

ACTS: Staying Focused (*Acts 18:18-23*)

The Departure (v. 18)

- Due to Gallio's hands-off approach, Paul was emboldened to stay in Corinth for a little while
 - But begins to make plans to leave, allowing him time to have a proper farewell
- Priscilla & Aquila join him in the first part of his journey
- They depart through Corinth's eastern port of Cenchreae
 - Where he shaves his head as part of some vow
 - Likely a Nazarite vow (Num. 6:5)
 - The purpose of the vow is unknown, but it may have been a means of expressing thanksgiving and seeking the continued blessing of the Lord in his Corinthian mission in connection with his vision (v. 9–10)
 - If so, Paul may have grown out his hair for over 18 months and then shaved his head on the way back to Jerusalem where he would complete his vow
 - This shows that Paul still saw himself as part of the Jewish community

The Layover (v. 19-21)

- Paul & company travel to Ephesus
 - A common port on a trip from Greece to the Judean coast
 - The leading city in the province of Asia
 - The 3rd largest city in the Roman Empire
- Once they arrived, Paul parted ways with Priscilla & Aquila who stay in Ephesus more long-term (v. 26)
- Paul spends a small amount of time* in the synagogue speaking with his fellow Jews about Jesus
 - But when they ask him to stay, he refuses
 - This seems odd, but Paul clearly does not see it as God's will at the moment
 - He does return to Ephesus later
 - Instead, he remains focused on what God has directed him to do
 - That is, going to Jerusalem to finish his vow
- We all have 'layovers' that are filled with good things, but can ultimately distract us from God's will
- It may be that God will circle us back to them
 - Or that they are for someone else to do
- But ultimately, we need to let God set our direction and hold our focus

Reporting & Revisiting (v. 22-23)

- Paul then finishes his sailing journey in Caesarea, the Mediterranean port for Judea
 - Then goes up* to visit the Church in Jerusalem, and probably complete his vow at the Temple by burning the hair he had shaved off
- He then finished his 2nd missionary journey by reporting to his home Church in Antioch
- But he doesn't stay long before going back to revisiting some of the Churches in Galatia & Phrygia, which begins his 3rd missionary journey

○His motivation is to strengthen the newly birthed Christian communities

So What?

● Are we focused on what God has before us?

○Not getting distracted by “good things” which are not what God wants us to be concentrating on

Meditation Verse: *Philippians 3:14*