

# Paul's fellow workmen

## Part 3

Speaker	Eugene Vedder
Duration	00:54:23
Online version	<a href="https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/ev005/paul-s-fellow-workmen">https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/ev005/paul-s-fellow-workmen</a>

*Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.*

[00:00:00] Well, it was interesting, as Ian was speaking about grieving the Holy Spirit, one of the ways we can grieve the Holy Spirit by lying to him, the first public sin in the church was precisely that.

And before starting on our subject of Paul's fellow workers, maybe we can turn just a little bit to Acts 5, I'd like to speak about a couple who served with Paul, Aquila and Priscilla, but let's just look at the other couple in the Acts to contrast them a little bit.

This couple in Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira, we noticed yesterday when we were looking at Barnabas, how many of these early Christians were selling their property and pooling their [00:01:08] resources, laying the money at the feet of the apostles and how this money was used for the common good.

After mentioning Barnabas and what he did, and really over and beyond what others may have done, we read here, now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property, also.

And it says, with his wife's full knowledge, he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. It's interesting how much in conflict with what we've been seeing as to the spirit of God and his work, this couple are.

Here's a couple that sells property, but they're going to hold back something for themselves. [00:02:04] There isn't really that full commitment to the Lord, that full trust in him, and perhaps they said, well, we're going to see if this Christianity deal works out. We'll put some back for any day in the meantime, if things don't work out right. And so they bring this, or he brings it, Ananias, and Peter has to say to him, Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you've lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received from the land?

Now, he was pretending that they were giving it all, and the apostles were there, perhaps the saints had met together, and he brings the money, puts it at the apostles' feet, and he's immediately accused of lying to the Holy Spirit.

[00:03:06] You know, we often forget, I believe, that the Holy Spirit is personally present in meetings of the assembly.

When the Lord's people are together, you know, each one indwelt by the Holy Spirit, baptized into

one body by the Holy Spirit, well, certainly the Holy Spirit is present as a person.

We think of what our brothers or sisters may say. We often don't think about the possibility of grieving the Holy Spirit, and certainly he was grieved at a deliberate attempt to lie, deliberate hypocrisy here.

And Peter tells him, didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? [00:04:02] You've not lied to men, but to God. Now there was no compulsion on this giving.

It was an absolutely voluntary thing, and yet, you know, when we see others doing something that's good, sometimes we feel under a bit of pressure, and no doubt this couple felt under a certain pressure, and they also wanted to be well thought of.

Joseph had been given this added name, Barnabas, and Ananias and Sapphira, what are they going to say about us? And, you know, we like to be praised by men, and Peter confronts Ananias with this.

What has been done so far is absolutely voluntary. You didn't have to give, you didn't have to sell your property in the first place, you didn't have to give any of the money, it was absolutely yours, but to give part and pretend that you're giving the whole. [00:05:02] You've lied not to men, but to God, and when Ananias heard this, he fell down and died, and great fear seized all who heard what had happened. You find the young man coming, wrapping up his body, carrying him out and burying him. I've often thought this, even the wife wasn't told about the funeral, you know, no funeral ceremony, he just got buried apparently, and the wife comes in three hours later, her husband is already buried, and she doesn't know that he's dead, and Peter asks her right off, tell me is this the price you and Ananias got for the land? Yes, she said, that's the price, they had agreed, Peter said to her, how could you agree to test the spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they'll carry you out also. At that moment, she fell down at his feet and died, and so both die and are buried that [00:06:05] same day.

You know, if God were working that way this afternoon, or if he had been working that way the past 40 years or so, how many of us would be here this afternoon? Have we ever pretended to be something that we are not? Have we ever tried to give the impression that we are more spiritual, more devoted to the Lord than we actually are?

Have we ever lied to the Holy Spirit?

I wouldn't be here speaking to you if, you know, if God were dealing in summary judgment in the assembly today.

Here's a couple that was thinking of themselves. They wanted the benefits of Christianity, and they may have been true believers, and [00:07:02] we have no real reason to question this, but they didn't realize that when we deal with God, when we deal with God the Holy Spirit, it's absolutely serious business. And you know, here it wasn't a matter of introducing serious false doctrine or something like that. It was just a plain, ordinary matter of life, a matter of honesty versus the type of partial honesty that we are altogether too prone to.

The couple that we're coming to this afternoon, we are introduced to in Acts 18, and Bill hasn't

duplicated the note sheet for me yet, so probably he'll get it this evening. The couple is Aquila and Priscilla, and they are really the contrast in so many ways to Ananias and Sapphira. Ananias and Sapphira have some property. [00:08:01] Yes, they're going to give to the Lord, but they've got to reserve some for themselves. They're not totally committed. They're not really flexible.

They've got their reservations.

Paul is on this missionary journey that we had him on this morning already with Timothy. But here at this point, from Athens, remember Paul had sent Timothy back to Thessalonica, and in the meantime, he moves on from Athens and comes to Corinth. Corinth, a major commercial city, sits on the Isthmus where the Peloponnesian Isthmus runs off from the main peninsula of Greece, and I understand it's a little neck there about six miles wide. The Romans were talking about digging a canal across there because the trade, a lot of it [00:09:03] came in on the one side at Corinth and had to be transported by land over to Cancra or Centria, however you want to pronounce the town, on the other end.

In more recent times, in this century in fact, the Greek government has had a canal dug across there.

They finally chopped that Isthmus off.

So these two towns, one on either end of that little narrow neck about six miles apart, very important commercial centers.

Being a harbor town, Corinth was very important to the sailors.

The patron goddess of Corinth was Aphrodite or Venus, the goddess of love, and Venus was worshipped with public prostitution, and it was a very degraded town.

[00:10:08] Paul comes to this town from Athens, the university city par excellence in the Roman Empire, and Paul is alone.

Very seldom on Paul's journeys do we find him alone, and I would like to emphasize in speaking of Paul and his fellow workers that the work of God involves teamwork. Now God uses individuals, and he may use individuals alone.

There's an Elijah who for many years of his life and ministry was by himself, and being by himself, and facing the enemy by himself, eventually led him astray.

And God had to remind Elijah when Elijah says, well I'm the last one left who's faithful to you, and they're trying to kill me, and so on and so forth, God had to remind him [00:11:03] of 7,000 more that he had his eye on, and that Elijah was completely overlooking. And yet one of those was evidently known to Elijah because God simply has to mention his name, go up to Abel Meholah and anoint Elijah, the son of Shaphat, as prophet in your room, as your replacement, and so on.

Well there we see the dangers of constantly working alone.

We can get very taken up with ourselves, with our work, with our suffering, with our sacrifice, and lose

sight of what God is doing and how he's using others. And I appreciate it, to what we heard about the baptism of the Spirit drawing us, uniting us into one body with all believers.

And you know we don't have the baptism of the Spirit for the brethren, and the baptism [00:12:04] of the Spirit for the open brethren, and the baptism of the Spirit for the Baptists, and for this group, and that group, and some other group, there are not a number of churches that are being formed on earth, regardless of how men may look at it, but it's one church. And within this, God is looking for his own to work as a team.

And it's interesting that the work that God gives is not all the same kind of work.

Recently in Kenosha, in these weeks that we had the opportunity to spend there, I told the brethren, I said, I'm here because of my dad's needs, and I trust that you won't expect that I'm going to simply take over your assembly and minister every meeting and this type of thing. And I said, I just want to fit in as a brother in the local assembly during our time here. [00:13:02] I said, sure, I can give some ministry, but I'm not going to, don't expect me to do this automatically in every meeting. So we enjoyed the Bible readings in Colossians 1, Paul was praying for these Colossian believers to the end that you may be filled with the full knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding so as to walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the true knowledge of God. Bearing fruit in every good work.

He doesn't write that letter to an individual. He writes it to an assembly. I don't think there's any individual that can bear fruit in every good work. But within the framework of an assembly, this can be done.

And commented just that evening as we were studying the portion, if I were to go downstairs [00:14:03] into the basement of the Kenosha meeting hall and sit down at one of those sewing machines that they have there, whatever the result of it would be, it would not be a good work. I don't know how to run those machines. But I know that there are some sisters in that meeting that come together every two weeks, spend several hours at those sewing machines, and they produce some very good work for the mission field.

And there are, you know, in the framework of an assembly, there are brothers who minister the word publicly, and there are others who service as a quiet work in the background. One brother, retired brother from the assembly there, came every Tuesday to do mother shopping for her.

And right now he's got the keys to the house, and he's picking up the mail, doing things like this.

Well, this is part of the every good work that has to be done. [00:15:05] He's a brother who is, we would regard him as an elder in the assembly there, and yet he has no gift for public ministry.

But these kind of works need to be done too. And this is what we're going to be seeing, at least that direction is what we'll see with this Aquila and Priscilla. Paul comes to Corinth, and 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, and because he was a tent maker, as they were, he stayed and worked with them.

Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. So here Paul comes to a new city, and he's by himself, and he hears of this Jewish couple, at least the man is a Jew, I assume his wife was too, and you know they're so up to date, [00:16:08] so cosmopolitan.

There's some people who all their life, you know, never moved more than 10 or 20 miles from where they grew up, when we lived in this county. It was interesting, just across the county line, we were almost on the county line, just over in the next county, there were some people that I had the privilege of taking into Catawba County, on the other side of the river here, for the first time in their lives. And they were people that were considerably older than I. They lived in Iredell, I lived in Alexander, and I took them across the river to Catawba for the first time in their life. They hadn't been that far away from home in that direction. Well you know, there are people like that, and then there are other people, and our society today is that our roots do not go down very deep, and we move from one place to the other [00:17:06] quite readily.

This man was born in Pontus, if we had a map of Turkey, Pontus is the northeast corner of Turkey, up along the Black Sea.

And in the course of his career, in the course of his business, he had gone to Rome and had lived there.

And then came some problem that the emperor had, he was holding something against the Jews, and the emperor had great rights, and he kicked all the Jews out of Rome, expelled all the Jews from Rome.

We don't read that this man was at fault, but he was a Jew, expelled from Rome. He comes to Corinth with his wife. Where he got his wife, we're not told, whether she was a native of Pontus, whether she was from Italy, or where, but we're given the names.

Aquila, in Latin, Aquila means an eagle, an eagle.

[00:18:05] When you read it, you hear somebody's aquiline notes, it looks like a beak of an eagle. The name Aquila, in Greek, means immovable.

I like to think of it in both ways, an immovable eagle. This man was really quite flexible. Priscilla is the diminutive of the name Prisca.

Prisca is the real name, Priscilla is the diminutive, just like we have Susan, and we call her Susie, you know, something like this. And Prisca means old or ancient, it's the feminine, and the feminine diminutive there, Priscilla, really means a little old lady. Sometimes a teenager can talk about my old lady very contemptuously, and sometimes a very elderly gentleman speaks of the old lady, and it's with real love and affection. [00:19:04] This is the meaning of the word Priscilla.

And here they are, Jews of the dispersion, and they've been run from one place to another, and sometimes moves are based on economics, sometimes they're based on racial matters, sometimes on, you know, persecution. We have an awful lot of refugees in the world today.

No children are ever mentioned for this couple.

They seem to have been a childless couple. No children, no grandchildren ever mentioned here. And yet this couple is a couple that uses their home, whatever it may have been, for the Lord.

And wherever we find them, their home is what they have for the Lord. There's a little course about Samson had, or Shemgar had an ox goad, and Dorcas had [00:20:01] a needle, and the various things that different ones had. Well, this couple, wherever they went, they had a home that was open for the Lord.

They were tent makers by occupation, and you know, Christians are spoken of as being strangers and pilgrims in this world. Well, here's a couple that certainly went from one place to another, even their occupation reminds us that here we have no abiding city.

And they didn't put their roots down deep to try to build something for themselves. They weren't holding back something for themselves.

They've just gotten to Corinth, and they've gotten started in this business. Paul hears about them. He goes to meet them, and something strikes, and he decides he's going to live with them.

They invite him to live with him. [00:21:02] Their home was open for the servant of God. Now, they had just gotten to Corinth themselves a short time before. Probably didn't have a big nice house, maybe a rented apartment or whatever, but Paul could live with them. They could work together, and it must have been a profitable time. As they worked on the tents, something like Madeline doing her knitting, I said not to click the needles too loud. Well, you know, making tents is not a noisy kind of work, and I'm sure they could carry on conversation in so doing, and Paul could help them, instruct them.

We're not told at what point in their travels they had been saved, but when you read Paul's letter to the Corinthians, and he tells them in 2 Corinthians, be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, I don't think Paul would have gone into business partnership with a [00:22:06] pair of unconverted Jews.

I really believe that they had come to know the Lord perhaps before they got to Corinth. They're of Jewish background, or he is of Jewish background, but Paul lives with them, works with them. We're not told that they're saved through his ministry, but I believe they're definitely shaped and formed through his ministry and through their working together. And we're not told that they, you know, stood on the street corner together preaching, but here they were making tents together, and Paul writes to the Corinthians later and has to remind them that he had not received financially from them, but that he had supported himself.

To the Ephesian elders he can say, these my hands have ministered not only to my own necessities, [00:23:03] but to those that were with me. Paul was not ashamed, or he didn't feel it was out of character for him as a servant of the Lord to work with his hands to help to earn his support.

And when you think of how he was, you know, going from place to place, how would the saints at Antioch have known where to send a letter to him with some financial ministry? You know, if he didn't work in this way, he would have been stuck, humanly speaking. I mean, God could take care of him, but there's some very practical wisdom in his ways. Paul stays with them, lives with them, works with them for approximately a year and a half, and there's some interesting experiences at Corinth. But I believe Paul was much more free to do his work for the Lord because he didn't have [00:24:03] to worry

from day to day about cooking meals and about where he was going to sleep and so on. He could work with them making tents, but I'm sure there were things that they took care of in the background.

When Paul writes to the Philippians, we should really get to this tonight, but we've got a long list of other fellow workers that will take us past midnight tonight to get through if we spend time with it.

He writes about those women that labored with me in the gospel at Philippi. Well there was a Lydia, and they walked together from her home. She had opened her home after she was baptized and insisted that they come there. And they walked from there to this place on the riverbank where the women would congregate for prayer.

And you know, he credits fellow workers that we wouldn't think of.

[00:25:02] I've counted quite a long list of people that are regarded as Paul's fellow workers. We're just going into detail on a few of them. But here, this couple, they welcome Paul into their home.

By their support, their background work, they make it possible for him, every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. And we find when Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. At first they seemed to have worked together, and then they just said, Paul, take all the time you need. You know, we're partners, and you do the preaching, we'll do the tent making. And they worked together. He was living with them. And it's beautiful to see how they are willing to help in their way in the work of the Lord.

[00:26:09] So, there are various experiences.

Brought before the tribunal, Paul is at least accused.

There were reasons why Paul would love to have left town and gotten out of there. And the Lord said, well, I've got a lot of people here in this town, and you just stay here, don't be afraid of anything. And the Lord took care of him. Later on in the chapter, we find that Paul finally leaves.

In verse 18, Paul, having yet stayed there many days, took leave of the brethren and sailed thence to Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila.

Oh, they accompany him.

He's going on.

He's headed toward Jerusalem. He's got a vow.

And when he pulls stakes there at Corinth, Priscilla and Aquila go with him. [00:27:05] They're a flexible couple.

How flexible are we when it comes to the Lord's interests? They were tent makers. There was probably a demand for tents wherever they would go, but sometimes we get very attached to a place.

We may get very attached to certain people. And there are those whom the Lord would leave all their lives in one place, and there are those who move periodically.

Talking to a brother recently, a fellow from hospice who had come to visit my dad a few times, his chaplain with him, it turned out he was a lovely Christian, and I asked him where he was from. He said, well, he couldn't really say where he was from because his father had been in the army, and in the first 18 years of his life, he had lived in 18 different places. So he couldn't claim any one place as hometown or something like that. [00:28:05] But we have all kinds of people.

This couple, for the Lord's sake, was flexible. They perhaps felt they could be of some further service to Paul. And Paul's boat puts in at Ephesus, and there's cargo to be unloaded and other cargo to be loaded, and Paul uses the opportunity in verse 19.

He entered into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews while the boat is being taken care of.

He's using the opportunity, going to the synagogue to speak with the Jews. And he finds such an interest that they ask him to stay. We'd like you to stay, brother, and have some more meetings. And no, he says, I can't.

I've got to keep the coming feast at Jerusalem. [00:29:01] I've got a vow to the Lord to go there, and so on. I'm not going to rule on whether Paul should or should not have made this vow, but he feels he has to go on.

But we read that he left them there.

He left Aquila and Priscilla there.

Doesn't say they decided to stay there. He left them there.

Well, there's an interest, Aquila and Priscilla, why don't you follow up on it? And yet, as we go through these verses about this couple, there's no record of Aquila ever preaching a sermon. In fact, when we read the story of Aquila and Priscilla carefully, it would almost seem that Priscilla was perhaps the more active in the family, the more outgoing, perhaps the more gifted.

We never read of Aquila preaching the gospel or doing any public teaching.

[00:30:07] But here they are, both of them, left behind at Ephesus, and it's not accidental, it's very deliberate, they're staying behind. They're going to follow up on some of this interest. Now they go to the synagogue, a little bit farther down in the chapter, in verse 24, we find here's a certain Jew, Apollos, from Alexandria in Egypt, the second city in the empire, an eloquent man, mighty in the scriptures, arrived at Ephesus. He was instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in his spirit, he spoke and taught exactly the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, and Aquila and Priscilla having heard him, oh, they went to the synagogue, huh?

[00:31:03] I thought they were Christians.

I thought they were in the assembly at Corinth. And here at Ephesus, they're going to the synagogue.



They're going to a different church. They haven't separated.

Boy, they're a failure, aren't they? You know, according to the rules that we draw up for ourselves, that Ian was speaking of, you know, well, we want to bear in mind that at this synagogue, there was an interest for the things of God. They had wanted Paul to stay. In the next chapter, when he comes back, he spends several months preaching in that synagogue, and then an opposition develops. And then, after an opposition develops, Paul separated the disciples, and they started meeting in the school or lecture hall of Tyrannus.

[00:32:03] They couldn't go on with opposition in the synagogue, but while there was an interest there, here they were.

We don't read Aquila was doing all the preaching. No, they go to the synagogue, and here's a man from Alexandria, Egypt, holding meetings in the synagogue, and they hear him preach. You know, it's so out of character to a lot of things that we have developed rules for ourselves on, but this is where God uses them.

They're attending synagogue service, they hear Apollo's preaching, he's fervent, he's giving it all that he has, but it's evident there's some things he doesn't know. He knows only the baptism of John.

He doesn't know Christianity as such.

So what do they do?

Approach him after the meeting, grab him by the coat lapel, brother, you're all wrong.

[00:33:09] Don't you know this and this and this? Apollo says, why don't you come home with us and have dinner? I don't know where they were living at the time, but it says that they took him to them.

And I understand that to be they took him home with them. They brought him over for a meal. And then we read here that they took him to them and while Priscilla was busy in the kitchen cooking coffee and making fine dinner, Aquila sat in the living room and explained everything properly to Apollo. Is that what it says?

Well, isn't that the way it's supposed to be done? I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over a man, and so isn't her service [00:34:02] in the kitchen and the man's service in the living room explaining the scripture? That's not what we read here.

It's possible that it may have been that way, but that's not the impression we get when we read the scripture.

Aquila and Priscilla, having heard him, took him to them and unfolded to him the way of God more exactly. And I'm reading this from Mr. Darby's translation, which we kind of use as a standard for accuracy as to a literal word for word translation.

They took him to them and unfolded to him the way of God more exactly. I'm sure that after having

been with Paul for a year and a half, having absorbed his teaching, Priscilla would take her role as a sister, Aquila would seek to take his role as a brother, but you know it's so beautiful to see how they can work together. [00:35:05] This type of thing today is referred to sometimes as friendship evangelism. We don't read of Aquila preaching. It's not Priscilla preaching either, but they open their home, they get acquainted with people, and there in the quiet, in the privacy of their home, they together are helping this man whom God has been using, and whom God can now use in a much more mighty way. He accepts this help, and it says when he purposed to go into Achaia, the brethren wrote to the disciples, engaging them to receive him, who being come, contributed much to those who believed through grace. For he with great force convinced the Jews publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

Oh, what's this?

The brethren wrote.

[00:36:03] The assembly, as we know it, doesn't get formed until the next chapter, and the next chapter begins.

It came to pass that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul comes back to Ephesus, and then the real work of the formation of a public assembly there begins, and yet it would seem that while Apollos was there, Aquila and Priscilla, their being there had borne fruit to the extent that we read of brethren who can write to those in Achaia, commending Apollos to them, and so on.

So evidently something was going on.

Perhaps it wasn't a full-blown assembly as we would look at it, and they certainly had not separated from the synagogue yet. [00:37:01] Paul does that in the next chapter, but they're our brethren. They're people who have been saved, evidently, through the ministry of an Aquila and a Priscilla.

They must be meeting there in the home.

At least Aquila and Priscilla are acquainted with them, and when Apollos is going to leave, they can write to brethren at Corinth. Achaia was the province, you know, like the state today, and Corinth was the city.

While things are not all as organized as we would want to see things today sometimes, we see there's a real work for God going on, and a work for God isn't dependent on whether it's, you know, all the P's and Q's are exactly in place the way we figured they ought to [00:38:01] be. Thank God that homes can be opened and used for the Lord, and that brethren can be meeting together, whether they're breaking bread yet, whether not, I mean, what is an assembly, and at what point does a group that meets together become an assembly? And should we be that concerned about all these outward details, or should we be glad that the work of God is going on, and that there's growth and that there's progress? We see growth and progress here.

Apollo's usefulness and sphere of ministry certainly expands, and this man who, shall we say, came into fellowship with Aquila and Priscilla and a few others who met in their home where there's no real assembly started yet, he is commended by that group to those [00:39:04] in Achaia where there are some assemblies, and he's received by them, and he becomes a very useful brother in a public way,

convincing these Jews, and so on.

We have things in the book of Acts here that, sad to say, many dear brethren wouldn't tolerate among us today, and yet this is the work of God going on.

Well, we had three mentions of this couple here in this chapter.

Now there are three other mentions of this couple in scripture. We'll turn to 1 Corinthians 16, and you know there's a lot of helpful information in some of these chapters with names, if we don't mind reading some names.

In 1 Corinthians 16, verse 19, Paul is getting to the end of the epistle.

[00:40:07] He says, the assemblies of Asia salute you.

Aquila and Priscilla, with the assembly in their house, salute you much in the Lord.

Well, the first public meeting place of what became the assembly at Ephesus was this hall of Tyrannus, school of Tyrannus.

In Acts 19, Paul is writing sometime later. He's still at Ephesus. He's saying in this same chapter, in verse 8, I remain in Ephesus till Pentecost, for a great door is open to me and an effectual one, and the adversaries many. So we would put this letter somewhere in Acts 19, historically speaking, where Paul is right in the swing of this great work at Ephesus. [00:41:02] We find in the New Testament that assemblies generally didn't have big, beautiful halls that they built with thousands and thousands of shekels or talents or whatever, but oftentimes they met in homes, and because of persecution, for one thing, there was a whole lot less to lose and they were a whole lot less conspicuous, you know, not meeting in a great big cathedral somewhere.

But here, this, first Paul is living in the home with this couple. Then we read of their welcoming Apollos, and we read of some brethren who can at least write a letter, and now Paul says, while he's still at Ephesus, the assembly with the assembly that meets at their home.

Now the assembly may have been meeting in several locations in the city of Ephesus. It's somewhere, I believe, that Ephesus at that time is estimated to have had a population [00:42:02] of 120,000, and remember, people got places by walking, most generally.

So there may have been assemblies in several places in the town, but anyway, here is an assembly in their house.

What does this involve? Well, when the assembly at Taylorsville started, it met in a house, and I can still remember, you know, there had to be a little cleaning done before the meetings, and often a bit of cleaning after the meetings. Kids don't always wipe their feet on a muddy day before they come into the house, and they're not always too careful what they might climb onto, and you know, things can get broken, and sometimes there are refreshments, and you know, before long, everybody's had their refreshments and somehow they've disappeared, and there's still a stack of dishes standing there, and so on and so forth.

There's a lot involved in an assembly meeting in a house. [00:43:05] There's a service for the Lord. These are Paul's fellow workers. He's left them there. They're able to carry on. He's back at Ephesus again, and he's sending their greetings to Corinth. They have happy memories of the time they spent at Corinth. They didn't leave Corinth because they got fed up with that assembly and thought they would start something else elsewhere. I don't think God would have blessed it in this way, but here in Ephesus, the assembly is in their house, and they salute you much in the Lord. Oh, they send lots of greetings. They send all their love, and you know, one can see the warmth of the relationship here. These are beautiful things to see, and here, it's a house.

I don't know where they lived in Corinth, whether they had a house of their own. They had just gotten there. [00:44:02] I can picture them renting a place for a while. They only stayed there a year and a half, then they had gone on to Ephesus. Where did they live originally? But at this point, they've got a house, but you know, the house isn't a decorative thing. It's just got to shine and be polished all the time, and you don't want to invite families with little kids over there because they might break something and so on. It's a house that is available for the Lord.

It's used for him.

Okay, Romans 16.

Paul finally comes to the point of the letter to the Romans in the first verses where he commends Phoebe. Now, this is the longest letter of commendation that I've ever read. [00:45:02] Occasionally, one hears a long letter of commendation, but not 16 chapters worth, but the commendation itself is passed over in two verses.

This is Phoebe. Now, in verse 3, Where is this couple now?

Back in Rome.

That's where they had been driven out in the reign of the Emperor Claudius. All Jews had been expelled. They spent several years in Corinth. They've been several years in Ephesus. Now they're back at Rome again, and what's happening there? One of the three or four assemblies mentioned in this last chapter, or three or four segments [00:46:06] of the assembly at Rome, depending on how much you follow the traditions that we've grown up with, was meeting in their house.

The apostle isn't quite as careful as some of our brethren in the last century were about this. He says greet the assembly at their house. London was supposed to have only one assembly, although it met in 20 or 30 places, and they had to have joint brothers' meetings every Saturday night to try to regulate the affairs, and a lot of the divisions grew out of that kind of thinking, really. Here Paul recognizes assemblies in several parts of Rome, and yet the letter is addressed to the Church of God, the assembly at Rome.

In one sense, there's one assembly, but they meet in various places. Among other places, this couple has come back to their home. [00:47:04] Maybe they had to rent it out very suddenly when they left, but here they are back. It's open to the assembly.

Nice to see that, isn't it? In the Derby, the very exact translation, this time we have salute Prisca and Aquila.

She's getting older.

She's not called Priscilla anymore, not called Susie, but Susan, Prisca, using the full name now. A little older, a little more dignified, but they're still the same couple using what they have for the Lord.

What does Paul add? He says, they stake their necks, they risk their lives for me.

We see a little bit of what this could be like in Act 17 when the apostle is at Thessalonica, [00:48:07] and the Jews start a riot, and they don't find Paul, but they catch Jason, the man at whose home he was staying, and they haul him off before the tribunal. The man has to post-bond and so on in order to get free, and Paul, when the riots were raised in Ephesus, when Demetrius the silversmith raised the riots, perhaps it's at that time that in some way this couple risked their lives for the apostle.

The fact of having a dangerous man like this at Thessalonica, he was accused of turning the world upside down.

These men who turned the world upside down have come to us, whom Jason has received. This put them into jeopardy, and Paul commends this couple for whatever way it was, having [00:49:07] risked their lives for him.

When you open your home for the Lord, it may involve considerable risk in the long run. It doesn't only involve risk to those fancy pieces of china that may be on the shelf that some kid can reach, but it may involve a whole lot more.

You put your home at the Lord's disposal, and well, what's going to happen?

You're identified with his work in a way that may cost something.

Paul says, I'm thankful to them, sure, not just myself, but all the assemblies of the Gentiles are thankful to this couple for having risked their lives for me. Remember when he was at Ephesus, he wrote and he said he had fought wild beasts at Ephesus.

[00:50:06] Whether he was actually in the arena fighting against a lion or a tiger is questionable, but this was the opposition that the enemy had raised up, and this couple with whom he would stay, they shared the dangers that he faced.

Beautiful to see that, isn't it?

We're thankful to Prisca and Aquila for what they did as fellow laborers of Paul.

Turn to 2 Timothy 4, the last mention of this couple.

Verse 19, salute Prisca and Aquila, and the house of Onesiphorus, Erastus remained in [00:51:06] Corinth, and so on.

Paul is writing to Timothy from Rome, and Timothy is evidently back in the province of Asia, Ephesus was a major city there, and so when Paul says, salute Prisca and Aquila, again they're gone from Rome, they're back at Ephesus evidently, on the move.

Their roots were not deep here on this earth, strangers and pilgrims here on this earth, but he says, salute them.

Earlier in this epistle, he had very sadly written, Timothy, thou knowest this, that all who are in Asia, of whom is Phygelus and Hermogenes, have turned away from me. [00:52:02] And there's not a long list of greetings at the end of this epistle. These names are mentioned, a number of them because of their opposition and the problems that they've caused, and others that Paul knew, and he's reporting on their travels in different directions. But as far as giving greetings, most have turned their back on him. But here's a couple that have gotten older, the last letter that Paul writes, and he can say, salute Prisca and Aquila.

They're going on, they're faithfully walking with the Lord, despite what others are doing. You know, sometimes what others do, and the unfaithfulness of others, is a tremendous discouragement for us.

And we feel like throwing in the towel too. No, salute Prisca and Aquila.

[00:53:01] Just a few words.

Nothing is mentioned as to a house, as to an assembly meeting at the house, because those at Ephesus by and large have turned their back on Paul by this time. But even if nobody comes to the house to meet with you, go on for the Lord.

That's what this couple did. And Paul can say, greet them, salute them.

It's nice to see they're continuing on.

There are ups and downs in the work of God.

We've traced Aquila and Priscilla over a number of years, in a number of cities, under quite different circumstances.

But how good to see them going on with the Lord, despite what people do.

And this is what the Lord looks for, for ourself.

[00:54:01] Their service isn't mentioned here, but their faithfulness shines out, doesn't it? And that's what the Lord is looking for. Well done, good and faithful servant.

Enter into the joy of thy Lord.

Well, may we do likewise.