

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
Acts 18:6-18 | Session 48 | God Reassures Paul
A.D. 54

Popularity is not a requisite for a healthy ministry or church. Nevertheless, people tend to flock to the churches that are in vogue or are cool. Rather than just teach the Word of God, many pastors have come to believe they must use gimmicks and props to stimulate their congregation. American Christians have become programmed to be entertained, even in church. Only the *loser* churches have unpopular pastors.

The apostle Paul certainly did not win the popularity award in the first century. Paul had many detractors and he made note of their accusations in 2 Corinthians 10:10; His enemies said that his letters came across as stern and pushy, but his presence in person was weak, and his speech was despised. In other words, by the standards of some he wasn't cool.

Whether or not the accusations were true we can only speculate, but what is evident is that many people rejected and deserted Paul throughout his ministry. For example: Acts 13:13, John Mark deserted Paul on the first missionary journey and went back to Jerusalem; Acts 15:39, Barnabas separated himself from Paul; 2 Timothy 4:10, Demas deserted Paul (and maybe even Crescens, and Titus); 2 Timothy 4:14, Alexander the coppersmith did Paul much harm; 1 Timothy 1:20, Hymenaeus and Alexander (coppersmith?) did some kind of harm to Paul; And near the end of his life Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:15, "*All they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.*"

There are probably other examples we could add to this list, but included with all of these desertions from his so-called fellow workers, Paul was mocked, beaten, and left for dead by the Jews and others. Do you think this could cause a man to want to leave the ministry? In Acts 18:9,10 the Lord gave *unpopular* Paul some healthy reassurance and encouragement to hang in there, don't be afraid, keep speaking.

Verse 5,6—

Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

When they opposed is one word in Greek and literally reads *And they resisted, and blasphemed*, Greek, **βλασφημέω**, *blasphemeo; to speak evil of*. We think of blasphemy as being against God (in a sense that's what they are doing here), but they are railing against Paul and his message. It was so verbally violent that Paul abandoned the synagogue; this is the first time he has done so! **Shook his raiment**. This is not the first time Paul has done this (Acts 13:51). Shaking dust from one's feet or raiment may have been cultural, but Jesus also told the disciples to do the same if those they preached the kingdom gospel to would not receive them (Matthew 10:14). Paul may be quoting from Ezekiel 33:4, "*Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.*" We only see Paul doing this with the Jews who rejected the kingdom gospel, not with the Gentiles where the grace message was preached. **From henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles, Paul** must be speaking only of Corinth because later he goes into the synagogue in Ephesus. He is still committed "To the Jew first." He was not going back into the synagogue in Corinth to reason, persuade, or testify. If that is the case, we should see him begin to preach the grace gospel which is salvation (or Justification) apart from the Law and that is what he is going to be accused of preaching in verse 13.

Verse 7—

Justus, one that worshipped God. From his Roman name and the context, we may assume Justus was a Gentile. That he worshipped God may mean believed in the God of the Jews, but had not become a Jew (See Lydia in Acts 16:14). **Joined hard to the synagogue**, literally this could be, *had once been the synagogue*. Now it is a house church where Paul will preach the grace message to any who desire to attend.

Verse 8—

Among those in attendance was **Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue**. He wasn't the priest, but was, what we might call, the synagogue manager, **ἀρχισυνάγωγος** *archisunagogos*. Shockingly to many of the Jews, **Crispus, believed on the Lord Jesus with all his house**. Crispus, his household and **many of the Corinthians who believed, were baptized**. Under the dispensation of Grace, there is only one baptism (Ephesians 4:4-6). If we say the baptism Paul is referring to in Ephesians is the *baptism of the Spirit*, then Paul does not require water baptism for those who believe (what we often call *believer's baptism*), for that would mean there are two baptisms. Although Paul was now going to the Gentiles in Corinth, he still had the desire for Israel to be saved. Therefore, though he was preaching the grace gospel, and my assumption is that Crispus was saved under the grace gospel, they were baptized (a Jewish ritual cleansing) so as to not completely alienate themselves from the Jews in Corinth. In 1st Corinthians 9:20 Paul stated, "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews."

Verse 9,10—

Paul washed his hands (so to speak) of the Jews, but the **Lord** had other ideas for Paul. **Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision**. We should not expect visions (Don't make a doctrine out of an historical event) in the night from the Lord since all we need is contained in God's Word. These were apostolic times during the transition between Law and Grace. **Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace**. The Lord gave Paul two imperatives 1. Don't be afraid. 2. Keep speaking. Why? **I have much people in this city**. The word **people** is in the singular. The Lord is not saying "I have already chosen **much** people" rather, it is a statement of encouragement for Paul; don't run off, everything will be okay, stay here and keep working because my People are here.

Verse 11—

Because of the Lord's word to him, Paul **continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them**, that is, among the people of Corinth. Most believe it was during this time that Paul wrote 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, the first letters we would consider Scripture.

Verse 12—

And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia. There is no question who this Gallio was. He is well attested to in history and he governed Achaia from A.D. 51-52. This date is important since it gives us an accurate time frame as to when Paul was in Corinth. [Note that the Scofield Bible has the date in Acts as A.D. 54. As well as the date of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians.] **Jews made** insurrection, that is *they came upon him*, as in the Jews blindsided him and **brought him to the judgment seat**. In 1935 archeologists discovered this (Gk. *Bema*) judgment seat and remnants of it remain today.

Verse 13—

Their accusation was that **he persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the Law**. There is no indication that their accusations were false (e.g. Acts 6:12-14). If we take the premise that Paul is

preaching the Grace gospel, then this accusation is completely true. See Acts 13:38,39. This is exactly what the Grace gospel does. No Law or works allowed!

The Jews making the accusation are upset because many Jews are believing Paul's gospel, e.g. Crispus and his household. They want the Roman governor to convict Paul. Next week we will find out how Gallio reacts to the accusation by the Jews.