**Paul’s Trial Before Gallio**

In Acts 18.5-.12

*Paul begins preaching full time in Corinth, and stays a year and a half in the city. Then some of his Jewish opponents hatch a conspiracy against him, bringing him before the Roman Proconsul, Gallio, for judgment.*

Archeologists have discovered a first century inscription at Delphi, in central Greece, that contains a proclamation of the Emperor Claudius. This proclamation refers to Gallio as the Roman Proconsul of Greece in the year in which it was issued. That year corresponds to 52 AD, which is the approximate date of Paul’s Corinthian trial. Proconsuls generally served for only one year.

This is the second independent chronological confirmation of the date of Paul’s visit to Macedonia and Greece. The first was Claudius’ edict expelling the Jews from Rome in 50 AD, which sent Aquila and Priscilla to Corinth.

 Then, a year and a half later, Paul is brought to trial before Gallio at the time of Gallio’s Proconsulship in 52 AD. These are dramatic confirmations of Luke’s historical accuracy. A few scholars argue that someone writing Acts early in the second century could have discovered these dates in a secular source and then worked them into the text. But how likely is this?

First, the ancient world was simply not interested in historical research. Ancient writers would include historical details if those details were part of their immediate sources, but research in the modern sense was not done.

Second, there would have been few records for the writer to consult even if he had been interested in doing so. Indeed, most of the provinces of the Roman Empire did not maintain permanent archives. Pliny, the Roman governor of Bithynia at the beginning of the second century, states in a letter that there existed no record of his predecessors in office, and Bithynia had been a Roman province for a hundred years. We know more of the details of Roman history today than did the ancient Romans.

Third, although Gallio’s Proconsulship was undoubtedly recorded in the archives of Roman Senate, one would have had to have been a Roman of high rank to gain access to those archives. Beginning in the sixties of the first century, no Christian would have been allowed in those archives, even one of high rank, since by that time being a believer in Christ was punishable by death.

Fourth, another way that a later Christian writer could have discovered the date of Gallio’s Proconsulship was if his name had been on a locally minted coin. But we know a great deal about Roman coinage. The province of Greece never placed the names of its Proconsuls on coins during this period, while local Corinthian coins contain only the names of city magistrates.

Thus it is almost impossible that someone of a later generation could have discovered Gallio’s name and date in some historical source, and used that information in writing the book of Acts. The reference to Gallio’s Proconsulship is either due to Luke’s personal knowledge or is derived from his immediate sources. The same can be said about almost every other social and political fact that is found in the book of Acts. If a particular fact belongs to the middle of the first century, this is the same as saying that the writer of Acts, or his immediate sources, had personal knowledge of that fact.

This is an important evidential point. Since it is almost impossible that some later writer could have discovered this information on his own, Luke’s record decisively points either to his personal knowledge of that event, or to the personal knowledge of his immediate sources. When Luke records that Gallio presided over Paul’s trial in Corinth around 52 AD, it is because he has direct knowledge of that trial.

**Footnotes:**

Hansen, G. W. "Galatia." In D. W. J. Gill and C. Gempf, eds., The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994, pages 9 and 185. Hemer, C. J. The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990, pages 251-253.

Marshall, I. H. The Acts of the Apostles. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980, pages 297-299.

http://pauls-journeys.com/pauls-trial-before-gallio/