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### How the Angry Mob was Thwarted in Corinth

W. O. Vaught

*Ouachita Baptist University*

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## HOW THE ANGRY MOB WAS THWARTED IN CORINTH

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS  
NUMBER 75  
ACTS 18:9-17

Dr. W. O. Vaught, Jr.  
Immanuel Baptist Church  
Little Rock, Arkansas

ACTS 18:9-17 "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drave them from the judgment seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things."

In our last study we saw how God prepared the way for Paul's great work in Corinth. For more than 100 years God has been getting the situation ready for Paul's work in that great city. Now today we study a satanic counterattack and see how Satan always fights when some great work for God is being done. The idea of a Satanic counterattack is described in these passages.

2 CORINTHIANS 2:11 "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

1 THESSALONIANS 2:18 "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us."

GALATIANS 5:7 "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?"

Paul had become discouraged. This is one of the ministerial hazards. It is always true that the one who works for Christ comes to those periods when he has extreme pressure placed upon him. In Corinth Paul became aware of the fact that he had great opposition, and this disturbed him deeply. People were maligning him and criticizing him. It takes the Word of the Lord to straighten out something like this. As we study this passage, it seems that these periods of depression were worse at night, so it was at night when the Lord spoke to Paul. This night visit by the Lord would strengthen Paul for the next 18 months of his ministry. The word "Spake" is in the aorist tense and means that in a point of time God spoke to him. It was a definite and exact experience. "Be not afraid" reminds us of Isaiah 41:10. "But speak" carries with it the idea that because of his depression and fears, Paul had not been speaking out for the Lord as he should have. "Speak" is present, active, imperative. It means don't speak once, but just keep on speaking and do it over and over again. It means a constant continued communication of the Word of God. "Hold not thy peace" is aorist, active, subjunctive and means that in any point of time when you have a chance, you speak out for Christ. So the Lord here reminded Paul that in spite of the terrible opposition he was with him and would never forsake him.

ACTS 18:10 "For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." Regardless of the opposition, God was with him. The Lord told Paul that no man was going to hurt him. This was God's guarantee that he would sustain him through all the experiences of his life. This promise applies to every single child of God in the earth. Paul was just about to get discouraged and leave Corinth, but God knew that a fantastic ministry was just ahead for him, God knew about the church that would be founded there, God knew about the writing of 1st and 2nd Corinthians and he was not going to let Paul miss these great mountain-top experiences. A mob is going to be formed, and remember, nothing good ever comes

from a mob. But through this mob Paul is going to come in contact with one of the greatest men of his time, the Pro-consul named Gallio. Gallio was the product of Roman law and was trained in the background of the genius of Julius Caesar. The law and order of the Roman Empire paved the way for Christianity for a period of 500 years. We have a similar background for our own democracy which came to us from England. There is almost 1,000 years of similar history in our own background. Two of these great Roman men were Gallio and Seneca. They were great in understanding Roman law. On the other side was Paul, a great believer. Paul and Gallio will meet in Corinth under very difficult circumstances and in their meeting we will see the greatness of Roman law. And although Gallio was not a believer, we will see his greatness also. So the Lord said to Paul, "I have much people in this city" and this proved to be the continuing basis for his faithfulness in Corinth.

ACTS 18:11 "And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." So Paul remained in Corinth for a year and a half. The word "Teaching" is a present, active, participle and means that he just kept on teaching. This is the title for the next paragraph. It explains how the mob arose over religion and how law and fairness prevailed. Religion is of the devil and will go to no ends to achieve its end. Verses 12 and 17 give the story of how the Roman Government provided a background of law and order so Paul would be able to continue his work in Corinth.

ACTS 18:12 "And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat" Gallio was, as we would say, the head man in Corinth. The Roman Government had placed him there and he was one of the most powerful leaders in all the Roman system. He was Rome's highest authority in Greece. Gallio was a man who had great strength of character, and had good manners. (Please note something--Good manners do not indicate weakness, but rather indicate training and breeding and culture.) But to these ignorant people of Greece, Gallio's good manners indicated to them that he was a weak ruler. These Greeks thought that Gallio would be a pushover because he was a gentleman with good manners. But they were in for a great shock.

We read, "The Jews made insurrection" and the word is "Kataphisteimi" and means "To stand against", in other words, to put a mob against Paul. We still have activity like this today. There are millions of people in this nation today who think that if they don't get their own way all they have to do is join a gang or mob and demonstrate. They will overthrow law and order in order to reach their goal. This is what we have here. The mob brought Paul to the judgment seat. It was called the "BEMA". This was the great open-air courtroom and here they brought Paul for trial.

ACTS 18:13 "Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law." These Jews kept on saying that Paul was forcing people to worship God contrary to Roman law. So they brought Paul to the right place and they hoped Gallio would use Roman law to show that Paul was wrong and in this way disproved him. They wanted Paul turned over to them so they could get rid of him in their own way. But remember, when law can be used to get rid of good citizens like Paul, then it is weak indeed. But instead of this, we are going to see Roman law protect Paul. Under Roman law he is free to move about over the Roman Empire and speak his message. Roman law will protect him from the mob gang. Now this is the great issue before this group gathered at the "BEMA" as they face Gallio. Little did the mob realize that they had brought Paul to the right man, for Gallio was fair and noble and wasn't about to let something happen that would endanger personal freedom.

ACTS 18:14 "And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you"

As Paul was about to open his mouth and defend himself, Gallio stepped in and threw it out of court before anything could get started. The point was this--Gallio refused to let a good man be intimidated by the unfair Jewish religion and prejudice. Gallio was not willing to get involved in technicalities involving the Jewish religion. Roman law stood for the separation of Church and State. He believed personal religion and the power of government were two different realms. Gallio believed that people should be free to choose their own personal beliefs and should not be forced into anything. Gallio would not let Roman law be set aside so someone could be intimidated and pressured. No one has a right to set certain laws and regulations and say that everybody must obey them. Freedom gives everybody equal rights and gives evangelism and missions a solid foundation. No one has a right to say that you must accept Christ or go to prison. No one has a right to say that you must accept Christ or be banished from the country. You see the freedom and stability of the Roman system prevented this kind of thing. This needs to be kept in mind by the preacher and the teacher. We don't want to force people into believing our way and force people into certain systems just because we think they are right. We don't want to pressure people to walk down an aisle, or sign a card, or be baptized, or join a church just because we want to scare them about punishment or hell. Gallio is going to look at the accusation brought against Paul in the light of freedom and right and principles. If Paul had done some wrong Gallio was willing for him to be punished, but he was not going to allow Jews to bully Paul just because they didn't agree with him. Gallio had already made up his mind that he was not going to let these Jews force their religion on others. Because Roman law was based on personal freedom, and because Gallio was a just man, Paul didn't have to open his mouth to defend himself. The very facts in the case defended him. These wild Jews, even if they did have a mob behind them, couldn't force Paul to believe in their system. Let me repeat, mobs today who try to force their views on others are wrong and you and I need to stay out of anything like a mob. Don't ever be a part of a mob no matter how good the cause may be. A just cause doesn't give you the right to parade and break windows and throw stones and try to intimidate others to your way of thinking.

When Gallio used the phrase, "If it were a matter of wrong" it means "If this were a matter of civil indictment". When he said, "If this were a matter of wicked lewdness" it means "If this were a criminal act". But Gallio knows that this is not the case. He knows that it does not involve principles, but it involves the prejudice and religion of the Jews.

ACTS 18:15 "But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters." It really means, "If it is a matter of your system and doctrine". In other words, it simply means this--Gallio says that he will not become a judge over personal religious viewpoints. Gallio contended that his job was to see that the law was obeyed and preserved and religious convictions were in another realm entirely.

ACTS 18:16 "And he drave them from the judgment seat." This really shows the strength of character of Gallio. The mob was dispelled and Paul was vindicated. Gallio threw the case out of court. Gallio dismissed the case and probably didn't see later when they beat Sosthenes.

ACTS 18:17 "Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things." Sosthenes, because of the beating, is going to start thinking, and as a result is going to become a Christian. He accepted Christ as his Saviour. They beat Sosthenes so they could see what kind of man Gallio really was. The conversion of Sosthenes resulted and later on when Paul would write 1 Corinthians, he addressed it to Sosthenes. The phrase "Gallio cared for none of these things" really means "None of these matters came under his jurisdiction". Religion was not to be sponsored by the law. Each was separate from the other.

In closing look at these points--

1. God stood by Paul and took care of him. God always provides for his own workers.
2. God took at least 100 years to get things ready for his man, Paul, to do his work in Corinth. God always looks after the details in advance.
3. God used a pagan government to serve his purpose in providing a background of law and order.
4. When God had work for Paul to do, nothing could thwart that plan.
5. God's plan is perfect and evil men cannot defeat it.