

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

**A0925 – June 21, 2009 – Acts 18:1-17 – Paul's Encouragement At
Corinth**

Okay, three questions came out of the last few weeks. One: the definition of presupposition. I'm having a hard time seeing the difference between a presupposition and an assumption. Good question. They're not the same as I said. Let me explain what is meant when you do reading in the area of apologetics. Presupposition is one of the most misunderstood words in this area. And we've said it means an "ultimate commitment." And we've said there are only two ultimate commitments. Either you are ultimately committed to God and His authority in the word or man and the authority of human reason. Everybody is in one of those two camps. There are not 101 different camps; ultimately there are only two camps. I hope you see that. Now, in terms of an assumption and a presupposition, the difference. When I say presupposition I don't mean "a prior thought" I mean "a pre-eminent thought." What takes pre-eminence in the way you think? What's your presupposition? When I say assumption I do mean "a prior thought." You can assume lots of things, your assumption may be right or wrong, but the difference is that an assumption is simply a prior thought whereas a presupposition is a pre-eminent thought or that which you are ultimately committed to.

Second question. You say in Acts 17:31 that Paul didn't introduce Jesus Christ, but that doesn't seem right because he mentions "a Man" who was appointed judge and was raised from the dead and that's Jesus Christ. Therefore Jesus is in v 31. Another good question. The first thing we have to say is neither Jesus nor Christ are mentioned in that verse. Everybody can agree to that. So let's back up to v 30. Who is the subject? God. God did several things. What has Paul been talking about all along? God. God's the creator of all things, He's the sustainer of all things. Vv 30-31 God has done

some other things. God has overlooked times of ignorance. God has fixed a day of judgment. God has appointed a judge for that day, a Man.” Yes, we know that’s Jesus because we’re Christians. But did the Greek philosophers on that day know that was Jesus? No. You’re inserting what you know into the text. Paul didn’t put that in there, you put it in there. If Timothy or Silas had been there, they would have known who Paul was referring to but Paul’s still trying to explain to them what God does. This stuff about the man and having raised this man from the dead is sort of like bait. Do you want to know who this man is, I’m not telling you yet, I’m not ready for that, but when the time comes I’m going to identify Him. So here’s the point: if God is the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe then everybody is responsible to Him. And therefore there is a day of judgment. Further the Creator God has already appointed the Judge. And He’s proved who the Judge is by raising Him from the dead. Now, if God is the Creator and He Sustains the universe then can God raise someone from the dead? Obviously, it’s very easy for someone with such power to raise a dead person. So the point still is what God does. Now, if you repent about the nature of God then I’m ready to tell you who the man is, which some were, evidently some others wanted to hear Paul also about this. And he went on and told them and they believed. So obviously Paul gave Damaris and these others the rest of the story. But he did just like he said he did in Acts 20:21, he preached repentance toward God first, and then he went on to preach faith in the Lord Jesus. It’s useless to preach Jesus as long as their messed up on God. If God, for example, is the universe and Jesus is God then Jesus is the universe and the universe isn’t even a person. So now we have an impersonal Jesus and this very radically messes up the gospel. So we can’t go into that Paul says until I get straight that you guys have a right view of God because Jesus is God and that’s heavy stuff. So I work that out first.

A third question, and here someone has done some thinking. I try to stay away from this high language, but someone has done some research. What do we mean when we say that when man fell he fell ontologically. Well, the simple answer is we mean man lost his relationship with God, not his knowledge of God. But let me back up. As I’ve taught Acts 17 I told you there were two ways commentators interpreted this text and the question is really getting back to those two approaches. When man fell did he lose his knowledge of God or his relationship with God? That’s the difference between the two approaches to Acts 17. Everybody agrees man is fallen but they

disagree as to the essence of man's fall. So the question in theological circles is whether man fell ontologically or epistemologically? In other words, when Adam fell and we in Adam did we lose our knowledge of God or did we lose our relationship with God? If we lost our knowledge of God then the fall was epistemological and men don't know God exists. If we lost our relationship with God then the fall was ontological, people know God exists, but we're at enmity with Him and we suppress that knowledge. Now, I've said the latter, man fell ontologically. We didn't lose our knowledge of Him. Take Adam, Adam is in the garden, he eats the fruit, now, did he lose his knowledge of God? No, he's hiding from God, so he knows very well God is there. Something else is the problem; the problem is he's got short accounts with that God. The relationship has been breached. He's separated from God relationally. He's not rightly related to God anymore. Now, it is true that because man is ontologically fallen this does affect Adam's knowledge. Adam now distorts the knowledge of God, he distorts the nature of God just as the Athenians had done. How do we know Adam had done that? Well, what did Adam do when he heard the Lord God in the garden? He tried to hide from God. When was the last time you could hide from an omnipresent person? What had Adam done? He'd localized God, he'd spatialized God. Can God be limited in that way? No. But Adam did still know God was there and so the fall of man was primarily ontological and after that we can talk about epistemological affects. But the fall is where mankind lost his relationship with God, not where he lost his knowledge of God. Here's what the other side thinks. They make the fall out to be epistemological and therefore man lost his knowledge of God. If that is the case and men do not know God is there then all men could not be held responsible and Rom 1 couldn't be the word of God because it says all men do know God exists and will be held responsible for that knowledge. Secondly, if we lost our knowledge of God then when people said, "I don't know God exists. It's not clear to me." we would launch into arguments for the existence of God framed after the authority of human reason and experience. But we don't do that because that's not what the Bible says.

Now, today, we move on from Acts 17 and Athens to Acts 18 and Corinth. No church was established at Athens but a church is established at Corinth, so let's get the background knowledge starting in 18:1, **After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. ²And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife**

Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, ³and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers. ⁴And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

Paul is still in the province of Achaia, but he moves down the road from Athens 50 miles west to Corinth. Athens was on the Greek peninsula and it connected to the Peloponnesian peninsula by way of an isthmus. Corinth is along that isthmus and therefore it is a major city of commerce since it sits between two major bodies of water. The ships, rather than taking their cargo 200 miles around the peninsula would take it across the isthmus at the eastern port, Cenchraea, where Paul will establish a church, over to the western port of Lechaem. Corinth sat smack dab in the middle and so it was a major city of business, lots of commerce, and had a high population, about half a million. But Corinth was also a very, very immoral place. In Athens the suppression of the truth was intellectual; they devised various philosophies to shield themselves from the knowledge of God. In Corinth the suppression of the truth is immorality. Their chief goddess was Aphrodite whose temple towered 1,800 feet above the city. There were one thousand religious prostitutes who dominated society and therefore there came to be a saying in the ancient world. Instead of using the common verb “to fornicate,” one would simply be said “to Corinthianize,” it was a technical phrase that meant “to fornicate.” And if you were called a Corinthian Girl you were a prostitute. So Paul at Corinth enters the sex capital of the ancient world. A city that was licentious to the core, a city though in which the Lord had many elect people. And in these verses we have the background for two epistles in the NT, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and one must know this section to appreciate the problems that Paul later addresses in those epistles (1 Cor 5; 6:15ff).

Also, look at all of the cities Paul has gone into in Europe. Every town he's gone to Paul's been virtually kicked out of town, save Athens. After this happens in town after town you start wondering when you walk through the gates of a new town, when is the mob going to attack me this time, and this can get very discouraging. This is the state of Paul when he arrives at Corinth. He's down and out.

But, as the Lord would have it when Paul arrives the Lord has very strategically placed two outstanding people there to encourage Paul. These two people will become lifelong friends of Paul, a married couple, **Aquila** and **Priscilla**. The man, named **Aquila**, was from Pontus, an intellectual province north of Asia Minor, on the frontier of the Black Sea. He was related, probably, to a large clan that lived in Pontus which produced many scholars. One hundred years after the NT was written a man from his clan, also named Aquila will translate some of the OT Hebrew texts into Greek and will do a lot in standardizing manuscripts. So Aquila comes from a well-educated area, he's not just anybody that God picked to come alongside Paul. He's someone who had a keen intellect like Paul and they could discourse day in day out. And his wife was **Priscilla**. Her background is even better known; she comes from the family, the Prisci and the Prisci were a very wealthy family in Rome. History testifies that it was the Prisci family that bought, paid for and maintained the first public cemetery for Christians. That cemetery still exists outside the city of Rome today. The Prisci family developed and maintained many, many Christian works. And so apparently this woman was a member of the upper class, a very influential class, and she and her husband may have already been Christians. On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 there were Jews from Pontus who had come and it may have been that Aquila was converted at that time or near after. Anyway, probably they were already converted and were sent to encourage Paul.

Now not only does God send these two believers to Paul but He sends word through them that something has happened in Rome. Now in the Mediterranean Sea, the Italian Peninsula comes down and it looks like a boot kicking a rock. Paul is located over in Corinth and this is as far west as the Christian message through Paul has gone and one would be tempted to think again that this is as far as the Holy Spirit and Christ have gone. Not so, for back on the day of Pentecost there were people who had come from as far as Rome, as far as Cyrene in N Africa, as far as Pontus by the Black Sea. And they had been won to Christ and had come back to their respective cities and planted churches. One church that was established was in Rome. This church was established by neither Paul nor Peter; it was established by converts from the day of Pentecost. The church had become so powerful that certain things had happened and some of those things would encourage Paul.

The things that happened are mentioned in verse 2, **because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome.** Now what's that got to do with Christianity? What it has to do with Christianity is that this expulsion of the Jews was caused by Christians apparently. Here's how it happened. Claudius issued an edict which scholars believe occurred in AD50-51, and this, therefore, pins down the date of Paul meeting Aquila and Priscilla.

Apparently they were kicked out of town, Ramsay projects, about 7 or 8 months after the decree in 50-51 AD. So Claudius obviously had a problem with the Jews and so he threw them out. The problem was related by Suetonius, a Roman author, in his book, *Lives of the Caesars*, he relates, "As the Jews kept on indulging in constant riots at the instigation of a man by the name of Chrestus, he banished them from Rome." In other words, there was one riot after another occurring in the Jewish ghetto quarters of Rome and the Roman police would go in and restore law and order and walk out. There'd be another riot, they'd send the Roman police in again, quell it, go out, another riot, and so the Roman inspectors began to ask, what's causing this problem. They traced it back to a man by the name of Chrestus. Now it doesn't require too much imagination to see who Chrestus is. That's Christ. And what's happened, Suetonius doesn't understand; he doesn't realize that Christ wasn't actually present in the ghettos. There's all this talk about the Christ going on in the ghetto. But Christ isn't there. He assumes Christ is there. He assumes this Christ is causing riots. Christ in a way is causing the riots in that everywhere these converts from the day of Pentecost go they're arguing that Jesus is the Christ, they're trying to persuade their non-Christian Hebrew friends of this. So there was all this arguing in the Hebrew ghetto's over Jesus Chrestus. And mind you there were 20,000 Jews in Rome at the time and if anytime you get two Jews in a disagreement you can have a riot. Just think what you get with 20,000. So Emperor Claudius has finally had it. He says we're not going to have this any more, get out of town and so it shows you Christianity is making headway in Rome. Do you think that encouraged Paul? Paul hadn't even been to Rome. The farthest Paul had traveled was Corinth. And now he hears the gospel has already gone a thousand miles father west. So encouragement number one is Aquila and Priscilla, encouragement number two is Christianity is making headway ahead of Paul.

So Paul meets the two believers and in verse 3 **because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they**

were tent-makers. He enters into a trade guild with them. The Jews had trade guilds in all their communities. Paul went down to the local Jewish trade guilds and since his father had trained him in tentmaking and two of the members of the tentmaking guild were Aquila and Priscilla he joined them. The word for **tentmakers** refers to all kinds of leather work, so Paul's skill was in the area of making leather goods; they could be tents, could be saddles, all kinds of leather goods. And so Paul needs some money because his father, who was apparently quite wealthy, cut him off when he came home from rabbi school professing Jesus as the Christ and he has to make a living making leather items. Paul was not independently wealthy, he was not getting full-time support from believers, he had to trot out a living. In fact the Jewish Rabbi's, after the time of Rabaan Gamaliel III, said that if a man were to only study and teach Torah it would inevitably lead to sin, because all he was doing was exercising his brain muscle and that meant his body muscle needed an outlet, so they said you have to work both the brain and the body. If you don't and you just stick your head in a book all day it will lead to idle time, idle thinking and that leads to sin. We saw the most interesting example of this in Ephesus last year when we looked at the great Library of Celsus. This is where all the braniacs spent their time, but in the basement of that library there was a secret passageway. Guess where the secret passage went? Under the street to the local brothel. So you get tired of working your brain, sneak across the street and work out your body. And therefore the Jews are probably right; it's not a bad idea to engage in some manual labor alongside preaching the word of God. And this is what Paul was doing at the time.

Acts 18:4, **And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.** ⁵**But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul *began* devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.** Now it doesn't come through in the translation but here's what happened. Because he had to work every day he obviously couldn't teach every day. Therefore Paul's teaching was limited to only the **Sabbath**; Friday evenings, Saturday mornings, the **Sabbath**. He was limited in his teaching ministry and we know how he felt about it from parallel passages which we'll see in just a moment. Paul was discouraged; he was limited in the situation.

He's had two encouragements, Priscilla and Aquila, and the advance of Christianity in Rome. Now the third encouragement comes. Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia and now Paul began **devoting himself completely to the word**. What's this mean? It means Paul dedicated himself to full time teaching of the word. So Paul obviously stopped making tents when Paul and Silas arrived. Why? Because they had brought financial gifts from other believers. Now Paul can preach every day. Let's see how he did this.

Turn to 2 Cor 11:9; we'll show you these texts so that when you read the NT epistles you'll learn to relate it to what we're reading in Acts, get a little background. And also you can see that the apostles faced frustration and discouragement in life. They weren't immune from the same kinds of things any preacher or teacher of the word of God faces. Just watch. Paul says, "and when I was present with you and was in need," he's talking about financial need, when "I was in need I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia, that's Silas and Timothy, "they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so." Paul's not going to burden these believers at Corinth for money. Why not? Because they were new believers. Paul didn't want to be supported by new believers. He wanted them to thoroughly learn what grace was. And once they thoroughly understood grace, then he'd accept it, but not from the new converts, if he had to he would rather support himself by making tents than take money from new believers. That was part of Paul's philosophy of ministry.

Let's go to Phil 4:15. Remember Philippi; that was the first church he had gone to in Macedonia; after he crossed the Aegean, he entered up north at Philippi. It was that city he went to first, and then he came down to Thessalonica, Berea and eventually to Athens and Corinth. In Phil 4:15, "You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;" So now we can locate the exact local church that gave Paul financial support. It was the Philippian church.

But Silas and Timothy coming from Macedonia brought him more encouragement than just finances. For that turn to 1 Thess 3:6. From Philippi came money; from Thessalonica came something else, verse 6, "But

now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you.” So the second thing they brought was news of fondness of Paul. Remember, Paul had to leave by night, it was sudden, it was covert, no time for good byes. Did they love Paul? Yes, they did. So Silas brings financial support and Timothy brings encouraging words of love to Paul in Acts 18.

After bringing that it says in Acts that he began to constantly teach, day after day after day, he would go into the synagogues of the Jews and follow his standard operating procedure, testify that Jesus was the Messiah. He would present the historical framework of what God had done in the nation of Israel’s history, then inside that framework he would present OT verse after OT verse after OT verse that related to the Messiah. And by doing this he was building a Messianic profile of what the Messiah would be like, and then he would plug Jesus into the profile. This went on and on until verse 6 and finally, as was the case almost every other town, what’s the result? The Jews **resisted and blasphemed**, the Greek text says they lined up in battle array against Paul. And we can tell from the rest of the verse that Paul was pretty bent about it. Every town I go to I get resistance, I get the mob mentality, I have to leave town after town after town, and here we go again. I went to the Jew first, I’ve given them ample opportunity, now I’ve had it, and I turn to the Gentiles. But in this case, as in Acts 13:51, he’s extremely bent and Paul goes through this very exasperating gesture. **he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”** You can tell he’s had it with the Jews there. He gave them a shot, he went over the verses and over the verses and over the verses and finally you come to the point that these people don’t want the word of God. And when you’re with people and they show absolutely no interest in the word of God there’s only one response. Leave. Don’t waste your time. Paul said, you don’t want the word of God, fine, there are plenty of other people who do want the word of God, I’ll go to them. And so Paul does. But watch how he does it.

V 7 Paul sets up shop in someone's house. Look at this, look at the location of the house, **Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue.** That word means “built against it.” Justus’ house and the

synagogue were touching. So, you guys don't like the word of God? Fine, I'm setting up camp on your doorstep, how do you like that. I'm not going away; the word of God isn't going away. And this doesn't go on too long before someone is won to Christ and lo and behold, who should be won to Christ but the chief ruler of the synagogue. Acts 18:8, **Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.** Crispus, a Roman name, so a Roman citizen but apparently still a Jew; was the head of the synagogue. What a strategic person to win to Christ, the chief of the synagogue. And not only did he win this man, he won his family. Men particularly ought to notice in the middle of verse 8, when the man of the house believed all his house believed. You see that with the Philippian jailer, you find it again later in the book of Acts. That doesn't mean that the husband makes a decision for the wife or the father makes a decision for the children. What it means is that these men function as the spiritual leaders of their home and when they believe the gospel their wives and children follow them in believing, if, of course, the children are at an age where they can believe. The point here is that the structure of divine institution #2 and 3, marriage and family were being respected and when the men responded to spiritual things, the wife and children followed.

The man is the critical element in spiritual success in any family or church. If the men respond to the gospel women and children will follow. This isn't only true for response to the gospel but response of believers to spiritual truth. I remember calling an organization that majors on issues of manhood and womanhood and as I requested a seminar, the man said, now we don't do women only seminars. We do men and women or men only but we will not do a woman's only seminar at the church. Curious I asked, well why is that? And he said, what we've found is that most churches want women's only seminars because only the women are interested in spiritual things. And what we've found through our research is that it creates women's leadership in the churches which is role reversal and we don't want to contribute to that problem. So we refuse to facilitate the spiritual needs of women until the men say alright, we want it. Now you say, that's male chauvinism. No it's not, its biblical priority. God expects men to be the spiritual leaders in marriage and family and church; not spiritual followers. What happens to men when you get women leading is they start to resent it and they're too proud to admit it so they plunge into the de-masculinization process where they become

passive, weak, effeminate males who do not study the word of God, do not train their children, do not lead their families. So we have a problem of role reversal and this is healed by this method of saying men, we're not going to go forward until you step up. We're not going to do any kind of special ministering to the ladies that will encourage them into positions of church leadership. You men come along first and then you can bring your wives and family up to speed. And so with the house of Crispus and others this is what happened and you see, at the end of v 8 a tremendous response to the gospel, many believed and that encouraged Paul.

But v 9, Paul senses a storm is rising. Paul's seen this in every European city so far and sure enough, here it comes again. But this time, some encouragement comes. Verses 9 and 10, **And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid *any longer*, but go on speaking and do not be silent; ¹⁰for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.** Now, the crux of this encouragement from the Lord Jesus Christ is verse 10, the words, **I am with you.** Maybe you remember where this tradition began in the OT, where was the first place the Lord God said the words "I AM." Where did He say those words? In the burning bush to Moses, Exod 3:14. Was that an encouragement to Moses? What was Moses' commission? You go back to Egypt Moses and let My people go. What? Are you crazy? I'm not going to walk in there before Pharaoh, I murdered an Egyptian, and he'll chop my head off. Go ahead Moses, I AM with you. No one's going to touch a hair on your scalp Moses. So go ahead. That's where this tradition originated. And here you see it crop up again with Paul, don't worry Paul, I am with you. Now people get, yeah, yeah, that's the omnipresence of Jesus, Jesus is in all places at all times. Yes, He is, but that's not all this is talking about. It's talking about I am with you and I'm working with you. What Christ talks to Paul about in verse 10, is not new; it's a reiteration of an OT theme that was given again and again and again down the corridors of history to encourage spiritual leaders. Spiritual leaders get discouraged and this promise is there to lift their spirits.

Turn to Jer 1:8. Here's another example of this promise. Jeremiah was a prophet who had to go out and preach the word of God in a rebellious climate. And yet here's a promise in the midst of it. "Do not be afraid of them, For I am with you to deliver you," declares the LORD." That verse depicts what I am with you is all about, when He commissions you to a task have nothing to

fear from God is with you to deliver you from danger. Every context of I am with you is given in an environment of danger. Don't worry, I am with you.

For another one turn to Isa 41:10, "Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." That verse depicts the same theme again. It's not just I am with you in the sense of omnipresence, God is with everyone in that sense, this is something more. This is when you're in a dangerous environment I'm going to give you strength, I'm going to help you, I'm going to uphold you. Uphold you with what?. My righteous right hand. Righteous right hand? What's that? That's the power of God. His power toward you, in this context, toward Israel, His chosen people. I chose you and you're history is just going to be riddled with annihilation attempts. When you go into dispersion nation after nation will try to destroy you. You'll never get to settle down, but don't fear, I AM with you and no one can destroy you. I am your God.

Now, do you think that kind of encouraged Paul a bit? A personal message from the I AM Himself. Paul, don't fear, I know and you know a red storm is rising, **but go on speaking and do not be silent; ¹⁰for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.** What an encouragement to Paul. Finally, some peace and quiet for awhile and I can do what I was made to do, preach the word of God unhindered. And so Paul, don't be afraid, many men may want to take your life, but I'm not going to permit it. Why?

Verse 10 **for I have many people in this city.** And you Paul are the instrument to call them forth. See, the word of God is the instrument of God to call forth into historical existence the elect of God. It's that simple. God's got a lot of people in this city and Paul's going to be there a prolonged period of time to reach these people for Christ. Now some people don't like the doctrine of election, but you can see it lodged in v 10. God has people in the city of Corinth. God picks and chooses. People don't like that but that's the word of God. They real question people never seem to ask is "Why does God have any people in any city?" God didn't have to choose anyone. He certainly didn't look down and say, now I've got to choose that Jeremy, he's just so wonderful. God never said that of me, God never said that of you, God said that of the Lord Jesus Christ. But of me, what a dirty, rotten, stinking mess, but the miracle of it all is that God said, I choose to take that dirty rotten mess and make it by My grace into an instrument for My use. Why? Because

I'm the omnipotent Creator, that's why. Why do I do it? Because I love him. Why do I love him? Because I love him, that's why. But why do you love him God? Because I love him. That's as far back as we humans can go into the divine counsels. God's love toward His elect is sovereign love. God doesn't love me because of who I am; He loves me because of who He is. If God loved you and me because of something in you and me His love would be conditional wouldn't it. But God's love is unconditional. That's the kind of love God has for us. That's the kind of love God had for His people in Corinth. And His love is going to win them to Himself as Paul preaches the word of God fearlessly. So don't get discouraged Paul, I'm protecting you, you're under divine cloak, go preach the word of God and just watch, My results are guaranteed. I've already stated My people are out there, now you just go teach the word and catch them, just cast your nets on the other side.

Now, what an interesting story this makes in the course of Western history. If this event didn't happen this way world history would be radically altered. Here's Paul, it's in the fall of AD50, the Lord appears to him, go teach the word. He teaches the word of God for a year and a half bringing us into AD52 and finally the Jews have had enough and they mount their attack. Who's the man of the hour? **Gallio, proconsul of Achaia**. A man high up in the Roman administration. Proconsul, not politarch or chief magistrate like the men at Thessalonica and Philippi. Those men didn't have much power. They were local authorities. But the **proconsul**, if he passed a verdict in his province every proconsul in every Roman province would follow his verdict as legal precedent. So here's **Gallio**. Gallio was a man from a family of intellectuals. His father was a rhetorician, his younger brother was a philosopher, and he himself was a politician. When he moved to Rome he was adopted by another man Lucius Junius Gallio and that's how he got his name **Gallio**. He was re-named after his adoptive father. Now, what was this man like? His brother Seneca in his *Natural Questions, vol iv a, Preface, 11* says of him, "no mortal is so pleasant to any one person as Gallio is to everybody." In other words, this is the nicest guy in the whole Roman Empire. But that's not all. We have an inscription at Delphi that indicates that he was appointed directly by Emperor Claudius in the year 51AD, July 1, to be exact. When did we say Paul preached for eighteen months? He started in 50 and extended into 52 and who other than the nicest guy in the whole Roman Empire is appointed to the office of proconsul to handle Paul's case? What did Jesus say to Paul, I am with you. You may be attacked but no harm is going to come to you. I control history and I control Emperor Claudius and I'm going to have him appoint the most genteel man in all the Roman Empire to handle your case. And once he decides your case Paul it will be the *status quo* for all provinces in the entire Roman Empire. So let's see how it happens.

Now the results in vv 11-17. **And he settled *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.** Paul went about teaching the word of God completely unhindered. But this does cause a problem so let's see what happens over time as more and more people respond. Let's see if Paul gets hurt in the attack or if the divine I AM promise of Christ remains true. Verse 12, **But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, ¹³saying, "This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."¹⁴But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you;¹⁵but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters."¹⁶And he drove them away from the judgment seat.¹⁷And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and *began* beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.**

All the actors are in place. Paul's teaching the word, eighteen months, the Jews get bent, here they come to Gallio, verse 13 **"This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."** He's promoting an illegal religion they say. In Rome there was a list of legal religions and you could practice those religions to your hearts delight but if you introduced a new religion, one not on the approved list, then you would be punished and prohibited from propagating that religion. So the stakes are high here. If Paul is found guilty of introducing a new religion then he would be punished and prohibited from preaching the gospel. And so the future of Christianity is on the line. Is the Christian gospel going to continue being propagated in the Roman Empire or is this the end of Christianity in Rome? Verse 14, **But when Paul was about to open his mouth,** here's Paul, I've got to defend myself so Paul's all ready to give his defense, the defense is already in his head, all he has to do is open his mouth and let it out but before he does **Gallio** opens his mouth and says **to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you;¹⁵but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters."** I refuse to judge this matter you Jews. I've heard enough to conclude that what Paul is saying is nothing more than a debate

internal to Judaism. It isn't a new religion it's just technical religious jargon about certain words and names inside Jewish religion. And therefore, since I see no wrong or vicious crime committed by this man, I refuse to judge these matters. Now, the question is who organized all this? Is this Gallio or is this the **I am with you Paul, and no man will attack you in order to harm you**, You're under My divine cloak of protection. See the sovereignty of God over history. This is fantastic insight into whose moving the pieces of history. We don't do that, God does that.

And the conclusion, verse 16-17, **he drove them away from the judgment seat. ¹⁷And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.** Now what we have here is some evidence of early anti-Semitism in the Roman Empire.

Remember v 2, Emperor Claudius had expelled 20,000 Jews from Rome. Well, it didn't stop there. A lot of Gentiles were turning anti-Semitic in the first century and so they take Gallio's decision as an opportunity to attack a Jew, **Sosthenes**, the new **leader of the synagogue**. So let's recall our doctrine of anti-Semitism or the Jew. The Jew in history has been the subject of vitriolic attack because of the promises of God to this people that they would bring forth the Messiah. Numerous attacks were made through the OT to try to destroy the line of the Messiah; the attempted rapes of Sarah and Rebekah, Pharaoh's attempt to kill all the baby boys, Saul's attempted murders of David, Queen Athaliah's attempt to murder King Josiah, the royal line, Herod's killing of the baby boys around Bethlehem. But when Satan was unsuccessful at killing the Messiah at his birth he finally though he had found success by killing him on the cross. But actually Christ's death on the cross was a defeat for Satan because Jesus didn't have any sin and therefore He was resurrected to life. And after forty days He ascended on high, passing through the heavenly places to the right hand of the Father and now He is no longer in reach of Satan and so who does Satan turn his wrath against, but the people who brought Jesus Christ into historical existence, the Jewish people. And so we already see Satan's anti-Semitic vitriol rise in Rome, a vitriol that will have been waged against the Jewish people thorough the whole church age, a history that is absolutely horrible, for everywhere the Jew goes is the ghetto and though every time the Jew tries to amalgamate and associate he is persecuted, he is accused of every plague, he is convicted of blood libel at the time of Passover and the horror goes on and on and on.

The Jew is the most hated people in history. Believer and unbeliever alike recognize this. Why? Why is he the subject of hate? Because Satan himself, the ruler of this age, is waging a war to destroy them. And the hate continues in our own day. Virtually all the nations have turned their backs on Israel and now it is only a matter of moments before end times prophecy begins to unfold.

Now for the surprise; let's conclude by turning to 1 Cor 1. **Crispus** was head of the synagogue, he became a believer and was fired, **Sosthenes** replaced Crispus as the head of the synagogue. And here **Sosthenes** is beaten. Who do you read about in 1 Corinthians 1:1? "Paul, called *as* an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, ²To the church of God which is at Corinth," Sosthenes! Sosthenes had become a Christian, boy they sure rotated synagogue rulers fast. Crispus gets fired because he converts to Christianity, Sosthenes replaces him and he gets beaten, he converts to Christianity, he gets fired. So you can see Christ calls out sovereignly through many different circumstances; Christ calls out. And so we conclude that Paul was at a discouraging place in his life but the Lord sent encouragement in five ways; first, by sending two believers, Aquila and Priscila, to work alongside Paul. Second, by sending word of the gospel explosion in Rome, 1,000 miles west of Paul's journeys, so the gospel is making inroads. Three, the conversion of Crispus, the synagogue leader, a prominent man and his household. Four, the personal exclamation to Paul, "I am with you," the cloak of divine protection. And five, the decision by Gallio not to interfere in Paul's religion, a decision that served as precedent in every Roman province for the next 10-12 years. What this did for the spread of Christianity is difficult to measure. At the time it placed Christianity under the protection of Roman law and it meant that the Christian gospel could be proclaimed in all of Rome without fear of coming into conflict with Roman law. And so the spread of Christianity into the West continued. We have much to thank the Lord God for. Let us pray.

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