

Introduction

Many years ago, I was invited to be a special guest at the Balloon Fiesta in Albuquerque. Our company used the Marriott Hotel, and they had a special working relationship with many of the balloonists. They offered us the opportunity to go up in a hot-air balloon. Chris Roberts, our Administrator, and Karen both took advantage of the opportunity and enjoyed a forty-minute ride. I thanked them for the opportunity, but also added that riding in a hot-air balloon was not in my top ten thousand things that I wanted to do. This morning, we will be looking at Priscilla and Aquila. I have wanted to preach on this couple for at least two decades. I have made mention of them in several messages, but never had the opportunity to focus a message on their lives. While I turned down the balloon ride, I am not turning down this golden opportunity to talk about this outstanding couple. I am excited about this forty-minute ride.

Last week, we looked at Part 2 of Paul's Concluding Remarks. He introduced and commended Phoebe, and then exhorted the saints in Rome to receive and help her with any needs that she might have. Paul's commendation of Phoebe was significant because she was the first and only woman mentioned who served in an official leadership capacity, in the office of deacon. This week we will cover verses three through five, and will be looking at Priscilla and Aquila. Priscilla and Aquila were church planters and part of Paul's apostolic team. Paul's greeting to Prisca and Aquila is significant for two reasons. First, it shows that women could be involved in other ministry besides the office of servant. Second, it dispels the misunderstanding about women being able to teach in the church, including men. Like last week, we will look at their personal information, their ministry, and their reputation.

Paul's Concluding Remarks – Part 3 Paul's Greeting to Prisca and Aquila

1. Personal Information
2. Ministry
3. Reputation

(Rom 16:3-5) "Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, {4} who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; {5} also *greet* the church that is in their house. Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia."

1. **Personal Information** (Rom 16:3-5)

Paul sent his greetings to Prisca and Aquila, his fellow workers in Christ Jesus. Both of them had Latin names. Prisca is short for Priscilla, and it means ancient or venerable. Some scholars say that the name was to bring the blessing of long life. Aquila means an eagle. Even though they had Latin names, they were Jewish. Aquila was a native from Pontus, which was a region by the Black Sea, that is now part of northern Turkey. At some point in his life, Aquila moved to Rome, and lived there until 50 AD, when Claudius, the Roman Emperor, who ruled from AD 41 to AD 54, ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. When ordered to leave, Aquila and Priscilla moved to Corinth, which is where they met Paul. Then, they moved to Ephesus, and then moved back to Rome around 56 AD, which is where they were when Paul wrote this letter to the Romans.

(Rom 16:3) "Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,"

(Acts 18:1-2) “After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. {2} And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them,”

Paul not only knew this couple, but he was joined together with them in ministry. The word for fellow workers is *sunergos*, a combination of *sun*, to join together, and *ergon*, to work. Priscilla and Aquila joined or became yoked together with Paul to work in his apostolic ministry. They joined one another in Corinth while living and working together. Luke recorded that Paul stayed with them, because they were of the same trade, tent-making. Paul stayed in Corinth for eighteen months teaching the word of God. Paul probably stayed with Aquila and Priscilla the entire eighteen months and became very close friends. Paul was probably the one that led them to Christ, and disciplined them.

(Acts 18:3, 11) “and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers....{11} And he settled *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”

Paul greeted Prisca and Aquila, his fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks to save Paul's life. Paul does not give a specific incident or time that this happened, but it might have happened while they were in Corinth. As we pick up the text in Acts 18, the Jews resisted and blasphemed Paul. He then focused his ministry in Corinth to the Gentiles. Many people turned to the Lord in Corinth, despite the hostility of the Jews. In Acts 18:9, the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.” Paul was staying with Prisca and Aquila, and it is likely that they risked their own lives by keeping him in their own home.

(Rom 16:4a) “who for my life risked their own necks...”

(Acts 18:6-10) “But when they (*the Jews in Corinth*) resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, ‘Your blood *be* on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’...{9} And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid *any longer*, but go on speaking and do not be silent; {10} for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.”

Jesus said that if anyone wished to come after Him, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow Him. Prisca and Aquila were willing to take up their crosses to save Paul's life. By risking their own life for Paul, they demonstrated to God and to the world that they were true followers of Jesus.

(Matt 16:24) “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.’”

Jesus also said, “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” Prisca and Aquila demonstrated the greatest love possible by risking their own lives to save Paul. The relationship that Paul had with Prisca and Aquila was very special. Love is the perfect bond of unity, so the bond between Paul, and Prisca and Aquila was very strong.

(John 15:13) “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”

(Col 3:14) “Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”

2. **Ministry** (Rom 16:3-5)

Paul said that Prisca and Aquila were fellow workers in the ministry. They were joined with him in planting and establishing churches. In our passage, Paul said to greet the church that is in their house. I believe that they planted this church in Rome. They had lived in Rome before being ordered to leave in 50 AD, and now they had moved back and planted a church. They had helped Paul plant the church in Corinth, and then they planted a church in Ephesus, and now they are planting a church in Rome. Priscilla and Aquila were part of Paul's team and they planted and established churches. To successfully plant churches, you need a core group or team. Priscilla and Aquila were fellow workers, and part of Paul's team. Paul also greets Epaenetus, who he refers to as, “my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.” Epaenetus is most likely part of the team that is planting the church in Rome with Aquila and Priscilla.

(Rom 16:5) “also *greet* the church that is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.”

Let's look at a timeline of their ministry for a minute. In 50 AD they moved to Corinth and met Paul. He stayed with them and they planted a church in Corinth. In 51-52 AD, Paul went to Jerusalem. Priscilla and Aquila accompanied him to Ephesus, and stayed there to help plant and establish a church in Ephesus while Paul went on to Jerusalem. In 56 AD, Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthian church, and sent greetings from Prisca and Aquila and the church that was in their house in Ephesus.

(1 Cor 16:19) “The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.”

Claudius died in 54 AD and the Jews were free to move back to Rome. So, shortly after Paul's letter to the Corinthians in 56 AD, they moved back to Rome, and planted another church in their home. The letter to the Romans was written around 56-57 AD, and they had already moved to Rome and started a church in their house. Prisca and Aquila were church planters, who planted and established churches wherever they went. Notice that these churches held their services in their house. Home churches keep the expenses down, and provide a much more intimate atmosphere for fellowship and building relationally.

Priscilla and Aquila were more than just pastors of a local church; they did apostolic ministry. After planting a church in Rome, they went back to Ephesus. In Paul's second letter to Timothy, written in 67 AD, he sent his greetings to Priscilla and Aquila. Timothy was in Ephesus, so they were also in Ephesus. In the same sentence, Paul greeted the household of Onesiphorus. It is likely that Onesiphorus was leading a church in his home, and they were staying with him.

(2 Tim 4:19) “Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.”

One of the things that I admire about Priscilla and Aquila is the way they worked together as a husband/wife team. Ministry can be tough on marriages. In one survey conducted by Schaeffer Institute, they found that seventy-seven percent (77%) of pastors said that they did not have a good marriage. There are a lot of expectations placed on pastors, and the majority of them are under financial stress. Many wives feel they take a back seat to the church, and resent it. Aquila and Priscilla are a great example for us to learn from.

How did Aquila and Priscilla keep their marriage strong in ministry? First, they did everything together. They made tents and worked together. They planted churches together. They traveled together. Not every wife of a pastor feels called to ministry, and do not want to share ministry with their husbands. Many of them do not want their husbands in the ministry.

Many times this can be a result and symptom of the pressure, spotlight, and neglect. Schaeffer also found that pastors lacked close friendships. Aquila and Priscilla were part of Paul's team and had lots of friendships with others.

Another thing that Aquila did to help their marriage is to encourage and support Priscilla's ministry. She was an excellent teacher, who was very knowledgeable. Some scholars attribute the book of Hebrews to her, although I have not seen clear evidence of this. (Some older commentaries attribute it to Paul.) Priscilla was free to minister in her giftings and was not restrained in any way, and taught under the covering of her husband. The fact that she is mentioned first in the majority of the references tell us that she played a prominent ministry role, something that Aquila must have encourage and blessed. They are a great example for all of us.

- (Acts 18:2) “And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them,”
- (Acts 18:18) “Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.”
- (Acts 18:26) “and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”
- (Rom 16:3) “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,”
- (1 Cor 16:19) “The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.”
- (2 Tim 4:19) “Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.”

In my third church plant, I did not do a good job of including Karen in what I was doing. In my zeal to train leaders, I did not include her enough in the planning. We were not working together as a team to plant the church, and our marriage suffered. I repented of this and have made sure that Karen and I operate as a team. Aquila and Priscilla worked as a team, and are a great model to those in ministry. We get the picture that these two were inseparable and had an incredibly strong marriage.

One example of their being mentioned together in a ministry setting is in Acts 18, when Priscilla and Aquila brought correction to Apollos. Her name is mentioned first, and most scholars believe she is mentioned first because she was the one that taught Apollos. Aquila's name is mentioned with her name, meaning that he was right there, and she was operating under the covering and authority of her husband. In Acts 18:24, we find that Apollos was an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord and he was fervent in spirit. He came to Ephesus, where Priscilla and Aquila were living, and he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

(Acts 18:24-26) “Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. {25} This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; {26} and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”

There are several things that I want to point out. First, Priscilla and Aquila knew the word extremely well. Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures, but they explained the way of God more accurately. They knew the word.

Second, they had very good discernment. When they heard what was being taught, they recognized that some things were not quite right. In their leadership role, they were able to quickly pick up on things that were not correct, and then teach it correctly. They were mature believers who were not going to be led astray by incorrect doctrine.

(Eph 4:14) “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;”

Third, they were bold and confident and could bring correction to Apollos. He was well trained, mighty in the Scriptures, and was speaking out boldly. That did not deter them; they approached him and taught him the way of God more accurately. Many people would be intimidated to approach someone like Apollos, but they were undeterred and spoke to him.

Fourth, they were wise about how they brought instruction to Apollos. Solomon said, “The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable.” They were able to share with Apollos in such a way that he accepted what they had to share. They took Apollos aside so that it was done privately. They did not embarrass or shame Apollos. In their correction, they protected, covered, equipped and strengthened Apollos’ ministry. Aquila and Priscilla used wisdom and discretion in the way they took Apollos aside.

(Pr 15:2) “The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly.”

It is important to also mention Apollos. This example speaks highly of Apollos, who was humble and very teachable. He was not offended, and continued to help others and speak powerfully. It does not matter how mature we are in the Lord, and how much we know, we can learn from others. We need to have a humble and teachable spirit, which Apollos had.

(Acts 18:27-28) “And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, {28} for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.”

I have been a Christian for forty-eight years. Four years after becoming a Christian the Lord gave me a life verse. It is Ezra 7:10. “Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.” I set my heart on studying the law of the Lord, practicing what I studied, and teaching God’s word to others. I call it the three P’s: Prepare, Practice, and Preach. So, for forty-four years I have been diligently studying God’s

word. I also maintain a healthy reading program. For many years I have read through the Bible at least once every year. My objective is to have a better overall grasp of Scripture. Having said all of that, I stand before you today and tell you that I have many gaps in my knowledge of Scripture. I am grateful that God has put some Priscillas and Aquilas in my life who have helped fill in some of those gaps, and helped me to have a more accurate understanding of the Scriptures. We all need wise mentors to pour into our lives.

(Ezra 7:10) “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.”

Some people say that women are not to ever instruct or exercise authority over a man. I think that is a misunderstanding of Scripture. In 1 Timothy 2, Paul says that a woman should not teach and usurp authority over man. The Greek word is *authenteo*, which means to usurp authority. A person who is not under proper authority is a dangerous person. We will not allow men or women who are not properly submitted to authority to minister in our church. Priscilla was under her husband's authority. He was right there with her, backing her up, but she is mentioned first because she was most likely doing the instructing. Apollos was humble and he received instruction from a very anointed woman of God.

(1 Ti 2:11–13) “A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. {12} But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. {13} For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.”

A few years ago, I put together the men's breakfast, and I asked a pastor from another church in town to come speak to our men. I told the man that we would have breakfast from 7:30 to 8:00. I would give announcements, and have a man lead two songs of worship. I would introduce him at 8:15, and he would have 45 minutes to share his message. I told him to aim for thirty-five minutes so that if there were questions or prayer afterwards, we would have time for it. The man accepted my invitation and came to speak. He did not finish at 9:00 as directed. He made a comment about how people in American churches are too caught up with time, and that he was going to take all the time he needed. He shared for 1 hour and 40 minutes, and finished at 10:00. While he was speaking, I could have interrupted him and stopped the message. I elected not to dishonor him publicly, and to allow him to finish. Afterwards, I shared with the man that the message had some good content, but that I could not allow him to speak again to our men. He did not submit to the conditions that I put before him. I had made a commitment to let the men out by 9:00 and his failure to submit caused us to not be men of our word that day. He usurped authority to speak past 9:00. He *authenteo* or took it upon himself that it was okay to keep on trucking. He was wrong. I won't allow it. I won't allow it for a man, and I won't allow it for a woman either.

Notice how Paul greets Prisca and Aquila; he mentions her name first. Normally, someone would say, “Greet Aquila and Priscilla,” or “Greet Bill and Karen.” Usually, the husband is introduced before the wife, and that is especially true in Greek. There are five verses where Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned together, and in four of those five verses, Priscilla is mentioned first. The one exception is in 1 Corinthians 16:19, where Paul wrote, “The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartedly in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.” There are several possible reasons for this. One possibility is that Priscilla had a strong teaching ministry, and did much of the teaching. In the passage where Priscilla and Aquila taught Apollos, I believe that Priscilla was giving the correction and instruction to him, which is why she was mentioned first.

(Rom 16:3) “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,”

(1 Cor 16:19) “The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.”

3. Reputation

Paul gave thanks for Prisca and Aquila, but he is not alone. Notice in verse four that all of the churches of the Gentiles gave thanks for Prisca and Aquila. Their heroic actions to protect Paul's life were greatly appreciated by all the churches and Gentiles that Paul's ministry was focused on. Priscilla and Aquila had a great reputation among all the churches of the Gentiles. Their love and faithful service had endeared them to all the churches they had ministered in.

(Rom 16:3-5) “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, {4} who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; {5} also *greet* the church that is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.”

Our reputations are extremely important. In order to qualify as a leader in the church, we must have a good reputation within the church, and also to outsiders. Our ministry will not be very effective unless we have a good reputation. In Proverbs we learn that “a good name is to be more desired than great wealth.” Prisca and Aquila maintained a good name throughout their ministry in every place they went. All the churches sent their greetings to this precious couple who were loved and respected by all.

(Pr 22:1) “A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, favor is better than silver and gold.”

In regard to their reputation, I want to highlight what Paul did. He wrote about how they had risked their life for him. He built them up publicly. We need to look for ways to build up or edify others, something Paul consistently did in his ministry.

Conclusion and Applications

Our passage today is an example of another woman in ministry. She helped plant churches. She had an amazing grasp of Scripture. She was able to speak into other people and help them grow in their knowledge and ministry. She was a courageous minister of the gospel.

Our passage is also a glimpse of a great marriage of two people very involved in ministry. Aquila and Priscilla were always mentioned together, and did things together. I identify with Aquila and Paul, who both wanted people to fulfill the ministry God called and gifted them to do. I believe Priscilla was able to be all that she was because her husband encouraged and supported her.

Our passage also gives us a glimpse of two of the other members of Paul's team. Paul was a great team leader and developer. Paul looked for faithful people who he could pour himself into. While in Corinth, he poured himself into Priscilla and Aquila. Our look at their lives today shows the effectiveness and fruitfulness of Paul's investment in their lives. Jesus commanded us to go and make disciples, which is what Paul did. You and I need to be looking and praying about who we are to invest our lives in, and then do it.

Prayer

Father God, thank You for the example of Aquila and Priscilla. I pray that in our church you will raise up husband and wife teams who work well together. I pray for strong marriages. I pray for mature leaders who can recognize doctrine that needs to be made more accurate, and can wisely speak into the lives of others. I pray for people in our church who have a sacrificial love that is willing to risk their lives for the sake of others. Lord, as we plant a church in our home, may You bless it like you did for Priscilla and Aquila. Lord, help us to learn and glean from this great example that You have given us. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Q & A

- What do you most appreciate about Priscilla's ministry?
- Why do you think that Luke mentions Priscilla first in all but one of the references?
- What does it take for a husband and wife to work together? Many couples say that they cannot work together, but this couple worked and ministered together.
- What was it in Aquila's life and calling that made it easy for him to allow Priscilla to have a prominent ministry, while he appeared to be more behind the scenes?
- How easy or difficult would it be for you to bring correction to a modern-day Apollos? What are the things that might hinder you from doing this? What are the things that would compel you to do it?
- How easy or difficult is it to be part of three or four church plants in a seven-year period? What are the relational challenges in doing this?

Introduction (Rom 16:3-5)

1. **Personal Information** (Rom 16:3-5, Acts 18:1-11, Matt 16:24, John 15:13, Col 3:14)
2. **Ministry** (Rom 16:3-5, 1 Cor 16:19, 2 Tim 4:19, Acts 18:24-28, Eph 4:14, Pr 15:2, Ez 7:10, 1 Tim 2:11-13, 1 Cor 16:19)
3. **Reputation** (Rom 16:3-5, Pr 22:1)

Conclusion and Applications