

After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.

(Acts 18:1-3)

They had passed through Syria, Cilicia, Derbe and Lystra (where they picked up Timothy). In each of these places they had strengthened and encouraged the young churches. Then they continued on to Phrygia and Galatia and, after being turned away at Bithynia, to Troas, where Paul's vision beckoned them to Macedonia. Next was Samothrace, a day later, Neapolis, and on to Philippi, where he and Silas were arrested, stripped and beaten with rods, and thrown into prison. Upon their release, they found momentary solace at the house of Lydia in Thyatira, then proceeded to Amphipolis, Apollonia and Thessalonica, where they spent three weeks reasoning through the Scriptures in the local synagogue and were almost jailed again. By night they fled to Berea where, again, the Jews from Thessalonica stirred up local opinion against the missionaries. Traveling by sea, Paul left his companions and journeyed alone to Athens, where he spoke before a crowd of philosophers at

the Areopagus.

It was an itinerary that would bring anyone to their knees. So it must have been a weary and possibly low-spirited apostle who entered the cosmopolitan, albeit immoral, city of Corinth. Paul would not have been interested in the flashy distractions of this metropolis, nor the companionship of one of its famous temple prostitutes. He would instead—after months of travel and fleeing for his life—be searching for a place of rest and restoration with people of like mind and Spirit.

People like Priscilla and Aquila.

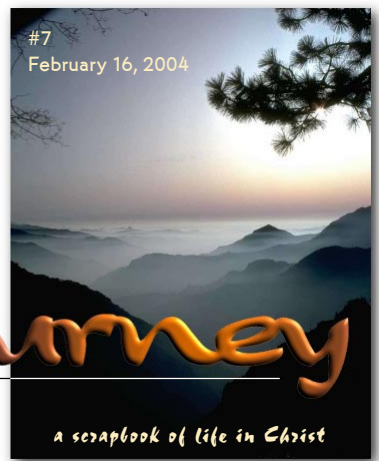
### Out of Place

Just imagine, if you will, being so terribly far from home, bereft even of your traveling companions, bone-weary from being constantly challenged, ridiculed, and pursued. You find yourself now in a strange and alien city, where licentiousness is not only permitted, but the official religion. Imagine, evening is approaching

and the dying sun is burnishing the streets of bustling Corinth a deep orange. Strangers jostle and bump against your shoulders, eager shopkeepers beckon you closer, hoping to separate you from the little currency you have. The evening air is filled with the disorienting stench of this foreign culture. Nothing is familiar, nothing comfortable.

Out of desperation, you ask a street vendor where you might find a prosperous tent-maker in the city; you tell him you are of that trade and seeking employment. With a dismissing wave of his hand he tells you to go down this street, then that street, until you reach a house that looks like this. With the mumbled directions repeating through your head, you wend your way through the darkening streets and alleyways, until at last you stand before the previously described address. Timidly you rap against the heavy, wooden door; loud voices and angles of lamplight seep through the cracks that outline the door's

the Journey



# FRIENDS ALONG THE WAY

It had been a long, arduous journey.

The apostle Paul and his companion, Silas, had just completed a whirlwind tour of the Northern Mediterranean region:

timbers. Abruptly the gate swings open, and before you know it you are standing in the midst of friends—brothers and sisters to whom moments before you were unknown. For you have found not only tentmakers, but the open arms of fellow Christians.

## Family and Friends

Life in God's family is organic. Yes, it includes scholarship, deep philosophy, good business practices, common sense, adherence to doctrine, and an historical foundation. But at its root, kingdom life is fundamentally about members of a *family*—a vast, diverse, sometimes incomprehensible family, to be sure, but still, a family. Jesus told us that after our love for God, the most important part of our life with Him is to be our love for each other.

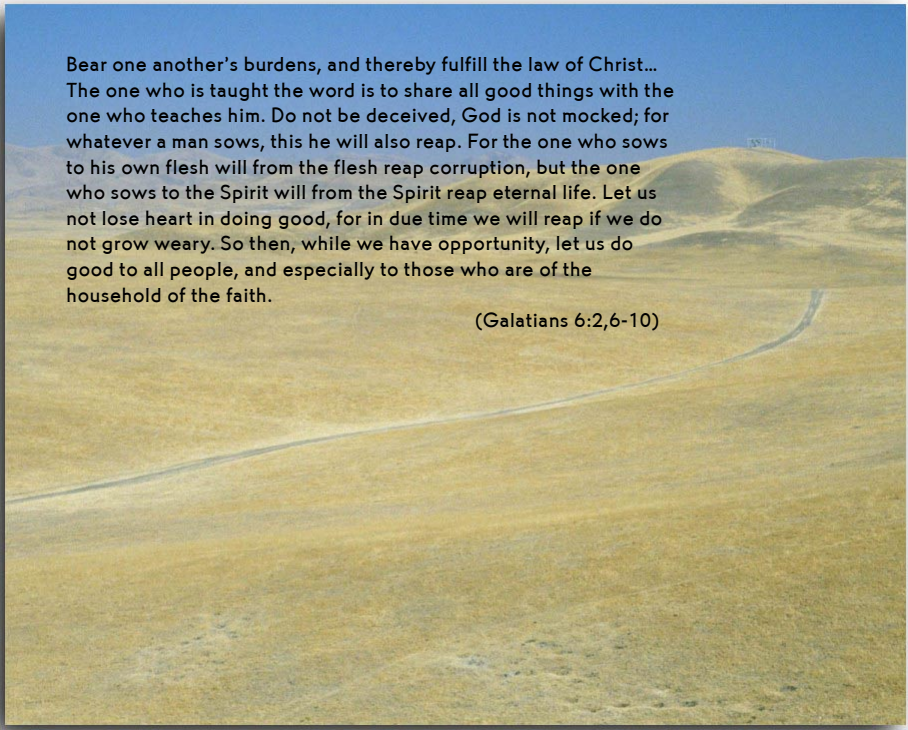
**But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question,**

testing Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:34-40)

of one *friend* voluntarily giving His life for another—another who would eventually become part of His family.

Priscilla and Aquila were not professionals. They never studied at a seminary, were not even apprentice clergy. They were tentmakers by trade—but Christians in heart. We know little of these two saints

beyond the fact that they were zealous for the Kingdom of Christ, and were eager to share His love with others. They took in the bedraggled apostle Paul not because of his reputation, or because he was physically impressive, or because they hoped to show more profit in their tent-making business by having another employee in the shop. They took him in because they



Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ... The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

(Galatians 6:2,6-10)

Man was created, first, to glorify his Creator. Second, he was created to be a friend to his neighbor. And as in all things, Jesus was our supreme example. His death on the cross was the once-and-for-all atonement for the sins of man. That was first. But His sacrificial death was also that

were friends to anyone who called Jesus Lord. They opened the door not to a stranger, but to someone who was already a member of their family. They lovingly erected their tent of protection over their brother, Paul, and took him into their home.

*Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.*

*Before our Father's throne we pour our ardent prayers;  
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, our comforts and our cares.*

*We share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear;  
And often for each other flows the sympathizing tear.*

*When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain;  
But we shall still be joined in heart, and hope to meet again.*  
(John Fawcett)

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