

Series #24: Women of the Early Church
Session #3 – Women of the Epistles
Tuesday, May 4, 2021

Priscilla (Romans 16:3-5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19)

- Priscilla (/pri'silə/; Greek: Πρίσκιλλα, Priskilla or sometimes misspelled as Priscila) and Aquila (/ækwɪlə/; Greek: Ἀκύλας, Akylas) were a first century Christian missionary married couple described in the New Testament. Aquila is traditionally listed among the Seventy Disciples. They lived, worked, and traveled with the Apostle Paul, who described them as his “fellow workers in Christ Jesus” (Romans 16:3).
- Priscilla and Aquila are described in the New Testament as providing a presence that strengthened the early Christian churches. Paul was generous in his recognition and acknowledgment of his indebtedness to them (Romans 16:3–4). Together, they are credited with instructing Apollos, a major evangelist of the first century, and “[explaining] to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26).
- It is thought by some to be possible, in light of her apparent prominence, that Priscilla held the office of presbyter. She also is thought by some to be the anonymous author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.
- Priscilla was a woman of Jewish heritage and one of the earliest known Christian converts who lived in Rome. Her name is a Roman diminutive for Prisca which was her formal name. She is often thought to have been the first example of a female preacher or teacher in early church history. Coupled with her husband, she was a celebrated missionary, and a friend and co-worker of Paul.
- While the view is not widely held among scholars, some scholars have suggested that Priscilla was the author of the Book of Hebrews. Although acclaimed for its artistry, originality, and literary excellence, it is the only book in the New Testament with author anonymity. Hoppin and others suggest that Priscilla was the author, but that her name was omitted either to suppress its female authorship, or to protect the letter itself from suppression.
- She is the only Priscilla named in the New Testament. The fact that she is always mentioned with her husband, Aquila, disambiguates her from different women revered as saints in Catholicism, such as (1) Priscilla of the Roman Glabrio family, the wife of Quintus Cornelius Pudens, who according to some traditions hosted St. Peter circa AD 42, and (2) a third-century virgin martyr named Priscilla and also called Prisca.

The Roman Women

1. Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2)
 - a. An important leader in the early church.
 - b. Probably the bearer of the letter from Paul to the church in Rome.
 - c. Introduced as “a sister” and a servant or deacon of the church in Cenchreæ.
 - d. She probably led the community and presided over worship.
 - e. Independent, wealthy, a benefactor of Paul and others.
2. Mary of Rome (Romans 16:6)
 - a. Not much is known about this Mary.

- b. She was a hard worker for the Roman church.
 - c. Perhaps a widow, as she is not mentioned in connection with a man/husband.
 - d. Commentators think that Paul didn't mention a lot about her because she might have been a very prominent member of the church in Rome and quite well-known. Also that she is named early in the list.
3. Junia (Romans 16:7)
 - a. Probably the wife of Andronicus and together they are named as “prominent among the apostles” and “fellow prisoners.”
 - b. She is probably an early believer, even before Paul was.
 - c. Endured some sort of imprisonment for the sake of the gospel.
 4. Tryphena & Tryphosa
 - a. Not much is known about them. Possibly twins.
 - b. They likely belonged to the same noble Roman family and very prominent or involved in the church, perhaps even deacons, as Paul singled them out for their work.
 5. Persis (Romans 16:12)
 - a. Not much is known about her. Her name is possibly derived from the Greek name of the country of Persia, although there is no evidence that she came from Persia.
 - b. Another hard worker for the church.
 6. The Mother of Rufus (Romans 16:13)
 - a. Paul considered his friend's mother to be a mother to himself as well.
 - b. This kind of language supports the Christian community being like a family.
 7. The Sister of Nereus (Romans 16:15)
 - a. Mentioned, not by name, but as the sister of Nereus. Nereus was a Gentile Greek name, often carried by slaves in Rome—although it is not certain that they were slaves. But they were nevertheless leaders in the church.
 8. Julia (Romans 16:15)
 - a. Probably a Roman citizen, the sister or wife of Philologus.
 - b. Probably also a leader in the house-church community in Rome.

Chloe (1 Corinthians 1:11)

1. Her name means “green herb.”
2. Probably a prominent figure in the church in Corinth. Paul mentions her as though she is clearly known to the readers/hearers.

Euodia & Syntyche (Philippians 4:2-3)

1. Some translations use Euodias, which is a male name, but Paul's letter clearly says this is a woman.
2. She and Syntyche had some sort of disagreement, the nature of which is unknown.

Nympha (Colossians 4:15)

1. A leader in the church in Colossæ who held gatherings in her house, so she was probably a wealthy matron.
2. Her name has been masculinized (Nymphas) in some translations.

Lois

1. The grandmother of Timothy.
2. This is the only occurrence of the word ‘grandmother’ (mammē,)in the Bible.

Eunice

Claudia (2 Timothy 4:21)

1. Her name means “lame.”
2. A principal woman of honor in the local church. Possibly of Gentile origin.
3. Several scholars suggest that Claudia was the wife of Pudens, with whom she is mentioned, and that Linus, who became bishop of Rome was their son.

Apphia (Philemon 2)

1. A believer from the church in Colossæ.
2. Apphia is believed to have been the wife of Philemon and either the mother or sister of Archippus who was evidently a close member of the family.
3. She must have been closely associated with Philemon, otherwise she would not have been mentioned in connection with a domestic matter.

The Elect Lady & her sister (2 John)

1. <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/all-women-bible/Elect-Lady>
2. Exemplary
3. Hospitable
4. Privileged