*DEVOTIONAL*

March 5 - 10

Aquila and Priscilla’s Witness

**Monday, March 5 Acts 18:1-11**

*“He met a Jew named Aquila . . . with his wife Priscilla”*

 Knowing what Paul was to face in Corinth, the Lord gave him new friends who shared both his love for Christ and his avocation of tent-making. Aquila and Priscilla were Jewish Christians who, after having been driven out of Rome by Emperor Claudius, had fled as far as Corinth. They extended hospitality to Paul and an opportunity to work with his hands. In this way the Lord gave Paul the opportunity to relax and be occupied with something other than the often frustrating and dangerous ministry of sharing the Gospel. Working with supportive friends gave Paul a chance to rebuild his energies.

 When he began to preach again, Paul’s ministry in Corinth brought both tremendous response and strong rejection. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, was converted along with his household. That crystallized the issue with the Jews, and the attack was on again. But so was the Spirit’s power in Paul’s preaching. A large number heard and believed the Apostle’s straightforward presentation of the Gospel.

*Thank you for friends, Lord, who encourage us in our Christian journey. Amen.*

**Tuesday, March 6 1 Corinthians 1:1-9**

*“You have every spiritual gift you need”*

 It was Paul’s habit to encourage and praise those with whom he worked and he did not make an exception here, even though he was writing primarily a letter of reprimand. Some people have even questioned Paul’s sincerity in this section, knowing the kinds of problems he would be dealing with in the body of the letter. But when we read the verses more carefully we see Paul’s focus is on what God has done in their lives. These brief words about what God had called them to become would be a great source of encouragement as they dealt with the very heavy burden of their shortcomings.

 First, they were the objects of God’s love and grace. Regardless of their failings, which God knew about long before they even heard about Jesus, in Christ they were saved. Second, Christ had given them spiritual riches. They had everything they needed to live godly lives that would please God. Third, God had given them a basis of hope. They were facing many problems in the present, but their future in heaven was secure in Christ.

*You give me what I need to do your will, Lord, and I am grateful. Amen.*

**Wednesday, March 7 1 Corinthians 1:10-17**

*“Let there be no divisions among you”*

 Immediately following his opening words of encouragement, Paul addresses the problem of division within the fellowship of the church. There is nothing subtle or indirect in the way he approaches the problem. First, he states the problem as a fact that exists and not as a rumor. Paul is too careful in his dealings with the truth to bother with some unsubstantiated bit of gossip. Second, he gives the original source of the information as coming to him from the household of Chloe, information he undoubtedly substantiated through conversations with others who knew of the situation in Corinth. Third, he repeats the divisive slogans of the various factions, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.”

 Paul does not get involved in either the beliefs or practices of any of the groups but attacks the spirit of partisanship which he feels could ultimately divide the church. His larger concern was the quarrelsome spirit to which their differences had given birth. He was not calling for uniformity of thought and action but for oneness of spirit, for the primacy of love and grace.

*In spite of our differences, Lord, may we graciously love one another. Amen.*

*DEVOTIONAL*

March 5 - 10

Aquila and Priscilla’s Witness

**Thursday, March 8 Acts 18:12-17**

*“The Jews made a united attack on Paul”*

 Luke does not describe Paul’s relatively long ministry in Corinth in much detail. Here, though, he does give us the response to Christianity of the proconsul Gallio, who was a well-known figure in the Roman Empire (a proconsul is the chief magistrate of a Roman province). His proconsulship of Achaia is attested in an inscription found in Delphi dated around 52ad and in the writings of his famous brother, the Stoic philosopher Seneca. His positive response toward Christianity was a key building block in the church’s case for a positive legal standing in the Roman Empire.

 The Jews brought Paul to Gallio, charging him with persuading people to worship God in ways contrary to Judaism. The reason behind making this charge was to show that Christianity was not truly Jewish and therefore should not be included with Judaism which enjoyed protection under Roman law as an accepted religion. Gallio did not even give time for Paul to speak. Rather, he said that what Paul was doing was not a crime for him to judge; it was instead a matter of Jewish law, and he was not going to tackle issues pertaining to their theology.

*You use even secular rulers, Lord, to further your Kingdom on earth. Amen.*

**Friday, March 9 Acts 18:18-23**

*“He had his hair cut off, for he had taken a vow”*

 Taking Priscilla and Aquila with him, Paul left Corinth and travelled to the port of Cenchrea to get a ship to Caesarea so he could go on to Jerusalem for the feast (probably Passover). Before boarding the ship, Paul had his hair cut off in connection with a vow he had taken to the Lord. The cutting of hair was a physical sign of having taken a vow, the details of which Luke does not give us. Paul had been through a difficult time and the Lord had helped him. In performing this vow, whatever its particulars, he expressed his gratitude and his recommitment to God’s purpose.

 When the ship stopped at Ephesus on its way to Caesarea, Paul, Priscilla and Aquila got off briefly for a visit to the city. The Apostle could not stay away from the synagogue and one further opportunity to communicate Christ. The response was positive and the people wanted him to stay, but his heart was in Jerusalem. Leaving Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus, he promised to return. Arriving in Jerusalem, he participated in the feast and greeted the Christian church there. After that he returned to Antioch of Syria, thus completing his second missionary journey.

*We praise you, Lord, for your help in times of trouble. Amen.*

**Saturday, March 10 Acts 18:24-28**

 *“A Jew named Apollos came to Ephesus”*

 Apollos deserves an important place in the book of Acts because he played a significant role in the growth of the early church. Luke thus interrupts his description of Paul’s journeys to insert a section on Apollos’ ministry in Ephesus and the “completion” of his understanding of the gospel. While we are not told how Apollos first heard about Jesus, there was no doubt about his effectiveness as a preacher of the Gospel. Three things are noted: he had a thorough knowledge of the Bible, he spoke with great conviction, and he taught about Jesus accurately.

 Into this situation Priscilla and Aquila entered, inviting Apollos to their home. Though Apollos was an educated man and a student of Scripture, he was willing to learn from his hosts in order to “complete his education.” Since Apollos “knew only the baptism of John,” that is, baptism as a sign of repentance, Priscilla and Aquila would have shared with him about the baptism of the Holy Spirit which is experienced by all who by faith have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

*No matter how much I know, Lord, I am open to learning more of you. Amen.*