

Text: Ac 18.19, 26-27

Proposition: Aquila and Priscilla provide an example of the best use of a Christian life.

After our hiatus to think about the Christian and Government, we return to the book of Acts. We haven't said everything that needs to be said about the Christian and Government, but we will leave it for now. I am working on writing up more material on that subject and will share it with you later.

Now, let's return to Acts.

Paul's ministry in Corinth lasted a year and a half, roughly. You will recall his new co-workers: Aquila and Priscilla. They are actually the focus of our message today.

Our subject, centered on these two, is church planting. As we follow the few details of their life as recorded in the New Testament, I want you to think about what kind of people they were and what they were doing with their lives.

Let's read this last section of Acts 18.

Acts 18.19-28

You will notice several interesting threads here and the introduction of a new individual, Apollos. We will get to him a bit later.

The whole next chapter deals with Ephesus. Paul spent a lot of time there, it was a very strategic place.

As we begin the story, however, I want to remind you of another passage in Acts:

Ac 16.6 ¶ They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;

This is just after Paul and Silas picked up Timothy in Lystra on the Second Missionary Journey. It is probably about two years before our current passage in Acts 18.

Notice that the Holy Spirit forbade their entrance to Asia ... Ephesus is Asia, it's the chief city of the Roman province of Asia. God's prohibition wasn't permanent, but temporary.

God's plan was for Paul to go first to

- Troas, to meet and add Luke to his team
- Philippi

- Thessalonica
- Berea
- Athens
- Corinth

And it is in Corinth that Aquila and Priscilla come into the ministry of Paul — and remember, they were there because Claudius ejected the Jews from Rome.

Yet again, we see the hand of God, the work of Providence, which ought to encourage our own work for God.

As we look to the thread of Aquila and Priscilla in the text, I want you to think about how they lived their life.

- We find them six times in the New Testament, always together.
- They became closely connected with Paul and his mission.
- We have just enough detail to discern their unusual devotion to the Lord while carrying on a “secular” life of business.

As we think of them, they become a model of Christian lives lived for the glory of God. They are an *example* to us.

Proposition: Aquila and Priscilla provide an example of the best use of a Christian life.

I. The biography of Aquila and Priscilla

A. Before they met Paul, they lived in Rome

Ac 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,

1. We have no record of their conversion
2. They became believers, it seems, before they met Paul
3. They left Rome when Claudius expelled the Jews

B. When they met Paul, they went into business together

Ac 18.3 and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.

1. Paul was a tent-maker, they were tent-makers

2. They joined into work together as Paul waited for Silas and Timothy

C. At the end of Paul's ministry in Corinth, they accompany him to Ephesus

Ac 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.

1. We will talk about Paul and his vow next time

2. Cenchrea is the harbour on the Aegean side of Corinth

3. Aquila and Priscilla accompany him to Ephesus, and stay, as our text says

Ac 18.19 They came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

D. While in Ephesus, the Lord uses them to disciple Apollos

Ac 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.

1. In the text, Paul spoke in the synagogue, and left for Jerusalem with an invitation to return

2. Priscilla and Aquila continued to attend the synagogue, for the time being

3. This is the last mention of them in the book of Acts

E. Next reference, 1 Corinthians 16.19

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.

1. Paul is writing 1 Corinthians from Ephesus

2. We will see in Acts 19 that the usual separation from the synagogue occurred three months after Paul returned to Ephesus

3. By the time Paul writes, Aquila and Priscilla host the Ephesian church in their own home (this speaks of their prosperity and generosity)

F. Next reference, Romans 16.3

Rm 16.3 ¶ Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,

1. Paul writes Romans from Corinth, probably six months to a year after 1 Corinthians
2. Prisca and Aquila are now in Rome, their original location, involved with the believers in Rome

G. Last reference, 2 Tim 4.19

2 Tim 4.19 ¶ Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.

1. Paul is in his last imprisonment in Rome, writing to Timothy in Ephesus, 8 or 9 yrs from writing Romans
2. Where are Aquila and Priscilla now? In Ephesus again

Key points:

- Long term relationship... AD 49 (decree of Claudius) to about AD 63 or so, when 2 Tim written
- Long term faithfulness to the work of God
- Continuing business activity throughout

In other words, they are dedicated “lay people”

II. The beginning of the church in Ephesus

A. Ephesus a logical place for establishing a regional ministry

1. Most populous city in Asia, commercial and political hub of province
2. Ancient city, inhabited prior to 1000 BC, in ancient days the center of Anatolian mother goddess worship
3. Conquered by Greeks (1044 BC), transformed cult to Gk goddess Artemis
4. Subsequently overrun by various empires (at least 5) before coming under the sway of Rome, goddess worship persisted
5. The temple to Artemis considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world

6. Archaeologists, since 1813, unearthed ruins of temple, a stadium built by Nero, and the theater (capacity 24,000)
7. Located at the end of a major highway to the rich eastern trade routes, had a natural harbour at the mouth of the Cayster River
8. Harbour continually filled with silt from river, requiring dredging, but even in Paul's day the city was a few miles up the river
9. The "seven churches" of Revelation are in a circle around Ephesus, it is the "hub" that links them together

"In fact, no better site could have been picked for the evangelization of all of Asia Minor than Ephesus. The seven churches of Rev 2–3 may well have owed their origin to Paul's Ephesian ministry."¹

B. A functioning church existed before Paul returned to Ephesus

1. Little known fact! See 18.27

Ac 18.25-27 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.²⁷ 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,

- a. Apollos ministers in Ephesus
- b. Apollos disciplined by Aquila and Priscilla
- c. Apollos desires to serve in Corinth
- d. **The brethren**
 - 1) Encourage him

¹ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 394–95.

2) Write a letter of introduction for him

Who are these brethren?

2. The brethren of Acts 18.27 are the church body in Ephesus
 - a. Not Aquila and Priscilla
 - b. A body of converts, worshipping Jesus, taking on the actions of a church
 - c. Remember, Paul only spoke once in Ephesus
3. What makes the difference?
 - a. Aquila and Priscilla left behind
 - b. Aquila and Priscilla built up others through discipleship
 - c. No doubt they were evangelizing as well, along with Apollos and others

All of this brings me to the point of this message

III. The disposition of a Christian life

A. How should a Christian dispose of his life?

1. First, one must *be* a Christian
 - a. Understand you a sinner who cannot save yourself
 - b. See Jesus as your only saviour from sin
 - c. Call on him to save you and give you eternal life
2. But then what?
 - a. “Ok, I’m good, now I get to make as much money as I can before I die, then go to heaven.” — Is that it?
 - b. You could substitute any other pursuit — people are motivated by more than money, believe it or not!

B. How did Aquila and Priscilla dispose of their life?

1. They continued in their business
 - a. They have expenses
 - b. They likely have a family and responsibilities
 - c. But...

2. They are active in the work of the Lord

- a. In Rome, seems like they were active before expulsion
- b. In Corinth, they join up with Paul
- c. In Ephesus, they stay to lead, disciple, evangelize, endorse, eventually host the church itself in their home
- d. Paul commends them in Romans as his “fellow-workers”
- e. Paul makes sure to greet them in his last letter, 2 Timothy

By the way, perhaps part of God’s reason for Paul not going to Ephesus to start with was to bring this particular couple along into the ministry.

C. How are you disposing your life?

1. You have expenses, yes, and it is right that you work to meet them
2. Your life, though, should belong to the Lord
 - a. You can encourage others to believe
 - b. You can help others to grow

You may not be called to be “church planters” as such, but you are called to think about others besides, or rather, more than yourself.

Conclusion:

Proposition: Aquila and Priscilla provide an example of the best use of a Christian life.

How are you using your Christian life?

Within the scope of your relationships, how can you further the work of God where you are?