



The POINT OF NO RETURN

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When you reach the point where all the bridges are burned, all the aces up your sleeve are gone, then you have only one way to go—and that's forward.

Of all the fine arts, the finest art is life. Learning to live and to live dynamically within the framework of God's Word makes life scintillating, exciting, and fulfilling. Neither sunrise nor sunset nor any gorgeous night when the star-studded heavens glisten in the vast canopy of blue is nearly as beautiful as a man or a woman for whom the living of

life has become an art.

A college graduate, just after receiving her baccalaureate degree, remarked to me, "I have as fine an education from one of our great universities as money can make available, but all my educational achievements and successes were primarily designed to teach me how to make a better living. But you, sir,

in a class called Power for Abundant Living, taught me how to live."

There's only one way to go in life, and that's forward. We in The Way Ministry have reached the point of no return. Our bridges are burned. We move forward, building new bridges, new roads, new highways for those who desire to travel—not on the dead-end roads of life, not on the

back roads, not on the mud roads of life, but on the highway marked "Glory Road."

The first-century Church certainly moved forward, beginning on the day of Pentecost with the magnificent outpouring of the holy spirit. In this article I want to look at the lives of a man and his wife who were pioneers in the early Church, paving the way for others. As what we would call Twig coordinators, these two believers lived life with a focus on God and His Word. There was no point of return for them; they were committed to the forward move of God's Word.

Aquila and Priscilla are mentioned in the books of Acts, Romans, I Corinthians, and II Timothy. Let's start with Romans 16:3: "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus." The Apostle Paul writes to the Church at Rome, "You greet Priscilla and Aquila, who are my helpers." They worked with Paul. And they were *in* Christ Jesus. Christ in them was salvation; but they were also living in Christ Jesus. That was their walk.

Verses 4 and 5: "Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise *greet* the church that is in their [Aquila and Priscilla's] house. . . ." Who are these people, Aquila and Priscilla, who laid down their necks, for whom Paul gave thanks? Who are these people with a church in their house, their own home? Who is this Aquila and who is this Priscilla?

In I Corinthians 16:19 we read: "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house." Aquila and Priscilla were carrying out the Word of God and the ministry of God, and they were meeting in their home. The family, the home, has long been a central point of contact between God and His believers.

In Acts 18 we have the record of these two. Verse 1: "After these things Paul departed from Athens. . . ." When Paul left Athens, he went to Corinth and found a certain Judean named Aquila, who had been born in Pontus. Aquila had lately come from Rome, or from somewhere near Rome, with his wife Priscilla because

Claudius the Emperor had given an official order that no Judean was allowed to stay in Rome. Thus Aquila and Priscilla moved to Corinth.

Verse 3: "And because he [Paul] was of the same craft [as Aquila], he abode with them and wrought. . . ." Paul stayed with Aquila and Priscilla, and he worked with Aquila, "for by their occupation they were tent-makers." The King James Version says "tentmakers." That's not accurate. Aquila and Paul were saddle-

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makers. Women wove the tents, not men. Men made saddles.

So Paul lived with Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth and made saddles with Aquila. He spoke God's Word. Some believed, but many hardened their hearts and persecuted the believers.

Paul was being threatened; his life was being threatened; his God-given ministry was being threatened. Then one night, according to verse 9, the Lord spoke to Paul by way of a vision: ". . . Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace." In the midst of this adversity, the Lord told Paul not to be afraid but to speak the Word. Just because people are threatening you, just because people are trying to silence you, don't be still. Keep talking the Word, for the Word of God is to be preached in season and out of season. All the time. This is a tremendous record.

The one defeating element in any person's life is fear. The fear itself is worse than the reality could ever be. Do not be afraid but speak, speak, speak. Share God's Word. Do not

refrain; do not keep quiet.

What is our protection when we defy what man says to us? Verse 10: "For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." Wherever you are, God has people there or you would not be there! And when you reach the point of no return, when you're sold out, you'll speak His Word. But as long as you have an ace up your sleeve or you're considering retreat over the bridges behind you, you haven't reached the point of no return. When everything is cut off except God and His Word, then you're committed. Paul had reached the point of no return. God said to Paul, "I am with you, and no person will be able to hurt you."

Verse 11: "And he [Paul] continued *there* [in Corinth] a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." Where among them? From house to house. The Church met in homes, including Aquila and Priscilla's.

Verses 18 and 19 tell us that Aquila and Priscilla traveled to Ephesus with Paul. After a time, Paul sailed from there to go to Jerusalem. Aquila and Priscilla stayed in Ephesus.

And in verse 24: "And a certain Jew [Judean] named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent [learned] man, *and* mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus." By this time Paul had left Ephesus, but Aquila and Priscilla were still there. This great, golden-tongued orator, Apollos, was a highly educated man, born in Alexandria, Egypt. But, most impressive of all, he was "mighty in the scriptures," which means he knew the Word of God very well; he could handle it.

Verse 25 tells us more about Apollos. "This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John."

This man was instructed. The word "instructed" is "informed." Apollos was informed and also "fervent," which means "boiling." He was fervent in the spirit, boiling in the spirit. He spoke and taught diligently. The word "diligently" is "accurately." What did he teach ac-

curately? Most critical Greek texts read, "the things concerning the Jesus."

This man was instructed, catechized, in the way of the Lord. And he was fervent, spiritually boiling. He was a dynamic orator, a dynamic teacher, and he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning God's Son, Jesus. But he only knew the baptism of John. And that's about as much as most teachers of God's Word in our day and time know.

Verse 26: "And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." Tremendous truth here. While this great Apollos was speaking in the synagogue the things concerning God and His Son, Jesus Christ, Aquila and Priscilla didn't stop him. They didn't say, "Oh, Apollos, you're off a little bit on that statement." They allowed him to speak. They didn't interrupt him; they didn't embarrass him; they didn't make him feel bad. They took him away from public exposure, and then they "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos home with them after the meeting in the synagogue, and perhaps they ate some chicken. And then they, these Twig coordinators who had a fellowship (church) which met regularly in their home, talked with Apollos, the famous orator.

Now Apollos had earned a Ph.D., so to speak. He was highly educated at the great university in Alexandria, while Aquila was, by contrast, a saddlemaker. Aquila and Priscilla had not graduated from the Imperial College in Rome. But they had reached the point of no return. They were a beautiful couple, for they had learned the art of living.

The art of living is to put God first, to put on the mind of Christ, to make a commitment to the integrity and accuracy of God's Word. Do not sell out to the world. Do not vacillate. Do not waver on principle. Just stand. Having done all, do one thing—stand.

So Aquila and Priscilla, the two humble laypeople who had a Twig in their home, took the golden-tongued orator, Apollos, home with them, and

they instructed him. Apollos only knew the baptism of John. Was he sincere? He sure was. Was he trying to teach the truth? Certainly. But he couldn't go beyond what he had been taught.

All of us are where we are because of what we've been taught. We will be tomorrow where our believing takes us because of what we've been taught and what we've believed. You cannot teach any more than you know. You can teach less, but not

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more. Apollos, though fervent in the spirit, didn't know more than water baptism. So Aquila and Priscilla took him home and instructed him. They expounded God's Word to him; they declared it; they unfolded it.

What a wonderful man this Apollos must have been, because most of us educated men are just fools. We don't listen to laypeople. We think, "After all, I've got my Ph.D." Apollos had his, too, but look at the greatness of that man. He was willing to receive instruction and then walk on God's Word.

We see the same greatness in Jesus' apostle, Thomas. There is no criticism in God's Word of Thomas because he was a doubter. To doubt as Thomas did should not evoke criticism, because when he got his answers, he walked on those answers. Ladies and gentlemen, it's when the Word of God has been offered to people and they walk away from it, that it's a sin.

Apollos, a golden-tongued orator, a man mighty in the Scriptures, didn't know enough. When wonderful

Aquila and Priscilla, Twig coordinators, took him home with them and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly, the great Apollos continued to walk on a more accurate knowledge of God's Word because he, too, had made a total commitment in his life. He had reached the point of no return.

When you reach the point where all the bridges are burned, all the aces up your sleeve are gone, then you have only one way to go—and that's forward. And then God can make a way where there is no way. Your life's dream becomes a reality when you walk on the integrity and the accuracy of God's Word.

That's why I say the living of Life with a capital L is an art. No one ever learns the art of living Life without coming to God's Word. It's God's Word that makes life effervescent, that makes life worth living. Without the Word of God and the hope of Christ's return, life would be one long ordeal. But with God and His Word we are more than conquerors. Christ came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

To instruct or expound the way of God more perfectly is the calling of the ministry of The Way International today around the world. To spread the accurate knowledge of God's Word is the one great purpose of our commitment. We've reached the point of no return, and we want to declare the Word of God more perfectly to every man and every woman who wants to hear it.

That's what Aquila and Priscilla did. You don't see Paul belittling Aquila and Priscilla as being "mere laypeople." Just the opposite. He thanked God that they risked their necks for him and that they had a church in their home. Paul remembered them with great thanksgiving.

Ladies and gentlemen, to live life as an art depends on nothing else but the greatness of the love of God living in your hearts. God's love in you teaches you the art of living Life with a capital L. God's love in you makes life so dynamic, so exhilarating, so exciting to live. You have to decide that you are at the point of no return—and move ahead sharing God and His Word. ☑