

Part 46 Paul's Continued Travels

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Wednesday, Aug 17, 2016

† Acts 18:12-23

In our last study from the Book of Acts we looked at the first 11 verses of Chapter 18 which found Paul now in Corinth where he met some new ministry partners, a husband and wife team by the name of Aquila and Priscilla. He also reasoned in the Synagogue with the Jews until they opposed him and blasphemed the Lord Jesus. He then moved his ministry into a house of a man named Justus who lived beside the Synagogue and he had a very successful ministry there for about a year and a half. It was while he was there that the Lord spoke to him in a vision and told him not to fear that no man would hurt him and he had many people in that city.

So we pick up the story in verse 12 tonight: **12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,**

Here we are introduced to a new name, Gallio, the deputy or proconsul of Achaia. When the Romans conquered Greece they split it into two sections; Macedonia, and Achaia. The capital of Achaia was Corinth, where Paul was currently at.

History tells us that Gallio served as the deputy of Achaia in the year 52 AD. So we can get a timeline of sorts for Paul's ministry.

...the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat

And just like in many other places Paul has been in the unbelieving Jews hate him and want to destroy him. So they start an insurrection. That means they started a street riot and got lots of people stirred up against Paul, enough to have him detained and brought to be put on trial.

13 Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

Notice the charge was that Paul was persuading men to worship God contrary to the law. The Romans allowed the Jews to worship God in the manner that they wished. The Romans also had laws concerning worship, of course they didn't worship the God of Heaven as the Jews did but they worshiped false gods. But there were certain laws that kept things in balance. The Jews have accused Paul of teaching something outside of these laws, both Jewish and Roman. They have to try and get the Romans involved because they do not have a legal leg to stand on otherwise.

Paul now claims to be a "Christian" instead of identifying with the Jews, so he worships differently and teaches others to do so as well. He also is not a pagan or Gentile as the Romans were so he worships differently and teaches others to do so as well. So, he is "persuading new believers to worship in ways that are contrary" to the normal mode of worship and they accuse him of breaking the law.

14 And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

This Gallio is a just man. His own brother, a man named Seneca, who was a very well-known Stoic philosopher, wrote a book titled De Ira, in which he described his brother Gallio like this: *"He was of the sweetest disposition, affable to all, and beloved by every man."*

Before Paul can even speak to defend himself, Gallio rebukes the Jews and tells them if Paul had actually done something wrong or wicked he would hear their charges.

15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. 16 And he drave them from the judgment seat.

He sets them straight real fast. If they are accusing him of breaking one of their Jewish laws he is not even going to listen to them. It is not his place to judge them according to their Jewish laws. Then he ran them all away. Now remember, the Lord told Paul no man in that city would hurt him. The Lord is keeping his promise!

17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

Alright, now this verse has been the subject of many debates of what exactly happened here. I'm going to tell you what I believe happened here though I cannot say absolutely that I am right.

First of all it says the "Greeks." Who are the Greeks? I believe it is those Greeks that have been mentioned in nearly every city Paul has been in that were engaged in worship with the Jews in their synagogues. You might call them Jewish proselytes. Greeks that believe in the God of the Jews and worship with them.

Secondly, we are told that this **Sosthenes** is the **chief ruler of the synagogue**. We can only assume that he took over that position after Crispus, who was mentioned as being the chief ruler of the synagogue in **Acts 18:8: And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house;...** More than likely Crispus gave up his position or was forced out of his position for being a Christian and Sosthenes took over.

So why did they "beat him before the judgement seat"? I'll give you two possibilities: 1. Sosthenes was the one who convinced the Jews to try and put Paul on trial and after it failed they turned on him and took their anger out on. Or 2. Sosthenes had also become a believer and they knew it and since they couldn't get Paul they got him instead. I have a reason for believing it was the 2nd one. If you look over a **1 Corinthians 1:1-2** we see that Paul mentions a man with the same name as being his "brother.": **Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, 2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:**

I believe this Sosthenes, whom Paul calls his "brother," is the same one that was beaten in the Acts 18:17. ... **And Gallio cared for none of those things** Again, Gallio did not want to get involved with the Jews disputes so he just ignored it.

18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

Well Paul enjoyed a great stay in Corinth. The Lord watched over him and gave him peace for at least a year and a half, probably all together he was there nearly two years. But now it is time for him to move on. So, he sets sail with intentions of going to Jerusalem which is about 1500 miles away over the ocean. It will take him some time to get there.

We see that the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla also go along with him. They will play a big role in the ministry from here on out.

Then we get to this part about the vow. [having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow](#). This little passage has had scholars debating for years over what all this means and who the Bible is talking about that shaved his head and took a vow. Some believe that since the last name that was given before this phrase was Aquila that the Bible is speaking of him. But others, such as myself, believe that it is referring to Paul, so that is what I teach and preach.

So, if this is Paul the Bible is talking about then we have to wonder what this is all about? Shaving his head and taking a vow? First of all, what kind of vow is this? Well, there are all kinds of vows mentioned in the Bible but the one that deals with hair is the Nazirite vow.

Turn with me to [Numbers Chapter 6:1-21](#) (READ FROM BIBLE)

According to this the Nazirite vow could be taken by both women and men.

The main things were during the vow, they were to not drink any wine or strong drink. They were not to come in contact with any dead bodies. And they were not to cut their hair. The vows were for a set period of time and also some were for life such as in the case of Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist.

Now I want to share something with you that you may never have heard. It took me years to figure it out because I had heard it so many times coming from well-meaning preachers that really have very little understanding of the Bible. But what I am referring to is this Nazirite vow. Most people assume because it looks and sounds a lot like Nazareth or Nazarene that it has some connection with Nazareth... it doesn't.

- The word **Nazarite** comes from the Hebrew word "**Nazir**" *which means "separated, or consecrated."*
- The word **Nazareth** comes from the Greek word "**Nazaret**" *which means "the guarded one."*
- The word **Nazarene** is taken from **Nazareth** and is used when *referring to someone from Nazareth*. It was also *a nickname the Jews used for Christians* because they were followers of Jesus of Nazareth, such as was used for Paul when he was being accused of defiling the Temple:

[Acts 24:5-6](#): For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the [sect of the Nazarenes](#): 6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.

So, being from Nazareth has nothing to do with taking a Nazirite vow. The two are not even related. Why is this important? Because we need to make sure we are not wrongly interpreting the Scriptures. Many people have the false belief that Jesus took a Nazirite vow because he was from Nazareth, but you will find nowhere in the Bible that mentions Jesus ever taking a Nazirite vow. In fact Jesus did many things that would have broken a Nazirite vow if he had taken one. Such as coming in contact with dead bodies. People also think that all of these paintings that you see depicting a long haired, blue eyed hippie looking guy is what Jesus looked like and because in those paintings he had long hair that he must have taken a Nazirite vow... That is not what Jesus looked like. That was an image created in the mind of Michelangelo. The Bible describes the appearance of Jesus in several places and none of them describe that man painted by Michelangelo. Stop using that picture as your idea of what Jesus looks like.

Just remember that taking a Nazirite vow has nothing to do with the place called Nazareth. Anyway, back to our text.

It is obvious that Paul is still practicing some of the Hebrew traditions and rituals that he was taught and observed all of his life. You have to remember that the Book of Acts is a growing period for Christianity and the New Testament Church. All of these folks were Hebrews and had lived the life of a Hebrew for hundreds of years. This will be a hard thing to break away from.

In fact, we don't have time to cover it tonight but those Hebrew early New Testament Christians had the idea that the Church was an extension of Judaism. That is why they continued coming to the Synagogues and Temples and observing the Hebrew feast days and such. So obviously Paul had taken a Nazirite vow during his stay in Corinth but now it was time for the vow to be completed. So before he leaves the coast of Corinth he stops in Cenchrea, which is a harbor city on the coast of Corinth, and he shaves his hair off in order to take it to Jerusalem to offer up in the Temple as part of the Nazirite vow.

[19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.](#)

They leave Cenchrea and sail 300 miles across the Aegean Sea and stop off in Ephesus. That would have taken them around 10-days barring no problems. Paul goes into the Synagogue to reason once again with the Jews and try to win them to Christ. This is where Priscilla and Aquilla are going to stay for a while and Paul will leave but come back to this place on his 3rd missionary journey and will spend about 3 ½ years teaching and preaching there.

[20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; 21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.](#)

The people wanted Paul to stay around longer so they could hear what he had to say. But Paul was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem before this feast started. We are not told which feast it was but it could have been the Passover or Pentecost.

Here again is further proof of Paul still observing the traditional Jewish holidays and feasts.

[22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.](#)

He lands at Caesarea which is on the coast of Israel, not the Caesarea of Philippi but the one of Syria, and he goes and greets the Christians at the Church in Jerusalem. We are not told if he actually made it in time for the feast he was trying to get to or not because nothing else is said about it. -- After greeting the Church in Jerusalem he then heads back to his sending Church of Antioch in Syria and that would complete his 2nd missionary journey.

[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.](#)

He spends a little time in Antioch and then he heads back out, revisiting the Churches until he gets to Ephesus where he will stay for 3 ½ years.