



ACTS 18:1-18a

Spiritual Focus, My time with God

Imagine going into Las Vegas, a city known Sin-City, a “Playground for Adults.” Las Vegas is a city known as a place where anything goes pretty much; prostitution, gambling-you name it. Immorality is considered perhaps a virtue in that town. Of course not everyone and everything in Vegas is immoral or corrupt but it does have its reputation none the less. Now imagine going down the main drag and trying to win hearts for Jesus. Oh there are those that are doing just that I’m sure. I’m not sure how successful one might be in that town doing so however. Trying to turn people away from a behavior that pays the bills there might get you a fat lip. It might get you a beating even. Vegas no doubt can be a rough town, especially with the mob element running operations.

The Apostle Paul didn’t have it much easier in the city of Corinth which we will see in the following text.

Acts 18

Paul Meets Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth

¹ Then Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ² There he became acquainted with a Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently arrived from Italy with his wife, Priscilla. They had left Italy when Claudius Caesar deported all Jews from Rome. ³ Paul lived and worked with them, for they were tentmakers just as he was.

⁴ Each Sabbath found Paul at the synagogue, trying to convince the Jews and Greeks alike. ⁵ And after Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul spent all his time preaching the word. He testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. ⁶ But when they opposed and insulted him, Paul shook the dust from his clothes and said, “Your blood is upon your own heads—I am innocent. From now on I will go preach to the Gentiles.”

⁷ Then he left and went to the home of Titius Justus, a Gentile who worshiped God and lived next door to the synagogue. ⁸ Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, and everyone in his household believed in the Lord. Many others in Corinth also heard Paul, became believers, and were baptized. ⁹ One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him, “Don’t be afraid! Speak out! Don’t be silent! ¹⁰ For I am with you, and no one will attack and harm you, for many people in this city belong to me.” ¹¹ So Paul stayed there for the next year and a half, teaching the word of God.

Paul, true to form brought the message first to the Jews (his Kin) and according to Romans 1:16. When he was rejected and insulted he shook the dust off (a way of showing he rejected the Jew’s rejection) and took the message to the Gentiles. The Lord then appeared to Paul in a vision and assured him He was with him and not to be afraid and continue to speak out! The Lord was firm in this.

Today missionaries need a lot of courage. They are serving in a foreign land and some of them have to be secretive about evangelizing. **Why do you think that is so?**

Group leader: Explain to your group what we learned last year about being a "tentmaker"; what it meant as Paul's occupation in his missionary journeys and what the label "tentmaker" means when applied to a missionary today.

¹² But when Gallio became governor of Achaia, some Jews rose up together against Paul and brought him before the governor for judgment. ¹³ They accused Paul of "persuading people to worship God in ways that are contrary to our law." ¹⁴ But just as Paul started to make his defense, Gallio turned to Paul's accusers and said, "Listen, you Jews, if this were a case involving some wrongdoing or a serious crime, I would have a reason to accept your case. ¹⁵ But since it is merely a question of words and names and your Jewish law, take care of it yourselves. I refuse to judge such matters."¹⁶ And he threw them out of the courtroom.

This sounds very much like Pontius Pilate addressing the crowd before he washed his hands of Jesus doesn't it?

¹⁷ The crowd then grabbed Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and beat him right there in the courtroom. But Gallio paid no attention.

Paul Returns to Antioch of Syria

¹⁸ Paul stayed in Corinth for some time after that, then said good-bye to the brothers and sisters and went to nearby Cenchrea. There he shaved his head according to Jewish custom, marking the end of a vow.

Group leader: The vow taken by Paul is believed to be The Nazarite Vow. Read "Numbers 6" and explain it to your group.

Paul has now completed his 2nd missionary journey having finished with a year and a half in Corinth—a challenging venue to say the least. Taking the "vow" is considered his way of leaving behind "the world" and retreating for a period of time...a sabbatical, a time of spiritual renewal.

Have you ever taken a sabbatical, a retreat or experienced a time of spiritual renewal? If so—can you describe it and explain what the effects were?

A sabbatical is a time to focus in-depth on things that are important to a person's work and life with the church in order to renew the calling and creativity of our spiritual leaders. Such sabbaticals should include intentional times for reflection, rekindling the spirit, and deepening spiritual life and family relationships.

What does a sabbatical look like to you? What and where would be your choice for one? What work would you like to see God accomplish in you?

