

## 9. GALLIO INSCRIPTION\*

The New Testament lists a number of Roman officials that the apostle Paul encountered in his missionary travels. One such official was Gallio, whom Paul stood before in judgment at the bema in Corinth sometime between A.D. 51-53. When in Corinth, according to Acts 18:12-13, he was brought before this Roman proconsul of Achaia for breaking the Jewish law. When Gallio heard that the charges regarded the Jewish law, rather than actionable Roman law, he immediately dismissed the charges. The Scripture reads,

**“12** But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, **13** saying, “This man persuades men 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 wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; **15** but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters.” **16** And he drove them away from the judgment seat. **17** And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and *began* beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.” (Acts 18:12–17 NAS95)

One may observe that the proconsul said were the matter a wrong or vicious crime, he was willing to give consideration. Since, however, it related to the Jewish law, they were to deal with themselves. Because of this dismissal, Sosthenes, the synagogue leader, was beaten by the Jews.

Junius Annaeus Gallio was the son of Marcus Annaeus Seneca the rhetorician and brother of the famous philosopher, Lucius Annaeus Seneca. The latter spoke of Gallio highly, “No mortal is so pleasant to any one person as Gallio is to everybody.”<sup>1</sup>

The existence of Gallio, and his position, is confirmed by an archaeological discovery at Delphi, in 1908, consisting of nine stone fragments.<sup>2</sup> Deissman says regarding the discoveries that the inscription was a puzzle. Initially four fragments were unearthed, then three additional ones, and finally two more.<sup>3</sup> There was disagreement as to whether the pieces were part of different inscriptions but finally scholars agreed that all nine fragments were from the same inscription.<sup>4</sup>

The inscription is a proclamation made by emperor Claudius (A.D. 41-54) that mentions Gallio as the proconsul of Archaia (Greece) to about A.D. 52. Gallio’s position at Corinth helps to confirm Paul’s time at Corinth between A.D. 51-53.<sup>5</sup>

The pertinent part of the inscription reads, “Gallio, my fr[iend] an[d procon]sul [recently reported to me. . .”

ΝΙΟΣ ΓΑΛΛΙΩΝ Ο ΦΙΛΟΣ ΜΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΘΥΠΑΤΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΧΑΙΑΣ ΕΓΡΑΨΕΝ

The entire inscription is thought to have read thus:

Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, 12<sup>th</sup> year of tribunician power, acclaimed emperor for the 26<sup>th</sup> time, father of the country, sends greetings to [...]. For long have I been well-disposed to the city of Delphi and solicitous for its prosperity, and I have always observed the cult of the Pythian Apollo. Now since it is said to be destitute of citizens, as my friend and proconsul L. Iunius Gallio recently reported to me, and

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<sup>1</sup> Seneca, *Natural Questions*, iv. a; Preface 11.

<sup>2</sup> These fragments were actually found in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century but their importance was only realized in 1907-1908.

<sup>3</sup> Adolf Deissmann, *St. Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*, Trans by Lionel R. M. Strachan (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), 238.

<sup>4</sup> Gardner Gordon, Paul, Dating, and Corinth: The Gallio Inscription and Pauline Chronology (PDF) from [www.reformedperspectives.org](http://www.reformedperspectives.org) (last visited November 18, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> See the detailed arguments of Gardner Gordon regarding the reign of Claudius, the ascendancy of Seneca to tutor Nero, and the appointment of Gallio and the impact of these on the dating of Paul’s work at Corinth.

desiring that Delphi should regain its former splendour, I command you (singular) to invite well-born people also from other cities to come to Delphi as new inhabitants, and to accord them and their children all the privileges of the Delphians as being citizens on like and equal terms. For if some are transferred as colonists to these regions.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See the Greek text and translation in Hans Conzelmann, Acts of the Apostles. *Hermeneia* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 153-154