

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon Title: The Impact of Aquila and Priscilla, Acts 18:1-26

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INRODUCTION: The Apostle Paul was in Athens, Greece, where he was distressed by the number of idols he saw. He began preaching about Jesus and the Resurrection. And, people asked, “Who is the babbling man?” Paul pointed out the marker, which was inscribed “to the unknown God,” and he said he was telling them about the God they did not know. Some of them sneered at him, and others believed.

OVERVIEW: My three points in this message are:

1. God used frustrating circumstances to bring people together.
2. For Aquila and Priscilla, tent-making became secondary, and ministry became primary.
3. Aquila and Priscilla were daring for the Gospel.

First, GOD USED FRUSTRATING CIRCUMSTANCES TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 18:1-4 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 Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them,* ³*and because he was a tent maker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.* ⁴*Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.*

EXPLANATION: This seems like a rather uneventful meeting, but this was the beginning of a great relationship, which would intersect with Paul’s ministry numerous times.

I want to point out several things in these four scriptures. Why Paul left Athens and went to Corinth, we do not know exactly, but we have several clues which give us ideas. Corinth was about fifty miles east of Athens and was the largest city east of Athens...thus Corinth was a logical stopping point for a traveler. Corinth was a city with lots of traffic, and it was a port city as well.

Not only was Corinth a logical stopping point for travelers, but it was also a place where Aquila and Priscilla had the cottage industry of tent-making. Since Paul was a tent-maker also, they worked together. The scripture says, “*He stayed and worked with them.*” What the financial arrangements were, we do not know, but what we do know is that this interesting couple allowed Paul to join them in their work.

From this scripture, we learn these two had relocated from Italy to Greece because Jews had been expelled from Rome by Claudius. This relocation resulted in completely starting over as immigrants in a new land. They took their trade with them. So, what we have here is a couple banished by circumstance, meeting the Apostle Paul by circumstance, sharing a common bond of vocation. When Aquila and Priscilla left their homeland, I am sure they were sad and wondered about their future. Where will we live? How will we make a living? Will the people accept us? Will we learn the new language? I am sure they were frustrated. When Paul left Athens, I am sure he was frustrated. Was I successful in my preaching? Will people remember the Gospel after I leave? What about those who scoffed at the Gospel? Will the new believers remain faithful?

This is an aside, but did you know the term tent-making is used today to describe people in the ministry who have a means of income outside of the Church? This is where the term comes from. Paul was a tent-maker, and several times in scripture we read of him working a job so as not to be a financial burden to the people he served. While he is in Corinth, we learn his trade was making tents during the week, and on the Sabbath, he preached.

ILLUSTRATION: A few years ago, I lost my wallet and searched the house looking for it. I went to the driver’s license place, and it took nearly all day for me to get another license. While there, a woman had a crying baby. This baby was miserable. After quite some time of listening to the baby cry and watching the

mother wrestle, I asked if I could hold the baby. The baby calmed down while I was the babysitter. I began having a conversation with the mother about spiritual things. The mom remarked it was nice having a break from the baby. Then someone called me to the counter to get my new license. And, when I got home, my wallet was right on the end table in the living room where I left it. It struck me God used my frustrating circumstances to bring me in contact with a mom who needed a break.

APPLICATION: God used frustrating circumstances to bring people together who shared a common vocation. Do you have frustrating circumstances in your life which are outside of your control? And, if so, are you looking for God's will in them? Are you considering the fact God is bringing you in contact with new people who need a special touch?

Second, FOR AQUILA PRISCILLA, TENT-MAKING BECAME SECONDARY, AND MINISTRY BECAME PRIMARY.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 18:18-19 ¹⁸ *Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchreae 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.*

EXPLANATION: After spending a long time with Paul, Aquila and Priscilla caught a new vision for their lives together as a couple. At some point prior to this, they had become believers, probably due to Paul's persuasion. When Paul decided it was time to leave Corinth, he took these two with him. They had already left everything once, so they knew how to leave everything behind. He preached in Ephesus and then left them behind in Ephesus to spread the Gospel while he went elsewhere to spread the Gospel.

After they moved, we don't hear any more about tent-making. If they continued, it must have been secondary. What we hear about these two is their influence on Apollos.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 18:24-26 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 fervor 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.*

EXPLANATION: Apollos was a long way from his home in Egypt. He was similar to the Apostle Paul in that he traveled and preached. His boldness was quite incredible, and he had his own fan club of sorts. The couple who had relocated, who had been under the instruction of Paul for quite some time, mentored Apollos. He had limited knowledge of baptism, only that of John. What was the baptism of John?

Look in Acts 19. When Paul was teaching, he asked the people:

SCRIPTURE: Acts 19:3-5 ³ *“Into what, then, were you baptized?” Paul asked. “The baptism of John,” they replied.* ⁴ *Paul explained: “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the One coming after him, that is, in Jesus.”* ⁵ *On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

EXPLANATION: Baptism in the name of Jesus is an identification of his death, burial, and resurrection.

Aquila and Priscilla passed on their knowledge of Christian baptism to Apollos so he could preach more accurately. This is a great result of Paul’s working with these two and their willingness to follow him to Ephesus.

APPLICATION: Perhaps it’s time for you to consider the possibilities of ministry instead of just surviving the daily grind. If you are living in the world of the daily grind, and you see nothing beyond surviving another mundane day, there is hope for you! Think of it from another perspective. Think about Aquila and Priscilla. Does making tents sound exciting? No. These two could have continued their lives in the

daily grind, pushing through just one more day. But, they met someone named Paul who shared the same skill of building tents. The difference was he did it so he could do something more meaningful. Tent-making became a means to an end, not an end in itself.

APPLICATION: Have you ever looked at the daily grind of your job and tried to see it from another perspective? Your income is a gift from God...and can be used to benefit the Kingdom of God. To the people in your work place, you are the missionary. Being honest in your dealings will help your witness. Consider your job as a means to an end and not an end in itself.

Third, AQUILA AND PRISCILLA WERE DARING FOR THE GOSPEL.

They were risk takers.

As Paul closes out the Book of Romans, he told the people:

SCRIPTURE: Romans 16:3-4 ³*Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus.* ⁴*They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.*

EXPLANATION: We know Paul's life was in jeopardy several times, and we don't know exactly what he's referencing here. But, apparently he and the Gentile churches knew.

APPLICATION: When was the last time any of us did anything daring for the Gospel? When was the last time any couples here did anything daring for the Gospel? Stay with me because I'm coming to a conclusion.

As Paul closes out his letter to the church at Corinth, he said:

SCRIPTURE: I Corinthians 16:19 ¹⁹*Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.*

EXPLANATION: So, here we have evidence they started a church in their home.

In 2 Timothy 4:19, Paul sends his last greetings to these two as he is chained in a cold dungeon knowing his life is just about over. Paul was confident the Gospel would go on after he died because of the dedication of the people he had trained...people like Aquila and Priscilla.

APPLICATION: A lot of preaching and Christian teaching is for the individual, but I want to ask our couples, does God have a mission for you as a couple? Is there something you can do together for the Lord, which will have a profound impact on others?

Do you have a mission as a couple? Are you willing to take whatever is primary in your life and make it secondary in order to allow service to the Gospel to become primary? I'd like all couples to talk about this today.

[The following are notes and suggestions for preaching this message:

- Talk about the times Paul's life when his life was in jeopardy.
 - We don't know which time Paul was talking about when he referenced Priscilla and Aquila risking their own lives for his, but it's highly possible it was one of episodes mentioned in scripture.
- Make this sermon a part of a series about legacy.
 - "What legacy are you building as a couple?"
 - "What legacies will you, as a couple, leave behind?"
- Ask couples to consider what their mission is together, pray about it together, come up with a plan, and then inspire others by sharing what they believe their mission is.
- Tell needs of your church where a couple could make a difference. Do this to give them ideas, and see how they respond.]

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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