

Priscilla and Aquila: “My Fellow Workers in Christ”

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple Internet Sources)

Introduction:

- A. They are mentioned six times in four different books of the New Testament.
 - 1. They are always named as a couple and never individually.
 - 2. Of those six references, Priscilla's name is mentioned first three times
 - 3. Acts 18:1-3, 18, 24-27; Rom. 16:3-5; 1Cor. 16:19; 2Tim. 4:19
- B. Who was Priscilla?
 - 1. Luke indicates Priscilla's is certainly not Aquila's property, as was customary in Greco-Roman society, but rather his partner in marriage and the work of the Lord.
 - 2. The Church, built by Jesus, had a radical view of the status of women. He emphasized that women and men are both made in the image of God, and with the exception of roles in the home and church, they are equal in God's view.
 - 3. Priscilla was a woman of Jewish heritage believed to be a Roman by birth (she has a distinctly Roman noble name) and one of the earliest known converts who lived in Rome. Her name is a Roman diminutive for Prisca, her formal name. She is the only Priscilla in the Bible.
- C. Who was Aquila?
 - 1. He was originally from Pontus and was a Jewish Christian.
 - 2. Tradition reports that Aquila died as a martyr, along with Priscilla
- D. Priscilla and Aquila were tentmakers, as was Paul.
 - 1. They had been among the Jews expelled from Rome by the Roman Emperor Claudius in the year 49 as reported by Suetonius. They ended up in Corinth. Paul lived with Priscilla and Aquila for 18 months.
 - 2. The couple started to accompany Paul when he proceeded to Syria, but stopped at Ephesus.
 - 3. They were among the earliest known missionaries. In Acts 18:24-28, Luke reports the couple explaining Jesus' baptism to Apollos. This passage is often perceived to be in conflict with Paul's explicit forbidding of female preachers - 1Tim. 2:12
 - 4. I have heard my own brethren add and subtract from the text to make it say that only Aquila did any teaching. Keep it in context; Paul was forbidding public teaching, not private Bible studies
 - 5. In 1Corinthians 16:19, Paul passes on the greetings of Priscilla and Aquila to their friends in Corinth, indicating that the couple was in his company. This happened before 54, when Claudius died and the expulsion of the Jews from Rome was lifted.
 - 6. In Romans 16:3-4, written in 56 or 57, Paul sends his greetings to Priscilla and Aquila and declared that both of them "risked their necks" to save his life.

I. THEY WERE A FAMILY OF FAITH

- A. From Distinction - Acts 18:1-3

1. Prisca was the name of a distinguished Roman family at that time. It may be that Aquila moved to Rome, met and married a Roman Jewess of some social standing.
 2. She would have to stand up for Judaism among pagan Romans, and then for Christ among unbelieving Jews
- B. Facing Difficulties - verse 2
1. Claudius, the Roman Emperor, sought to reinstitute interest in the old Roman religions. As a result, he issued a command that all Jews were to be expelled from Rome.
 2. May have met Paul in a synagogue or marketplace

II. THEY WERE A FAMILY OF DUTY

- A. A duty to God's Work - Rom. 16:3
1. Paul isn't talking about making tents, but about the work of the Lord.
 2. They uprooted again to travel with Paul for a time - Acts 18:18-19
 3. There is not a single word about contention between them
 - a. Paul had to confront Peter face to face - Gal. 2:11
 - b. He and Barnabas had to part company - Acts 15:39
 - c. He refused to allow John Mark to travel with Him - Acts 15:38
 - d. He rebuked his helpers Euodias and Syntyche over their disagreements - Phil. 4:2.
 - e. He said fellow preacher Demas had forsaken him - 2Tim. 4:10
 - f. We do not know all of the reasons behind these events, but it is safe to say that Paul may have been hard to work with.
 4. Priscilla and Aquila managed to work well with him.
- B. A duty to God's Word - Acts 18:24-28
1. They knew the truth; Apollos did not; it was their duty to teach him
 2. As they worked the Paul, they learned much more about the deep things of God than many others. But they did not keep these things to themselves - John 7:37-38
 3. They allowed Apollos his dignity by taking him aside, rather than gloating or mocking over him. They did not publically expose or humiliate him - Psalm 105:15
- C. A duty as God's Witnesses - Rom. 16:4
1. They were willing to lay down their own lives for the Man of God so that he could finish his course.
 2. A witness does not keep his testimony to himself
- D. A duty toward God's Worship - Rom. 16:5
1. Worship is not about theatricality, ornate buildings, and large crowds. Worship is about God's people gathering to worship God in fellowship with each other.
 2. All we need for true worship is what we have already been given in the Lord Jesus. Whether we are on carpet or sawdust, padded pews or homemade benches, whether we light with fluorescent or kerosene, what really matters is that we worship in spirit and truth - John 4:24.

Conclusion:

A. Many speak of preachers who had a profound influence on them. Here is a case where a family had a profound influence on a preacher.

1. When Paul was about to be put to death writing his final letter, he makes a special effort to greet Aquila and Priscilla - 2Tim. 4:19
2. Can greater tribute be made for the Christian faith and lives of a family?