



Lesson 12 February 20th, 2021

Priscilla: Called to Minister

MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL

Study Scripture – Acts 18:1-3, 18-21, 24-26; Romans 16:3-4

Background Scripture – Acts 18:1-26; Romans 16:3-4;
1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19

Key Verse:

Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Romans 16:3-4

INTRODUCTION

While ‘the limelight’ center-stage and ‘the forefront’ are the places that many want to be; ‘behind the scene’, ‘away from the limelight’, ‘in the background’, represent the arena where very often, significant work is done to advance any cause or objective. Good leadership it seems is always in short supply, though there is no shortage of aspirants, which leaves a lot of room for those who just want to contribute without the accolades or recognition.

Have you ever considered that you will be more effective when your work for the Kingdom as part of a team?

Do you consider that when you follow the Great Commission you are actually in ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ fully equipped with all the resources that you need, and which are given by the Holy Spirit?

What activities do you consider to be ministry activities, and do you think any activity in your life is not part of your ministry?

What activity do you want to exclude?

Have you ever thought about the surprising and unexpected opportunities you have been given to minister?

Do you work for the limelight? Do you refuse to do ministry for Jesus because you are not up-front and receive accolades for what you are doing?

Our Lesson features a husband and wife team, Aquila and Priscilla working in the ‘Kingdom’ who seem to want nothing more than just to help the brethren. They appear to be who we would call ‘ordinary Christians’ but somehow are mentioned at several points in the outreach, growth and expansion of the early church and inevitably linked to the great Apostle Paul.

Priscilla is mentioned in this work more than her husband even though it is made clear they both work together. There is no hindrance in their work for they co-operate with each other both of their business enterprise and in the ministry.

While many are preoccupied with identification of gifts, endowments, recognition and acclaim, our couple’s main desire and asset appear to be a willingness to serve brethren in any place a

need might arise. They were essentially servants of Jesus Christ serving wherever the Master placed them. Too often, too many Christians are looking for roles tailored to their perceived gifts or abilities or self-promotion is their motive.

As we consider this wife and husband team, it is hard to miss the contrast with another Christian couple we studied recently, Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). That tragic pair wanted to be more than just regular members of the church. They wanted to receive more than the normal appreciation and admiration of other Christians and coveted the accolades and applause of the brethren, to satisfy their 'flesh' driven desire for praise and pre-eminence. Our couple on the other hand was marked by humility, hospitality and a commitment to the Gospel that put their lives at risk. Importantly, they are always mentioned together; a true picture of 'two becoming one'.

Do not think that the life of this couple was an easy one for they were among the Jews that were expelled and uprooted from their homes in Rome by the Emperor Claudius. They were labouring in a sense outside of their comfort zone, willing to travel and looking for a place to live and survive. But despite this life of uncertainty under the iron thumb of the pagan Roman emperors they were determined to spread the Gospel wherever they went. Their priority was the Great Commission, and they went about fulfilling that instruction by the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul was called to be the 'Apostle to the Gentiles', was God's chosen instrument and the foremost evangelist / church planter to the Gentile world of his day. Paul's mission was daunting, against formidable enemies and at great personal cost in every meaningful aspect of his life.

Let us look at what has been happening to Paul up to this point. He was stoned and left for dead in Lystra. In Jerusalem some Christians accused him of being a false teacher. When he went to Philippi on the second Missionary journey a mob grabbed him, beat him with rods, he was tossed into jail, locked into stocks, an instrument of torture where your arms were pinned into a piece of wood with a slot made to hold it firm, and your legs were in a similar slot so that you could not move your outstretched arms or legs. There he was left to think about the additional torture and suffering he would undergo soon. But at midnight there was a big earthquake and Paul was freed, saved some souls, and continued his ministry.

Then he went on to Thessalonica where his own countrymen formed a mob, attacked him and drove him out of the city. They followed him to Berea where they opposed his ministry and made life difficult for him. Then Paul went on and preached in Athens, that great center of intellect and philosophy and there he was derided and regarded as a fool. But nevertheless some, what seemed to be a very small group, believed in what he was preaching.

The indomitable Paul then went on to face a bigger and worse set of problems than was found in the other places he had been to. Many pseudo-intellectual Jews who were proud of themselves lived in the city and they were worse than the Jews of Thessalonica.

Note that at this point Paul was probably somewhat discouraged. Alone and a total stranger Paul entered into the strategically located city of Corinth, a great sense of commerce and trade located on a narrow strip of land between the Adriatic Sea and Aegean Sea.

The city was the center of the worship of Aphrodite the Goddess the goddess of sex and its reputation in the Roman world was that it was the center of sensuality. Whenever there was a stage play that included a part for a citizen of Corinth, he was always portrayed as a rather loose man, immoral, and a staggering drunk. The city was described as follows:



“It was infested with certain strongholds of evil which the apostle describes in his first letter to the Corinthians—places where evil was entrenched and was difficult to dislodge. Sexual license and perversion were rampant. Racial discord was prominent. There were family feuds and political tyranny. And of course, spreading over all was the emptiness, meaninglessness, and the lack of purpose which paganism always produces”.

Another writer describes the city:

“The city itself stood on a little island; it had two ports, Lecheeum on the west, and Cenchrea on the east. It was one of the most populous and wealthiest cities of Greece, and at the same time one of the most luxurious, effeminate, ostentatious, and dissolute. Lasciviousness here was not only practiced and allowed, what was consecrated by the worship of Venus; and no small part of the wealth and splendour of the city arose from the offerings made by licentious passion in the very Temple of this goddess. No city of ancient times was more profligate. It was the Paris of antiquity; the seat of splendour, and show, and corruption. Yet even here, notwithstanding all the disadvantages of splendour, gaiety, and dissoluteness, Paul entered on the work of rearing a church; and here he was eminently successful”.

Paul later describes his experiences in other cities and tells us later that during his ministry in Corinth he was weak and afraid and in trembling, and this picture of the city and the people there help us to understand what the Apostle went through and helps us understand ourselves better as we engage in Christian ministry.

We learn about the necessity of the presence and the power of Christ and it presents a powerful rebuking message to those who have an unrealistic view of who they are and the power they personally have.

We are looking in this Study therefore how God arranges His work. Never forget that the Lord is still living, still working, and He accomplishes His work through the ministers of the word of God wherever they may be. Now God took people who were in real difficulty and were now alone in trying to survive and at the same time do the work of God. They met in a terribly depraved city and they will have to work together. No wonder therefore that their personalities meshed, and they worked well together, achieving a great deal, loving each other and thinking entirely of each other.

The Apostle is very particular to express gratitude to our couple on behalf of himself and the Gentile churches. He taught them and worked steadily with them. Yet we do not read of them doing miracles, planting churches, preaching great sermons and yet feeling proud of themselves.

Our heroes are mentioned briefly in the four sections of our Study Text doing significant is an understated, ‘matter of fact’ fashion; just going about doing God’s work without fanfare.

The Book of Acts begins in Jerusalem and ends in Rome. The military and political center of the first century, Rome had a significant Jewish population. Christianity came to Rome early, likely within a few months after the resurrection of Christ. On the Day of Pentecost, visitors from Rome heard the Gospel preached and undoubtedly some of them were baptized (Acts 2:10, 41). Then they returned home to spread Christianity in the imperial city.

That spread seems to have been confined to Jews for many years. As a result, Christians of Jewish background coexisted with unbelieving Jews in tight urban spaces, jockeying for control of various synagogues which led to tensions and even violence. Rather than sort out the



instigators, Emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from the city, whether Christian or non-Christian, in AD 49. Jews were not readmitted to the city until the death of Claudius in AD 54. These events form the backdrop of Paul meeting two Jews, Priscilla and Aquila who were expelled from Rome, in Corinth about AD 51. In the meantime, Christians of Gentile background in Rome established house churches (Romans 16:5, 10–11, 14–15), a development that caused some tension when Jewish Christians returned to the city.

Political decisions in Rome and opposition to the Gospel in Macedonia and Achaia will lead to a fortuitous meeting between the Apostle Paul and acutely needed ‘helpers’ Aquila and Priscilla. Evident in our Text is God’s providential care and concern for His faithful worker.

As we come to the Study Text, the attitude, devotion and commitment to the Gospel of this couple challenge the Christian reader on many fronts.

THE TEXT

Acts 18: 1 – 3.

The first section of the Text introduces the principals of our study and at a time the Apostle Paul was at a spiritual low; he was alone, dejected in spirit and lacking financial resources. He had just arrived in Corinth, the debauched center of sensuality and sexual perversion in the ancient Roman world. It was fifty miles west of Athens the Apostle’s last stop and which was itself a center of intellectual pride and idolatry and which treated the Gospel with indifference and disdain.

The Apostle had little success in Athens, left without setting up a church but did leave behind perhaps a few interested followers. Alone, a total stranger, he entered the strategically located city of Corinth, among other things a center of commerce and trade, located on a narrow strip of land separating the Ionian and Aegean Seas.

Even prior to Athens, Paul was expelled under great duress from Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea where he had to leave his travelling companions. At least he was able to establish churches in those cities, but Athens was a distressing, spiritual wasteland. The experience in Athens weighed heavy on the Apostle as he arrived in Corinth and without companions or financial support in a strange and evil city what next was likely on the Apostle’s mind. It is at this point that Aquila and Priscilla enter the narrative and they were all the Apostle needed at that juncture.

Verse 1. *After these things...* links us with the previous chapter, identifying Paul as the one continuing his missionary journey and the various trials and triumphs that he experienced. So, he left Athens and headed for Corinth.

Corinth ... In view of his prior difficulties and the sordid reputation of the place, Corinth in our way of thinking, should not have been his first choice and would not be at the top of most people’s ‘must visit’ list. In fact, it was a place that those who were not morally depraved pleasure seekers, or dedicated to making money, would probably want to avoid, or ask God to destroy like Sodom and Gomorra.

This however was where Paul determined to plant the next church. Corinth was the capital of Achaia and was a major trading center, everybody who was anybody probably passed through there; not surprising then, all manner of people and customs found their way to Corinth. It was most notably known for its wealth, luxury and extravagance. Idol worship of the sensuous type



that encouraged sexual debauchery was the norm and incorporated every kind of perversion and immorality.

Verse 2. *And found a certain Jew...* sounds like more than coincidence and suggests a sought-after resource for the dejected Apostle.

Pontus was another province of Asia Minor. It was situated north of Cappadocia, on the Black Sea south coast. Pontus and Cappadocia under the Romans constituted one province. This was one of the places to which the apostle Peter directed his epistle, (1Peter 1:1) and was the birthplace of Aquila.

Aquila, born in Pontus ... Aquila was a Jew born in a Gentile country; it is understandable that his name was Roman. He had recently fled Italy with his wife Priscilla, due to the decree of the emperor Claudius in A.D. 52, commanding all Jews to leave Rome. The Roman historian Seutonius records that the Jews were persecuting their Christians compatriots, and this was leading to many serious disturbances in Rome. The emperor cared only to know that the trouble concerned Jews and so he expelled them all, the innocent with the guilty.

Verse 3. *... he was of the same craft ...* Paul found this couple because he was looking for such people and he gravitated toward Aquila and Priscilla because he and they had a common occupation, they were tent makers or more accurately leather workers. Here was a friendship made in heaven. Paul needed workmates and a place to stay. They were forced to uproot themselves and flee Rome. So, they met by divine appointment and a long, lasting friendship of mutual support began; Romans 16:3-4.

Paul would work alongside them, not only would he earn his keep, but the required money to fund his missionary trips. The advancement of the gospel was most important to Paul to which he gave his time, talent and treasure.

Interestingly we are not told if Aquila and Priscilla were believers before Paul came or if they became Christian as a result of Paul's ministry while staying with them. We note however that a church was previously established in Rome, so it would not be inconceivable that they were already believers before they were driven out of Italy. Whatever the case, it is evident that all parties benefited from what would be a life-long relationship that started here.

Aquila, like many Jewish boys, would have been taught a trade, a practical way to earn a living; in this case tannery. We can surmise the couple who are always mentioned together would be a good moral example for these morally dissolute Corinthians. They would see the picture of a true man and woman of God.

Only very few husbands and wives can work together in business, under the pressure of work production and not have a relationship breakdown. But this couple had an ideal kind of mature relationship; they could be both lovers and workmates, able to be happily together 'twenty-five' hours a day, seven days a week. They were inseparable.

The Apostle who brought this new message about God worked with his hands instead of acquiring followers and living off them, in the manner of pagan priests; this would be a shock for these pagans. Practical examples of what it means to be a believer, a member of the 'Body', working together without exploiting each other for material gain was a needed model for new converts.

The importance of Paul's willingness to support himself in this manner is seen when he wrote to the church in Corinth several years later (1 Corinthians 4:12; 9:1-18; compare Acts 20:34). The accommodations that Paul shared with Aquila and Priscilla may have served as personal



lodging, tent factory and sales shop concurrently. Skilled craftsmen were in demand in a commercial center like Corinth thus allowing Paul to earn a living. The Scriptures demand you work for a living.

It would have been near impossible for any Christian to work with the great teacher every day and not become a strong, well-grounded and spiritually mature Christian. No wonder they became so proficient in the Faith. (See Acts 18:18-21 Text). Paul would have used every opportunity to build up Aquila and Priscilla in the Apostolic doctrine. They were willing listeners, ready learners, great disciples and ready themselves to lead others into greater truth, just as Paul led them into greater truth. The fruit of the Apostle's labor will be evident in the next section of text.

We must take advantage of every opportunity we have to teach others about Christ. We should engage those with whom we work in sharing the good news about the great salvation in Christ and when the Spirit brings them to belief, disciple them in every respect.

But remember that Paul was under pressure, but he continued in Corinth for a year and six months teaching the word of God despite opposition from the ultra-religious and pseudo-intellectual Jews and other pagan people. It became so very difficult but yet we are told that many of the Corinthians heard, believed and were baptized. Jesus himself intervened to support Paul, Aquila and Priscilla and the Apostle was told in verses 9-10

“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”.

One can imagine the feeling of relief that came over and sustained these three fellow workers as they laboured together with great success. We can be sure that they spoke a lot about that vision of support from Jesus.

Acts 18: 18-21

Paul busied himself in Corinth for a while, but other exigencies moved him to leave Corinth. But remember he had faithful fellow workers in Aquila and Priscilla.

Verse 18. ... *Paul after this tarried there yet a good while*, Paul stayed in Corinth, for about a year and a half to two years. During this time, he planted other churches (2 Cor 1:1) and ensured the development of strong leadership. He saw the nurturing of leadership as an essential part of church growth and the house of Justus (Acts 18:7) seemed to have been in fact a ministry training school.

Paul and his now enhanced team of Timothy, Silas, Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:5), taught Jesus as Messiah. Crispus, leader of the synagogue and his entire household were saved. Many other Corinthians also believed and joined the church. During this period God had strengthened Paul and removed his fear of attack.

... sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila ... Paul eventually left Corinth and took Aquila and Priscilla with him. Evidently by now Sosthenes, Stephanas and Crispus (vs. 8-17) had become capable leaders. Sosthenes was the synagogue leader beaten by a mob after failing to secure a conviction against Paul. He later became a Christian (1 Cor 1:1) and a leader in the church.

Paul is headed back to Antioch of Syria, his sending church. He will also spend time in Jerusalem on the way to Antioch (Acts 18:22).



... *he had a vow* ... He had taken a vow of some kind and this was accompanied by shaving his head. This is not explained, but Paul may have taken a Nazarite vow at some point in the past (Numbers 6:5, 18). Some think it was related to his discouraging time in Corinth earlier, a humbling of himself to be used as a vessel for God's service (2 Timothy 2:21). The shaving of the hair is the end of part of the vow, a preparation for visiting the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 21:24).

Taking this sort of vow was not compulsory but was a physical sign of a time of spiritual reflection and renewal. Though he was willing to accommodate his lifestyle to relate to people he encountered in ministry (1 Corinthians 9:19–23), Paul continued His Jewish practices (Acts 21:26).

Cenchrea... was the eastern port of Corinth that services its Aegean Sea trade.

Numbers 6 gives much information on vows observed by many Jews. Paul was a Jew all his life, though he was an Apostle to the Gentiles. All he did was to reject the legalistic tradition of the elders which often perverted the intent of the Law. Paul's Jewishness was important to him. It is a pity that many Gentile commentators have tried to twist Paul's position to unfairly attack Judaism.

Verse 19. *Ephesus* ("desirable") was located on the southwest coast of present-day Turkey. This city served as the capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor and was the third-largest city in the Roman Empire. At the time of Paul's arrival, Ephesus had a large Jewish population with a well-established synagogue. Paul set off a riot in Ephesus in the process of establishing one of the most noteworthy churches in biblical times (Acts 19). On his third missionary journey, Paul would spend the better part of three years in the city (20:31). The church in Ephesus was one of seven to receive a special message from Christ (Rev. 2:1–7). It was the site of the famous temple of Diana, reputed one of the seven wonders of the world.

... *he came to Ephesus* ... the Apostle stopped in Ephesus and spent a few Sabbaths in the local synagogue, reasoning and persuading the Jews from the Scripture that Jesus is the Messiah. He seemed to have intended to return and work in Ephesus, but he also felt highly of Aquila and Priscilla that they could build the church. The work he began on this occasion was carried forward by Aquila and Priscilla who he left in Ephesus. Later Apollos would assist the work. (See Acts 18:24-260).

... *left them there*... a definite action of purpose. He knew the pair competent to carry on the work.

Verses 20-21. ... *they desired him to tarry longer time with them*... Paul's understanding and exposition of Scripture met fertile ground so powerfully, that the members of the synagogue asked him to stay longer. The Jews however, seldom rose against the Gospel till the successful preaching of it stirred them up and they would not tolerate losing their own to The Way. Paul however had to deny their request as he was determined to complete his vow and celebrate the festival in Jerusalem, but he would return. In the meantime, the spirit-led and competent Aquila and Priscilla would continue the work.

We encourage and urge believers to study, take advantage of whatever teaching of the truth of Scripture is offered, so that there will be no worry, when they are left on their own. There will be confidence that they will declare the full counsels of God night and day.

Paul then left Ephesus and headed for Jerusalem.

Meanwhile in Ephesus



Acts 18:24-26

Verse 24. We may recall that Paul 'left' Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus to carry on the work. It was during this period that a certain disciple named Apollos visited the church in Ephesus. *Apollos* was a Jew born in Alexandria. It was not uncommon at this time for a Jew to have a Roman name, especially having been born and raised in a place under Roman rule. What may seem strange is that Apollos was also the name of a false god.

Apollos afterward became a distinguished and successful preacher of the gospel, 1Cor. 1:12; 1Cor. 3:5-6; 1Cor.4:6; Tit.3:13; but nothing more is known of him than is stated in these passages.

Alexandria was a celebrated city of Egypt, built by Alexander the Great, from whom it took its name. It was seated on the Mediterranean Sea, between Lake Mareotis and the beautiful harbor formed by the Isle of Pharos. This city was built under the direction of Dinocrates, the celebrated architect of the temple of Diana at Ephesus. It was in this city that Ptolemy Soter founded the famous academy called the Museum, in which a society of learned men devoted themselves to philosophical studies. Some of the most celebrated schools of antiquity flourished here; and here was the Tower of Pharos, esteemed one of the Seven wonders of the world. This was the environment in which Apollos was raised.

... *an eloquent man* ... He is described as an eloquent man. He was a great orator and evidently had an excellent command of the language(s) he spoke. His skill and intellect were most likely a product of the fine schools that existed in Alexandria. His parents obviously valued a good education, even though based in a secular system.

... *mighty in the scriptures* ... we are also told that this Jew, living in a Gentile country, with the name of a heathen god, was also mighty in the Scriptures. The foundation was laid; the importance of passing on the Jewish culture, way of life and beliefs were not diminished in any way due to his environment. Apollos' high education probably equipped him to diligently and systematically study the Scriptures. As a result, he was well versed in the Old Testament Scriptures and very importantly the Jewish method of interpretation.

Verse 25. ... *instructed in the way of the Lord* ... the Old Testament Scriptures are replete with the promises of redemption and the coming of the Messiah. Apollos knowing the Scriptures as he did, would also have known the prophecies and as any good believing Jew, would have had a very high expectation and longing for the fulfillment of the prophecies.

We are also told that Apollos aside from knowing the Old Testament Scriptures, was instructed in the way of the Lord; that is, he had had some formal contact with those who were likely disciples of John the Baptist. He was zealous and compelling in teaching and sharing this truth. He was accurate in the dissemination of the truth to the point of his understanding, yet he lacked the facts that accompanied the fulfillment of John's teaching. He did not know that Jesus was the Messiah, who had come and that He died and was risen, ascended and now sits at the '*right hand*' of God. This of course is essential to the message of the Gospel. Armed with the realization of what he already knew and believed, Apollos would become a truly might warrior for the Lord and instrumental in cultivating the work of Paul. "*Paul plants and Apollos waters, but God gives the increase...*" (1 Cor.3:6).

Verse 26. ... *speak boldly in the synagogue*: ...Apollos was a believer and a Jew so he would naturally attend the synagogue every Sabbath and here he had opportunity to expound the word and he did so boldly, without fear or doubting. (See Rom.1:16; Acts 1:8).



Now note that this skillful orator Apollos was not a Christian at the time. He had been trained in the finest Jewish schools at Alexandria in Egypt but of course he could only go so far as what he knew and understood. Apollos knew only the baptism of John and that was of course a lot, for John the Baptist taught a lot about Jesus Christ. The meaning of “the baptism of John” really meant the message that John preached in the wilderness of Judea which of course was dynamite in that day.

It did appear that the followers of John traveled throughout the known world and in Acts 19:1-7 we read of Paul's encounter with some of them in Ephesus who also believe John's message and lived-in anticipation of the arrival of Messiah without knowing the news about Jesus. They did not even know about the coming of the Holy Spirit. They did not of course know the whole truth.

It will be helpful for us to examine some of what John taught to remind ourselves about this message of John. We will notice the difference between his message and the full teaching of Christianity. One writer summarizes John's message for us as follows:

“1. First that, before God, forgiveness of sins is possible only on the basis of repentance. Thus, there was no longer any need to bring a sacrifice or offering. That was a startling message to these Jews. They had been told that the only way they could have their sins forgiven was by means of an animal substitute whose blood was shed on their behalf. Thereby God passed over their sins-- accepted, temporarily at least, the blood of the animals on their behalf, and forgave their sins. But John came with the startling word that all God really wanted was a repentant heart.

2. John had the people express their repentance in baptism, which was a symbolic act of cleansing. This also was something new. In the Old Testament you can read in the Law about certain cleansing in which, after fulfilling a sacrifice, the bringers of the sacrifice would wash themselves. This was similar to baptism, but not quite the same. John came announcing that as people repented, changed their mind about their evil, called it what God called it, and forsook it, God forgave their sins. The symbol of that forgiveness was the washing of baptism. And John insisted that their repentance had to be real, insisted that they actually produce fruit that befitted repentance. That is, their actions had to demonstrate that they really meant what they said and would indeed turn from their evil. He met several different groups of people and told them specific things that they could do in order to indicate that they really had judged themselves before God.

3. Third was his announcement that there was coming One who would complete the work he had begun. Repentance is just a beginning with God. It is as far as we human beings can go by ourselves, but it does not give us life. Repentance would achieve forgivingness of sins, but it would not give us any positive ground of action, and the power by which to live. That is what John announced would be available when Jesus came.

“There is coming one after me”, he said, “who is mightier than I., whose shoes I am not worthy to carry. I have baptized you with water, as a symbol of the forgivingness God gives but he will go further; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit he will put life into you. He will give you power. He will pour into you that which it takes to live as God asks. That I can't do”
So, Apollos knew this much, but he knew nothing of the cross, nor of the resurrection, and he did not know of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. His message was basically incomplete. He announced the word about Jesus, but he said nothing about those



three essentials which make it possible for the word of Jesus to be experienced in our own life: His death, his resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Spirit”.

... *Aquila and Priscilla had heard* ... however, when Aquila and Priscilla heard him preach, they instantly recognized in him a powerful and knowledgeable speaker who really needed to be brought up to date concerning the Gospel. It was not that he was in error; rather he had not read the last chapter.

Now *they took him unto them* ... notice the response of Aquila and Priscilla; they did not publicly expose his current lack concerning the finer points of the Gospel. They did not use this situation to further some personal agenda or draw attention to themselves, but neither were they about to allow such a power speaker or anyone for that matter to continue without the whole truth. Allowing such might have resulted in some future distortion of the Gospel. Most cults start out extremely zealous having only part of the truth.

... *and expounded unto him* ... Aquila and Priscilla then taught him all they had learned concerning the coming of the Messiah, who He was and the nature of His work and certainly salvation by grace.

They would have told him of the Crucifixion, the Resurrection and events on the day of Pentecost and the mighty work of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles and disciples; such as Stephen and Philip and the evangelization of the entire Gentile world. Equipped with such knowledge and zeal, Apollos could now expound the complete Gospel.

Two notable things happened here and are really evidence of the working of the Holy Spirit. First, Priscilla and Aquila were in no way intimidated by the intellectual Apollos in presuming that they were able to give him instruction.

Secondly, Apollos did not look down on these humble tent makers to despise their instruction. Rather he demonstrated that a great teacher must always remain teachable and that type of humility is a mark of a truly godly character.

We should note that it was at the feet of this husband and wife, these ‘ordinary Christian’ that this learned man came to Christian maturity. It is a very important and profitable role for older and more mature Christian to recognize and nurture the gifts in young people – so the scripture says “*young men I call on you because you are strong...*”

Though Aquila and Priscilla were very knowledgeable having spent time working side by side with and learning doctrine from Paul; Aquila did not covet or see himself in the capacity of Apollos, as a speaker in the synagogue. Rather as an encourager and an enabler, he and Priscilla would make huge contributions to the work of God. It is obvious that neither party was concerned in getting notoriety for themselves. Rather they understood their spiritual enablement and abilities and would use them in such a manner, as to maximize the benefit to the church and bring glory to God. This is an important area of ministry: helping those who have a passion for God and power in serving Him yet have limited knowledge or resources for effective ministry.”

The prominence of Apollos in the writings of Luke and Paul (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:5–6; 4:6) speaks also of the importance of Apollos’s instruction by Aquila and Priscilla.

There is one important point that we should learn from this. Apollos was unusually eloquent, mighty in the Scriptures, very capable in communicating the word of the Lord, and if you heard him preach you would recognize these unusual gifts in communication and discussing the word of God. As well he fearlessly preached in the synagogue and everyone hearing him including



Aquila and Priscilla were quite impressed and marveled at his eloquence and his grasp of Old Testament Scripture.

No wonder then that Paul wrote to tell us that some liked Apollos for the way that he presented the truths of God. Others would say that they liked Paul because he was a man of great insight and vision even though he did not have the skills that Apollos had in presenting the truths of God.

Then there were other immature believers who joined in this foolish assessment of preachers and teachers of the word of God and who said, ***“I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas, I am of Paul”***. And then some others even joined in this foolish type of discussion by saying ***“I am of Christ”***. But to his credit after the skillful and complete teaching of Aquila and Priscilla Apollos did not join into that argument. The couple had made him into a mature believer.

The warning for us is quite clear. Be careful of your judgments. Do not allow the attractiveness of eloquent and smooth talking turn you into rating the ministry of preachers and teachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Everyone in the body of Christ has their role and purpose. You can be certainly interested in what people are saying but the gifts that people had been given by the Holy Spirit should not be rated. We have very little way of knowing how God regards the value of what His Saints are doing. The skills that make people in the world love others and respect others do not line up very well with the values that God loves. After all, if you were there in the wilderness of Judea St. John the Baptist you might not think that he really was the greatest prophet in Old Testament. Jesus told us that about John. So be careful. We do know however that Apollos was not proud and arrogant. He listened, he learned, and he followed God.

Romans 16:3-4

Verse 3. *Greet ...* We finish this Lesson with the “greetings section” of Romans 16. Paul returned to Corinth during his third missionary journey and wrote to the church in Rome about AD 57 (Acts 20:2–3). It may seem unusual that Paul knew so many people by name in the church in Rome, since he had never visited the city (Romans 1:11–13; 16:5–15). However, travel in the Roman Empire was fairly easy during Paul's lifetime. Probably he had met some of these people elsewhere and knew others of them by reputation.

“To” refer to *Priscilla and Aquila as helpers* accorded them both a high level of respect among Paul's associates (Romans 16:21; 2 Corin. 8:23; Philemon 24).

Paul had left them in Ephesus when he moved on to Jerusalem (Acts 18:19). In Ephesus they helped Apollos (Acts 18:24–28). Later they returned to Rome where they had lived previously (Acts 18:2). Later still they returned to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:19). Churches normally met in houses at that time, and one met in theirs (1 Cor. 16:19).

Interestingly, Priscilla is often named before her husband, which was culturally very unusual (Acts 18:18, 26; I Cor. 16:19; II Tim. 4:19). Possibly she was of Roman nobility or the dominant personality of this couple. Paul possibly heard of the strengths and weaknesses of the Roman church from this couple.

Verse 4. *Who have for my life laid down their own necks...* in both Corinth and Ephesus, Paul was in danger. In Corinth, his Jewish opponents hauled him before the proconsul's judgment seat. While Paul himself avoided punishment, the synagogue leader was beaten by the crowd (Acts 18:17).



In Ephesus, Paul encountered a deadly threat in the form of a riot instigated by the silversmiths. Paul was prevented from trying to calm the Ephesian crowd by his 'disciples' (Acts 19:23–30). Perhaps these included Priscilla and Aquila. They might have been involved in Paul's escape from Corinth, at risk to themselves as well. Also possible is some other dangerous situation that occurred during Paul's three years in Ephesus about which no record remains.

...but also, all the churches of the Gentiles... What a sweeping affirmation and thanksgiving! From Paul's letters, we know that *the churches* in both Corinth and Ephesus had Gentile members (1 Corinthians 12:12–14; Ephesians 2:1–14). These churches had reason to be thankful for Priscilla and Aquila not only because they protected Paul but also because they continued to minister to *Gentiles*. As Paul's life was preserved by the couple, so were Gentiles whose eternal lives were secured through their unbiased ministry.

CONCLUSION

We learn many things from studying the ministry of Priscilla and Aquila. We see a married couple who worked and ministered as a team. There was no competition between them, whether they were building tents or building up the people of God. We see a family willing to relocate whenever God called them, supporting themselves in the original bi-vocational ministry. Their obedience to God's will made them cherished companions to Paul. We see a woman and her husband whom Paul considered to be his "helpers," a designation of high praise.

We have an example of a sincere and talented preacher receiving private, corrective teaching from wiser believers. Apollos's teaching had omitted a crucial Christian doctrine. The discreet yet powerful witness of this godly and faithful married couple was the right remedy at the right time. Their investment in Apollos yielded benefits when he moved to Corinth to minister among their friends in that church (See 1 Corinthians 3:6).

Whether single like Paul or part of a couple like Priscilla and Aquila, *all* God's people have responsibilities to one another. We must

"hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering ... [and] consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Hebrews 10:23–24).

We also see an effective pattern of leadership and discipleship. While Paul stayed and worked with Aquila and Priscilla, he was able to disciple them and build up their faith, to the point that they became effective teachers.

In turn, Aquila and Priscilla then took Apollos under their wings and nurtured this gifted man to become an even greater force in the kingdom. Apollos then also strengthened the brethren, using his gifts for the glory of God.

Apollos with all his education and knowledge, remained humble and therefore teachable. The fact that both Aquila and Priscilla taught this man, demonstrates in particular the important role that women have in teaching, young and sometimes misguided minds.



It is to be carefully noted that God is the one who will care for us in all our trials. God cared for Paul and He cared for Priscilla and Aquila. He cared for Apollos and brought him to them for instruction.

We should also bear in mind that every true Christian must be a testimony concerning our faith in Christ who offered Himself as a sacrifice for us. When you think of the difference of many despite many crises in their lives it is a tragedy. You will find that some people are quite jovial, happy- go-lucky, and maybe even love to do good things and help others but they care nothing for the things of God.

But we must remember that nothing is more important than life than the relationship that we have to the Lord Jesus Christ who died for us and gave Himself for those that believe on Him. We do not really know all of those that belong to Christ. So therefore, let us press forward, witness to the love God the Father and do everything that He requires of us.

What spiritual contribution are you making to the lives of others?

