

Priscilla
The Missionary Tentmaker
A.D. 54

Aquila and Priscilla, a noble Christian couple, had been driven from Rome by the decree of Claudius Caesar. A large Jewish colony dwelt at Rome in a crowded quarter on the banks of the Tiber. A Roman historian, Suetonius, tells us that Claudius banished the Jews from Rome because of the constant disturbances of certain Jews that followed Christ. During the early decades of Christianity, the Romans did not distinguish between Jews and Christians. Christianity had no doubt been introduced into Rome by some Jews who were converted at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. These Christians were undoubtedly persecuted by their fellow Jews, causing disturbances in the capital city. It was because of these disturbances that the whole Jewish colony was banished.



Aquila and Priscilla were already Christians when they met the Apostle Paul. They had settled in Corinth where they were in the business of tentmaking. Upon his entrance to the city of Corinth, Paul met this couple and made his home with them. They were attached by a threefold tie: they were Jews by birth, Christians by profession, and tentmakers by trade. While Paul was ministering in Corinth, he worked with his friends at their trade.

He was so successful in his missionary work, that at the end of a year and a half the Jews raised such a persecution that all three were driven from the city to Ephesus, where Paul met his friends and sailed to Syria.

Sometime after Paul's departure, a learned and eloquent Jewish man of Alexandria came to Ephesus. His name was Apollos. Apollos had heard of and accepted the Christian religion and was working enthusiastically among his own people. When Aquilla and Priscilla heard him preach they were impressed by his ability and zeal, but they came to realize that he was not fully educated in Christian teaching. They invited him to their home and offered to teach him more fully the truth of Christianity. Priscilla and Aquilla became his teachers, and it is actually Priscilla is given more honor in this matter which is shown by her name being placed before that of her husband in the written record (Acts 18).

A few years later the couple evidently returned to Rome, for Paul in his letter to the Romans sends them greetings (Romans 16:4). In this single verse we learn that Paul remembered them as his "helpers" in the gospel work, no doubt thinking of the days in Corinth. Again, he says they had saved his life at the risk of their own. And, lastly, he speaks of "the church which is in their house." Their home had become the meeting place of the Christians in Rome at a time when it was neither possible nor safe for them to have a special house of worship.

