

SOSTHENES  
SOSTHENES

one of Paul's most remark able converts  
one of Paul's most remark able converts  
(ACTS 18:17)

The authorities of the synagogue were worried, and their fears were not groundless. Paul, who had been in their city for some time, had been joined by two of his colleagues. An added impetus had been given to the zeal of the fearless preacher, and the leaders of Israel dreaded the possibilities of the immediate future. "And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, Paul shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts 18 : 6). They watched as he entered into the nearby house of Justus, but their anger deepened when they discovered that a great change had taken place in their own leader. "And Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house" (V. 8).

## The Unique Task

During the following days, the cause of Israel seemed in jeopardy, and the people were at wits' end to know what to do. Someone had to be found who would challenge and overcome the threat of the Christian faith. Some strong character had to counteract the influence of the terrible visitor! When Sosthenes succeeded to the rulership of the synagogue, it appeared that such a man had been found. He would stand no nonsense! He was a man who would fiercely use any means, legitimate or otherwise, in order to attain his purpose. It was not a cause for amazement, therefore, when the new leader organized a great demonstration before the authorities. "And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat" (v. 12). Their riotous behaviour stirred the entire city, and many Greeks also attended the trial. At first it seemed most probable that Paul would be sentenced for disturbing the peace; but to the astonishment of Israel, the judge ignored their protests and dismissed the case. When they would have argued, the soldiers forcibly removed them from the court, and "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."

## The Unmerciful Thrashing

So ended one of the most momentous days in the stormy experiences of Paul. Probably he also watched, as the enemy of his faith was beaten by the crowd. Many of the Christians might have felt elated at the amazing turn of events; but Paul was sad. Ultimately the mob allowed the assaulted ruler to escape to his home, and while they went laughing on their way, the poor Jew prostrated himself upon his bed. His schemings had failed entirely; his pride had suffered irreparable damage, and even the cause of Israel had been brought into disfavour. Was it at that moment that Paul knocked at the door? Of course we cannot be sure of these things, but since this eminent Jew became a great Christian (I Cor. 1:1) we are at least justified in asking if he were won for Christ through the ministry of his one-time enemy? Did the apostle quietly enter, to attend to the wounds of the man who had sought his destruction? Did the graciousness and sincerity of the man of Tarsus overcome all the prejudice and animosity of Sosthenes?

SOSTHENES

one of Paul's most remarkable converts

#### The Unexpected Testimony

Years later, when Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth, he was able to say, "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother. Unto the church of God which is at Corinth . . . Grace be unto you." Obviously there is a gap between the two sections of the story; but it is clear that the old enemy of the faith, the one-time ruler of the synagogue, had taken his place at Paul's side. In company with his predecessor Crispus, Sosthenes had bowed before the Lord Jesus Christ, and through personal faith in the Saviour had found peace beyond understanding. It would appear that two features united to win him for Christ. Paul's loving deeds had adorned the Gospel he proclaimed, and this combination of virtues swept aside all opposition, and brought Sosthenes to the Lord. The story is rich in suggestions, but perhaps the greatest is that we should never despair of winning difficult characters, for oftentimes the most unlikely people become the best Christians.

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.  
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.