

Gallio Cared For None Of Those Things.

Acts 18:12-17.

Sunday morning, June 19, 2011.

I. Before Gallio's judgment seat.

- A. Gallio was the brother of the famous philosopher Seneca, who was the personal tutor of Caesar Nero. Later, Nero would put both Seneca and Gallio to death. Gallio was made the Roman Proconsul of the province of Achaia in the year 51 or 52, almost 20 years after the beginning of the gospel era.
- B. The complaint that the Jews lodged against Paul in Gallio's court was that Paul persuaded people to worship God in ways that were contrary to the Law of Moses.
 1. In alleging this they were saying that Paul was not advocating the Judaism that had been recognized by Rome as a lawful religion; Rather Paul was advocating some new religion, not recognized by Rome.
 2. New religious movements often had dangerous political by-products that endangered the peace that Rome had imposed on its empire known as the Pax Romana.
 3. As such propagating a new and unrecognized religion was considered a serious crime under Roman law.
 4. We see from this very clearly that the apostles and the first century church did not consider the Christian faith to be a new religion as opposed to Judaism. They saw Christianity as Judaism in full bloom. What had been a promising bud for centuries in OT times now showed forth all its glory in full bloom.
 5. This was a dangerous moment in the history of the young church. How would Gallio see the Christian Church; as a new religion or as a faction of Judaism? If he saw it as a new religion he would set a dangerous precedent for other Roman rulers and open wide the prospects of persecution on the part of Rome, which thus far had only come from the Jews.
 6. Paul was just about to open his mouth to explain that the Christian faith is the fullest and most mature expression of Judaism when Gallio beats him to it. Gallio dismisses the whole case, seeing the complaint as an internal squabble within the ranks of Judaism, and he will not be made a judge of such matters.
 7. The outcome of Gallio's ruling was that Sosthenes, the new ruler of the synagogue after Crispus had joined the Christian church, is beaten before the judgment seat. Sosthenes, as ruler of the synagogue, would have been the one to present the complaint against Paul before Gallio's judgment seat.
 - It is unclear as to who beat Sosthenes before Gallio's judgment seat, and why it was done. The better reading here is not "all the Greeks," but rather a simple "they all."
 - Was this a Jewish crowd which felt that Sosthenes had poorly acquitted himself and that he should go back before Gallio, re-doubling his efforts?
 - Was this a pagan crowd venting their anti Jewish sentiments, and desiring Gallio to pass sentence on Sosthenes for bringing a frivolous suit? We simply do not know.
 - It is noteworthy however that in this event it is Sosthenes, and not Paul, who takes the brunt of the crowd's anger.

- C. We should not lose sight as to why this event was chosen and included of what was an 18 month long ministry in Corinth.
1. Remember that Paul later would write to the Corinthians how he was “among them in weakness, in fear, and much trembling.” 1 Cor. 2:3.
 2. The Lord had given him encouragement in a night vision saying: “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack to hurt you; for I have much people in this city.” Acts 18:9,10.
 3. This account is included in the book of Acts, and is given to us as the one significant event of the ongoing ministry of Paul in Corinth. It shows us the truth of the Lord’s words. The force of the attack was simply deflected around the Apostle Paul, and it fell back on the head of Sosthenes who had initiated it.
 4. Mount an attack; the enemies of the gospel could do that, but hurt the apostle they could not. As long as the Apostle was engaged in gathering and teaching the many people the Lord had in the city of Corinth, and as long as that work was unfinished, the Apostle would simply be invincible.

Application:

Please note again that the reason of Paul’s invincibility is not found in Paul in the first place. That primary reason is given to us in the words of the Lord spoken to Paul in the night vision: “...for I have many people in this city.” Only secondarily was the reason located in Paul, for he was given to those many people as their servant / shepherd for Jesus sake. As long as Paul lived out of that calling, and his work remained unfinished, he would remain invincible to his enemies. And so it is with us; as long as we live out of our calling as humble servants to the many people the Lord still has in this world, and as long as that work remains unfinished, we too shall be invincible. On the other hand, when we begin to serve and live for our own desires rather than the Lord’s “many people,” then we begin to inherit the kind of weakness and sickness spoken of in Paul’s teaching on the Lord’s supper in 1 Cor. 11:30, 31, and we begin to pierce ourselves through with the many sorrows spoken of in 1 Timothy 6:10.

II. Gallio’s indifference.

- A. Gallio was right not to involve himself in matters that were not within his jurisdiction as a judge; he was right to leave to the Jews to resolve internal matters relating to Judaism.
- B. Yet there is more to Gallio’s handling of this case than rightfully dismissing the case from his courtroom. Gallio spoke in a demeaning fashion of a faith that he might have known to be from God, and with which he should have acquainted himself. The way in which to worship God, and whether Jesus is the Messiah, and whether the gospel is a divine revelation, is not just a matter of (inconsequential) “words and names,” as Gallio describes them.
- C. If these claims are true then Gallio will find himself one day as a defendant in the court of King Jesus, and “caring for none of these things” will prove itself to have been a disastrous response in matters relating to the gospel.
- D. For us to come to the Lord’s table with Gallio’s spirit would be disastrous; rather, here we take our place again as humble subjects before our lord and as humble servants before his people.