

## PRISCILLA AND AQUILA INVITED APOLLOS TO THEIR HOME

Acts 18:18b-19:7 (Key verse: 18:26b)

*When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.*

Today's passage is a continuation of last week's passage. So let's do a short recap of what we covered last week. In last week's passage Paul left Athens (Map 1<sup>1</sup>) and arrived in the city of Corinth. (18:1) (*He moved from the end of the Purple line to the beginning of the red line.*) At the time, Paul was in a crisis. He was not only broke but also all by himself. But then, by God's grace, Paul met a Jewish man and his wife; Aquila and Priscilla. They were both tentmakers. (18:2) Can you still remember how they helped Paul? Yes, they not only gave Paul a tent-making job to earn an income.....but also allowed Paul to stay for 18 months (18:11) with them in their house (18:3) Now....we all know Paul, right? He always spoke to people about Jesus. Then what do you think Paul did while he stayed and worked with Jewish couple? Yes, Paul kept on speaking to them about Jesus ....explaining to them from both Scripture and his personal experience that Jesus is the Christ of God. The question is, how did they respond to the gospel message? Did they become abusive like other Jews in the past? (18:5)

In context of today's passage, it is clear that Aquila and Priscilla not only believed the gospel message but also became precious co-workers of Paul in the Lord Jesus.<sup>2</sup> For in today's passage, we see how Aquila and Priscilla invited to their home a man named Apollos, .....and *explained to him the way of God more adequately*. In comparison to Paul's public ministry, inviting someone to your home does not seem like much; right?! However, as we will see, the Lord blessed Aquila and Priscilla's quiet and personal approach. This morning, let's learn how to serve the Lord quietly, yet effectively, like Aquila and Priscilla. Amen

Look at verse 18b. After 18 fruitful months in Corinth, and about three years on his second missionary journey, the time came for Paul to return home in Antioch. So, Paul left the brothers and sisters there and sailed home for Syria. (Map 1) He then made a quick pit stop at Ephesus, (19-20) from where he sailed to Caesarea, (21) and then finally arrived home in Antioch. (22) Now, humanly speaking, after such a long time away from home.....and after experiencing many good and equally bad things on the road.....we would expect Paul to settle down a bit, right?! To take things easy and spent time with people in Antioch. But look at verse 23. (Map 2) After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and began a third missionary journey!!!!

The question is, while Paul was moving around, where were Aquila and Priscilla? What did they do? I ask these questions in light of last week's passage, when we said God calls upon all believers to speak to people from Scripture about Jesus. Do you remember? So now that Aquila and Priscilla were believers in the Lord, we can be certain they too wanted to speak to people about Jesus. Then how did they do so? Did they also travel from place to place; like Paul? Did they also speak publically about Jesus in the synagogues; like Paul? Did they address large and sometimes hostile crowds; like Paul? No, they did not. Then how did they share the good news of Jesus with others? They did so by inviting people to their home; for private bible studies and discussions.

Let's look at verse 24. (Read) The first person Priscilla and Aquila invited to their home, was a Jewish man named Apollos. When you think about Apollos, what image comes to mind? In my mind I see a WITS student (of course a brother.....not sure if he is graduate or undergraduate. What do you think?) But he is .....talented.....smart.....energetic.....well-spoken..... and filled with a zeal for God. Can you picture him in your mind? The only differences are.... Apollos was not South African but a Jew.....he is not alive today but lived roughly 2 000 years ago..... he did not stay in Johannesburg but in Alexandria (which was in Egypt) and lastly.....he did not study at WITS but the world renowned library in Alexandria.

The question is, what did Apollos study? Look again at verse 24. It says Apollos was a learned man. Other bible translations are more specific. The ESV and the NKJ says, Apollos was an eloquent man. To be eloquent is to

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.understandchristianity.com/timelines/paul-first-second-missionary-journeys/>

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor 19:19, Rom 16:3, 2 Tim 4:19

be *fluent or persuasive in speaking or writing*. In Apollos' case (and as we see in verses 25-26 below) his learnedness related to fluent or persuasive speaking. That is why the New Living Translation referred to Apollos as an eloquent **SPEAKER**. So whereas many young men today comes to WITS to study accounting or engineering.....Apollos went to the library in Alexandria to study eloquent speaking! In this course he learned how to construct an argument to speak persuasively to all kinds of people.

Apollos also studied the Scriptures. Look again at verse 24. It says Apollos had a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. This would be Scripture from the Old Testament, as at the time the New Testament did not yet exist. With verse 25 continuing: he had been instructed in the way of the Lord, again referring to the way of the Lord as taught in the Old Testament. Now, if you combine eloquent speaking with a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures; what do you get? Yes, a persuasive preacher; right!! Look again at verse 25. It says that Apollos spoke with great fervor. Even in verse 26 we see that after coming to Ephesus, Apollos began to speak boldly in the synagogue. It seems spiritually Apollos did not lack anything.

But Apollos did lack something. Look again at verse 25. It says, Apollos knew only the baptism of John. The bible teaches us that there are two kinds of baptisms. There is the baptism of John – which is a *baptism with water for repentance*. Then there is the baptism of Jesus – which is the *baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire*. (Matt 3:11) Which baptism is required for someone to enter the kingdom of God? To enjoy the fullness of the Holy Spirit? Brother Silence told us clearly in his message at the movie night on Friday! Yes, we need the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire. For no one can see .... or enter..... the kingdom of God unless he or she is born of water **AND THE SPIRIT**. (John 3:3-5) Yet, despite his thorough knowledge of Scripture.....and despite teaching accurately about Jesus..... Apollos only knew John's baptism of water and repentance. This means, he either did not know that Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead. Or he did not understand the deep significance of Jesus' death and His resurrection from the dead. Either way, though Apollos could recite many bible verses and speak with great fervor about God from Scripture, he lacked the most important person in the Christian faith; Jesus Christ! And God used Priscilla and Aquila to help him meet Jesus personally.

Let's look at today's key verse, verse 26, to see how. 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. Just like Paul, Priscilla and Aquila also went to the Synagogue for fishing. But unlike Paul who usually began to reason with the Jews, Priscilla and Aquila quietly went in and sat down in the Synagogue. Then, we can imagine, they prayed for the Lord to show them who would be open to the gospel message. It was then when Apollos began to speak boldly in the synagogue. As usual he spoke very well from Scripture. But being believers, when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they immediately picked up that Apollos did not personally know Jesus Christ.....or understand the deep meaning of His death and resurrection. Now I am sure, some of you may ask in your hearts: How could Priscilla and Aquila know this simply by listening to Apollos' speaking? Let me ask you this question: let say someone just heard about you from someone else, but never personally met or spend time with you. Let's say that person visit your family and friends who know you well. And then begins to speak to them about you. Do you think your family and friends will realise the person does not know you at all? Of course they will! It is no different with Jesus. When someone who never actually met Jesus personally speaks to believers..... who **DO** know the Lord, it becomes crystal clear to the believers that the person does not know the Lord. For those who do not know the Lord can never ever know how wonderful is His forgiving love. Nor will they ever be able to testify how God saved them.....by the blood of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. You simply cannot fake this! Right?!

It was no different with Priscilla and Aquila. The moment they heard Apollos speak, they knew he did not know Christ. So what did they do? Did they correct or criticize Apollos? Look again at verse 26. After Apollos spoke, they invited him to their home. Wow! Will you invite a stranger you met for the first time at church to your home? That is exactly what Priscilla and Aquila did. They humbly opened their home to Apollos. What about Apollos; did he accept the invitation? Amazingly he also humbled himself and visited Priscilla and Aquila's home! There Priscilla and Aquila explained to [Apollos] the way of God more adequately.

But what does this mean.....to explain the way of God more adequately? **Firstly**, it means that Priscilla and Aquila shared the gospel message of Jesus with Apollos. They did so by using not only the Old Testament Scriptures at the time that pointed to the coming of Jesus.....but also using what they learned from Paul about the meaning of Jesus's death and resurrection..... probably along the lines of what is recorded for us

today in the book of Romans. We can be sure they then shared their personal testimonies with Apollos..... of how they met the Lord Jesus in His word.....and how God's love expressed through Jesus.....have transformed their hearts and lives.

While Apollos listened to them, something amazing happened. Yes, the Holy Spirit began to work in Apollos' heart. Then, for the very first time he understood that Jesus was crucified.....not for something Jesus did wrong.....but for all the dirty sins he committed. He also understood that to totally destroy the power of sin and death in his [that is Apollos'] heart, God raised Jesus from the dead after three days. (Rom 6:1-14) And with this, Apollos personally put his faith in Jesus, as the Christ of God. Wow!! How gracefully God worked in Apollos when Priscilla and Aquila shared the gospel message with him at their home.

But how do we know that this truly happened in Apollos' heart? We know it by the testimony of the believing brothers and sisters in Ephesus. Previously when Apollos spoke to believers it was clear he did not know the Lord. However, now, all the believing brothers and sisters in Ephesus could see and hear that Apollos was in Christ Jesus. That is why, look at verse 27. When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia (that is Corinth 19:1), the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. Also, if you think Apollos was a powerful speaker before he met Christ, we can only imagine how he spoke after meeting Christ. Look at verse 28. For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate. And whereas before his teachings were dry, lacked the power of the Holy Spirit and was miss directed, now he could prove gracefully from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah. Consequently, Jesus used Apollos to replace Paul to defend His name in Corinth. That is how much Apollos changed!

Among us there are many who are like Apollos. Brothers and sisters who knows the Scriptures and who have been instructed in the way of the Lord. Yet, who either never heard the pure gospel teaching about Christ.....or have not personally accepted it as God's truth in their hearts. If that is you this morning, there is nothing wrong or shameful about that. It only means that perhaps the time has now come for you to not only repent of your sin, but also come to the cross of Jesus.....where the blood of Christ will wash away all your dirty sins. And the resurrection power of God can also work powerfully in your heart. And give you a new life.

There are also many Priscillas and Aquilas among us. Believers who love the Lord Jesus, yet who simply cannot speak to people like Paul used to do! In today's message we learn that too is okay.....for there is another way you can share the gospel message with God's people. The Aquila and Priscila way! For those among us who already have their own home: we can open it to any brother or sister who are eager to know the Lord Jesus. And privately share the gospel message and our personal testimonies of Jesus with them. For those who are still studying and live in a dormitory, it might be a bit more tricky and risky. Right? But the point is not that we must bring people to our homes and rooms. The point is, to invite brothers and sisters to a quiet and safe space, where we can talk about Jesus with them.

In conclusion. Last week our hearts might have been troubled when we learned about how Paul always kept on speaking to people about Jesus. Paul always travelled from place to place. He always seemed to speak in public and sometime even got in confrontations with abusive Jews. I am sure, there are not many among us who can serve the Lord in this way; like Paul. However, in today's passage we have learned that there is another way. The Aquila and Priscilla way. Where we with the same devotion and purpose as Paul, privately and quietly meet with brothers and sisters behind the scenes.....either at our homes or any place where we are safe and comfortable.....to share the word of Jesus personally with them. This is in fact, the way our UBF ministry follow.

Personally, I was once like Apollos. I grew up in the church. I attended worship service twice on a Sunday and completed Sunday school at the age of 18. In a way I too had knowledge about Scriptures and was instructed well in the way of the Lord. At the same time I also knew about Jesus. And could tell you about his death on the cross and resurrection. However, I can honestly say, I did not know Jesus personally. I simply did not know that Jesus died for me..... personally. So I got drunk like an unbeliever.....view the world like an unbeliever.....lived like an unbeliever. For I was an unbeliever. Yet, at the same time my heart cried out for God to save me from the sheer meaninglessness of life. It was then that I met a Priscilla in UBF, missionary Josephine, who sat Sunday after Sunday teaching the bible to me. The more I studied the bible the closer the

Lord drew me to Jesus. Until one day, the Holy Spirit opened my eyes to meet Jesus personally in His word through Mark 8:29. When Jesus asked his disciples who do you say I am, Peter answered, you are the Christ of God. This word gave me an opportunity to make a personal confession of who I believed Jesus was. With God's help, I understood and believed Jesus died for me.....personally.....and that God raised Him to life after three days.....so that with Christ I too can inherit a new and eternal life. This happened about 15 years ago. Needless to say, since then the Lord's love has blossomed in me. Also, I have the great privilege to serve the Lord.....not in Paul's way, but in Aquila and Priscila's way. I am truly willing to open my house to anyone of you. To share the word of Jesus and my personal testimonies of what the Lord has done in my life during the last 15 years. Also, I am willing to meet anyone of you on campus, in a safe and quiet space, to do the same. I am sure, there are many of you who feel the same way. Right?

Life is short and time is flying by. Therefore, whether we relate to Apollos or to Priscila and Aquila, let's obey the word of God, by from now on humbly and practically following in their footsteps. If like Apollos, then accept our ministry's invitation to study the bible with one of our Priscilla and Aquilas. If like Priscilla and Aquila, then open your house and your heart to God's people and share the word and your testimony about Jesus with them. In this way, our ministry will be filled with believers who the Lord can use to advance His kingdom in this world. I sincerely pray, this may be so for our ministry! Amen.