Sosthenes was a Jewish synagogue leader in Corinth who later became a Christian and a co-laborer with the Apostle Paul in the early church. His journey from a religious authority within Judaism to a follower of Christ illustrates the transformative power of the gospel and God’s grace.

Sosthenes in Corinth – A Ruler of the Synagogue

In Acts 18, Paul arrives in Corinth during his second missionary journey. He begins reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath, attempting to persuade both Jews and Greeks. Initially, Paul faces resistance from the Jewish community. However, God encourages him to remain and preach boldly:

> *“Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent;*
> *for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.’”*
> — Acts 18:9–10 (NKJV)

Paul obeys and stays for a year and six months, teaching the

Word of God (Acts 18:11). During this period, many Corinthians believe, including Crispus, the synagogue ruler at the time (Acts 18:8), and later Sosthenes, who appears to succeed Crispus in that role.

The Opposition and Sosthenes' Beating

Paul's effective ministry sparks jealousy among some Jews, who bring him before Gallio, the Roman proconsul, accusing him of promoting unlawful worship. Gallio dismisses their accusations as internal religious matters:

> *"But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, 'If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such matters.'"*
> — Acts 18:14–15 (NKJV)

After Gallio refuses to act, the crowd takes Sosthenes, now the

ruler of the synagogue, and beats him publicly:

> *“Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.”*
> — Acts 18:17 (NKJV)

This attack may indicate that Sosthenes had shown sympathy toward Paul—either by being lenient, allowing him to preach, or even by beginning to embrace Paul’s teachings. The fact that he was singled out by the mob suggests he was seen as a traitor to the Jewish cause.

Sosthenes the Believer – A Brother in Christ

Later, when Paul writes his first epistle to the Corinthians, he opens with a greeting from himself and “Sosthenes our brother”:

> *“Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,”*

> — 1 Corinthians 1:1 (NKJV)

This is widely understood by scholars and theologians to be the same Sosthenes from Acts 18:17. If so, this means that Sosthenes eventually became a Christian and a trusted companion of Paul, helping in the authorship or delivery of the letter. His inclusion as a co-sender affirms his leadership and acceptance within the early church.

Theological Insights and Lessons from Sosthenes

1. God Calls People from All Backgrounds
   Sosthenes' conversion shows that even those deeply rooted in religious tradition and opposition to the gospel can be transformed. Like Paul, another former persecutor of the faith (Acts 9), Sosthenes' life testifies to God's grace in reaching the most unlikely individuals.
2. The Gospel Challenges Religious Structures
   As ruler of the synagogue, Sosthenes represented the Jewish religious establishment. His eventual support of Paul demonstrates how the gospel confronts and surpasses old systems, fulfilling the Law through Christ (Matthew 5:17; Romans 10:4).
3. Persecution Often Precedes Purpose
   Sosthenes was publicly beaten for his association with Paul. Suffering for the faith is a hallmark of Christian discipleship (Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:12), yet God uses that suffering to shape and position His servants.
4. No One Is Beyond Redemption
   The story reminds us not to limit whom we share the gospel with. Just as Romans 1:16 declares,

> *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes…”*
> *We are called to preach to all—religious leaders, skeptics, traditionalists—because only God knows who are “His people” (Acts 18:10).*

Final Encouragement

Sosthenes’ story is one of courage, transformation, and faithfulness. He went from a respected leader in Judaism to a Christian servant working alongside the apostle Paul. If God can use a synagogue ruler to build His church, He can use anyone—including you.

Preach the Word boldly, without prejudice.
You may be planting the seed in the next Sosthenes.

May the Lord bless you as you serve Him.

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