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**Series: Romans: The Just Shall Live by Faith**  
**Message: A Model for Ministry**

**Transcribed Message**  
**April 7, 2024**  
**Romans 16:3-5**

I think you would agree with me that the art of letter writing is probably for all practical purposes over and done. I wonder if any of you can remember the last time you got out a piece of paper, a pen, envelope, and postage, and you wrote a letter to somebody. In this day and age of emailing and texting and social media, it's a lost art. We just don't do it anymore. We have a way of communicating with each other that is almost instantaneous. It's quick. It's easy, and therefore letter writing is seemingly something of the past. We may jot a note or a card but that's kind of the extent of it. My mother was a letter writer. Maybe some of you had parents that were letter writers. As her seven children left the home and went to various parts of the country, she would write every one of us a letter every week. We would all get a letter from Mom. It would talk about what was going on in her life with dad, what was happening by way of the weather in Omaha. That is really where I got some of my meteorological tendencies. She would just write to all of us every week. When Bonnie and I were in seminary, she would often slip a \$20 bill in there, which was a lot of money back then. We looked forward every week to getting a letter from Mom.

Paul was a letter writer. We have 13 of his letters in the New Testament and that's what we're doing here in this section that we're looking at again this morning. So, let's turn to Romans 16. We look at verses 3 through 5 and this is what we want to see. It seems to me to love Christ is to love the church. To love the church is to love people. To love people is to want to help them grow in their walk with God, to help them learn to love the Lord more deeply and more fully. That was Paul's passion. That was his heart as we've seen so often.

Let's take another quick introductory look at this 16<sup>th</sup> chapter and I would just say two things. Paul has already set the table for this 16<sup>th</sup> chapter in chapters 12, 13, 14 and 15. If you've been with us for those previous chapters, you know he said a lot about love

for one another. He talked a lot about the importance of family and the connectedness that we have within the family of God. He talked about sacrifice. He talked about service. He talked about welcome. All those things just play into what he ends up doing in this 16<sup>th</sup> chapter as he greets all these different people.

I think the other thing that you see is he cares deeply about people. Paul cares deeply about people. There are some 27 people that are named by name in this 16<sup>th</sup> chapter. How incredible would that be that you're getting this letter from the apostle Paul, you're part of the church at Rome, and your name is in that letter. He's acknowledging, he's thanking, he's saying something about you. These people's lives and names are recorded for all of eternity in the word of God. Most of them, apart from the ones that we look at this morning, this is the only reference in all the Bible about them. Most of them we don't know anything at all and even in this case that we look at this morning we know a little bit but there's a whole lot more that we'd love to know about the couple that we look at this morning. I think it's encouraging to us to realize Paul takes the time and his heart is really revealed in his deep love for people recording 27 names.

This is what I think. I think these people were probably on Paul's prayer list. These 27 people that he's going to be giving commendation to and thanks to. I've got a feeling they're part of his weekly monthly prayer list. It probably was a long one. Which reminds me, if you want to be prayed for and when the elders and the staff and the pastors and your friends here at Covenant take their church directory and pray through it, that's a wonderful way to minister to and for each other. You need to be a part of that just for the sake of knowing there are people who take that directory, and they just pray their way through, and they think about me and my family and my circumstances, my situation. It seems to me that's probably very likely what Paul was doing here.

Let's look at this very dynamic duo. I wonder what comes to mind when you hear the words dynamic duo. There are all kinds of dynamic duos down through time. There are dynamic duos in sports, in music, in entertainment, in movies, in cartoons. There are all kinds of names that just go together. When we hear one, we just think of the other one. That is clearly the case here. Priscilla and Aquila are a biblical dynamic duo.

There are lots of things that we would love to know, as I said a moment ago about this couple. But here are four things that the Bible and Paul tells us about them.

The first thing I want you to see is their personal connection with the apostle Paul. The very first part of that third verse: “Greet Priscilla and Aquila...” we’ll just stop right there. There’s a lot behind just those opening words in terms of the personal connection that this couple has with Paul. Let's start by looking at their history. What is their connection with the apostle Paul? How did that unfold? If you're familiar with the book of Acts, Luke records for us three different times that Paul went on extensive trips. We call them the missionary journeys. There are three missionary journeys of Paul. Paul encountered Aquila and Priscilla in his second missionary journey. He is on his second missionary journey, and he encounters them and we read about this in Acts chapter 18. If we go to Acts chapter 18, we see in the first three verses: “After this Paul left Athens and he went to Corinth and he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla. Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome and Paul went to see them, and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.”

We know that Aquila was from Pontus. Pontus is what is modern-day Turkey. At some point, he leaves his homeland, and he goes to Rome. Maybe it was in Rome that he met his future wife, his wife Priscilla. But in this recorded instance, they are now in of course Corinth. They've been forced out of Rome by what many believe was the decree of Claudius in 49 that expelled all the Jews from Rome. Being of Jewish descent, they were forced to leave Rome. They made their way over to Corinth and somewhere in that encounter they met Paul and this lifelong relationship begins when they moved to Corinth.

The second place we find them is again in Acts 18. Slide your eyes over to verse 18 and we see that they're in Ephesus. “After this Paul stayed many days longer and then they took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae, he had cut his hair for he was under a vow and they came to Ephesus and he left them there and he went on his way.” The second place we see them is now in the city of Ephesus. Paul's going to come back to Ephesus on his third missionary journey. You can read about that in Acts 19 and in the encounter that they

have there. He is going to end up spending a couple of years when he comes back on that third missionary journey in Ephesus. This relationship that starts with this encounter in Corinth is going to build and grow as they share these two years together in Ephesus.

Then you go to Romans 16, the passage we just read in verse 3, and they're back in Rome again. He says greet Priscilla and Aquila. They're in Rome with you. They're in the church. Now we're in about 57 AD. Somewhere from 49 when they first met, now we're all the way to 57. We've gone from Rome. We've gone to Corinth. We've gone to Ephesus. And now here we see the last one in 2 Timothy chapter 4 in verse 19. This is what Paul says. This is the last letter that Paul writes. 2 Timothy is the end of his life. He is about to be martyred for his faith. He writes and he says "Greet Prisca and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus." They're back now in Ephesus. Look at that initial personal encounter that he has with this couple and obviously you say these guys are movers and shakers. They don't stay in one place for long, do they? Of course, some of that was imposed upon them. Some of it was by means of persecution. Some of it may have been vocational. But they did move around and the mobility of these people in the 1<sup>st</sup> century is kind of amazing, isn't it? We think as we've said before of how mobile we are, but this is the 1<sup>st</sup> century. This couple Priscilla and Aquila find themselves moving from his homeland of Turkey to Rome, to Corinth, to Ephesus, and back again to Ephesus. It is just a remarkable story of what they're doing.

This is what it looks like to me. This is the principle that I would want us to see. Whoever you are, wherever you are, whatever you're doing, you're in service and ministry of Jesus Christ. That's a part of what I want you to see in this initial encounter that Paul had. Whoever you are, wherever you are, whatever you're doing, you are a minister. You're a servant. We've underscored that before when we looked at Phoebe. God wants us to be available to him. It's called the Great Commission. Go into all the world and make disciples. It is go into the world and bring the gospel to people. It is go into all the world and help them grow. We have a great love for our Lord and Savior. We have a love for our Lord, and we have a love for the church. We have a love for the church, and we have a love for people. We want to see people grow in their understanding of God's word and of all that he has for them.

Notice the second thing by way of personal connection as to their names. Their names as they are recorded in Scripture. The interesting thing is they're always mentioned together. They're always mentioned together. We don't ever read about the encounters that we are given in Scripture, we never read of just one of them. We always read of them together. That's truly why I refer to them as the dynamic duo because they're always together. Six times to be exact Aquila and Priscilla are mentioned in Scripture. As I said, they're one of the few exceptions to the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter where we know something about the people that we're reading their names. Most of the other ones as we'll see, Lord willing, next week we hear about them one time, but Priscilla and Aquila six different times. We know Aquila was a Jew. We know he was from Pontus, modern-day Turkey.

Priscilla is a name of Latin origin. There is so much that that we just offer by way of conjecture. William Barclay says that she may have been of an aristocratic royal family because this name Priscilla was common within certain aristocratic families in that time. That, of course, is somebody putting some pieces of history together and suggesting that could be a possibility. But here's the interesting thing. Priscilla is mentioned first four of the six times. Priscilla is mentioned first four out of the six times. We maybe wouldn't even think about that. Somebody says Carlon and Bonnie or Bonnie and Carlon, and we don't sit there and go hmmm, I wonder what they meant by that. I wonder why they put her name first. We just interchange names generally in that regard. But in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, that would not have been the case. It would've been unusual for a woman's name to be mentioned before her husband. And yet here the Holy Spirit four out of the six times has Luke and Paul mention that it is Priscilla first. I just think that is kind of fascinating. What could be behind that? Well again, somebody said maybe it was because she was at this higher social standing and that was the proper way to introduce a couple when that was the case. Again, we don't know that. Another has said maybe it was her personality. Maybe her ministry was a little bit more forward and she was the stronger of the two in that regard. Maybe Aquila came to Christ after Priscilla did. Maybe there are considerations there regarding their ministry.

But here's the thing. Every time Paul refers to this couple, he always refers to her as he does here in Romans 16 as Prisca. He never refers to her as Priscilla. Priscilla is

the more affectionate name. It's the more familiar name. Paul refers to her in the occurrences when he mentions this couple he always says Prisca. Again, we don't know exactly why that is. We don't know if that is the stylistic thing in Paul's mind. We don't know if that's some way that he is acknowledging her ministry, if he's acknowledging something that he has encountered in his relationship with them. It might be because it's more familiar. When we have a woman's name like Elizabeth, you might call her Liz or Lizzie. If you have a name like Jennifer, you may call her Jen or Jenny. We shorten names up. Sometimes it's because of the preference that they have, and sometimes it's familiarity and affection. Paul, being a single man, maybe it was just his practice, did not become so familiar in that way as he referenced a woman in ministry with him. But in any event, Paul always puts Prisca first.

The third thing I want to see about the personal connection is they had a shared vocation. Not only were Priscilla and Aquila in business together, I won't ask for a show of hands, but I know we've had couples and have couples right now who are in business together. You share life together every day because you work together side-by-side. There's I'm sure both challenges and joys and some things that go along with doing that. But that was this couple. They were together. They worked as tent makers and so was Paul. Paul was a tent maker. It's kind of fun to think that the first time that they met in Corinth. They're forced out of Rome by persecution, and they come to Corinth. They establish their business somewhere along the way. We know that it was Paul's practice when he came to a new place to go to the synagogue. Maybe as he went to the synagogue, maybe Priscilla and Aquila came on that particular time. As he began to talk to them, he may have said to them where are you guys from? It is like when I meet new people and I say are you new to the community? Where are you from? They always say California or the West Coast. No, I'm just kidding. They moved from Rome to Corinth and so they maybe shared that story with Paul. Maybe Paul went into the marketplace. Maybe he went to the marketplace in Corinth where they had set up shops, and he was looking for somebody to partner with in terms of tent making. That's what Paul did. He was a tent maker. When he didn't have support for ministry, he was bi-vocational. When the gifts came, as we know as we've read in in the book of Acts, then he would step away from tent making and he would just devote full-time

opportunity to ministry. But maybe they talked, and he said I'm a tent maker. Why don't we pull together and do this together? Some way or another they shared the same vocation.

The last thing I want you to see is they shared their home with Paul. They shared their home with Paul. When you look at Acts 18 it says in verse 3: "...and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade, and he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks." Look at the 9<sup>th</sup> verse. This is why Paul came to Corinth. Acts 18:9. "The Lord said to Paul one night in a vision: do not be afraid..." Paul was afraid when he came to Corinth. He told us that. Anxiety filled his heart. He was going into an area that he had not been before. He wasn't sure how he was going to be met. Just like any of us going into something new and different, there were some challenges there. Yet the Holy Spirit says to him: "...for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in the city who are my people. And he stayed a year and six months teaching the Word of God among them." Paul lived with Aquila and Priscilla for 18 months. How would you like the preacher living with you for 18 months? Everybody would be on their best behavior all the time. If you had the apostle Paul living with you for 18 months? That would be a model marriage and model parenting and model children. Maybe. Maybe not. But Paul stayed with them for 18 months. There was a definite personal connection between this dynamic duo and Paul.

But here's what I want us to see. I want you to see that there was a ministry connection. Look at the rest of that third verse. "Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus." They shared a spiritual relationship. They shared a spiritual relationship. When we read that they are my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. Look back at verse 2 when he was talking about Phoebe. He said welcome her in the Lord. Those are just parallel phrases. You're in Christ together. You're in the Lord together. You realize of course that the most significant, the most long-lasting relationship that you have is not your earthly relationships. Our earthly relationships are just that. They're earthly relationships and they're temporal. Our earthly family, as important as we are to each other, that is a temporal relationship. I'm sure in all of glory and eternity there is still going to be a specialness of family, earthly family. There is going to be that kind of

connectedness. But the Scriptures repeatedly remind us that the eternal family, the most significant relationship that we have are in fact those with whom we are in Christ together. We are in the Lord together. That's the eternal relationship.

Here's the beauty and the blessing of a marriage relationship where both the husband and the wife are in the Lord. Of course, we know why that is so important. Because it's the most important relationship that we can have. That's why Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6 to be mindful, to be aware that you do not become unequally yoked together. You want a life partner who is going to share your values, your goals, your dreams, your desires, your heart for those things that are spiritual, that are the most important of all. They were definitely equally yoked together. He calls them fellow workers, and it's in the plural so he's talking about both of them. They're both fellow workers with him, a reference to each of them. They labored together for the sake of the gospel. He doesn't just leave it there and say hey, they're my fellow workers.

There is something else that the Scriptures give us. We're going to go back to Acts 18 and I want you to see then secondly, they shared a commitment to discipleship. They shared a commitment to discipleship. Go back to Acts 18 again and we're going to pick up at verse 24. There's a man named Apollos who comes into their life. "Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. Being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak 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." Now this is a fascinating encounter. We're told that Apollos was from Alexandria. Alexandria was like a center of scholarship. One of the largest, if not the largest, libraries in all the world at that time was in Alexandria, North Africa. A huge library that really attracted people who wanted to study. It was kind of like an Oxford or Cambridge type of atmosphere where people came literally from all over to study in Alexandria.

Look at the ways that Luke describes Apollos. He said he's an eloquent man. He was an excellent speaker. He knew the Scriptures. He knew the Old Testament Scriptures. The New Testament Scriptures were just being formulated. They hadn't



been collected and people weren't reading out of the New Testament yet at this point. He knew the Scriptures. Yes, he did. He knew the Old Testament Scriptures. He was fervent. He was a good teacher, but he does have one problem. He had some gaps in his theology. There was something missing in his teaching, and it tells specifically that he knew only of the baptism of John. We can take some time and we can say what we think that means and I would suggest that it's likely a reference to two possibilities.

When it says that he is only aware of the baptism of John, it might be that he knew all of the Old Testament Scriptures about the coming Messiah. Clearly, he knew well what the Old Testament said about the one who was to come. He knew the prophecies that were explaining the coming of the Messiah up until the baptism of John, which would be John the Baptist. It's possible that he didn't know that the Messiah had come, that Jesus had come, that he had died on the cross, that he had been raised again. That's one possibility. I don't lean that way. I lean this way. When it says that he knows only the baptism of John, I'm wondering if that means he has not yet understood the baptism of the Spirit. When you get to Acts 19, that is in fact one of the storylines of the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts is the introducing of the people there to the idea that there is yet another baptism, the Spirit's baptism. At the moment of faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit of God enters us and indwells us and seals us and brings us into the family of God. It might be that that is what it is referencing. But in any event, there's something missing in his theology, in his doctrine, in his message.

Here's the question. What do you do when the preacher is a little bit off? Be careful how you answer is the first thing. Be nice is the second thing. That's really what's happening here. They are dealing with a man who is clearly eloquent in his presentation. He is an excellent teacher. He knows the Scriptures. Their hearts resonate with him as he's teaching. But they're thinking to themselves something is not quite right in this message. He is not aware of some things that have happened. So, look at what happens.

There is a beautiful picture of them explaining to him a more excellent way. Verse 26 again. Look at that. "He began to speak 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." When you read that account I don't know who you admire more. Do

you admire Priscilla and Aquila? Or do you admire Apollos? Because this is a model for how you relate to each other in a circumstance like this. Of course, there are many different applications for how that could look but it's exemplary. I want you to see what they did.

First, they took him aside. They took him aside. In the Greek that means they took him out to lunch. They took him out to lunch. They probably invited him to get a bite to eat, invited him over to the house. They wanted to discuss what he's taught and explain to him the more excellent way, the way of God more accurately. So, they took him aside. They did it in private. They did it graciously. They did it with discretion. Again, this isn't applicable only to preachers and teachers. This is applicable to just a lot of areas of our life. When we have something that we need to talk to somebody about, there's a way that we could do it in which we draw attention to ourselves. We get to show everybody how smart we are. We could show everybody how well we can correct somebody else. Or we can do what they did. We can graciously, discreetly, quietly pull somebody to the side. I think this is just a beautiful picture of that.

Notice too that they did it together. They did it together. It doesn't say that Aquila took the Scriptures and showed Apollos the more excellent way, the way of God more accurately. No, the Holy Spirit wants to see that as this couple engages in ministry, they do this together. They have this conversation together. I would imagine that both contributed to what it is that they wanted Apollos to know. I think it speaks again to the appreciation of the apostle Paul for the ministry of women. I think it speaks again just a little bit more insightful into the role of women within the context of ministry. This isn't Priscilla standing up in the teaching of the word service and bringing a word of correction and admonition to the whole body. That's not what's happening. But it is a partnership of Aquila and Priscilla pulling this man aside.

Here's the thing. We know that Apollos received this. That's not the easiest thing in the world, is it, especially as a teacher. When somebody comes to you and says: Did I hear this right? Yeah, maybe you did say something that you didn't intend to say, in a way that was misunderstood or a misapplication. It's not always easy to have somebody come and bring you a word of correction. But Apollos does and we know that because the church sends him out. As you read further into this account, they send him out in

ministry. He's received this word of correction if you will and filling in of the gaps and he's a more equipped guy to take this message even more powerfully. We know when we open the book of 1 Corinthians and the 1<sup>ST</sup> chapter and the 12<sup>th</sup> verse, we know that Apollos was one of the pastors of the church in Corinth. Clearly the ministry of Priscilla and Aquila in this man's life is of vital importance and God used it.

Here's one more thing. I say this to the men. Men, if your wife is a student of Scripture and if your wife knows the Bible better than you do, first be thankful. Be thankful. Be thankful that God has blessed you with a wife who loves his word, who loves to study his word, who loves to read his word, who has been equipped by the Holy Spirit and other teachers in her life to love and to teach that word. First, be thankful. That is a massive blessing to have a woman in your life who loves God's word and who's going to do all she can to model that in her life. There are few blessings that are more significant, more impactful in your life personally and in the life of your home and your family. Start off by saying my wife knows a whole lot more about the Bible than I do, and I'm very thankful for her heart for God's word.

Then here's the other thing you do. The second thing you do is you get going. You get going. You get going and if you're behind her, then you do all that you can to catch up with her. She's going to keep on going. That's a word to single men as well. You're looking for a woman like Priscilla. You're looking for a woman like Prisca. You're looking for a woman who has a heart for God and for God's word. If you ask any man, and I ask every couple that I counsel with and marry, what attracted you guys together. All the time when I ask guys to write out the answer to those questions, they will always say I thought she was beautiful. That's the way God designed it. That's the way it should be. But it's very encouraging that almost all the time on that list there's something about her heart for God. There's something about their interest in spiritual things that drew them to each other. and that clearly is here. So, we have Priscilla, Aquila, and Paul. They have this personal connection. Then they have this ministry connection.

Now look. We don't need to take too much time on the last one because we don't know a lot about what is being said here but let's look thirdly at a life risking connection. Notice in verse 4 Paul says of them, this dynamic duo: "...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.” We don't know what Paul is referring to here. When he says they risked their necks for my life we don't know what exactly he's referring to. He could in fact be referring to something that happened in Ephesus when you go on and read in Acts 19. There was a riot. Everywhere Paul went there was a riot. In this particular riot, Priscilla and Aquila may have been there and even though the Holy Spirit didn't choose to give us those details, maybe in that circumstance somehow they stepped in. Maybe they knew the people who had some form of authority. In any event Paul's life was rescued. It may have been something that happened at Corinth where he was there for 18 months. But in any event, it was something that happened and we do know this. We know it happened and we know it was a big deal to Paul. As Paul looks back on his relationship with Priscilla and Aquila, as he's writing this word of greeting to the church at Rome, one of the first things that came back to his mind was I remember the day these guys saved my neck. I remember the time that they stepped in and literally saved my life. Paul was thankful for that. Who else is thankful? All the Gentile churches are thankful. I think again remember in Romans and in the church at Rome that there was this ethnic conflict that was true all through the 1<sup>st</sup> century church where there was this tendency to divide ourselves into these different groups. Paul just kind of again by the Spirit of God gently reminds the Gentile believers that this godly Jewish couple saved my life. We can all be thankful, Paul says, for that.

And the last thing. There was a local church connection. The very first part of verse 5 Paul says, “Greet also the church in their house.” Paul loved the church. Paul loved the church. We ought to all be like Paul. I only ask of you one thing. When the time comes for a new senior pastor to step in to this role, I hope, and I pray with you that the man that God raises up is a man who loves the church. That is absolutely vital. Of all the capacities and skills, he needs to be a lover of the church. We don't need somebody who puts up with the church, who looks askance at the church. We all know the church of Jesus Christ is imperfect. After all, we're not looking for perfect people, are we? We welcome imperfect people. We welcome sinners to join other sinners. And yet there's just too little regard in so many situations for the church. Jesus loves the church. Jesus gave his life for the church. How can we not love the church? With all the

other stuff that goes on in the life of the church, and sometimes it's not always fun, but the reality is Paul loved the church. Jesus loved the church. Priscilla and Aquila loved the church. Everywhere they went they had a church in their home. here in Rome. Greet the church in their home. You go to Corinth. They're got a church meeting in their home. you go to Ephesus. You've got a church meeting in their home. These people loved the church. They wanted to be a part of what God was doing in that way.

I've got to be careful in saying this. You understand that they didn't have church buildings. That 1<sup>st</sup> century, 2<sup>nd</sup> century, 3<sup>rd</sup> century and a lot of that was driven not by a dissatisfaction with the church per se, the established status quo. It was driven by the fact that there was persecution that popped up all the time and Christians didn't really have the rights that would establish a piece of property and a building. That didn't come until the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century. Today there are sometimes home churches that are established because of the disaffection with the church and they're making a statement we don't want to be like them. I'm not saying that's always the case because it is not always the case. There are some wonderful home church groups. But sometimes it's born out of we want to distance ourselves from the church. That's not happening here. They have a church in their home because they love the church. They want to offer their possessions, the things that God entrusted to them, they want to offer those to the Lord. What do we see? To love Christ is to love the church. To love the church is to love people. To love people is to want in our heart to bring them closer to Christ.

What do we take away? Wherever you find effective, productive ministry just look behind the scenes. Look behind the scenes. There you'll find mission-minded, gospel-centered servants of Jesus Christ. That's what's happening in this whole 16<sup>th</sup> chapter. Paul's putting forward the names of people who have enabled him and others to do ministry successfully. It happens every week at Covenant Community Church. People behind-the-scenes. There isn't any better example than last Sunday when we had all the huge crowd here and all kinds of help all through the campus. How does that happen? That happens because people who are ministering and serving behind-the-scenes are pulling together with one mission in mind. We have one mission here. We have one goal here. It is that God will allow us to make disciples, that God would allow us to share the gospel, and help people grow in their walk with God. If we all keep that

before us, if we're all pulling on that same rope in the same direction together, then all the other little incidental things and sometimes bigger things won't be divisive and harmful and hurtful. It's when we get our eyes off the mission, then we get ourselves into difficulty, in trouble. Here they are. Wonderful examples to us of people who are committed to the gospel, to the sharing of the gospel, and to making disciples.

That's our heart. When we talk about sharing the gospel, the gospel as it is presented to us in God's word is the idea that you and I apart from the grace of God cannot have a relationship with God that is going to be eternal. God has told us very clearly that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. God has told us clearly that we can't work our way to heaven. Your being here this morning does not establish a credit line with God for a Sunday that you've been in church. It's an encouragement. We're commanded to do it. We are supposed to be here, but it does not in any way impact God looking at us and providing us additional grace to get to heaven. That's reserved for Jesus alone. He died on the cross for our sins. All that God asked us to do is to believe that what Jesus did is all that needed to be done. It's an invitation that we give every Sunday. It's an invitation I extend to you this morning. If you do not know for certain that if you were to die today that you would go to heaven, you can know that before you leave here. All that you need to do is to believe and trust that what Jesus did is enough. God forgives your sins, and He gives you eternal life, and you're on your way to being a disciple and follower of Christ.

Let's pray. Father God, thank you for Aquila and Priscilla. Thank you for godly men and women here at Covenant who model much of what we see in their lives. Thank you for the faithful stewards of ministry here at Covenant, for all the faithful people who give of their time, their energy, their gifts, their talents for the advancement of the gospel and for the making of disciples. Bless this gospel. Bless this gospel in the life, in the heart, and the mind of someone this morning whom you are calling to yourself. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.