

Freedom & Fearlessness

... we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. 2 Thessalonians 3:8,9 (NIV)

18a: FREEDOM OF SPEECH & CONSCIENCE (18:1-6)

18:1-3 How was it that Paul retained his freedom of speech with churches? (1 Cor.9:6-19; 2 Cor.11:7-9,23,13-18)

The arrival mentioned here in Corinth is a second one since we parted from the young preacher at Berea. But Luke sticks so closely to the apostle's work in spreading the gospel that all else is omitted. He does not mention the fact that at this time, here in Corinth, Paul wrote the Epistles to the Thessalonians, and sent Timothy back with them, nor does he say a word about Paul's great anxiety at Corinth for this northern church. **J.M. Stifler**, *The Acts of the Apostles* p.173

18:4-6 How are freedom of speech and conscience inseparable?

18b: HOW FREEDOM FROM FEAR IS POSSIBLE (18:7-17)

18:7-10 'Paul the Dauntless' (the title of Basil Mathews' biography of Paul for young people) derives his courage from what priority?

Paul was mortal. He was certainly dejected. The very first word in the vision is, "Be not afraid." Again he is assured that no man shall set on him to hurt him. How exactly the epistle to these same Corinthians, written about five years later, harmonizes with this. He says his advent among them was "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling" (1 Cor. 2:1-3). No wonder. He had been "shamefully entreated" at Philippi. He had been driven by persecution out of Thessalonica and Berea. He had been left alone to be mocked at Athens. He had been virtually expelled from the synagogue here in Corinth. It had been one long siege of bitter trial in which his life was more than once in peril. This was too much for even his iron nerve. **J.M. Stifler**, *The Acts of Apostles* p.174

18:11-17 Gallio -- a classic case of a nice guy 'despising small things' (Zech.4:10)

Luke's narrative suggests that the Jews seized the opportunity

The Corruptions of Corinth

If Athens was a centre of clouded light, Corinth was a centre of corrupt life. If Athens was full of idolatry, Corinth was full of sensuality ... Everything which he denounced within the church was a reflection of the corruption of the city. In his first letter, he first corrected their attempt to form societies around emphases of Christian truth. That was a reflection of what was going on in Corinth. Men were splitting hairs, even in the realm of their own philosophies, and forming schools around different emphases or views. So when he passed to the graver matters, so far as moral conduct was concerned, we again see the picture of Corinth; the rich living in voluptuous luxury, given over to every manner of evil. It has been said that Corinth at this time "was the Vanity Fair of the Roman Empire, at once the London and Paris of the first century after Christ." The masses of the people were infected by this influence. They were debauched and degraded. There were shows of all kinds, and a vulgar and ostentatious display of wealth, mingled with the most corrupt and indecent practices. All these things were affecting the people who were not wealthy; the corruption had permeated even to the slaves ... The most terrible phase of the corruption was that the religion of Corinth had become the centre and the hotbed of its pollution. In that one splendid and yet awful temple of Aphrodite there were a thousand sacred to shame. It is significant that it was from this city that Paul wrote his Roman letter; and when one reads his description of Gentile corruption in that Roman letter [Rom. 1:22-31], one has almost certainly a mirror of what he found in Corinth. **G.Campbell Morgan**, *Acts* pp.333-334

But Aquila and Priscilla, of whom more presently, were firm friends; and good news came, with Silas and Timothy, from the north. Paul left the hostile synagogue, was vindicated in a Roman court, and gathered a congregation from the motley community. The city treasurer, the ex-rabbi of the synagogue, the rich lady Chloe, were among its many members. But so, too, were the nameless, rootless horde, the contentious Jews and Greeks, the self-styled philosophers so ironically dealt with in the first four chapters of the letter, the ill-bred dregs of dockland, temple girls, those who formed the horrific list of the sixth chapter (1 Corinthians 6:9,10): in short, the tumbled multitude of the most notoriously licentious city in the Greek world. (To "act the Corinthian" was, in Greek slang, to play the part of an immoral rake.) Hence the stern battle for stability, integrity, balance, purity, and a clean, clear testimony in the Corinthian church. It is a patent fact that cities have a color and character and that the Christian community, for both good and ill, demonstrates, in its corporate life, facets and aspects of its time and place. The divisive loyalties, the emotional extravagances of the Corinthian church were nothing more than a reflection of the faults of the community from which it was drawn. **E.M. Blaiklock**, *op. cit.*, p.171

afforded by the arrival of a new governor to make an attack on Paul. Marcus Annaeus Novatus was a brother of the famous Stoic philosopher Seneca; he was the son of a Spanish orator, and on coming to Rome he was adopted into the family of Lucius Junius Gallio and took the name of his adoptive father. Since Achaia was a second-rank province, it was governed by someone who had not yet attained the rank of consul (the senior Roman magistracy). Gallio accordingly came to Achaia after being praetor and before being consul. He had a pleasant character, but suffered from ill-health. He died as a result of Nero's suspicions against the family. The date of his proconsulship can be fixed fairly accurately from an inscription found at Delphi, and it probably commenced in July, AD 51. **I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* p.297**

... no mortal is so pleasant to any one person as Gallio is to everybody ... **Seneca in F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* p.374**

Gallio, according to both the Roman poet Statius and Seneca, was a gentle and amiable person, and the Jews obviously misread both the magistrate and the situation. He was not the man to yield to noisy demonstrations and violence, a strength of such characters which not infrequently surprises those who seek to take advantage of what they imagine to be weakness. The Jews, with arrogant confidence, also thought to profit by the new magistrate's inexperience and phrased their charge to look like one of treason. So they had done before Pilate. So they had sought to harm Paul in Thessalonica. Perhaps, too, they forgot the fact that, with Claudius' recent expulsion of the Roman Jewish colony, the nation was somewhat under a judicial cloud, and not likely to obtain, even from the most impartial Roman court, anything more than their bare due. Gallio proved quite capable of distinguishing between matters of serious political significance and charges relating to minutiae of Jewish law. Incidentally, Seneca, Gallio's brother, calls the Jews 'a most scoundrelly race.' **E.M. Blaiklock, *Acts: The Birth of the Church* p.177**

If Gallio had only been concerned enough to hear Paul's message, patient enough to listen to it thoughtfully and carefully! For as we trace his history in secular volumes we find that at last he became a thoroughly disillusioned man, who found that the world could not satisfy and who, possibly, died a suicide. It seems sad indeed that this well-meaning, amiable man, this gracious and kindly philosophical Roman governor, should have no interest in the gospel of God! **Harry Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Acts* p.418**

Paul ... having no other means of support, no great church behind him, no missionary society to guarantee his salary ... went into partnership with Aquila ...

Harry Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Acts* p 405

Funding missions Paul's way



Harry Ironside

It was not considered proper for a scribe or rabbi to receive payment for his teaching, and many of them therefore practised a trade in addition to their study and teaching of the law. **F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* p.367**

Make not of the Torah a crown wherewith to aggrandize thyself, or a spade wherewith to dig. So also used Hillel to say, He who makes a profit from the crown of the Torah shall waste away. Hence thou mayest infer that he who derives gain for himself from the words of the Torah is helping on his own destruction. **Rabbi Zadok, *Pirke Aboth* iv.7**

Paul did not impose any burden on the Corinthian church by claiming financial support from it, since his needs were supplied by the Christians from Macedonia (*cf.* Phil. 4:15). It seems probable, therefore, that Silas and Timothy brought gifts of money which freed Paul from the need to work to support himself in Corinth; he could therefore carry out missionary work throughout the week and not merely on the sabbath. **I. Howard Marshall, *op. cit.*, p.294**

When Paul began his work in Corinth, he joined Aquila and Priscilla, and laboured at tent making. When we read his letters we shall discover his reason. At Thessalonica he had done the same thing, as at Ephesus; and for a brief period it was absolutely necessary in a city wholly given to commercial enterprise, that he should demonstrate the fact that the preaching of the Gospel was not commercial. So he contented himself for a period with preaching only on the Sabbath day in the synagogue to Jews, and also to Greeks, while he wrought with his own hands during the week. **G. Campbell Morgan, *op. cit.*, p.337**

It may seem rather surprising that Paul should have known how to work with his hands; for, as we have seen, his family was evidently well-to-do. But, by a salutary Jewish custom, a rabbi was expected always to learn a trade. Tent-making was part of Paul's rabbinical preparation; and now it stood him in good stead. His reasons for not accepting support from the Corinthian Christians are set forth in 1 Cor. 9; 2 Cor. 11:7-15. Corinth was not the only place where he laboured with his hands. He had done the same thing, for example, at Thessalonica, 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:7-9; Phil. 4:16. Compare 1 Cor. 4:12. **J. Gresham Machen, *op. cit.*, p.110**