

PAUL'S LIFE AND TEACHINGS

Lesson 16

Paul's Second Missionary Journey – Part 3

Sir William Mitchell Ramsay was the first professor of Classical Archaeology at Oxford University in 1885 with the new title Lincoln and Merton Professor of Classical Archaeology and Art. Ramsay was well qualified having outstanding degrees in classics and humanities as well as extensive field experience researching and exploring in Greece and Turkey.

As a world-class historian, Ramsay wrote that experts classified historical works into four different categories:

1. "Historical Romance" where a framework of basic history is woven into an invented tale that makes one appreciate the subject of the story;
2. "Legend" where real events and real people over time accrue stories and "facts" that have no real basis of historical value;
3. "Second or Third Rate History" where careless writers or writers with insufficient information give a decent account of events, but one that has numerous errors nonetheless. These are works where readers need to carefully consider what may be true and discern what may be false or inaccurate; and
4. "History of the Highest Order" where a writer has done impeccable work to ensure accuracy in what is written through personal knowledge and/or research. This historical writing is then put together in a way that provides literary skill and genius. "Such an author seizes the critical events, concentrates the reader's attention on them by giving them fuller treatment, touches more lightly and briefly on the less important events, omits entirely a mass of unimportant details, and makes his work an artistic and idealized picture... Great historians are the rarest of writers."¹

Ramsay adds that the "first and the essential quality of the great historian is truth. What he says must be trustworthy." For Ramsay, this is "truth in each detail" as well as "truth in the general effect."²

¹ Sir William Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (Baker Book House 1949) at 2-3.

² *Ibid.* at 4.

Ramsay learned as an academician that the New Testament book of Acts belonged to either the second or third category of historical writing (legend or second/third rate history). Ramsay held such a view when he began his archaeological explorations in the Turkey and Greek regions where the early church had roots. As Ramsay began his explorations, he considered Acts a book written sometime in the second century with little to no real historical value.

The more Ramsay explored, however, the more he found Acts reliable as history. He wrote, “It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth.”³ Ramsay chronicles the scholastic efforts of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that sought to establish Acts as a late work and then explains his progression through those theories as his archaeological studies necessitated a different conclusion. Ramsay finally asserts and then sets out to prove his hypothesis that Acts was indeed written by Luke, a personal friend of Paul’s and a great and fully reliable resource. Interestingly, Ramsay never arrived at his conviction because of a theological need or belief in inspiration or inerrancy of scripture. It was the cold hard evidence of investigation and careful translation that led Ramsay to embrace the truth of Acts.

This is important to us as we study Paul because much of what we know about his life comes from the accounts in Acts. As we continue to study Paul’s second missionary journey, we find ourselves carefully considering the history Luke recorded in Acts 18.

THE STORY

We rejoin Luke’s narrative as Paul leaves Athens and walks to Corinth, a distance of about 50 miles. Our knowledge of Corinth at the time is fairly broad. A number of writers both before and after Paul give us insight into the town that Gordon Fee calls “the New York, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas of the ancient world.”⁴

One early writer with a wealth of insight into Corinth was the Greek traveler and writer Pausanias (120-180 A.D.). Book 2 of Pausanias’s *Description of Greece* centers on Corinth.⁵ Pausanias gives a bit of history explaining that the ancient city of Corinth was destroyed by the Romans and then rebuilt by Julius Caesar.

³ *Ibid.* at 8.

⁴ Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Eerdmans 1987) at 3.

⁵ Book 1 covered Attica, the area of Greece that included Athens. Pausanias writes of the Athenians having “altars of the gods named Unknown” (1.4). This echoes Paul’s comment to the Athenians in Acts 17:23, “I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To the unknown god.’” See Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Book 2, Loeb Classical Library (Harvard 1918), translation by W.H.S. Jones.

When Caesar rebuilt Corinth, he populated it with Roman colonists. Paul would have come into the picture roughly 100 years later. By that time, Corinth was already a prosperous and wealthy city.

The city's wealth came from several places. First, Corinth held a unique place for trade and travel.



Corinth was positioned with two harbors, one that faced Italy to the west and another facing Turkey to the East. The safest way to transit from Italy to Troas, Ephesus, or other key cities in the eastern Mediterranean was to sail into the Western harbor of Corinth (“Lechaeum”). At that point, the Corinthians had a kind of ancient railroad track made of logs that allowed the boats to be pulled across land the four and one-half miles to the Eastern harbor (“Cenchreae”). The logs were set out where a boat could be pulled onto the logs that would then roll under the boat. After the boat rolled off a set of logs, those logs would be carried to the front of the line to be used again in the movement of the boat. The sailing around the bottom of Greece was notoriously treacherous. Needless to say, this trafficking through Corinth brought a great deal of money into the city.

A second source of money came from a derivative source. Boat captains came into port with money to burn. Add to that the time it would take for their boats to be portaged four and one-half miles, and there was time for certain excursions by the captains. Strabo (64B.C.–25 A.D.) wrote that, “Corinth is called ‘wealthy’ because of its commerce, since it is situated on the isthmus and is master of two

harbors.”⁶ Strabo later adds that Corinth had a temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, lust, and beauty. This temple had many slaves and courtesans⁷ available for a price. Strabo wrote, “the ship-captains freely squandered their money” which gave birth to a first century proverb, “Not for every man is the voyage to Corinth.”⁸ (In light of these facts, we will not be shocked when we later read of the struggles Paul had trying to address the sexual problems of the Corinthians!)

A third source of money for Corinth came from the “Isthmian Games.” These were Olympic type games that occurred in Corinth every second year. The games drew great “crowds of people” and their money as well!⁹ They are also a reason Paul would speak to the Corinthians with sports analogies. Consider 1 Corinthians 9:24-27:

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

These were analogies the Corinthians readily understood!

We do not know for certain the size of Corinth when Paul visited, but scholars estimate the population around 145,000.¹⁰ Into this city came Paul the missionary.

Luke tells us that after arriving, Paul found a Jew named Aquila and his wife Priscilla. They had recently arrived at Corinth from Rome. They had left Rome because the Emperor Claudius had commanded Jews to leave. Luke does not give any more details, but secular history does. The Roman writer Suetonius (born ca. 70 A.D.) wrote a number of volumes on the lives of the Caesars. Book Five covers Claudius. As Suetonius recounts the facts, Claudius expelled the Jews

⁶ Strabo, *Geography* Book 8, Loeb Classical Library (Harvard 1927) translation by Horace Leonard Jones at 8.6. 20.

⁷ The Greek word Strabo uses is ἱεροδόλους (*hierodoulous*), which means literally a “sacred servant.” In every day parlance, this was a temple prostitute who sold sex for a price.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ John McRay, *Paul His Life and Teaching* (Baker Academic 2003) at 164.

from Rome because “the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus.”¹¹

God’s hand providently placed Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth. Like Paul, they were tentmakers.¹² Paul worked with them using his tent making skills to make ends meet while teaching in the synagogues. Scholars point to the oral law at the time of Paul (which was later written down around 200 and forms the *Mishnah*) for the principle that one was to work as well as teach the Torah. To charge for teaching the Torah was to take one’s reward on earth.¹³ While Paul would take ministry help *after* people became Christians, he always seemed to have worked or used his own resources when teaching unbelievers.

Paul spent time in the synagogues reasoning with Jews and Greeks about Jesus as Messiah. Acts 18:4 in the English Version reads, “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.” We should pause here and go into a bit of depth on the various early Greek copies we have of Acts. There are a number of different Greek manuscripts. While they differ only in minor ways, one of the more significant differences is here in this verse. The various versions are grouped into “families” based upon which were used in various areas of the early church. The English Standard Version, and most modern versions, follows what scholars call the “neutral version” which was prevalent in many of the earliest manuscripts.¹⁴

Another family of manuscripts that are also in use very early in the church are those called the “Western Texts,” after their greater usage in the Western part of the early church.¹⁵ While most scholars do not use the Western Text where it

¹¹ See the Loeb Classical Library edition (Harvard 1997) translation by J.C. Rolfe at 25.4. Chrestus could possibly be related to another Jew other than Jesus Christ, but many, if not most, scholars consider this to be the Roman Jewish division over Christianity. We will consider this in greater depth when we look at Paul’s letter to the Roman church which came about to address the issues that arose when the Jews returned to Rome and tried to reintegrate within the church.

¹² The Greek for “tentmakers” is σκηνοποιός (*skenopoios*), which was a leather worker. It would include working with and on tents, but also many other leather goods. See F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles, The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Eerdmans 1951) at 343.

¹³ In the section of the Mishnah called “Abot,” we read, “Do not make [Torah teachings] a crown with which to glorify yourself or a spade with which to dig...Whoever derives worldly benefit from teachings of Torah takes his life out of this world.” (4.5.C,E).

¹⁴ For example, the “Neutral Text” is found in the Codexes Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, and Vaticanus.

¹⁵ The most notable Western Text is Codex Bezae.

conflicts with the Neutral text, there is a section added to this verse worthy of note. Bruce makes a good argument that these manuscripts are worthy of attention in deciding what Luke originally wrote, adding that even if this statement was not in Luke’s original, it seems nevertheless to be true! As Bruce says, “It is undoubtedly a correct statement of what Paul did.”¹⁶

So, what does the Western Version add? We will compare the two versions, highlighting some of the Western Version differences in Italics:

| <u>Neutral Text</u> | <u>Western Text</u> |
|--|--|
| “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.” | “And <i>entering into</i> the synagogue each Sabbath day, he held a discussion, <i>inserting the name of the Lord Jesus</i> , and persuaded <i>not only Jews but also</i> Greeks.” |

In commenting on this textual change, Bruce Metzger notes the Western addition implies that in his expounding of the Old Testament scriptures, “Paul would ‘insert the name of the Lord Jesus’ where, according to Christian theology, it was appropriate.”¹⁷

Luke tells us that at some point in time, Timothy and Silas arrived in Corinth from Macedonia joining Paul in his efforts and freeing Paul up to preach more and make tents less! Some Jews were getting more and more vocal in their opposition to Paul causing Paul to shake out his garments and declare, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles” (Acts 18:6).

Paul went next door to the house of Titius Justus to continue his teaching. Many scholars identify Titius Justus as the “Gaius” Paul writes of in Romans 16:23¹⁸ and 1 Corinthians 1:14-15. “Titius Justus” are second and third Roman names,

¹⁶ Bruce, *Acts* at 343 quoting Lake and Cadbury.

¹⁷ Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, (United Bible Societies 1971) at 461.

¹⁸ In the Romans passage Paul also mentions “Erastus, the city treasurer.” Archaeologists have discovered a paving stone dating from Paul’s era in Corinth that has an engraving that it was “laid by Erastus at his own expense as City Treasurer (*aedile*). See John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Baker 1991) at 331ff.

while “Gaius” is a typical first name.¹⁹ His full name would have been Gaius Titius Justus. From the Corinthians passage, we learn that he was one of two that Paul himself baptized (“I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that none of you may say that you were baptized in my name”). The second person Paul baptized was Crispus. We read of him in Acts 18 also.

Luke tells us that Crispus was the ruler of the synagogue and that he put his faith in Christ along with his family. They were among many in Corinth who heard Paul, believed, and were baptized (Acts 18:8-9).

Paul had a vision from God one night where God told Paul not to fear, for in Corinth he would neither be attacked nor harmed. God was true to his word, and Paul stayed in Corinth for a full year and a half, longer than any city up to that point on his missionary trips.

While Paul was not attacked, there was an unusual flip of circumstances Luke gives us. Gallio became “proconsul of Achaia” and was approached by a group of Jews seeking to make a united attack on Paul. Before we get into the attack, we should note who was Gallio. When Luke notes Gallio was Proconsul of Achaia, we should think of him as Achaia’s ruling governor. He was high man for Rome and the Emperor in all of Achaia (Achaia was the ancient name for what we today consider Greece). We read a great deal of Gallio in contemporary writings of various sources.

Gallio’s brother was a philosopher named Seneca. His father was also named Seneca (called now “Seneca the Elder”). Bruce cites a Delphian inscription showing that Gallio was likely appointed to the Proconsul position in July 51. Seneca tells us that Gallio left his post because of a “fever” needing a cruise to help his healing.²⁰ Dio Cassius, a Roman writer of history born around 150 A.D. would offer comment on Gallio’s penchant for witty one-liners.²¹

As the Jews try to get Paul in trouble with Gallio, they bring a charge that Paul is “persuading people to worship God contrary to the law” (Acts 18:13). Roman law allowed certain religions to exist, but others were deemed illegal (“*religio illicita*”). It seems the Jews were trying to persuade Gallio that Paul’s teaching was of an unrecognized faith.

¹⁹ See the Paul lesson number 1 regarding Roman names. It can be downloaded from www.Biblical-Literacy.com.

²⁰ Seneca letter 104.2, Loeb Classical Library (Harvard 1925) translated by Richard Gummere.

²¹ Dio Cassius, *Roman History* Book 61 at 35.3-4, Loeb Classical Library (Harvard 1925) translated by Earnest Cary.

Paul, of course, would have seen his teaching as the fruition and fulfillment of Judaism. Judaism was an accepted Roman religion, so it is not entirely surprising that Gallio made quick disposal of the complaining Jews. Gallio explained:

If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. 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.

So, Gallio sent them all from his presence and Paul left. Meanwhile, certain Roman soldiers grabbed the chief complaining Jew (Sosthenes), ruler of the synagogue (Crispus being replaced after coming to faith) and beat him! Instead of Sosthenes getting Paul in trouble, Sosthenes²² himself took a beating.

Paul had more adventures and there is more we learn of Corinth when we study Paul's writings. We pause here, however, in anticipation of our study next week from Paul's letters to the Thessalonian church that Paul wrote while in Corinth.

POINTS FOR HOME

1. It has been over 1900 years since Luke wrote Acts, yet we have independent reasons to trust in the truth of what he wrote. Luke carefully notes the proper places, the proper Roman titles, the proper times, and the proper surroundings for his narratives. He does so over and over again. It is encouraging as we remember what Paul wrote to Timothy, "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."
2. God does not send us into the world for his purposes without preparing us and the world we encounter. The Lord "is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints" (Pro. 2:8).
3. We should continue to pray for the mission efforts of those sharing the gospel. As Paul told the Romans, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written,

²² Paul will later write to these Corinthians and reference "our brother Sosthenes" in 1 Corinthians 1:1. If it is the same Sosthenes, then he subsequently came to faith as well!

"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Rom. 10:14-15)