the Jews. **Took his leave of the brethren**, that is the body of Christ who were meeting in the church in Justus's house. The word **brethren** is often translated in modern versions as *brothers and sisters*. While it is possible to use it in this sense, it is a masculine word in the Greek *adelphos* and it means brothers (some cite Acts 13:26 to show *adelphos* can mean men and women; men here is probably *husbands*). There is a feminine word for sister, *adelphe*. It is okay to translate it exactly as it was written. We do not need to apologize for or adjust the Word of God to make it fit our culture.

And sailed thence into Syria. That is, he sailed **toward** (Greek: *eis*) **Syria**. He was joined by **Priscilla and Aquila**. After he had **shorn his head in Cenchrea¹: for he had a vow**. There is still evidence of the dock from which Paul and his friends would have boarded the ship for the journey. Before

departing, Paul shaved his head and took a vow. What this vow was and why he took it is not mentioned. The only vow in the Bible that required shaving of the head is found in the book of Numbers 6:18. This vow was an indication of being *set apart* for some purpose. The shaving of the head took place at the completion of the vow, but the problem with this is that it had to be done at the door of the Tabernacle/Temple and burned on the altar. Since Paul was a long way from Jerusalem this would have been impossible, unless he planned on taking the hair with him to Jerusalem. He does seem to be in a hurry to get to Jerusalem as we will see in a moment.

Verses 19,20-

And he came to Ephesus, and left them (Priscilla and Aquila) **there. He entered the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews**. The Greek word for **reasoned** is *dialegomai*, from which we get our word *dialogue*. And, as was Paul's custom while in the synagogue of the Jews he presumably would have preached the message that Jesus, whom they crucified, was the Christ (Acts 17:3). In this synagogue the Jews appear to be accepting of his message and instead of running him out of town, as in other cities, **they desired him to tarry longer time with them**. But ironically, **he consented not; but bade them farewell saying**

Verse 21—

I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem. Luke, the author of Acts, gives us no indication what feast this was. Whether it was the feast of Passover or another we do not know. Paul was eager to get to Jerusalem, and again, perhaps for the reason of completing his Nazarite vow. Nevertheless, he assures them he **will return again unto you**, and indeed we will see him return to Ephesus in chapter 19. But for now, **he sailed from Ephesus**.

Verse 22—

And when he had landed in Caesarea. Luke crams a lot of traveling into this one sentence. He will go from Caesarea, to Jerusalem to Antioch. The phrase **and gone up** always refers to Jerusalem. In the New Testament Jerusalem is always “up.” **And when down to Antioch** where the church which sent him on his initial missionary journey was located.

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY BEGINS

Verse 23—

And after he had spent some time there, he departed. How long he spent in Antioch we do not know, but after some time he **went over all the country of Galatian and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples**.

Paul back tracked **in order** from his previous journeys in order to strengthen the **disciples**. Whether these **disciples** refer only to Jewish believers in the Messiah (as some believe) is hard to say. It is interesting Paul never uses the term **disciples** in his writings. The term disciple does seem to be a term from the previous dispensation. Luke may be using the term for all who believe, Jew or Gentile since we know that those in Galatia were not Kingdom believers, but were believers by grace through faith. Next time we will continue with Paul on his third journey, after Luke gives a brief interlude, back to Aquila and Priscilla who are still in Ephesus.

¹ Later, when Paul wrote the book of Romans, he mentions a woman in the church of Cenchrea, Romans 16:1.