

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY- Acts Chapter 18- verse 9-17

Verse 9-11 (ESV)

⁹ And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” ¹¹ And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

So, Paul had been so discouraged by the stubborn unbelieving Jews that he left the synagogues to focus on preaching to only the Gentiles, but God had a different plan. His first words to Paul were “do not be afraid.” What was Paul afraid of? Was it persecution? He had experienced that many times before. Was it poverty? He was supporting himself since he had arrived at Corinth working with his friends, Aquila and Priscilla. And once Silas and Timothy arrived, he was able to focus more on his mission work because the Philippians sent support to him. (2 Corinthians 11:8-9, ESV 1072) Perhaps Paul’s fear was like the fear many Christians feel after witnessing, the fear that his work was in vain. That is why in verse 6 he told the Jews that he was innocent of their blood. He knew that he had fulfilled his responsibility to tell them, but he could not understand why more Jews (his primary focus) weren’t saved. Paul was feeling the same despair that many of us feel when we don’t immediately see the results of our witness. He was forgetting that we are only the witnesses, but the Lord does the saving. (Isaiah 43:10-11, ESV 672-673) (1 Corinthians 3:6), (Ephesians 2:8-9) Then, God in his mercy, went to Paul to comfort him, God told him he had no reason to quit because His presence was always with him. God also told him that he was not alone in his witness because He had many people in that city, even that city renowned for its decadence. The knowledge of God always being with him was enough to re-energize Paul. He stayed a year and six months longer because of the peace that God’s revelation brought him. (Psalm 91:1-4, ESV 551), (Exodus 33:14, ESV 82),

Verse 12-17 (ESV)

¹² But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, ¹³ saying, “This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.” ¹⁴ But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. ¹⁵ But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things.” ¹⁶ And he drove them from the tribunal. ¹⁷ And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.

After the Lord spoke to him, Paul resumed his mission to speak to both Jews and Gentiles. Once again this angered the stubborn unbelievers. When a new leader took office in Achaia, they decided it was a new opportunity to get rid of Paul. So, they brought Paul before the public court and accused him of persuading others to go against the law. The key to this entire incident lies in who they presented Paul to and what law they were accusing him of going against.

1. Gallio was a Roman official governing a small inner province, Achaia, in Greece. He was only concerned with Roman law.
2. At that time, Romans were indifferent to what went on in the Jewish community. There was no law in Achaia that said Jews could not practice their own rituals within their own community or even tell others about their beliefs.
3. The disgruntled Jews were referring to the ancient Jewish laws of Moses, which their own Jewish Council had declared secondary to salvation through the blood of Jesus as was declared by the ancient prophets. (Acts 15:14-18. ESV 1023)

So, when Gallio heard their accusations against Paul, he felt no obligation to intervene in any way. He did not even wait to hear Paul's response. Before Paul could say a word, Gallio dismissed the accusers and sent them away. Unfortunately, the crowd was so angry at his response that they took it out on their own leader, Sosthenes, although there is no evidence that he had done anything to deserve this treatment. They beat him right outside the court, but Gallio did not care about this at all. These actions were proof that the laws that these Jews were protecting so fiercely did nothing to improve their souls or their behavior. (Psalm 37:8, ESV 515), (Proverbs 29:10-12, ESV 613), (James 1:19-20, ESV 1113) Still, it is the consensus among believers that this incident may have persuaded Sosthenes to turn to the way of Christ since his name is mentioned as a co-author and brother with Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. (1 Corinthians 1:1, ESV 1053)