

The Parish of Wellow

Aquila and Priscilla the Tentmakers - Acts 18:1-4 & 18-26 Passage, Sermon Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these sermon notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during the next few weeks to consider the questions below.

1. Sermon Passage - Acts 18:1-4 & 18-26

1 After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, 3 and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. 4 Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

18 Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken. 19 They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. 21 But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus. 22 When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch. 23 After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. 24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervour and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

2. Sermon Notes

2.1 Aquila and Priscilla a brief Overview

Strengths and accomplishments

- Outstanding husband/wife team who ministered in the early church
- Supported themselves by tentmaking while serving Christ
- Close friends of the Apostle Paul and vital part of his missionary team
- Explained to Apollos the full message of Christ

Lessons from their lives

- Couples can have an effect ministry together
- The home is a valuable tool for evangelism
- Every believer needs to be well educated in the faith, whatever his or her role in the Church.

Vital Statistics

- Where: Originally from Rome, moved to Corinth, then Ephesus
- Occupation: Tentmakers
- Contemporaries: Emperor Claudius, Paul, Timothy, Apollos.

2.2 Aquila and Priscilla are a vital part of Paul's missionary team because:

- I) They work as a team
- II) They sacrifice as a team
- III) They travel as a team

2.3 They work as a team

- It is clear from the seven mentions of Aquila and Priscilla in the Bible that they are prepared to work as a team together: (Their story is told in Acts 18. They also mentioned in Romans 16:3-5, 1 Corinthians 16:19 and 2 Timothy 4:19.)
- Sometimes Paul or Luke who wrote Acts refers to them as Aquila and Priscilla and sometimes Paul or Luke refers to them as Priscilla and Aquila. Interestingly of the seven mentions of this couple, Aquila's name comes before Priscilla's twice, but Priscilla's name precedes Aquila's five times.
- Some commentators have speculated that Priscilla was the more important of the two and if that was the case then Aquila demonstrates some excellent team playing skills that we can all learn.

- In Aquila's day Jewish women certainly did not have the cultural status that women do today and yet he is evidently happy to encourage and support Priscilla's gifts and ministry.
- For them seeing God's word being spread and people's lives being changed was far more important than the political correctness of the day.
- In our marriages do we support each other and work as a team? Do we encourage each other to develop and grow our individual skills and gifts? Aquila and Priscilla work brilliantly as a team because they are willing to support and develops each other's skills and talents.

2.4 They sacrifice as a team

- The first thing that they were prepared to sacrifice for the sake of the gospel was having Paul stay with them. Now I guess that most of us can put up with visitors for a few days but Aquila and Priscilla had Paul to stay according to chapter 18 verse 11 for a year and a half.
- Paul effectively becomes a member of their family.
- Having Paul around for that length of time must have put stress on their marriage and yet we get no hint of this in the text.
- Aquila and Priscilla are such a strong team that they are able to offer Paul a stable home environment from which he is able to do ministry.
- What a blessing to Paul, Aquila and Priscilla must have been. But their home was also something else.
- Paul was kicked out of the local synagogue in Corinth and thus the house of Aquila and Priscilla became the meeting place for the Corinthian Church.
- What a home that must have been and what fantastic hosts Priscilla and Aquila were.
- Priscilla and Aquila were willing to sacrifice their home for the greater good of the gospel.
- What about our homes? Are we willing to use them in order to spread the good news of the Kingdom?

2.5 They travel as a team

- Having spent a year a half with Paul hosting the early Corinthian Church it is evident that Aquila and Priscilla have grown spiritually.
- It is thus not surprising to see that they leave Corinth with Paul and join him on the return leg of his second missionary journey back to Antioch via Ephesus and Caesarea.
- They then join Paul on his third missionary journey back to Ephesus, verse 23, where again they are hosts of the local Ephesian church. At the end of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians written from Ephesus we read chapter 16 verse 9 'Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.'
- Here they are again doing what they do best: giving Paul a place to preach and teach the good news of the gospel from.
- They clearly have strong pastoral gifts as well and delight in seeing their fellow Christians grow and develop. Whilst hosting the church in Ephesus they take under their wing a Jew called Apollos Acts 18:24.
- Apollos clearly only knows about Jesus' early ministry and not about his crucifixion and resurrection. Nor does he know about the coming of the Holy Spirit. In their quiet pastoral way Priscilla and Aquila explain to Apollos what Jesus rather than John the Baptist has done for him.
- They clearly teach Apollos well because he and they then separate from Paul leave Ephesus and go back to Corinth, where yet again Aquila and Priscilla host the Corinthian Church with Apollos doing the leading and teaching.
- We finally catch up with these two in Rome. They have traveled far, they have worked well as a team and have sacrificed much. That is why Paul speaks so highly of this couple in his letter to the Romans chapter 16 verses 3-4: 'Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.' What a fabulous summary of Aquila and Priscilla's work. What a wonderful example these two are to us all.

3. Questions to consider back at home

3.1 What gifts do Priscilla and Aquila have and how do they exercise these gifts? What can we learn from them?

3.2 In what ways can we use our homes for the Lord?

3.3 As you look around the church today are there modern equivalents of 'Apollos'? What lessons do we learn from Aquila and Priscilla about handling fellow Christians who do not seem to understand or know the whole truth?

3.4 What sense do you get from the text about how Aquila and Priscilla balance their work as tentmakers and their ministry? How would you describe the balance of work, ministry and leisure in your own life?

3.5 A friend of yours explains that she met someone the other day who said that the members of her church now met in peoples homes during the week to celebrate Holy Communion and were planning on selling their church building. She thought that this was most odd and wondered how this new phenomenon could be called church. Surely the church building is the most important part of any church she argues. What would Priscilla and Aquila say? What would Paul say? What is your opinion? How would you respond to your friend?

If you would like to discuss these questions further please feel free to call me on 01761 432293

Matthew Street 21st August 2005