

Pt 54 Romans 16:3-5 Priscilla and Aquila, Helpers in Christ

Rooting Through Romans, a sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Porchlight Baptist Church www.pbcknox.com

Romans 16:3-5

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: 4 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. 5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

This morning, with help from the Lord, we are going to be looking at verses 3-5 of Romans Chapter 16, which is Paul's recommendation of the husband and wife team of Priscilla and Aquila.

The very first time we read about his couple is when Paul goes to Corinth and meets them. We read it in **Acts 18:1-3** After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; 2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. 3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

Right away we see that the husband, **Aquila**, was born in Pontus which was a country in Asia which was near Galatia. Aquila was a Jew who had become a Christian although his name is a Roman name which means "**an eagle**." His Jewish name could have been "**Nesher**," as that is the Jewish name for "**an eagle**."

Aquila is mentioned 6-times in the Bible and each time his wife Priscilla is mentioned. They are never mentioned apart from one another. Interestingly enough, in our King James Bible, of those 6-times, his name is mentioned first 3-times, and his wife's name is mentioned first 3-times. Typically the man's name is mentioned first. Some believe Priscilla is mentioned first because she may have held a higher social position or was more prominent in the Church. But we do not know that for sure because the Bible does say that.

Instances in KJV where Aquila and Priscilla are mentioned

1. **Acts 18:2** And found a certain Jew named **Aquila**, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife **Priscilla**; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.
2. **Acts 18:18** And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him **Priscilla** and **Aquila**; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.
3. **Acts 18:26** And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when **Aquila** and **Priscilla** had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.
4. **Romans 16:3** Greet **Priscilla** and **Aquila** my helpers in Christ Jesus:
5. **1 Corinthians 16:19** The churches of Asia salute you. **Aquila** and **Priscilla** salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.
6. **2 Timothy 4:19** Salute **Prisca** and **Aquila**, and the household of Onesiphorus.

Priscilla, whose name means "**ancient, or primitive**." Not a very flattering name for a woman. She is also referred to as "**Prisca**" in Paul's second letter to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:19 Salute **Prisca** and **Aquila**, and the household of Onesiphorus.

The Bible says that Priscilla and Aquila were **lately come from Italy...** (because that **Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:**) During the reign of the Roman Emperor, Claudius, all the Jews were expelled from Rome because some of the Jews were causing riots and problems in Roman cities.

Although Paul had sat under the feet of Gamaliel and was a Jewish Lawyer, he also learned a trade so that he could provide for himself. That trade was tent making. Paul

worked this trade in places he would visit so he would not be a burden on the Churches that were being established.

Paul met this husband and wife team while he was looking for work in Corinth. It is not clear if Priscilla and Aquila were already Christians at the time Paul first met them or whether they become Christians under Paul's sharing of the Gospel with them. I personally believe they were already Christians because it says that Paul "**found a certain Jew named Aquila**." It sounds to me like Paul sought Aquila out, perhaps because he had heard of the Christian faith of him and his wife.

Either way, they became close friends of Paul and even allowed him to stay in their home. No doubt they spent a lot of time together discussing the Gospel.

One thing is for sure, Priscilla and Aquila had a good understanding of the Gospel and the truths of the Lord Jesus Christ because we read the following.

Acts 18:24-26 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. 26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside and did some discipleship teaching with him so that he had the whole Gospel. When it says "**the way of God**," it is most likely referring to a common phrase that was used in the early teaching of the coming of the Messiah. Those that followed John the Baptist were referred to as those "**in the way**," as well as those that knew and followed Jesus.

Notice that Priscilla and Aquila sees the great potential and value in this man Apollos as a preacher of the Gospel and wants to help him. They didn't go around making fun of him for not knowing the full Gospel. Some people would do that. There are people that will tear a man down because he is ignorant of something that they know, and they will go around making fun of him to other people to try and discredit him or make him look bad.

They saw the value in Apollos and took him aside and helped him, and it paid off.

How do we know it paid off? Look down in the next two verses:

Acts 18:27-28: And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: 28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

Priscilla and Aquila were also Church planters. Seems everywhere they lived they held church services in their home. We see that in our opening text in Paul's greeting to the Romans: **Romans 16:5a** Likewise **greet the church that is in their house...**

Also in Paul's greeting to the Corinthians: **1 Corinthians 16:19** The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, **with the church that is in their house.**

The Bible tells us that they also accompanied Paul to Ephesus (which was where they were when they helped Apollos). No doubt they held church services in their home in Ephesus as well.

Incidentally, when we established our church, Porchlight Baptist, it was founded upon the same principles as Aquila and Priscilla who held services in their home. Of course, we know there were not brick and mortar Christian churches in that day and

they would meet anywhere they could, a Jewish Synagogue, the sides of a river, but especially in the homes of fellow believers.

I think way too many churches have forgotten the roots of the Church and focus too much attention on big buildings and facilities. Some churches go in debt for millions of dollars building huge facilities which they like to call “campuses.” Friends, stop calling the church grounds a “campus.” That’s the “bigism” mentality. To think of all the tithes and offerings that are dumped into huge bank loans and churches constantly worrying about finances.

Speaking of churches, this week I heard about a local church that was holding a Yard Sale on Saturday (yesterday). This is a small church and there are only a handful of people that attend there. My wife and I drove by there yesterday on the way to the grocery store and their parking lot was completely packed with people coming in to try and find a bargain. It was probably the most people they’ve ever had at that church. It was really sad. It goes to show where people’s priorities are though.

But, getting back to our opening text in **Romans 16:3: Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:** There are a lot of things you can do in a church but there is nothing greater than being a “**helper in Christ Jesus.**” To be a helper means that you have to put forth effort. It’s not something you do to get paid for or to receive recognition, if that’s your motive to help then you might as well quit. A true helper does it out of the love in their hearts for the Lord Jesus and His Church.

A helper in Christ Jesus is someone that places an importance on the reason for a church. What is the reason for a church? Well, it can be pretty well summed up by reading **1 Timothy 3:15-16** *But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.* A helper in Christ Jesus desires for the church to be the “**pillar and ground of the truth.**”

If I have said it once, I’ve said it a thousand times, there is no truth outside of the Lord Jesus.

Truth isn’t found in man. **Romans 3:4** says...*let God be true, but every man a liar;* **Titus 1:2** says, “God cannot lie.”

There’s no truth in the government. We are lied to on a daily basis by the government. I don’t believe a single thing that comes out of some politician’s mouth. They are all in it for the money, power, and prestige. They will lie to you to get what they want.

There’s no truth in the world. This world we live in a raging, lying, cesspool. Jesus Himself says in the Gospel of **John 15:18-19** *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

So what does that leave us with? **The Church**, which is the “**pillar and ground of the truth.**” How can the church be such a thing? Because it is built upon the solid foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible says in **Ephesians 5:25-27** *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with*

the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Friends, the Church is the most important institution on the face of this earth because we are an extension of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We are the truth because the founder and head of the Church is Jesus. The world is lost in sin, and they need to know the truth. The Church is the only source for that. Priscilla and Aquila understood the importance of the Church and that is why Paul called them his “**helpers in Christ Jesus.**”

Not only were Priscilla and Aquila great assets to the church, but they were also great assets to Paul Look at verse four of our opening text: **4 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.**

We have no way of knowing the occasion Paul is referring to when Priscilla and Aquila “**laid down their own necks**” for him. He does not give us any other details. We know that Paul was constantly in danger from unbelieving Jews and the Jewish religious hierarchy. He was also imprisoned several times and beaten. Everywhere Paul went there were false accusations thrown at him. Whatever and wherever it happened, something occurred that caused Priscilla and Aquila to risk their own lives for Paul.

Not only was Paul grateful for what they did but so were all the Gentile churches. This is referring to all those churches that Paul had established during his missionary journeys. Paul was the Spiritual leader for these churches. They all looked to him for guidance. They all knew he was the one person they could count on. If something happened to Paul during the early stages of the church, it could have caused untold damages. False teachers abounded in that day and Paul kept them at bay. These churches were filled with former idol worshippers and pagan cultures and lifestyles. Paul was the one to teach them the true ways of Christ and what living a Christian life was about.

One of the greatest examples of this was his letter to the Church of Phillipi: **Philippians 3:12-17**

17 *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*

18 *(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:*

19 *Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)*

20 *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*

21 *Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

If it were not for Paul, many of these early churches would have been like lambs for the slaughter. He wanted the church at Rome to know Priscilla and Aquila were not your average ordinary people – they were helpers in Christ Jesus and protectors of the church.

Would to God that we would all be more like Priscilla and Aquila. You may not be a pastor, preacher, deacon, evangelist, missionary, Sunday school teacher, or hold any kind of position but everyone can be a helper.