

PRISCILLA AND AQUILA IN CORINTH

Summer 2022, Acts 18:1-22

August 14, 2022

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, with much trembling.

1 Corinthians 2:1-3

Introduction to Corinth

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 the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³ and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. ⁴ Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

⁵ When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. ⁶ But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

⁷ Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God.

⁸ Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.

Acts 18:1-8

1. Corinth's history reflects the cosmopolitan, proud, even hedonistic, values of Greek/Roman culture
2. The new church in Corinth reflected those same elements of the culture – read 1 Corinthians!

Paul still needed to be encouraged

⁹ One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. ¹⁰ For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” ¹¹ So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

Acts 18:9-11

1. The arrival of a gift from Philippi, news from Thessalonica and a word from God energized Paul for his most difficult ministry
2. The biggest encouragement for Paul was people: Aquila and Priscilla, Silas and Timothy, Justus

Why Priscilla and Aquila are so important

¹⁸ Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea 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. ²⁰ When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. ²¹ But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus. ²² When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

Acts 18:18-22

1. Priscilla and Aquila (yes, Luke is a VERY careful writer) represent the second generation of leaders in the early church
2. Paul's strategy is going to shift from "new fields" to clustering, equipping and writing

What was on Paul's heart when he left Corinth

1. Unity is a "power of the cross" issue for the church

¹⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. ¹¹ My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. ¹² What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ."

¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. ¹⁶ (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

1 Corinthians 1 (see 1 Peter 5:10 for God's part in "perfectly uniting" the church)

2. The church must be radically separate from the immoral, greedy culture that surrounds it

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans

⁹ I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰ not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. ¹¹ But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

¹² What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?

¹³ God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

1 Corinthians 5 [with the final quote repeated several places in Deuteronomy]

Resources for further studies in Acts

The Bible Project team has great stuff on Acts at <https://open.life.church/items/179224-poster-jpg>

Spurgeon's very good sermon on Acts 17 is at <https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/0193.htm>

Tim Keller has said much on the topic of mission. See "5 Practices" at <https://brave.is/5-practices-of-a-missional-church-tim-keller/> and <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/gospel-culture-and-mission-an-interview-with-tim-keller/>

D. A. Carson has a wonderful essay from Acts 17 on "Worldview Evangelism" at <https://www.monergism.com/athens-revisited-exegetical-study-acts-17-da-carson>

Deffinbaugh has an audio only message on Acts 17 at <https://bible.org/series/studies-book-acts>. His sermon on Acts 18 is at <https://bible.org/seriespage/25-seeing-paul-perspective-acts-181-197>

I borrowed from this John Piper message on missions: <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-supremacy-of-god-in-missions>

For those who want to dig deeper into the worldview clash at Mars Hill, I recommend Andrew Klavan's challenging "Speaking Truth into Modern Culture" at <https://youtu.be/Cckiti7as44>

John Stott's *The Spirit, The Church and the World: The Message of Acts* (IVP, 1990) and F. F. Bruce's work: *New Testament History* (Doubleday, 1980) and *The Book of the Acts* (Eerdmans, 1984). For this passage, I also like Kistemaker's commentary (Baker Book House, 1990).

Harry Boer, *That My House May Be Filled* (Eerdmans, 1957)



