

Sosthenes

Who was Sosthenes?

Sosthenes is mentioned twice in NT scripture: -

Act 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.

1Corinthians 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

Background to the book of Acts which was written by Luke in AD 60 and writes about Pauls second missionary journey where he had left Athens and travelled to Corinth in AD 54 where he spent 18 months before heading to Ephesus.

Not a lot is said about Sosthenes but by looking into more of Acts 18 we can see he became a convert in 1 Corinthians 1:1.

Looking at verse 17 let's look at some questions from it and from that delve more into the chapter.

1. Who was Sosthenes?
2. What is a chief ruler of the synagogue?
3. Why did the Greeks take Sosthenes to beat him?
4. Who is Gallio?
5. What is the judgement seat?
6. Why didn't Gallio not care?

Point 1 Who was Sosthenes? So Sosthenes was a new chief ruler of the synagogue who soon took over from Crispus. Crispus is mentioned in verses 8 of chapter 18, who converted to Christianity along with his household.

Point 2 What is a chief ruler of the synagogue? A chief ruler of the synagogue (*Archisunagogos*) is someone whose role would be the administrative officer supervising the worship (Vines Concise p52). In today's synagogues he would be called a "president of the synagogue" where he oversees a vast amount of the proper running of the synagogue through governance and financial controls. Also he manages selecting the speakers who would give the sermon that week, as we read in Acts 13:15 *And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.*

Point 3 Why did the Greeks take Sosthenes to beat him? The Greeks took Sosthenes to beat him as we read in verses 12-15

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, 13 Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. 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: 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.*

So, Paul was taken to the deputy (chief judicial officer) of Achaia (modern Greece), Gallio. **Point 4 Who is Gallio?** *It is interesting Gallio was the brother of the Stoic philosopher Seneca.*

The Jews revolted against Paul, with his teachings of Jesus which was conflicting to their religion of Judaism.

Maybe the Greeks and the Jews saw the influence of the teachings of Paul with the conversion of Crispus and wanted Paul stopped. Judaism was approved by Roman law at this time, so Paul could have been tried for sedition.

Point 5 What is the judgement seat? When Paul came before Gallio to the judgment seat, this seat spoken of isn't the Judgment seat of Christ mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:10 but this was like a raised platform seat mounted by steps where a judge would sit in a courtroom.

Look back in verse 9 the Lord came to Paul in a vision telling him not to be afraid, to keep speaking out and not to be silent because the Lord was with him and no one would attack or hurt him because there were many people in the city that belonged to the Lord.

I would imagine Paul thinking back to this vision as he is before Gallio at the judgment seat, "am I going to be beat up and whipped again" but in confidence he would remember what the Lord promised!

So, the Jews in verse 13 said before Gallio that Paul was persuading people to worship God in ways that was contrary to the Jewish law.

Point 6 Why didn't Gallio not care? In verse 14 we see Paul just going to open his mouth to defend himself but Gallio butts in and turns to the Jewish accusers, shrugs his shoulders and says, were it a matter of wrongdoing or wicked lewdness like a serious crime, I would have a reason to bear with you or accept your case.

Verse 15 he goes on and presses the fact that be a "question of words and names and of your law, look yourselves in to it, for I will be no judge of such matters". He then drove or threw them out.

This is where the Greek crowd seized Sosthenes and beat him right in front of the judgement seat where Gallio didn't care and paid no attention. Why did Sosthenes get beat up, I don't know, maybe for a weak case against Paul. Where maybe Sosthenes was convicted by Paul's teaching, but instead should have been

condemning Paul for his false teachings against Judaism with preaching about the Lord Jesus.

I see this was the right opportune time for Paul to come back to a battered Sosthenes, to help him clean his wounds and to witness and minister to him. Paul knew all about being beat up to near death as part of his witness for Jesus.

Through the witnessing of Paul and nursing Sosthenes I believe this is the same man in 1 Corinthians 1:1, calling him brother, how close and loving they must of became.