

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for September 25, 2016

The Conclusion of the Ministry in Corinth
Acts 18:12-22

Acts 18:12-22 concludes Paul's second missionary journey to Greece, concluding in Corinth in chapter 18.

1. Paul detained in Corinth (18:12-17)

As proconsul, Gallio was the most powerful official in Achaia. He reported directly to the Roman Emperor, Claudius. Gallio ruled over Achaia from 51-52 A.D. and his tenure enables us to date the chronology of Paul's ministry.

The Jews made the charge that Paul taught contrary to the law in order to have Christianity declared illegal. The Jews made this argument previously in Philippi (Acts 16:21) and in Thessalonica (Acts 17:7) but never with so much at stake.

Gallio had the authority to effectively ban the practice of Christianity and thus the treatment of believers throughout the Roman Empire. This decision brought legitimacy to Christianity for the next dozen years until the persecution under Nero beginning in 64 A.D.

Sosthenes, was a believer (cf. 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:1) who received the wrath of the Jews as a traitor.

The Jews not only differed from the Christians regarding their view of Jesus, but also in their approach to the government. The Jews sought the assistance of the government to further their cause.

The Scripture does not call us to bring societal change through the government but to seek peace with the government through submission (Romans 13:1-7) and prayer (1 Timothy 2:1-2). Believers have a greater mission, the salvation of mankind (1 Timothy 2:3-7).

2. Paul departs for Antioch (18:18-22)

A vow is a solemn oath (promise or pledge) particularly made to God. Vows are not intrinsically wrong (Numbers 6, Hebrews 6:17), however, Jesus taught His disciples to make no oath at all (Matthew 5:33-37) and James reiterated this teaching (James 5:12).

The issue that Jesus spoke against was using an oath to confirm a promise. The Jews had constructed a sophisticated system for what constituted a binding commitment.

However, righteous people do not need any confirmation by an appeal to a higher authority. As Christians, we represent Christ with our words.

Because Paul's vow ended with the cutting of his hair, it was very likely a special Jewish vow of commitment to the Lord, called the vow of a Nazirite (Numbers 6). Paul's reason for his vow is not stated however what is stated is the location of the end of the vow. Cenchræa was the port city of Corinth, meaning that he ended his vow upon his departure from Corinth. Therefore, the purpose of Paul's oath was not to validate a commitment but rather to identify himself with the Jews of Corinth for the purpose of winning those Jews during his eighteen-month stay (1 Corinthians 9:20). Today, we take oaths only when deemed necessary by others.

Ephesus was a major commercial city and will be the focal city of ministry for Paul's third missionary journey. Later in this chapter we will see the ministry of Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus.

Luke does not provide us with the reason why Paul did not agree to remain longer in Ephesus (although most later manuscripts add that it was to keep a coming feast in Jerusalem). Paul's example of his intention to return to Ephesus is instructive. His commitment was dependent upon the will of God.

Luke condensed a 1,500 mile journey over many months in a very few verses.

May we demonstrate our commitment to our Lord with the same willingness of Paul's to expend ourselves for serving others.