

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY- Acts Chapter 18- verse 18-28

Verse 18- We can deduce that Paul's encounter before Gallio served to encourage him rather than discourage him as his enemies intended because he remained at Corinth for quite some time after. Then, he left and took Aquila and Priscilla with him as he sailed for Syria. The interesting thing in this passage is the fact that though Paul was intent on continuing his mission to spread the gospel, he had not abandoned his Jewish heritage as his enemies had claimed. We know this because of the significance of him cutting his hair off at Cenchrea. Luke does not tell us the exact vow that Paul had made, but we know that he had made one, most likely the Nazirite vow due to his heritage. In the Nazirite vow, specific rules were followed for a specific time in order to consecrate oneself (show obedience and dedication) to God. Though Paul was adamant that Gentiles should not be required to follow this or any Jewish ritual, he obviously felt that there was no reason that a Jew could not practice the traditions as long as he recognized that salvation came only through following Jesus Christ. By cutting his hair, Paul was indicating that he had completed his vow. By cutting his hair in Cenchrea, rather than in Judea according to the tradition, Paul was indicating that his vow was purely between him and God and did not require human acceptance or approval. Based on where Paul had been during this latter part of his mission, it's possible that his vow was to not allow himself to be drawn into the idolatry or decadent behaviors of the places that he was visiting. Upon leaving Athens and Corinth, his vow was probably complete, so he could cut his hair. Of course, this is only a logical supposition. Since Luke didn't write more about this it is likely that he didn't know the nature of the vow either, indicating that this was not part of Paul's ministry or witness, but an observation about his personal relationship with the Lord. It is important that we also recognize that we must maintain a healthy personal relationship with Christ in order to be effective witnesses for Him. (John 15:4-5, ESV 999), (Mark 8:36, ESV 936), (Colossians 2:6-10, ESV 1087)

Verse 19-21- These verses give us the reason that Paul took Aquila and Priscilla with him. When Paul got to Ephesus he went to the synagogue to preach to the Jews as was his normal practice, however, he apparently knew he would not be able to stay long there so, he left Priscilla and Aquila to continue teaching them. Since they were asking him to stay, Paul knew he had planted a seed there. He left Priscilla and Aquila there to water that seed, with a promise that he would return if God allowed. (Luke) 8:11-15, ESV 958) Paul may have also had another reason to leave Ephesus in a hurry. He was trying to get to Jerusalem in time for the Passover Feast so that he could perform the ritual sacrifices that were part of the Nazirite vow (including burning the cut hair when the vow was complete). Some bible versions include a phrase in verse 21 where he states his intention to get to this "feast of Jerusalem." (NKJV, KJV). Some modern bible versions leave this phrase out

because they believe it was added by copyists because it does not appear in some older Greek manuscripts. Whether he said it or not, it makes logical sense that he was heading to Jerusalem because that is where he went next.

Verse 22- Paul sailed to Caesarea, a major port of Israel and up to Jerusalem where he greeted the church. Then, he went home to Antioch. Whatever Paul did in Jerusalem, it must have been personal because there is no mention of teaching or preaching there on this short visit. Going to Antioch was for Paul a visit home to the people who had sent him on this journey. He stayed for some time probably to rest and update them about his travels just as he did after his first journey. Then, just as before, he went back to Galatia and Phrygia to encourage all the disciples (those who had converted).

Verse 24-26- Here in these verses Luke tells us what went on with Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus while Paul was away. They were joined by a man named Apollos who was educated and a believer in Christ. From what we know this man was a self-appointed missionary, not sent by any particular church. We know that he spoke intelligently. He knew the Scriptures well. He had been taught the way of Christ and spoke accurately about Him. He was very enthusiastic about what he was preaching. But in listening to him, Priscilla and Aquila realized that he was in error about one thing. He had no knowledge about the Holy Spirit. He knew only about the physical baptism performed and taught by John the Baptist. He did not know about the baptism in the Spirit, so Aquila and Priscilla took him privately under their wing and taught him. (Matthew 3:11, ESV 897), (Acts 1:4-5, 8, ESV 1006), (1 Corinthians 12:12-13, ESV 1061)

Verse 27-28- When Apollos was ready to move on to Achaia, the brothers and sisters at Ephesus were able to give him a favorable recommendation from their church. Then, it turned out that he was especially effective in persuading the stubborn Jews that Jesus was the Messiah using his great knowledge of the Scriptures. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, ESV 1099)