

### Paul's Closing Greetings and Farewell

#### 2 Timothy 4:19-22

2 Timothy 4:19-22: *"Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. <sup>20</sup> Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I left in Miletus sick. <sup>21</sup> Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren. The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen."*

#### Background Notes

Paul's co-workers, Prisca and Aquila, are mentioned in verse 19. Priscilla and Aquila were a Christian married couple who were mentioned several times in the New Testament. (Prisca is another name for Priscilla.) Let's briefly trace their record.

Priscilla and Aquila were first mentioned in Acts 18, when Paul met them in Corinth on his second missionary journey. They had recently moved to Corinth from Rome, and their line of work was making tents. Since Paul was also a tent maker by trade, he stayed with them and worked with them while he preached in the synagogues on Sabbath days. Paul may have led Priscilla and Aquila to the Lord, although it's quite possible that they were already Christians before Paul met them. When Paul left Corinth for Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila went with him, and before long the church at Ephesus was meeting in their home. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus: *"The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house" (16:19).*

Some time later, Priscilla and Aquila returned to Rome. When Paul wrote to the Romans during his third missionary journey, he sent greetings to Aquila and Priscilla who were then in Rome. Once again a church was meeting in their home. Notice the wonderful commendation Paul gave of this devoted Christian couple in Romans 16:3-5: *"Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise, greet the church that is in their house."*

However, by the time Paul wrote his last letter to Timothy, Aquila and Priscilla were once again in Ephesus. Paul sent greetings to them through Timothy, who was in Ephesus, and Paul was in Rome enduring his final Roman imprisonment.

The household of Onesiphorus is also mentioned in verse 19. Onesiphorus brought help to the apostle Paul (chapter 1), and here in chapter 4 we learn that Onesiphorus was from Ephesus.

Erastus was named in verse 20. Acts 19 mentions an "Erastus" who was on Paul's missionary team. Romans 16 says that an "Erastus" was the city treasurer of Corinth. If you visit the ruins of ancient Corinth today, you can see the name of

this very man, Erastus, inscribed on an ancient pavement there. Is the Erastus in 2 Timothy 4:20 the same Erastus of Acts 19, or the same Erastus of Romans 16? It may be the same person in all three references, but we can't be sure.

Verse 21 mentions Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, and Claudia. This is the only mention of these Christians in Scripture. There is some "extra-biblical" evidence, however, that Linus may have been a leader in the church at Rome.

Also in verse 21, Paul requested Timothy make every effort to come to Rome soon: *"Do your utmost to come before winter."* Navigation on the Mediterranean Sea was limited during the winter months. In verse 13 Paul had requested that Timothy bring his cloak, and it's clear that Paul longed to see Timothy again before he died. *Be diligent to come to me quickly" (v9).*

In the closing benediction (v22) we read, *"The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen."* What's significant here is that both the singular "your" and the plural "you" are used in this verse. *"The Lord Jesus Christ be with your [singular] spirit. Grace be with you [plural]. Amen."* In other words, the letter of 2 Timothy was a personal letter to Timothy, but Paul expected that it would be read in the church at Ephesus.

The same is true of the other two Pastoral Epistles, 1 Timothy and Titus. They are personal letters, but it's clear that Paul intended them to be shared with a much larger audience.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God calls some husband-and-wife teams into the ministry.

We briefly traced the history of Priscilla and Aquila in the Background Notes. They were a husband-and-wife team in the ministry. They were always mentioned together in Scripture. The young church at Ephesus met in their home. When they returned to Rome, a church met in their home in Rome as well. This couple was very busy and productive in the ministry.

When Apollos, a Christian preacher, came to Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila took him into their home. Together, they taught him about the Christian faith and doctrine more deeply and accurately. Acts 18:26 says, *"So he [Apollos] began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately."* So Aquila and Priscilla functioned together as a husband-and-wife team, serving the Lord.

All Christian husbands and wives should function as teams. Like Priscilla and Aquila, they are called to work in ministry as a husband and wife team. In fact, I believe that God does not call a married man into full time service for the Lord without also calling his wife to either be involved or to be in a supportive role in that call.

1 Corinthians 9:5 reveals that all the apostles (except Paul) and most of the men who were involved in the ministry in the early Church were married. Paul was unique among most of these men who ministered in the early Church. Presumably, all the wives of the apostles and the wives of other workers were supportive and involved in their husband's ministries, but Priscilla was the only wife whose name was given. Aquila and Priscilla functioned together as a team in the ministry, and God calls some husbands and wives to serve together today as well.

Notice that Priscilla and Aquila were not professional full-time pastors or missionaries. They were an ordinary, hard-working, tent-making couple who loved the Lord, and who dedicated their lives to Him, and opened their home for Him. I'm familiar with several successful new church plants, where the secret of their successful start-up and growth was the dedicated efforts of a few husband-and-wife teams.

If you are married, God is calling you into His service as a husband and wife team.

If you are single, God is calling you to serve Him as a single believer - or at some time in the future, He may call you and your future spouse to serve Him together. God calls both single Christians and husband-and-wife teams into His service.

And you don't have to be a full-time professional church leader to follow God's call to serve Him! Like Priscilla and Aquila, you can serve by simply opening your home for Christian hospitality, Bible study and prayer.

## **2. It is not always God's will to heal sickness.**

Verse 20: *"Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick."* Trophimus was another of Paul's fellow workers, who was mentioned in Acts 20 and 21. We don't know the cause of his sickness or whether he eventually recovered. But in Paul's final travels before coming to Rome as a prisoner, Trophimus became ill. And Paul had to leave him behind at Miletus, a seaport town about fifty miles south of Ephesus.

Why didn't Paul heal Trophimus? We know that God healed other people through Paul's ministry. When Paul was at Ephesus on his third missionary journey, God worked unusual miracles through Paul. When handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched Paul's body were taken to those who were sick, they were healed of their illnesses, and the evil spirits went out of those who were possessed (Acts 19:11-12). And when Paul was on the island of Malta, *"it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed"* (Acts 28:8-9).

So back to our question – why didn't Paul heal Trophimus? Was it because Trophimus didn't have enough faith? No! Was it because Paul didn't have enough faith? No! The answer is our Doctrinal Point: "It is not always God's will to heal sickness."

The apostle Paul did not practice “faith healing” as an art. Paul’s use of the gift of healing was not directed by his own will, and the healing power was not from Paul. No, God healed those whom He willed to heal, and Paul was only the means that God used. Dr. Luke, who was traveling with Paul, was not able to heal Trophimus by medical means. It is not always God’s will to heal sickness, and it was not God’s will for Trophimus to be healed at this point.

Christians need to acknowledge this truth today. God can heal sickness today - sometimes through doctors and medicines, and sometimes without doctors and medicines. When I was twelve years old I was healed of polio - without medicines, and apart from any healer - by means of prayer alone. And the prayers were made in the context of “if healing is the Lord’s will.” I’m thankful that it was the Lord’s will! My paralysis was healed overnight.

But sometimes, for reasons known only to God, it is not God’s will to heal. And we’re not talking about disciplinary sickness here. We’re simply stating that sometimes it is not in God’s sovereign plan and will to heal sickness.

## **Practical Application**

### **Do you have a living legacy?**

A “legacy” is something that is left to others when a person dies - usually money or property. Paul had a legacy, but it wasn’t money or property! Paul had a **living** legacy! His legacy that he left to the early Church was Timothy. Paul had mentored Timothy. He had trained Timothy. He had given Timothy assignments in ministry, and he continued to challenge and encourage Timothy. He knew that when he died, Timothy (and Titus, and his other “living legacies”) would carry on the work Paul had begun.

Do you have a living legacy? If you were to die this year, would the work that God has entrusted to you come to a standstill? Are you mentoring a younger believer and working together in ministry, so that the younger believer can be your “living legacy”?

Shortly after Paul sent this letter to Timothy he was taken outside the city of Rome, where he was martyred. Paul boldly met the executioner’s sword for the sake of the Lord and the gospel. Paul went joyfully to be with the Lord, knowing that he had fought the good fight and he had finished the course that the Lord had set before him. And throughout his life as a believer, he had kept the faith!

An essential part of Paul’s ministry was leaving a living legacy through Timothy and others.

Do you have a living legacy?