

# Priscilla and Aquila: The Courageous Couple in Christ Jesus

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[ 0 : 00 ] We'll turn back with me to Romans chapter 16. Romans 16 on page 950.

We'll read again verse 3, 4 and the first part of verse 5. Where Paul writes to the church in Rome, Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.

Greet also the church in their house. You know, in the Lord's work, there are many combinations, many combinations of personnel who labor in the work that God sends them.

Well, think of Jesus, of course. Jesus in his work, the work that God the Father had given Jesus to do in Jesus' ministry. Jesus worked alongside disciples.

Or you go to the early church that you read of in the New Testament, and obviously the Apostle Paul, for example, working with colleagues. Paul and Timothy.

[ 1 : 14 ] Paul and Silas. Paul and Barnabas. And, of course, in the work in our present age, we might say in the work that God gives his people to do.

Again, there are combinations of personnel working together in the work of the Lord. Because we think of, well, leadership in church, for example, elders, deacons, office bearers working together for the good, for the spiritual good, the material good of the congregation.

Of course, there's many other ways that we see. We might call it cooperative work in the work of the Gospel. Think of the teamwork that goes on, even, as we've seen in the notices here and the different activities that happen in a congregation.

Children's work needs cooperative teamwork. And the responsibilities that are shared in the work of the Gospel. It's everywhere. It's all around.

But one combination can often be overlooked in the work of, we might say, the work of Christian ministry, ministering to the needs of others. And I say before I give that example, we have to say that not every, one in every congregation has this privilege in this particular combination.

[ 2 : 35 ] But there is a particular calling that God gives in a church, in a denomination for the furtherance of his kingdom. That's the work of Christian couples, fellow saints, fellow workers, being together and working together in the Lord.

It's a blessing that we shouldn't minimize in the work of the kingdom. It's the calling of couples in the work of the Gospel. It's got a biblical precedent.

And we give thanks and praise God for that particular work that he gives. Couples. One example that we see here is in Romans, well, I've just read it in Acts 18, and also the commendation in Romans 16.

The work of this couple, Priscilla and Aquila. This couple whom God called to share in service, to share in witness, to share in being encouragers to others, sharing in being these faithful servants of the Lord.

We see this, obviously, to encourage, to encourage us, even in our own day, to see the way that God works in particular ways for his glory.

[ 3 : 53 ] And whether it's the New Testament times, whether indeed it's our own time, then we do give thanks for the times when God does raise up couples in the Lord, united in heart, working together, working together for the glory of God's name, for the furtherance of the kingdom, to proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I pray that God will continue to raise up couples, to work together. Yes, living together, working together, praying together, serving together, working in that great mission field that God places his people in.

So, this couple, Priscilla and Aquila, we've got to find out, obviously, who they were. Obviously, we'll use scripture to find out who exactly this couple were, and then using the headings that we've got before us, the three headings, looking at what they were as co-workers, fellow workers in the Lord, and obviously seeing what Paul mentions here about their courage, as co-workers, and then church hosts to the Lord's people.

So, who were they? Well, that's why we read in Acts 18, because there Luke, the author of Acts, gives us quite a lot of information about this couple. We're told that they were among the Jews whom Emperor Claudius had expelled from Rome, and we read that in the providence of God, these two refugees, they went on their way to Corinth, and it was in Corinth, in the Greek mainland, Corinth, where Paul met them.

And it's not that they just shared the same ethnicity, Paul, born a Jew, this Jewish couple, but as we read there, they also shared the same occupation.

[ 5 : 52 ] Paul had been a tent maker, they were tent makers as well, and as we read in Acts 18, Paul stayed with them in Corinth, and as we read through the sections in Acts 18, we can actually see that Priscilla and Aquila actually travelled with Paul to Ephesus.

and, well, we're not exactly told, we're not told when exactly they were converted, but as you will have noticed when we read on in Acts 18, you can see that they became mature believers very quickly.

They were able to correct another Christian, Apollos, in particular teaching about God's way, about the way of God, as it's mentioned in Acts 18.

So these Jewish converts, these converts whom Paul worked with, and these converts who grew as Christians, well, they're already mature believers when at some point in their travels, they've been travelling Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, and obviously they've returned back to Rome at some point, Claudius died, and the new emperor, safe for them to come back, and when they're back in Rome, they're participating fully in the work of the church.

They'd served the Lord in Corinth, they'd served the Lord in Ephesus, and they're continuing to serve the Lord as they're back in Rome. Well, that's the background that we have in Scripture, but what about what Paul says of this couple in Romans 16, about them being co-workers in the Lord?

[ 7 : 35 ] Great Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. There's so much in that little passage. This Christian couple, they've laboured together for the sake of the gospel.

If you notice the order in which Paul mentions them, they're second behind Phoebe. Remember, we saw Phoebe last week, and we worked out, we reckoned that she was the person who'd been given the letter that Paul wrote to the Romans.

She'd taken that letter. But notice who's next. It's this couple, Prisca and Aquila. And Paul obviously holds them in great affection.

He's never forgotten the kindness that they showed him. He's never forgotten the courageous stance that they've taken for truth. And he wants them to be acknowledged for the work that they've done for the gospel.

He wants to point them to the church in Rome to show that they were with him as fellow workers in the Lord.

[ 8 : 43 ] And we've seen, I mean, they've obviously supported Paul in the work of mission. They've recorded the status of fellow workers, fellow workers with the apostle Paul and this Christian couple in their love one for another.

Their love for the Lord is seen in the work that they've done. They ask Paul's fellow workers. And there's several things to notice here in that little statement.

And the first thing really concerns Paul. This is Paul, the apostle, the great apostle of Jesus. This is Paul whom God had particularly blessed in spreading the good news of the gospel to the Gentiles, to the known Jews.

This is Paul who'd met the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus. This is Paul who'd been so wonderfully saved and sent on that mission. But the same Paul has no superior view of himself. He's got no pride in himself being an apostle. He's calling up Priscilla and Aquila fellow workers in the Lord. And, you know, that's surely a timely reminder for anyone whom God calls in the work of ministry.

[ 10 : 03 ] Because there are particular callings. Some are called to particular roles in the church, whether it's in church office or church administration or maybe some form of public speaking for the Lord or maybe work with children or whatever kind of work that honors the Lord of the harvest.

And yes, preaching ministry, pastoral ministry, it's a high calling. It's a particular calling. It's a special calling. It's a calling that has great responsibility.

But the person who's been given that high calling must have no sense of any kind of, you know, superiority such that he's not going to work alongside anyone else.

And that's got to be the way of any follower of the Lord Jesus. Because think of the Lord Jesus. Think of him in his greatness as the divine Son of God.

What does Paul tell us in the letter to the Philippians about Jesus? As though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself.

[11:16] By becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. And Paul has no desire to elevate himself, you know, somehow, you know, above Priscilla and Aquila.

Paul elevated not himself, but Christ. And in Paul's humble service as the Lord's Apostle, he's rejoicing that he is, you know, working alongside fellow believers.

He counts them as brothers and sisters in Christ. They, as with him, they've been given their particular work to do in sowing the seed of the Gospel. And for each and every one whom God calls to serve, we're not to glorify self, but we're to glorify the Saviour.

We're to glorify Him who washed the feet of His disciples. To glorify the Lord Jesus who died a criminal's death. To glorify the Lord Jesus who's seated at the right hand of God in glory.

So you serve as a servant of the Lord. Paul served the Lord in all his humility. Priscilla and Aquila served the Lord in all humility.

[12:32] But notice, secondly, notice their status as fellow workers. Not just greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers, but notice my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.

I mean, they enjoy unity as husband and wife, man and wife. And of course, that's there. But the unity that they shared in Christ, along with the apostles' unity in Christ, that was a greater unity. We might see a higher calling, a higher fulfilment in Christ Jesus. I know it's something that certainly passed me by for years and years until very recently.

Because, you know, when you look at the New Testament, and the way that Christians are described in the New Testament, so often the designation isn't Christian, but those who are in Christ, or in Christ Jesus.

In fact, it's fascinating, but Paul actually doesn't use the word Christian at all. He rejoices in being in Christ. And Paul frequently writes of believers as in Christ.

[13:49] Because we're seeing that wonder of wonders, that, you know, the person whom God calls to himself, that person whom God calls through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that person's united to Christ by faith, in Christ, he in Christ, she in Christ, she in Christ, he in Christ, and Christ in him, Christ in her.

And that indissoluble unity, that unity that can't be broken, and that relationship in Christ that speaks to the privileges that the believer has, Christ indwelling the believer, the believer dwelling in Christ.

And so, so for Paul here to speak of Priscilla and Aquila as fellow workers in Christ, well, this is Paul expressing the wonder of God's grace, that, you know, that unity that you have, that you share in Christ.

Paul in Christ. Paul united to Christ. So Priscilla and Aquila united to Christ. Every believer united to Christ.

Christ. The bond of fellowship that you know one with another, the bond of fellowship that you know as a believer is through being in Christ. And that surely has to have practical implications in the life of any fellowship, the life of any church.

[15:17] Yes, okay, we all have different personalities, or different characteristics. We might even have differences in the non-essential aspects of theological understanding.

But all for whom Christ died, we cannot allow these differences to affect the unity that we have in Christ. Because that unity speaks of one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

It's a unity that abates the scandal of division. It's a unity that joins hearts and minds that are transformed by the grace of God.

That transformation that directs you to go into the world and to go with the one gospel and show forth the love of the Lord Jesus and to know Him as Lord and Savior.

And so that then follows on. It has to have practical implications in the way that we approach gospel work. Because, I think we have to say this, generally speaking, that the isolated believer is a contradiction.

[16:27] Of course, there are times when God sends individuals to do particular work as individuals, but for the most part, those who are in Christ do the work together.

They are co-workers, fellow workers in Christ. You know, the very fact that every time we read the name Priscilla, Prisca, it's always with Aquila and vice versa.

You know, their names are together. Okay? They shared in the work. They're co-workers in Christ. And, you know, we can apply that to ourselves.

There has to be that unity in service, unity in being fellow workers together in the Lord's work. And God will put believers together to fulfill that work.

And, of course, that fellowship and service, that's going to take different types. The ministry itself, the pastoral ministry, is a lonely occupation. But you can serve as a co-worker in Christ.

[17:31] Praying. Praying for the pastor. That encouragement to know that there are those who are praying who are co-workers with the pastor of the minister.

That is of great value and great strength and great encouragement. I mean, think of the apostle Paul himself. I mean, Paul, when he was writing to the churches, asked them, pray for me, he said. Of course, think of the Lord Jesus. Jesus, when he sought the prayer support of his close disciples. And don't let it ever be said that, you know, that we're failing in our Christian love one for another when we fail to pray for one another.

Because we're in this together. And if you're in Christ, well, show that. Show that unity in heart and mind in Christ and your love one for another.

Yes, by supporting one another, praying for one another. I mean, there's Priscilla and Aquila. They're seeking to live Christ-like lives. They're devoted to the work of God.

[18:42] They're showing their devotion in their fellowship, even their fellowship with Paul as co-workers with him, even for that short period of time when they were with Paul as co-workers in the Lord.

But what else do we find here? We find they were courageous. Courageous in the Lord. I mean, they weren't just saints of God who were his co-workers.

They were courageous. Look at how Paul describes them. Who risked their necks for my life to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.

Now, Paul doesn't actually go into detail exactly, you know, the circumstances of Priscilla and Aquila and their self-sacrifice that nearly cost them their lives for Paul's sake.

But it certainly was a real, a noteworthy action. And, you know, not only Paul was aware of, was in his personal circumstances but other churches as well were obviously very aware of something that Priscilla and Aquila did that indicated that they were prepared to risk their very lives for the sake of the gospel.

[19:54] I mean, if you look at the way that Paul writes this, these two believers, they risked their lives so that Paul might continue his work, so that Paul might continue his mission endeavour for the sake of the gospel.

I mean, these two saints of God, they'd been even willing to lay down their lives so that Paul's life was spared to continue the work that God had given him to do.

So, in other words, these two saints of God, they didn't reckon that their lives were, you know, somehow worth saving if it meant that the gospel was to be preached and sinners saved.

They were prepared if necessary to lose their lives to save the lives of others. And that self-giving love, of course, a consequence of their greater love for the Lord Jesus.

They were willing to further the name of Jesus even by death if necessary. Now, of course, we know that that particular kind of self-giving love, the love of the believer that we see in a martyr's death, that's not the common lot of believers.

[21:11] But the principle is that which we have to follow a response to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross. We mentioned a few weeks ago being living sacrifices.

And yes, as we notice that living sacrifice that dies to sin and dies daily to sin, but there's also that giving of self in our love for the Savior, whether it be sacrificing reputation when we take a stand for truth or sacrificing popularity for the sake of the gospel.

And we know there are those who are literally taking their stand for truth in the wild world of social media hatred and aren't afraid of the being masses that really would try and by word destroy those who are taking that stand for truth.

But I don't think that it's just for those who we think are going to be able to withstand the torment of others. It's not just those people who are to give of self for the sake of the gospel.

All who are in Christ are to be bold in the Lord. Yes, for you and for me to be courageous for the sake of the Lord Jesus. What did Jesus say?

[ 22 : 35 ] Don't fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul but rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body and hell. Well, obviously Paul never forgot the courage and the self-sacrificial love of Prisca and Aquila.

many years after he wrote this letter to the church in Rome when he knew that he only had a short time left before he would ultimately give his life as a Christian.

In Paul's last letter that he wrote the letter he sent letter to Timothy Paul was looking back over his life and Paul reminisces about some of the sadnesses in his experience.

He speaks about being left by his associates his former associates people like Demas and he writes of how only Luke had remained with him in his latter days as it were.

But as he closed that last letter he wanted to send greetings and the first names in that short list of greetings were Priscilla or Prisca and Aquila and Aquila.

[ 23 : 49 ] Nothing more said than simply greet Priscilla and Aquila. Now this may well have been about a decade after he had written this letter to the church in Rome but Paul never forgot the love the service of Priscilla and Aquila these courageous saints.

Paul never forgot the kindness that these saints showed to him and Paul even in his last moments as it were of life sent this letter to Timothy asking him to greet these two saints.

And you know in the fellowship of believers that mutual love that we're to show one to another memories do last memories of the kindnesses that are shown one to another these memories last because friendship and fellowship in the Lord are not easily erased by the passage of time.

And you know thank God for these precious memories. I'm sure you've all got memories examples that you can turn to that recall the self-giving sacrificial love that was shown to you maybe as a young Christian as a young believer.

I think back to those who were particularly kind to myself in my early days as a Christian even growing up as a believer that faith and action that well that showed the evidence of true faith in particular individuals even the giving of the cup of cold water in Jesus name yes those who went that second mile that gave self for the sake of even a fragile believer and you know would that we as Christians you who are a Christian show that self-sacrificial love of the Lord Jesus yes in the new relationships one with another you know too often isn't it the case that you know when we do see the platform of the media all around us there's that temptation to self-elevation rather than self-denigration salvation but if you're to be like Christ you're going to be like the one and seek to be like the one who laid down his life for others you're going to seek to give of yourself even when it hurts even in what you lose you will know that you gain you'll gain that victory in Christ

[ 26 : 20 ] Jesus so be courageous as Priscilla and Aquila were courageous for the sake of the gospel but one more thing to focus listen here and that's as there being church hosts to the Lord's people middle of verse 5 greet also the church in their house this isn't the first time that actually Paul or the only time that Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned by Paul is actually hosting a church in their house we haven't read every reference to Priscilla and Aquila in the New Testament you go to Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth when he's been writing from Ephesus and towards the end of that epistle he speaks of Aquila and Priscilla sending their greetings together with the church in their house so these two saints of God they're well practiced in hospitality to the extent that whether they're in Rome or in

Ephesus they're willing to use their house their homes in the worship of God they're willing to show fellowship one with another for the spiritual good of the Lord's people now because obviously the size of houses in these days the number gathering in these homes wouldn't be a great number but the blessing of God in the very fact in that fellowship that Priscilla and Aquila were hosting there I mean what did Jesus say where two or three are gathered together in my name there I am in the midst and truly Jesus was in the midst of that house church whether in Rome or in Ephesus where Priscilla and Aquila served and you know where the Lord's people gather where we meet whether it's in a house whether it's in a church building such as this whether it's in a school building whether

it's in a village hall wherever the Lord's people gather whether it's few or whether it's many God is to be praised for the fact that people are meeting together that people are worshipping together for the glory of his name and you know in the context of our passage here and as we're seeing Priscilla and Aquila they used the resources that God had blessed them with for the furtherance of the kingdom of God and be encouraged you be encouraged to give back to the Lord that the Lord has given you I mean Priscilla and Aquila they gave back to the Lord they gave back to him their home they gave back to him their very selves their very lives they served the one who gave himself who gave himself fully and wholly for the sake of those for whom he came to save and realized it is a short focus on the lives of these two individuals this couple Priscilla and Aquila but I pray it's been of blessing to us all this evening their names are recorded in scripture their names I believe are recorded in scripture for the purpose of encouraging an encouragement to believers encouragement to praise and to give thanks to God for the way that God works in the lives and the way that God uses people such as yourselves myself in the work of the kingdom and may it be that we are working as fellow workers in the Lord that we are courageous for the Lord and that even in our times of worship that we are together as one giving him the glory and giving him the praise Amen let us pray Lord you give your calling to your people to serve you and we thank you Lord for the various ways that you call your people to serve whether as couples such as Prissa and Aquila or whether as individuals whether indeed as a church Lord we pray that you will give your people that strength that empowering to serve you where you send them Lord there is much to be done in the work of the kingdom the harvest is plentiful the labourers are few Lord we pray that you will send out labourers into the harvest field Lord we pray then for the work that is done in this congregation may you bless it may you bless those who endeavour to proclaim the good news of the Lord Jesus through the work that you've given them to do bless indeed Lord the work that is carried on even throughout this land even throughout our denomination may you bless what is done in your name for the glory of your name for the furtherance of your kingdom so hear us Lord as we continue in worship before you now forgive us all our sins we pray in Jesus name Amen