

Prisca and Aquila  
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Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth. He found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome: and he came unto them; and because he was of the same trade, he abode with them, and they wrought, for by their trade they were tentmakers (Acts 18: 1-3 ASV). Anti-semitism is no new thing. The Jews were hated in the ancient world as they often are today. Emperor Claudius issued an edict in A.D. 52 banishing the Jews from Rome. When the Jews had been banished from Rome, Prisca, an affectionate diminutive form of her name, and Aquila settled in Corinth.

When Paul left Corinth, Prisca and Aquila went with him. Paul sailed for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. They came to Ephesus, and he left them there (Acts 18: 18-19 ASV portioned). Apollos, a brilliant scholar, came to Ephesus. Apollos didn't have complete appreciation of the Christian faith. Prisca and Aquila took him into their home, gave him friendship and instructed him in the faith. A certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John: and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately (Acts 18: 24-26 ASV).

From the very beginning Prisca and Aquila kept an open heart and an open door. When Apollos was minded to pass over into Achaia, the brethren [Prisca and Aquila] encouraged him, writing [a letter of introduction] to the disciples to receive him. When he was come, he helped them much that had believed through grace. He powerfully confuted the Jews, publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was

the Christ (Acts 18: 27-28 ASV portioned).

Paul wrote his letter to the church of God at Corinth from Ephesus. In it he sends greeting from Prisca and Aquila. The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Prisca salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house (I Corinthians 16: 19 ASV). There were no places for Christian fellowship, no such thing as a church building. The home of Prisca and Aquila served as sanctuary for Christians.

The edict of Claudius ceases to be effective. Jews drift back to their old homes and businesses. No doubt Prisca and Aquila returned to Rome. Writing to Timothy to give diligence to come to Rome before winter bringing when you come, the cloak I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments and the books. Paul sends Timothy greeting from Prisca and Aquila (II Timothy 4: 19 ASV).

Much is certain about Prisca and Aquila. There is even greater romance in their story. Today in Rome there is a church of St. Prisca on the Aventine. There is also a cemetery of Priscilla. This cemetery is the burial place of the ancient Roman Acilian family. Acillius Glabrio, consul of Rome in A.D. 91, lies buried there. He died a martyrs death as a Christian suffering for his faith.

When people received their freedom in the Roman Empire they took one of the great family names as their name. One of the commonest names in the Acilian was Prisca; and Acillius is sometimes written Aquila. This presents two possibilities:

1. Perhaps Prisca and Aquila received their freedom from some member of the Acilian family, in which they were slaves. Can it be that these two people sowed the seeds of Christianity into that family so that one day a member of it, Acillius Glabrio, no less a person than the Roman consul, became a Christian? Can it be that Christianity reached the highest person in the Roman state because Prisca and Aquila first brought it to the family from which

he sprang?

2. It is an odd thing that in four out of the six mentions of this pair in the New Testament Prisca is named before her husband. The husband's name would normally come first. We say Mr. And Mrs. Because Prisca's name regularly comes before her husbands name there is possibility Prisca was not a freedwoman but a great lady, actually by birth a member of the Acilian family. It may be the great lady met a humble Jewish tentmaker and the two fell in love. Christianity destroyed the barriers of race and rank and wealth and birth, and these two, the Roman aristocrat and the Jewish artisan were joined forever in Christian love and service.

Of these speculations we can never be sure. We can be sure many in Corinth, Ephesus and Rome owed their souls to Prisca and Aquila. There is no more fascinating pair in the New Testament and no more effective friendship and instruction in the faith than the Home Ministry.