

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Faithful Gospel Workers

Acts 18:1-3, 18-19, 24-26

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: Aquila and Priscilla are introduced to the reader in Acts 18. Though they appear only a few times in the bible, their influence was one to consider for us today. This is due to at least three reasons: The first is that they labored and served the Apostle Paul in a point of time where he was likely lonely and facing discouragement. Second, they were responsible for bringing the great preacher Apollos to a proper and complete understanding of the gospel, thus unleashing him to do a good work himself. Third, because Priscilla becomes one of the key lightening rods for the egalitarian movement. This message seeks to develop all three of these points.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read 18:1-3, 18-19, 24-26
- B. We come again to this new chapter in the book of Acts and in the life of Paul, the Apostle.
 - 1. A quick note for those who do not actually know what the term “apostle” means. Its use is very straight-forward and means to be “sent out.”
 - 2. The way it would be used in that day would be that the person is sent out by an official, and when he speaks, he speaks as if the person who sent him is speaking. It is used by Jesus saying that God the Father “sent” Him.
 - 3. To be sent generally included the idea that you were sent with a message. And this is from where the term “apostle” comes and it took on a specific office in the New Testament. This message was not yours, but the message of the One who sent you. Your authority and your message is inextricably tied to the One sending.
- C. Last time I taught, we were introduced only slightly to the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla.
- D. Today I want to focus on this couple, for though they appear only a few times in the bible, their influence is one to consider for us even today. This is due to at least three reasons:
 - 1. The first is that they labored and served the Apostle Paul in a point of time where he was likely lonely and facing discouragement.

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2. Second, they were responsible for bringing the great preacher Apollos to a proper and complete understanding of the gospel, thus unleashing him to do a good work himself.
3. Third, because Priscilla becomes one of the key lightening rods for the egalitarian movement. This message seeks to develop all three of these points.
4. I will take these points in reverse order so that we can start with a corrective message and end with an encouraging word.

II. Faithful Gospel Workers.

A. Egalitarians and Priscilla.

1. Brief explanation between Egalitarianism and Complementarianism.
 - a. This deals with questions and objections raised within the Church-at-large roles and value between male and female.
 - b. **Complementarian** position basically says that male and female are inherently equal in value but inherently different in roles within the home and church.
 - c. **Egalitarian** position says that the value and roles for both males and females within the home and church are identical.
2. So what does this have to do with Priscilla? If you do a search for a biblical case for female pastors, preachers or apostles, you will find this woman's name in almost every single article.
3. Here is the basic idea regarding Priscilla.
 - a. The argument goes: "when you read Acts 18 carefully, you see indications that Priscilla was a church leader and that she functioned as an apostle, as a pastor and as a leader within the larger Church."
 - b. In one site the writer takes pains to show that here in Acts 18 Priscilla was a leader in the Church and recognized by all as being one. Here are several points the site makes, and as I share them

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look to the vss I read and see if they are actually in the text. (All taken from <https://womeninthebible.net/women-bible-old-new-testaments/prisca-priscillachristian-woman/>).

- (1) “Priscilla seems to have been the dominant partner in the marriage, something of a mover and shaker. She was strong-minded, fervent in her love for God and Jesus Christ, and loyal to her husband.
 - (2) “Paul heard about Priscilla and her husband Aquila, and sought them out.” (1-3)
 - (3) Using vss 18-26 as the basis, the site then says this, “Priscilla and Aquila travelled [sic] with Paul to Syria. After a short stay, he travelled [sic] on to Jerusalem, but they remained in Ephesus and settled there. This time, Priscilla had a mission. . . . But in this city devoted to so many ancient gods and goddesses, Priscilla taught anyone who would listen about the crucified prophet Jesus, and there is no doubt she was successful.”
 - (4) In addition, the article says that they set up a church in their own home and became “ authorities about the teachings of Jesus.” Yet nothing in the passage gives us that reality.
 - (5) Most glaring is what follows. We read in the article about Apollos in vs 26, “She took him aside and taught him about Jesus – what Jesus did, said, and taught. It was recognised [sic] by all that she was the real authority on the teachings of Jesus, and that as such she had a responsibility to pass on her knowledge to others. Aquila is mentioned, but in a secondary capacity. It is clear Priscilla was the one in charge.”
 - (6) Finally, a common argument set forth is to say that in 3 of the 6 passages mentioning this couple, Priscilla is mentioned first. Therefore, she must have been the more important of the two. The problem is this is pure speculation and deserves no explanation.
- c. These are the key passages about Priscilla that form the foundation of expanding the office of pastor/elder to women. It is also the key passage for women being teachers of men in the church, though not technically an elder.

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4. This is where the passage 1 Timothy 2:9-12 is important, “Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, with modesty and self-restraint, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly clothing, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women professing godliness. A woman must learn in quietness, in all submission. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.”

5. Behind all of this stands a more foundational issue that each of you must decide. What carries more weight for a Christian when reading the bible?
 - a. A descriptive passage or a prescriptive passage?
 - b. **Descriptive** is where you read what a person did or what happened. **Prescriptive** is where there are instructions, commands, principles given.

 - c. My free counsel to you is to look and listen carefully when you hear someone try to convince you that everyone has gotten it wrong and they are going to show you why. Do they take you to a prescriptive or descriptive passage? If the first stop is a descriptive one, you should take great caution in what follows.

- B. We find this couple being used by God to be responsible for unleashing a powerful preacher into the early church (18-28).
 1. We need only to lightly touch on this passage as we will look at it more closely in weeks to come.
 2. Paul is finished in Corinth after over 1½ years and is leaving behind Timothy and Silas to continue strengthening the church started by Paul. He

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heads to the port Corinth called Cenchrea and then heads across sea to Syria, where Ephesus is at.

3. This couple comes with him. Here is one place I see strong evidence of their long term faithfulness. Paul doesn't waste a lot of time with people who are fearful, lazy, untrustworthy, and such. If you doubt that, ask Mark. But this couple comes with him.
4. And it is here **we again see their faithfulness**. They have to start over yet again.
5. Notice how in vs 19 that when they arrived in Ephesus he left them there. Apparently he told them of his plans and they were agreeable to it.
6. And in this we find the providence of God at play. If you are unsure what that is, it is how we see the hand of God in the lives of individuals, cities, and nations. It is seen by looking backwards, never forward, which is why even Paul said in vs 21, "God willing."

C. My final point is rather simple but it strikes me rather deeply for some reason. The couple befriended Paul in a time of great struggle in his life (18:1-3).

1. Remember that when Paul entered Corinth, he was alone.
2. The first thing to do after getting refreshed at the baths was to try to find a place to set up shop and so he would go to the area where the tent-makers and leather workers would gather. And there, we see the grace of God shine.

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3. He would have recognized Aquila and Priscilla as Jews by the manner of dress and appearance and this would draw him to them. Jewish merchants spoke in Hebrew as a way to stand out and be identified by other Jews.
4. Imagine how the conversation would go. He would approach them, perhaps utter the classic greetings of *shalom* [peace] or *Shalom aleichem* (shah-LOME ah-LAY-khem) [peace be upon you].
5. They would begin to speak and most likely he would explain who he is and why he was there. He would not hold back, for he always went to the Jew first with the gospel.

6. No doubt they would have asked him where he was staying for they knew the challenges, because they had faced the same struggle when they first arrived.
 - a. Do they wish him well? Do they tell him that they will pray for him and hope that God will open a door?
 - b. No, they open their house to him. They are willing to have their private lives encroached upon for the sake of the gospel.

III. Conclusion.

- A. I have little doubt that Paul has this couple in mind as he penned these words to various churches and people.
 1. Romans 12:13, “. . . contributing to the needs of the saints, pursuing hospitality.”
 2. To the church at Ephesus via Timothy, Ephesians 3:2, “An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.”
 3. In that same letter, writing about widows, “having a reputation for good works; if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints’ feet, if she has assisted those in affliction, if she has devoted herself to every good work.”
- B. Gospel work cannot go forward without faithful believers who come alongside to help and encourage those on the front lines.

Benediction

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Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing the good news of Jesus Christ, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen