

Living out our faith Pt 24
Acts 18:12-17

V12-17

- Paul wasn't expecting to stay for an extended period of time in Corinth due to his experiences during his previous travels preaching and teaching the gospel. Verse 11 – But God had other plans allowing him to stay for a year and a half. And as we have seen, where opportunity exists opposition will follow. Verse 12 – there is a change in leadership and when there is change agendas develop. A man named Gallio is appointed the new governor, giving the unbelieving Jews hope that this would be an opportunity to silence the gospel once and for all. Gallio was the brother of a man named Seneca who was a philosopher of great influence in Rome. One of Seneca's students happened to be Caesar Nero – the crazed emperor who caused the deaths of thousands of Christians. So the Jews thought, this was their chance to not only get rid of Paul, but an opportunity to significantly damage Christianity and have it declared illegal. Therefore, as one accord they quickly arrested Paul and presented him before the court to stand trial.
- Paul was presented in the “judgment seat” – in Greek the word is “bema-seat”. This is the same word used to describe how we must each appear before Christ to give an account for what we did with our lives after knowing Him as Lord (**2 Corinthians 5:10**). Verse 13 – they accuse Paul of persuading them to worship God contrary to Jewish and Roman law. Roman law did not allow the spread of new religions but Judaism was an accepted and an established belief. Therefore, if the Jews could establish Christianity as a cult then it would be barred from the people. Verse 14 – Paul had every right to object for three reasons:
 1. As a Roman citizen it was illegal for the Jews to haul him to court without Roman permission,
 2. Paul was not introducing a new religion he was opening their understanding to the scriptures that they were incorrectly interpreting, and
 3. Paul could say, “I'm not teaching men to worship contrary to the law I am preaching the fulfillment of the law. And it is in the Person of Jesus Christ”.
- Before Paul could say any of those things, Gallio addresses the angry mob. He tells them if it was a matter of Paul robbing or stealing or blatantly breaking the law then I would hear you; but this is not a civil case but a religious matter so see to it yourselves. He then throws them out of his court. Previously in verse 8 when Paul first arrived in Corinth and preached the gospel the chief ruler was Crispus. We learn that he and his entire household became believers. Verse 17 – now a man named Sosthenes is the ruler of the Synagogue and he was looking to make a name for himself by bringing Paul up on charges and trying to get Christianity banned. This backfires in a big way because it is Sosthenes who is punished instead of Paul. Just as he dragged Paul to the court, Sosthenes is now dragged in to court and beaten in front of everyone. While this is happening Gallio the governor could care less.
- Three points I want to bring to your attention:
 1. Always, our best defense is allowing God to defend us rather than we attempting to defend ourselves.
 2. Paul did not need to speak because God had already spoken to Gallio's heart. Just as Jesus did not need to speak, as God had warned Pilate through his wife's dreams to be hands-off with Jesus (**Matthew 27:19**). If we take this same approach concerning our own situations where we want to speak but we keep silent, we'll find God has already spoken on our behalf and for His glory. Reflecting back to verse 15 how Gallio rebukes the Jews for not being able to handle biblical matters in house; we also read in **1 Corinthians 6:1-3** that we are told not to bring spiritual matters into the secular courts. Today few follow this command especially when money is involved.
 3. All of this was part of God's plan, as Paul's inconvenience led to a greater trust in the Lord, for him and the church and for Sosthenes (**1 Corinthians 1:1**). This same man

beaten and humiliated in the courts for bringing charges against the church would eventually become a believer. I'm sure his humbled heart was primed to hear, that once you are born again you can start over with a new slate (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). Who would have thought that when Paul entered the city of Corinth, a wicked and perverse place, that both chief rulers of the synagogue would eventually become Christians (**Isaiah 55:8-9**). It's amazing how the plans of God unfold in our lives and no matter how spiritual and devoted you are God's ways are still past finding out, being so much greater than ours (**Ephesians 3:20-21**).