

The Gospel According to Paul: Romans

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Personal Greeting to Saints at Rome

Greet **Priscilla and Aquila**, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. ⁵Likewise greet the church that is in their house [1st house church]. Greet my beloved **Epaenetus**, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ. ⁶Greet **Mary**, who labored much for us. ⁷Greet **Andronicus and Junia**, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. ⁸Greet **Amplias**, my beloved in the Lord. ⁹Greet **Urbanus**, our fellow worker in Christ, and **Stachys**, my beloved. ¹⁰Greet **Apelles**, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of **the household of aristobulus** [2nd house church]. ¹¹Greet **Herodion**, my countryman. Greet those who are of **the household of narcissus** who are in the lord [3rd house church] ¹²Greet **Tryphena and Tryphosa**, who have labored in the Lord. Greet the beloved **Persis**, who labored much in the Lord. ¹³Greet **Rufus**, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. ¹⁴greet **Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes**, and the brethren who are with them [4th house church]. ¹⁵Greet **Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas**, and all the saints who are with them [5th house church]. ¹⁶Greet one another with a holy kiss. **The churches of Christ** greet you.

Priscilla and Aquila

Greet **Priscilla and Aquila**, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks,

but also all the churches of the Gentiles.⁵ Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

Priscilla (Latin diminutive is *Prisca*) is mentioned before Aquila four times (Acts 18:18, 26; 2 Tim 4:19, Ro 16:3) with the order reversed two times (Acts 18:2, 1 Cor 16:19). Paul first met this Jewish Christian couple (Aquila was Jewish see Acts 18:2) on his first visit to Corinth when all Jews were expelled from Rome by the Emperor Claudius in AD49. This expulsion caused Aquila and Priscilla to migrate to Corinth where they encountered Paul (Ac18:2). They were tent-makers, which was Paul's own trade, and he found a home with them. When he left Corinth and went to Ephesus, Priscilla & Aquila accompanied him & settled for a time in Ephesus (Ac18:18) when the party stopped briefly (Ac 18:19).

They must have been knowledgeable of the Scriptures and of the story of Jesus (the Gospel). While at Ephesus, they met a young Jewish preacher “named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, and eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures.” He did not have a full understanding of the gospel, “being acquainted only with the baptism of John, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:24-26). This would have involved showing Apollos that his message, which was rooted in the messianic expectation, had been fulfilled by Jesus of Nazareth.

After Claudius died, Aquila and Priscilla returned to Rome, where they lived and ministered when Paul wrote this letter to the church there. Later, they returned to Ephesus (2 Tim 4:19)

Who for My Life Risked Their Own Necks

Apparently at some point in Paul's ministry this courageous couple "put their necks on the block" so to speak, risking their lives for Paul. Their sacrifice brings to mind John's exhortation "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren," (1 John 3:16).

To Whom Not Only Do I Give Thanks But Also All the Churches of the Gentiles

Priscilla & Aquila obviously rendered selfless service to many other

Christians as well; Paul goes on to make the statement that to them not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Wherever they traveled and lived, this Jewish couple ministered to all who came their way, and without prejudice. Jesus words in Mark 10, could easily apply to Priscilla and Aquila,

Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life, (Mark 10:29-30).

Likewise Greet the Church That Is in Their House

Early congregations met in homes. There is no clear example of a separate building set apart for Christian worship within the limits of the Roman Empire before the third century (i.e., the 200's); although there must have been some adequate meeting places for such churches as that of Jerusalem and Antioch of Syria. It is the case, however, Christian congregations were dependent upon the hospitality of prominent church members who furnished their homes for this purpose in many places.

In Ephesus the house of Priscilla & Aquila was a meeting place for the saints (1 Cor 16:19), as it was here in Rome. These facts provide a clue to the social nature of the early church. In a city with a Christian community of any size; there appear to be several "congregations" meeting in different houses. People just got together where they could for larger meetings (e.g., Priscilla & Aquila) were a mighty influence for Christ wherever they went. Greet also "the church in their house" seems to indicate that wherever this couple went, they soon had a church meeting in their house.

Small Jewish synagogues sometimes met in homes before they could purchase buildings; wherever a *minyan* of 10 Jewish males could gather together for the reading of Scripture and for prayer, there was a synagogue (synagogue – to gather together). Many Greek religious associations did the same; churches did so for some time. In Rome, many well-to-do apartments existed above shops in multistory tenement buildings; Aquila and Priscilla probably lived above their artisan shop. It is curious to note how often this practice is mentioned in the New Testament.

In Acts 8:3, we read, “But Saul began to destroy the **church**. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.” In Acts 12:5, “So Peter was kept in prison, but the **church** was earnestly praying to God for him.” In Acts 12:11-17 we read,

Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating." ¹²When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. ¹³Peter knocked at the outer entrance and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. ¹⁴When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!" ¹⁵"You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel." ¹⁶But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. ¹⁷Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the brothers about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

In Romans 16:5, we read, “Greet also the **church** that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.” So also in Romans, 16:23-24, “Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole **church** here enjoy, sends you his greetings. Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.” In 1 Cor 11:18, Paul writes, “In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a **church**, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it.” So also in 1 Cor 14:23, “So if the whole **church** comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?” In verse 26, he says, “What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the **church**.” In 16:19, Paul writes of, “The **churches** in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the **church** that meets at their house.” So also in Col 4:15, “Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the **church** in her house;” and in Philemon 1:2, “to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the **church**

that meets in your home.”

Conclusion

It is significant that Paul, here in the Romans 16 text, mentions a number of households or groups in his greetings. It would appear that these were house churches. Note this in the following,

*Greet **Priscilla and Aquila**, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. ⁵Likewise greet **the church that is in their house** [1st house church]. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ. ⁶Greet Mary, who labored much for us. ⁷Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. ⁸Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. ⁹Greet urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. ¹⁰greet Apelles, approved in Christ. greet those who are of **the household of Aristobulus** [2nd house church]. ¹¹Greet Herodion, my countryman. Greet those who are of **the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord** [3rd house church]. ¹²Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord. ¹³Greet **Rufus**, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. ¹⁴**Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them** [4th house church]. ¹⁵**Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them** [5th house church]. ¹⁶Greet one another with a holy kiss. **The churches of Christ** greet you.*

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