Hi,

At least some semblance of normalcy returned. The NFL draft began last night -- actual sports news. For those of you who are totally isolated, Joe Burrow of LSU went to the Bengals and the Cowboys first pick was wide receiver Cee Dee Lamb of Oklahoma. . . . sports news . . . wow.

Here are today’s updates:

* **My next Sunday class will be a Q&A**. It will help if you email me questions ahead of time or at least have them ready before we start class. It is a bit cumbersome working from the Facebook comments -- easy to miss some. **Sunday at 12 noon** -- on [my Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/scottengle).
* The Weekly Bible Study for this weekend is attached.
* People without a Facebook account have been unable to access my personal page for the Facebook Live class events. It should work (or so we thought), but it doesn’t. So . . . [if you don’t have a Facebook account you will have to view the class on my YouTube channel.](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChtwqaUcpZbwyTWnkp6INwQ?view_as=subscriber) I will make sure all recordings are up and ready for viewing by the end of the day of the class. (YouTube willing!).
* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://www.scottengle.org/). All of this week’s recordings and podcasts are posted.
* Keep sending in those movie and book recommendations!

Here is the fourth friendship story: a wife and husband, Priscilla and Aquila, co-workers with the apostle Paul.

***Ecclesiastes 4:9-10***

**9Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. 10For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help.**

***Acts 18:1-4***

**After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, 3and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together—by trade they were tentmakers. 4Every sabbath he would argue in the synagogue and would try to convince Jews and Greeks.**

***Romans 16:1-5b***

**I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well.**

**3Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, 4and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. 5Greet also the church in their house.**

The riots had gone on too long. The Emperor barely tolerated the Jews as it was. Now, he had been pushed too far; Caesar ordered their expulsion from Rome. Priscilla, Aquila, their friends and neighbors . . . all of them. As they fled, they had little hope of ever returning.

*Making a new home*

In the days of Jesus and Paul, Jews lived throughout the Roman Empire, from Syria in the east to Spain in the west. Even Rome itself had a substantial Jewish population of perhaps 40,000 or so. The Romans generally left such Jews alone. To the average Roman, the Jews seemed more peculiar than threatening. The Jews believed that there was only one god (yeah, sure) and that this god had chosen them (how silly a thought). The Jews took off work on Saturdays (nice if you can get it!) and avoided all sorts of foods. They even performed some strange rite of physical mutilation on their newborn males. But . . . so long as the peace was kept, the Romans left the Jews in peace.

Keeping the peace was important throughout the empire. Controlling millions of conquered peoples was no small task. But nowhere was this peacekeeping more highly prized than in Rome and in 49AD the peace in Rome came crashing down. Suetonius, a Roman biographer of the times, wrote “Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius, the Caesar] expelled them from Rome.” His reference to “Chrestus” is probably a reference to Christ. Evidently, followers of Jesus had come to Rome preaching Christ in the Jewish synagogues, triggering a violent response from many Jews. After all, something much like this happened nearly everywhere Paul traveled in the eastern end of the empire.

So, the Jews left Rome, forbidden to return. This would have included Jews who had become followers of Jesus, such as the married couple, Priscilla and Aquila (Prisca was her given name, Priscilla is a nickname). They were better off than many. They had a portable business; they were tentmakers. They owned property. Priscilla even had had some family money. So they headed east toward the large, bustling Greek metropolis of Corinth. Corinth was a busy, commercial port on a narrow isthmus. There, Priscilla and her husband set up shop in a storefront and began to rebuild their lives.

Not long after their arrival in Corinth, Priscilla and Aquila met a fellow Jew who had come to Corinth to proclaim the gospel, the Good News, of Jesus Christ. His name was Paul. The three of them quickly formed a close bond, for Paul was a tentmaker too. Priscilla and her husband invited Paul to join them in their storefront business and for the next eighteen months the three of them grew their business and grew the young Christian house churches in Corinth. (see Acts 18:1-18)

*Moving on*

Priscilla and Aquila were mature Christians when they left Rome. In Corinth, they committed themselves fully to Paul’s work and the building of God’s kingdom. When Paul decided that it was time for him to leave Corinth, Priscilla and Aquila left with him. All three made their way to Ephesus, another very important city. Priscilla and Aquila stayed there while Paul went on to Jerusalem. Not surprisingly, they quickly became leaders in the Christian community in Ephesus. Once, a well-meaning Jew named Apollos came to Ephesus teaching about Jesus and God’s kingdom as best he could. But his teachings about Jesus were a little confused and inaccurate. Priscilla and her husband took him aside and taught him the full truth about Jesus and the new way. With their guidance and encouragement, Apollos went on to be an effective teacher and leader among the churches in Greece. (see Acts 18:24-28)

*Going home*

Priscilla and Aquila stayed in Ephesus for several years. Paul would mention them when he wrote a letter back to Corinth (see 1 Corinthians 16:9). But they never lost their desire to return to Rome. After all, it was their home, where they had been raised, where they had met and married. In 54AD, Claudius died and his edict expelling the Jews from Rome died with him. So, Priscilla and her husband returned to Rome where they would carry on their kingdom building work. Later, when Paul was in Corinth a second time, he wrote a letter to the Christians in Rome urging them to find unity as the Jewish-Christians returned. In this letter, Paul sent a poignant hello to Priscilla and Aquila, noting that they had “risked their necks” for Paul and his work (Romans 16:3-4). But even though they were back in Rome, their work was not done. There were many house churches in Rome that needed help and encouragement. Later, it seems that they again headed for Asia Minor to work for the spread of the Good News of Jesus Christ (see 2 Timothy 4:19).

*Two lives committed to marriage and ministry*

There are no extended stories about Priscilla and Aquila in the New Testament. Rather, their presence and service are woven into the accounts of Paul’s ministry and their own. We meet them in the correspondence of the movement. We see that they were leaders in the early church and trusted co-workers of Paul, confident enough to instruct a respected teacher and preacher. They are always mentioned together and Priscilla is nearly always mentioned first! Though Paul saw advantage in his own singleness (1 Corinthians 7:32-35), we see in this couple that two disciples, committed to one another through the bonds of marriage, can work powerfully for the building of God’s kingdom, always supporting, encouraging, and loving each other.

*A movie recommendation*

A few days I dropped into a little of *Singing in the Rain* on TCM. Most of you have probably seen it, but even if you have, it will put a smile on your face. The film is #5 on the top 100 list of the American Film Institute. Here’s a surprise -- Debbie Reynolds was 18 when she landed the part and didn’t know how to dance. Hard to believe after watching her in action.

*A book recommendation*

I get asked a lot of questions about heaven and the afterlife. If you want a better understanding of the biblical view of these topics, the best starting place is N. T. Wright’s *Surprised by Hope; Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. He tries to force the reader to think biblically, even if it is counter to long-held beliefs.

‘til tomorrow, grace and peace,

Scott