

## Acts 18:12-17 ACTS-[49]-GALLIO, CHURCH & STATE

PRELIMS. Paul is on his 2nd Missionary Tour and now in Corinth. He has worked for his keep as a tentmaker. Despite his fear, God has assured him of protection and the blessing of his ministry because God has *“many in this city who are My people”*[10]

For some reason, Luke does **not** give us more details about what happened in Corinth in the 18 months Paul was there. He only says *“there was a united attack”* on him [12]. This attack was **not physical** as in previous cases but **legal** so they *“brought him before the tribunal”*[12]. The charge they brought against him was that Paul’s preaching was **not legitimate**. He was *“persuading people to worship God contrary to the law”*![13]

It was Jews who brought the charge. In Roman Law, official religions **were recognised** – including the Jewish religion. It was legitimate to teach and preach and evangelise their faith. So what these Jews were doing in appealing to the legal authorities was to try and prove that Xnity, was **not Jewish!** Until this particular time, Xnity **had** been considered a ‘sect’ of Judaism! There were **100s of sects** within Judaism and Xnity was general considered as ‘part’ of Judaism. The Jews always objected to this and now here was their chance to have it officially banned!

Now the *“proconsul of Achaia”*, Gallio, was the younger **brother** of the great philosopher **Seneca!** Gallio was highly respected for his **fairness** and was known as a **friend** of **justice** and **truth**. Seneca appreciated his brother Gallio’s tolerant kindness.

I am sure that Gallio had no idea that **the decision** he made at this time (ie, that the State should not enter into religious matters) would have done **so much good to Xnity** and would affect **world history** in the way it did. His decision here meant that Xnity was a now officially a legitimate religion. So Roman Law must now give it **protection!** Paul was able to continue proclaiming the gospel knowing that in Roman Law, Xnity was now recognised.

Of course, Xnity **is** ‘part’ of Judaism in that the **root promise** of

the gospel to all nations was made to Abraham! Xnity is a **development** of Judaism. Jesus said “*Salvation is of the Jews*” and Paul says re Israelites “*from their race ... is the Christ who is God over all*”[Rom 9:5] To Gals “*the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the **Gentiles** by faith, preached the **gospel** beforehand to **Abraham**, saying ‘In you shall **all the nations** be blessed’*”[Gal 3:8] Abraham is **father** of the faithful in Christ! There is indeed a strong connection/link between Judaism and Xnity, the **difference** stems from the fact that the Jews do **not** acknowledge Jesus as the **promised Messiah**. Jews cut themselves off from the **promises!**

So we have here the Roman State **protecting** legitimate religions! In fact Gallio’s legal decision was why Paul was able to **appeal to Caesar** and receive protection from the Jewish rabble uprisings!

Now this passage reveals to us that there **are two legitimate kingdoms** which God has appointed in the world – the **Church** and the **State!** The Church and the State have **both** been “*instituted by God*”, not man. Both of them have an **authority** from God! Both **represent** and are spokesmen for God! **Both** are called “*ministers of God*”. And of course, **both** are **accountable** to God and both will be **judged** by God – according to His Word!

Both officers are to **promote/advance** God’s will on earth! They have completely **different realms** in which to operate – but they both have the very same **source of Law** – the Holy Bible! God has provided for them both, **principles** from which they are to carry out their responsibilities. There is **enough** in Holy Scripture for each institution to meet **every possible eventuality**. The doctrine of the **Sufficiency of Scripture** covers both realms.

The ‘realm’ of each is: the Church operates in the ‘**spiritual**’ area of life; the State operates in the ‘**secular**’ area. But slight **overlap!**

The State, has to ensure that **justice** is done in all areas of life. Its **main function** is to **protect** the public from wickedness and to **punish** evildoers “*if you do **wrong** be **afraid** for he does not bear the **sword** in vain. For he is the servant of **God**, an avenger who*

*carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer*"[Rom 13:4] The State has authority to **punish** evildoers! It carries a **sword!** Paul says "*be afraid...For rulers are not a terror to good conduct but to bad.* Would you have no fear of the one in **authority**?"[Rom 13:3]

The State should **not** enter into the Church's realm of **what is** morally and spiritually evil. The **established Church** of the land does that! **APP** It is so wrong for our Government to legislate on spiritual and Biblically issues "*I refuse to be a judge of these things*"[15] It is important that a land **has** an established religion – chaos if multi-religions! **Freedom to worship** as you think right – but cannot break the laws of the established religion in the land! The State laws are based on the established religion of the land!

\*The State is also to **encourage** and **reward** those who do what is right! Peter says re "*governors...to praise those who do good*" [1P2:14] The State are to ensure that **justice** is done to **encourage: initiative, effort, labour, thrift, investment, productivity, stewardship** and **discourage: lazyness, idleness, extravagance!** They do that through the **taxes** which they can legitimately charge.

Some Xns maintain this is the **only role** of the State - the Bible forbids the running of **education/health** as it means **politics** will dominate/control services The State should only ensure that 'good' is done and evil prevented and **all** services to **keep** their **promises!**

Have you ever wondered **why** God said **Cain** was to go **free** when he was guilty of murder? "*If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him*"[Gen 4:15] The **answer** is that **only** the State has authority to determine the death penalty, and the State was not instituted then. "*Vengeance is Mine I will repay says the Lord*"[Rom 12:19] The verse before says "*Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written ...*"[Rom 12:18]. Cain **feared** man's punishment **more** than God's!

The Church operated in the **spiritual realm**. When a man sinned, he did not go to the State (it carried the sword and had no mercy –

‘**justice**’ was its motto/slogan)! When a man sinned he went to the Church for ‘**mercy**’ and forgiveness! It had a **ministry**, not of condemnation but of **healing** and **pardon**! The Church is a spiritual **hospital** for restoring the wounded. The Church **declared** the goodness of God and **explained** the **way of righteousness**. It declared what sin was, and what God’s will for mankind was.

The Church above all explained the **way of salvation** for each and every person. It had to tell **every** sinner, there was mercy for **them** (despite their sin)! It had to explain the **subtle differences** between **personal remorse** for sin (Judas), and **genuine repentance** toward **God**! A man’s sin is against God as well as against man!

No **interference** between the two! Gallio rightly, did **not** want to get involved in theology “*words, names, and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things*”[15] but each can help the other. State to Church ‘What should we do here?’ Church to State ‘Would you legislate on this matter?’

These Early Xns were very **disciplined/principled** believers. They did **not** fear man – they only feared **sin**! The charge made against them may have been ‘Look, these fellows, will not acknowledge Caesar as Lord – they **will not call him ‘Lord’**- as was required by Roman State Laws! They revered Jesus so much that **idolatry** was for them the greatest sins! Things that many Xns today would not bother about or even think unnecessary, were absolute **sacrilege** and **blasphemy**! You would never be a **schoolmaster** – because you had to tell **stories** about the **gods**! Never sign **business** contracts – because it required an **oath** in a man’s name! Never a **polisher** – because had to sharpen **sacrificial knives**! Never **politics** – because the **venue** was consecrated in the name of a **pagan god**! Etc. And they were **prepared to die** for it! And **did**! But that kind of **commitment** brought down the **Roman Empire**!!

**Practising what we preach!** Right in front of his nose a riot took place “...seized Sosthenes...**beat him in front of the tribunal**” yet “*Gallio paid no attention to any of this*”[17]! How often we fail when it comes to **doing** the will of God! Surely a law to prevent?