

Ancient Sources for Acts

Chapter 18

18:1–4

Strabo, *Geography* 8.6.20a

Corinth is called “wealthy” because of its commerce, since it is situated on the Isthmus and is master of two harbors, of which the one leads straight to Asia, and the other to Italy; and it makes easy the exchange of merchandise from both countries that are so far distant from each other. And just as in early times the Strait of Sicily was not easy to navigate, so also the high seas, and particularly the sea beyond Maleae, were not, on account of the contrary winds; and hence the proverb, ““But when you double Maleae, forget your home.””“Source unknown At any rate, it was a welcome alternative, for the merchants both from Italy and from Asia, to avoid the voyage to Maleae and to land their cargoes here. And also the duties on what by land was exported from the Peloponnesus and what was imported to it fell to those who held the keys. And to later times this remained ever so. But to the Corinthians of later times still greater advantages were added, for also the Isthmian Games, which were celebrated there, were wont to draw crowds of people. And the Bacchiadae, a rich and numerous and illustrious family, became tyrants of Corinth, and held their empire for nearly two hundred years, and without disturbance reaped the fruits of the commerce; and when Cypselus overthrew these, he himself became tyrant, and his house endured for three generations; and an evidence of the wealth of this house is the offering which Cypselus dedicated at Olympia, a huge statue of beaten gold. Again, Demaratus, one of the men who had been in power at Corinth, fleeing from the seditions there, carried with him so much wealth from his home to Tyrrenia that not only he himself became the ruler of the city that admitted him, but his son was made king of the Romans. And the temple of Aphrodite was so rich that it owned more than a thousand temple slaves, courtesans, whom both men and women had dedicated to the goddess. And therefore it was also on account of these women that the city was crowded with people and grew rich; for instance, the ship captains freely squandered their money, and hence the proverb, “Not for every man is the voyage to Corinth.” Source unknown: Moreover, it is recorded that a certain courtesan said to the woman who reproached her with the charge that she did not like to work or touch wool: “Yet, such as I am, in this short time I have taken down three webs.”

Suetonius, *Claudius* 25 (See Acts 16:35–40)

Dio Cassius, *Histories* 60.6

As for the Jews, who had again increased so greatly that by reason of their multitude it would have been hard without raising a tumult to bar them from the city, he did not drive them out, but ordered them, while continuing their traditional mode of life, not to hold meetings. He also disbanded the clubs, which had been reintroduced by Gaius. Moreover, seeing that there was no use in forbidding the populace to do certain things unless their daily life should be reformed, he abolished the taverns where they were wont to gather and drink, and commanded that no boiled meat or hot water³ should be sold; and he punished some who disobeyed in this matter.

Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 3.5

What are we to think of it, that most people so blindly knock their heads against the hatred of the Christian name; that when they bear favorable testimony to any one, they mingle with it abuse of the name he bears? “A good man,” says one, “is Gaius Seius, only that he is a Christian.” So another, “I am astonished that a wise man like Lucius should have suddenly become a Christian.” Nobody thinks it needful to consider whether Gaius is not good and Lucius wise, on this very account that he is a Christian; or a Christian, for the reason that he is wise and good. They praise what they know, they abuse what they are ignorant of, and they inspire their knowledge with their ignorance; though in fairness you should rather judge of what is unknown from what is known, than what is known from what is unknown. Others, in the case of persons whom, before they took the name of Christian, they had known as loose, and vile, and wicked, put on them a brand from the very thing which they praise. In the blindness of their hatred, they fall foul of their own approving judgment! “What a woman she was! How wanton! How gay! What a youth he was! How profligate! How libidinous!—they have become Christians!” So the hated name is given to a reformation of character. Some even barter away their comforts for that hatred, content to bear injury, if they are kept free at home from the object of their bitter enmity. The wife, now chaste, the husband, now no longer jealous, casts out of his house; the son, now obedient, the father, who used to be so patient, disinherits; the servant, now faithful, the master, once so mild, commands away from his presence; it is a high offence for anyone to be reformed by the detested name. Goodness is of less value than hatred of Christians. Well now, if there is this dislike of the name, what blame can you attach to names? What accusation can you bring against mere designations, save that something in the word sounds either barbarous, or unlucky, or scurrilous, or unchaste? But Christian, so far as the meaning of the word is concerned, is derived from anointing. Yes, and even when it is wrongly pronounced by you “Chrestianus” (for you do not even know accurately the name you hate), it comes from sweetness and benignity. You hate, therefore, in the guiltless, even a guiltless name. But the special ground of dislike to the sect is that it bears the name of its Founder. Is there anything new in a religious sect getting for its followers a designation from its master? Are not the philosophers called from the founders of their systems—Platonists, Epicureans, Pythagoreans? Are not the Stoics and Academics so called also from the places in which they assembled and stationed themselves? And are not physicians named from Erasistratus, grammarians from Aristarchus, cooks even from Apicius? And yet the bearing of the name, transmitted from the original institutor with whatever he has instituted, offends no one. No doubt, if it is proved that the sect is a bad one, and so its founder bad as well, that will prove that the name is bad and deserves our aversion, in respect of the character both of the sect and its author. Before, therefore, taking up a dislike to the name, it behooved you to consider the sect in the author, or the author in the sect. But now, without any sifting and knowledge of either, the mere name is made matter of accusation, the mere name is assailed, and a sound alone brings condemnation on a sect and its author both, while of both you are ignorant, because they have such and such a designation, not because they are convicted of anything wrong.

m. Abot 2.2

I A. Rabban Gamaliel, son of R. Judah the Patriarch, says, “Fitting is learning in Torah along with a craft, for the labor put into the two of them makes one forget sin.

B. “And all learning of Torah which is not joined with labor is destined to be null and cause sin.

II C. “And all who work with the community—let them work with them for the sake of Heaven.

D. “For the merit of their fathers strengthens them, and their [fathers’] righteousness stands forever.

E. “And as for you, I credit you with a great reward, as if you had done [all the work required by the community on your own merit alone].”

m. Abot 4.7

A. R. Ishmael, his son, says, “He who avoids serving as a judge breaks off the power of enmity, robbery, and false swearing.

B. “And he who is arrogant about making decisions is a fool, evil, and prideful.”

18:12–17

Seneca, Nat. Quest. 4.9–11

9. I used to tell you that my brother Gallio a man whom even his most ardent admirer cannot love according to the measure of his deserts was a stranger to other vices, but this he positively loathed. You might assail him on every side. One began by paying homage to his intellect, the greatest and worthiest of all, which one had rather see consecrated to the service of heaven than wasted in weak human effort; he ran away from one who talked thus. Or one began to praise his thrift he was so indifferent to money that he seemed neither to possess it nor to condemn it he cut short the very first words of the panegyric. Or, again, one would admire his bonhomie and unaffected grace of character, which charms even those it passes unnoticed a service to everyone he meets, which costs the author nothing. No one in the world, I may tell you, is such a favorite with his one chosen friend as he is with all. At the same time so great is his natural amiability that it is free from all savor of artifice or pretence. No one, you would think, can refuse credit for a goodness in which all share. At this point, too, he successfully resisted your blandishments, leading you to exclaim that you had found a man absolutely impregnable to assaults of the flattery which no one ever refuses to take to his bosom. You were forced to admit that you respected his wisdom and determination in escaping from that unavoidable plague, all the more that you had hoped that your insinuating words would be received with open ears because they were true. Yet all the more he saw that he must resist your wiles. For when truth is attacked by falsehood, the attack always seeks the aid of some measure of truth. Still, I would not have the flatterer who tried his art upon my brother displeased with his success, as if he had acted his part ill while the other suspected some joke or trick. You had not been detected, your advances

Seneca, Epistle 104

I have run off to my villa at Nomentum, for what purpose, do you suppose? To escape the city? No; to shake off a fever which was surely working its way into my system. It had already got a grip upon me. My physician kept insisting that when the circulation was upset and irregular, disturbing the natural poise, the disease was under way. I therefore ordered my carriage to be made ready at once, and insisted on departing in spite of my wife Paulina's a efforts to stop me; for I remembered master Gallio's words, when he began to develop a fever in Achaia and took ship at once, insisting

that the disease was not of the body but of the place. That is what I remarked to my dear Paulina, who always urges me to take care of my health. I know that her very life-breath comes and goes with my own, and I am beginning, in my solicitude for her, to be solicitous for myself. And although old age has made me braver to bear many things, I am gradually losing this boon that old age bestows. For it comes into my mind that in this old man there is a youth also, and youth needs tenderness. Therefore, since I cannot prevail upon her to love me any more heroically, she prevails upon me to cherish myself more carefully. For one must indulge genuine emotions; sometimes, even in spite of weighty reasons, the breath of life must be called back and kept at our very lips even at the price of great suffering, for the sake of those whom we hold dear; because the good man should not live as long

Dio Cassius, *Hist.* 61.35

In such a manner did Claudius meet his end. It seemed as if this event had been indicated by the comet, which was seen for a very long time, by the shower of blood, by the thunder-bolt that fell upon the standards of the Praetorians, by the opening of its own accord of the temple of Jupiter Victor, by the swarming of bees in the camp, and by the fact that one incumbent of each political office died. The emperor received the state burial and all the other honors that had been accorded to Augustus. Agrippina and Nero pretended to grieve for the man whom they had killed, and elevated to heaven him whom they had carried out on a litter from the banquet. On this point Lucius Junius Gallius, the brother of Seneca, was the author of a very witty remark. Seneca himself had composed a work that he called “Pumpkinification”— a word formed on the analogy of “deification”; and his brother is credited with saying a great deal in one short sentence. Inasmuch as the public executioners were accustomed to drag the bodies of those executed in the prison to the Forum with large hooks, and from there hauled them to the river, he remarked that Claudius had been raised to heaven with a hook.

Nero, too, has left us a remark not unworthy of record. He declared mushrooms to be the food of the gods, since Claudius by means of the mushroom had become a god.

Chrysostom, *Homily On Acts* 39.1–2

WHAT can be the reason that, having persuaded (some so far as to say) that they would hear him again, and there being no dangers, Paul is so in haste to leave Athens? Probably he knew that he should do them no great good; moreover he was led by the Spirit to Corinth. For the Athenians, although fond of hearing strange things, nevertheless did not attend (to him); for this was not their study, but only to be always having something to say; which was the cause that made them hold off from him. But if this was their custom, how is it that they accuse him, “he seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods?”

18:18–22

m. *Mid.* 2.5

A. The women’s courtyard was one hundred thirty-five cubits in length by one hundred thirty-five cubits in breadth.

B. And there were four offices at each of its four corners, each forty cubits square.

C. They had no roofs.

D. And so are they destined to be [in the future],

E. since it is written, *Then he brought me forth in the outer court and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and behold, in every corner of the court there was a court. In the four corners there were courts enclosed* [Ezek. 46:21–22]—

F. And ‘enclosed’ means only, without roofs.

G. And what was their purpose?

H. That in the southeastern corner was the office of the Nazirites, in which the Nazirites cook their peace offerings, shave off their hair, which they throw under the pot [Num. 6:18, M. Naz 6:8].

I. That in the northeastern corner was the office in charge of the wood supply, in which the priests who are blemished examine the wood [for worms].

J. And any piece of wood in which a worm is found is invalid for use on the altar.

K. That on the northwestern corner was the office of the lepers.

L. That in the southwestern corner—

M. said R. Eliezer b. Jacob, “I forget what its purpose was.”

N. Abba Saul says, There did they keep the wine and oil.”

O. It was called the office of the oil room.

P. And it [the women’s court] at first was empty [of buildings]. They surrounded it with a gallery, so that the women look on from above, with the men below, so that they should not mingle.

Q. And fifteen steps go up from it to the Israelite courtyard.

R. one each for the fifteen Songs of Ascents in Psalms [Ps. 120–134]

S. On which the Levites say their song.

T. They were not four-square but rounded like half of a round threshing floor.

m. Naz. 7.3

A. But as to [uncleanness contracted by overshadowing] (1) interlaced foliage, (2) projecting stones, (3) a grave area, (4) foreign land, (5) the sealing stone and, (6) the buttressing stone [of a grave],

B. a quarter-log of blood, and a Tent, and a quarter-qab of bones, and utensils which touch a corpse,

C. and because of the days of counting [after producing a symptom of *sarat* (Lev. 14:8)] and the days during which he certified [unclean with *sarat*]—

D. on account of these, the Nazir does not cut his hair or sprinkle himself on the third and seventh days and he does not lose the prior days [observed cleanness].

E. And he begins to count forthwith [after immersion and sunset].

F. And he is not subject to bringing an offering.

G. Truly did they rule: The days [of uncleanness] by reason of being a Zab or a IZabahI [Lev. 15:2,25,28], and the days of being shut up as a *mesora* [Lev. 13:4–5]—lo, these [nonetheless] go to his credit [in counting out his Nazir days].

1 Maccabees 3:49

They also brought the garments of the priesthood and the first fruits and the tithes, and they stirred up the Nazirites who had completed their days.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 19.6.1 §293

Accordingly he returned in haste, as was likely he would, now he returned in much greater prosperity than he had before. He also came to Jerusalem and offered all the sacrifices that belonged to him, and omitted nothing which the law required.

m. Naz 2.5–6

2.5 A. [If one said,] “Lo, I am a Nazir, and I take it upon myself to bring the hair offering to a[nother] Nazir,” and his friend heard and said, “So am I, and I take upon myself to bring the hair offering to a[nother] Nazir,”

B. if they are smart, they bring the hair offering of each other,”

C. And if not, they bring the hair offering of other Nazirs.

2.6 A. [If one said,] “Lo, I pledge myself to bring half of the hair offering of a Nazir,” and his friend heard and said, “And I too pledge myself to bring half the hair offering of a Nazir,”

B. “this one brings the whole hair offering of a Nazir and that one brings the whole hair offering of a Nazi,” the words of R. Meir.

C. And sages say, This one brings half the hair offering of a Nazir, and that one brings half the hair offering of a Nazir.”

m. Naz 3.6

A. He who [while overseas] took a vow to be a Nazir for a long spell and completed his spell as a Nazir, and afterward came to the Land [of Israel]—

B. the House of Shammai say, “He is a Nazir for thirty days.”

C. And the House of Hillel say, “He is a Nazir as from the beginning.”

D. M'SH B: Helene the Queen—her son went off to war, and she said, “If my son comes home from war whole and in one peice, I shall be a Nazir for seven years.” Indeed her son did come hom from war, and she was a Nazir for seven years. Then at the end of the seven years she went up the the Land. The House of Hillel instructed her that she would be a Nazir for another seven years. Then at the end of seven years she was made unclean. So she turned out to be a Nazir for twenty-one years.

E. Said R. Judah, “She was a Nazir only fourteen years.”

18:23–28

Pliny, *Natural History* 36.21

The most wonderful monument of Græcian magnificence, and one that merits our genuine admiration, is the Temple of Diana at Ephesus, which took one hundred and twenty years in building, a work in which all Asia joined. A marshy soil was selected for its site, in order that it might not suffer from earthquakes, or the chasms which they produce. On the other hand, again, that the foundations of so vast a pile might not have to rest upon a loose and shifting bed, layers of trodden charcoal were placed beneath, with fleeces covered with wool upon the top of them. The entire length of the temple is four hundred and twenty-five feet, and the breadth two hundred and twenty-five. The columns are one hundred and twenty-seven in number, and sixty feet in height, each of them presented by a different king. Thirty-six of these columns are carved, and one of them by the hand of Scopas. Chersiphron was the architect who presided over the work.

The great marvel in this building is how such ponderous Architraves could possibly have been raised to so great a height. This, however, the architect effected by means of bags filled with sand, which he piled up upon an inclined plane until they reached beyond the capitals of the columns; then, as he gradually emptied the lower bags, the architraves insensibly settled in the places assigned them. But the greatest difficulty of all was found, in laying the lintel which he placed over the entrance-doors. It was an enormous mass of stone, and by no possibility could it be brought to lie level upon the jambs which formed its bed; in consequence of which, the architect was driven to such a state of anxiety and desperation as to contemplate suicide. Wearied and quite worn out by such thoughts as these, during the night, they say, he beheld in a dream the goddess in honor of whom the temple was being erected; who exhorted him to live on, for that she herself had placed the stone in its proper position. And such, in fact, next morning, was found to be the case, the stone apparently having come to the proper level by dint of its own weight. The other decorations of this work would suffice to fill many volumes, but they do not tend in any way to illustrate the works of Nature.