



Sermon Notes | Guarding the Gospel | Romans 16:17-23

## **INTRODUCTION**

To begin, let us consider the state of things today, that is, 'the state of theology'. We will look at the Ligonier Ministries' Surveys to do so. These surveys have been administered every two years for ten years; they measure the beliefs and theology in society, as pertains to evangelicalism, and are given to a cross-section of people, believers and non-believers. In light of today's text, while we are familiar with the results, hearing the results afresh will help to focus our attention on the state of the situation.

We will start with a focus on yesteryear, and data from the United States, a country most recognized throughout the world for its Christian identity.

According to expanded United States social data from 1972, in 1900, 'two thirds' of the nation were declared born into 'evangelical' Christian homes. These were Protestant homes, not Roman Catholic homes. So then, a majority of the country identified themselves as having been born into 'good news' evangelical homes. This makes sense historically, given that the first citizens of the United States, their children and grandchildren, had fled to the US for religious freedom reasons for the sake of the Gospel. Now, fast forward to the end of the 20th century, where the statistic had dropped to only 'forty' percent of the population declaring themselves to be from a Protestant evangelical household. So within one hundred years, the number of self-declared Gospel households had dropped almost in half.

And then, twenty-five years later, in 2022, the Ligonier Ministries' Survey announced these results.

Self-declared, evangelical Protestant Christians, not Roman Catholics, were asked to 'agree' or to 'disagree' concerning the following statement: God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Thirty-nine percent of those surveyed AGREED. Thus almost half of evangelicals now have a 'flawed' view of who God is.

And what then of their understanding on the 'view of mankind' as we have studied in Romans 3, 5, 6, a key Gospel theme? To the statement: Everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God, forty-eight percent agreed. This meant that half of the evangelical population surveyed agreed, therefore, that man is naturally okay.

And concerning this Gospel truth, 'Who do you say that I am?' Who is Jesus? To the statement, Jesus was a great teacher but was not God, in 2022, twenty-four percent of evangelicals 'strongly agreed' that Jesus was not God. This is not a minor Gospel misunderstanding. This is significantly major. Who Jesus is, is the Gospel! The Good News is Christ! Christ is the Son of God. Jesus Christ, is the God/Man. He came to Earth and was crucified. He was the only life worthy to be 'the propitiation for the repentance', the only life to be 'accepted by God'. JESUS CHRIST IS THE GOSPEL; JESUS CHRIST IS THE GOD/MAN!

So what happened? We began with a flourish, so how did we get to this wrong place? Have you asked yourself this question? How did the Gospel start to disappear and fall away? The answer: The Gospel of God has NOT BEEN GUARDED! Posts have been abandoned. Other things have been turned to. Other 'people' have become the ones to please. Other 'things' have become the things catered to. Nevertheless, the Gospel came with instructions. And Paul ordered us to GUARD IT and to AVOID those persons who are striving to deceive. Paul states:

Romans 16:17-23

*I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil, The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucious and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, who is host to me and the whole church, greets you, Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.*

Our Father in Heaven, as we consider posts abandoned, and the charge that we have just read, we beg and appeal, in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to consider our guardianship of Your Gospel. Give us eyes to see, and hearts stirred. Hear our request, Father, that we may walk out living it. In Christ's Name! Amen.

Such instructions as Paul has put forth in our passage today are not uncommon. Paul's letter to Timothy, for example, instructs Timothy in its closing to 'guard and avoid' also. Paul states:

1 Timothy 6:20-21

*O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.*

And in a second letter to Timothy, Paul opens the letter with similar instruction.

## 2 Timothy 1:13-14

*Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.*

To the church at Ephesus, Paul ends his letter with instruction about the 'protective armour' and the need to 'stand firm' and strong, and 'alert' in the Gospel.

## Ephesians 6:10-20

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*

To the church at Galatia, Paul writes warning and serious rebuke to the leaders, commanding them to 'guard' against false teachers and their false teaching.

## Galatians 1:6-10

*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the approval of man or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.*

Paul, concerned that his teaching was being distorted, had sent a letter of warning, which Peter addressed in his own letter. There was serious concern about getting carried away in Gospel error.

## 2 Peter 3:15-18

*And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do to the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless*

*people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

And Jude, writing to Christians, also found it necessary to state the need for 'contending' for the faith.

Jude 3-4

*Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

In other words, 'Guard the Gospel'. It is a command to do so. It does not just happen. It requires constant effort and active vigilance in order to 'keep the faith', and Christians are 'called' over and over to do so, to 'Guard the Gospel'. No where in the Word, no where in the New Testament, or by Paul, or by any other writer, does it say, 'You have it now. Rest easy. Sit back. Life will take care of itself.' No! The instruction is: Be proactive! Guard it, or lose it! Be vigilant! Guard it before it gets distorted! Guard it before it gets away! 'Guard it' because it has always been under attack since the first century! Paul knew that 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure'. 'It's easier to extinguish sparks than to put out a blazing fire'. In other words, prevent the problem from getting away from you. Our problem today is that the problem got away. The forest fire got beyond us, and now we are throwing buckets of water on it. Hence the importance of heeding Paul's final words, 'Guard the Gospel. Guard the Good News'. Remember the promises of it. Be with the people of this Gospel. That is how you 'Guard the Gospel'.

The Gospel Instructions:

### **I. THE PRESCRIPTION: (vv. 17-18)**

Paul invokes a strong plea and command, as he appeals to the Roman believers to 'avoid' those who are opposed to the teachings of the Gospel.

Romans 16:17-18

*I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*

Watch out for those who cause divisions. This is not a suggestion. It is a command. Watch out. It is visual. It is intense. Ever watching for those who cause divisions, those who are objectively defiant, those who are against the Scripture, those who are reacting 'contrary' to the doctrine of truth, the 'good deposit' of the Gospel. There is a 'truth' to measure this by. It is not a matter of what it means to you, that is, your thinking about

the matter. No. It is the 'fixed standard of truth' which comes directly from Scripture itself. The Bible does not mince words. God is clear about what He expects. And so we look to Scripture's measure.

Proverbs 6:16-19

*There are six things that the Lord hates,  
seven that are an abomination him:  
haughty eyes, a lying tongue,  
and hands that shed innocent blood,  
a heart that devises wicked plans,  
feet that make haste to run to evil,  
a false witness who breathes out lies,  
and one who sows discord among brothers.*

The Wisdom Literature declares that God hates one who sows discord among the brothers. God hates division and dissension. Why? They are not qualities of the Spirit, but are rather, behaviours of the flesh. Galatians explains further.

Galatians 5:19-21

*Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

And therefore, we are instructed to 'watch for' those causing 'divisions' and 'avoid them'. God hates them, and knowing this we are to 'watch for them' and 'avoid them'. It is vital. Scripture does not say to give them a moment, or to give them a hearing. It does not say to be patient with them. It does not say do not be hard on them. But the text does say, turn away from them, 'avoid them'. It tells us to be intentional. It is an imperative, a command, and it is ongoing. It is the instruction to 'avoid evil'. Turn away from it. Leave them, and keep on 'avoiding them'. It is not short term. It is not momentary. No. 'Avoid' those who are 'opposed to Scripture'. It is not just a one time statement. No. It is stated for 'ongoing' attention. And similar instruction is stated elsewhere as well in Scripture.

Titus 3:10-11

*As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.*

2 John 10

*If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.*

Who are they? Who are they whom we are not to receive? The Jehovah's Witnesses, yes. False teachers, yes. But there are others also. Beware of those in the church itself,

those who are causing division and dissension. Yes, this is a prescription for the Church. Paul states:

Romans 16:18

*For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*

These are the people who say, 'Do His business.' But they are smooth talkers, and they confuse people with their flattery. They 'say Him', but they are not 'living Him'. They say they are 'professed believers' and they 'dwell in the ranks' of the believers, but in truth they are creating problems among the true believers. They are acting contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture, and they are quite deliberate in their actions, knowing exactly what they are doing. These are people of the flesh, walking and teaching 'in the flesh', not the Spirit. They claim Christ, but they do not, in reality, serve Him. They serve their own appetites. They are slaves to their own selves, and their behaviours are fleshly and carnal. Scripture says, 'avoid them'.

Romans 16:17

*I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.*

Galatians 5:16

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*

Romans 8:5

*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.*

We find the same message in Philippians.

Philippians 3:17-19

*Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.*

These are the people who are enemies of the Cross. Their god is their belly; their minds are on earthly things, on flesh, and their end is destruction. These people's heart is their own selfishness. They do not desire the truth. They do not desire Scripture. Their behaviour is contrary to Scripture.

Truth is getting in the way of their flesh wants and their desire for self. This is how we know them. They are driven by self. Their heart's desire is not for Christ, but for self.

What are we to do with such attitudes and behaviours, with such professors and teachers? We lay it down. We kill it, for these selfish self-seekers are effectively

convincing the naive Christians of wrong doing. They are deceiving weaker Christians, with their clever cunning works, and their smooth talk and flattery. The young and immature are falling prey to their deceptions. This is not just a threat to Rome, but to all believers in Christ.

Romans 16:18

*For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*

2 Corinthians 11:3

*But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*

Therefore, 'Guard the Gospel' of Christ! For wherever the Gospel of God is held to, there will be attacks, and they will come from within. Therefore, pay attention! Paul warns the Ephesian Elders on this very matter, and calls them to 'be alert' and aware.

Acts 20:28-30

*Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood, I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.*

Be alert! It is a matter of 'protection', not a personal preference. Wolves kill sheep. It is a fact. Therefore, do not tolerate the wolf. No shepherd tolerates wolves. Likewise, we are to 'avoid' those who cause division. It is a matter of 'safety and protection' for the flock. 'Guarding the Gospel' is a necessity. It is not a denominational matter. No. It is a Biblical mandate. It is the Lord's command. Be a slave to Christ. Watch and be alert to those who are enemies, and 'avoid them'. Being inclusive and entertaining pop ideology is not the Christian's concern. While 'pop ideology' doesn't like this stand and belief, this does not matter, for we are not concerned with 'pop ideology'. And it is not about just knowing what is prescribed; it's about 'doing' it. This is 'Gospel Defence'.

## **II. THE PRACTICE: (v. 19)**

Romans 16:19

*For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.*

'Obedience' in faith is central to Gospel life. There is no such thing as faith without 'obedience' to Christ. Paul declares that this is the whole point, 'the purpose' of God through the ages, has been to bring about 'the obedience of faith' among all the nations, through Jesus Christ. He declares in his doxology of praise that this purpose has been accomplished.

Romans 16:25-27

*Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory forever more through Jesus Christ! Amen.*

God's plan through the ages: the 'obedience of faith'. The Gospel in practice. Paul celebrates that this is happening in Rome, and that it is known to all.

Romans 1:8

*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.*

So then, how do we 'Guard the Gospel'? How do we 'practice' 'obedience' for we cannot lose what we live by. We do not 'give it up'. No. We live it. We walk in it. But some have 'obedience' to wrong things, whereas we need 'obedience to truth'. But 'obedience' does not stand alone. No. 'Discernment' is also needed, 'discernment' by way of our conscience, and our conscience informed by the Word of God. Therefore, BE WISE, KNOW WHAT IS GOOD, AND AVOID ALL EVIL! This is how we 'Guard the Gospel'. It is 'skillful living'. It is based on the Word of God. The Book of Proverbs, for example, is instructive about how to live.

Proverbs 4:20-27

*My son, be attentive to my words;  
incline your ear to my sayings.  
Let them not escape from your sight;  
keep them within your heart.  
For they are life to those who find them,  
and healing to all their flesh.  
Keep your heart with all vigilance,  
for from it flow the springs of life.  
Put away from you crooked speech,  
and put devious talk far from you.  
Let your eye look directly forward,  
and your gaze be straight before you.  
Ponder the path of your feet;  
then all your ways will be sure.  
Do not swerve to the right or to the left;  
turn your foot away from evil.*

The Book of Hebrews also provides wisdom and insight for Godly living, for growing in faith and understanding, not falling away from the faith.



Hebrews 5:11-14

*About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

1. We are instructed to be skilled in the Word of Righteousness... Do you know it? Should you not know it? We certainly have the intelligence and opportunity to know what the Scriptures say, and we certainly have access to Bibles, lots of Bibles in fact, but do you use it, read it, study it? Are you skilled in its contents? Do you live it out in 'obedience and faith'?

2. We are instructed to 'Avoid Evil' ... Are you innocent to evil? Do you hold fast to good? Romans instructs us that this is how we should be.

Romans 12:9

*Let love be genuine. 'Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.*

Are we making concessions to evil? The more concessions we give to evil, the more our defences against evil erode. The Christian is called to 'avoid evil' and to 'abhor evil'. Such is the way of life that pleases God.

### **III. THE PROMISE: (v. 20)**

Romans 16:20

*The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

Oh, the beauty of verse 20! There is a promise, and there is a God of peace. The Lord Jesus will 'crush' Satan. It is going to happen. It is already in motion. This is the Biblical picture of both victory and subjection. This is the 'enemy' underfoot. This is the Lord 'victoriously' putting the foot on the 'defeated' neck of the enemy. This is 'military might' and 'conquering peace' all in one verse.

Joshua gives us a preview of this victory action 'promise', when he and his army of men conquer Canaan lands.

Joshua 10:22-26

*Then Joshua said, 'Open the mouth of the cave and bring those five kings out to me from the cave.' And they did so, and brought those five kings out to him from the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon. And when they brought those kings out to Joshua, Joshua summoned all the men of Israel and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, 'Come near; put your feet on the necks of these kings.' Then they came near and put their feet on their necks. And Joshua said to*

*them, 'Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous. For thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight.' And afterward Joshua struck them and put them to death, and he hanged them on five trees. And they hung on the trees until evening.*

Thus is the intention of military might, that of victory. This is the God of peace, crushing the foe. Peace is found in no other way. Evil is only stopped when it is destroyed. Treaties do not stop evil.

The God of Peace 'crushes' evil. And the God of Peace will 'crush' Satan. This is the oldest promise in the Bible.

Genesis 3:14-15

*And the LORD God said to the serpent...  
"I will put enmity between you and woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel."*

The God of the Garden will crush the one causing Garden division, the one creating Garden obstacle. This is the promise. This is the Messiah!

Psalms 8:6

*You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under his feet.*

Psalms 91:13

*You will tread on the lion and the adder;  
the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.*

These verses both point back to the Genesis 3:15 promise. All things shall be placed under the feet of Jesus; the subjection of all things 'under His feet'.

1 Corinthians 15:24-27a

*Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For God has put all things in subjection under his feet...*

The enemy 'underfoot'. The 'glorious promise' of God to be completed. Christ trampling Satan. A slow death for Satan, begun in the Garden, previewed in the Old Testament conquest, pictured by the Old Testament saints, and now continuing on by the feet of the believers. Christ, the Messiah, raised from the dead by the power of God, and seated at the right hand of God.

Ephesians 1:22-23

*And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

Hebrews 1:2-4, 13b

*...but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. ...*

*“Sit at my right hand  
until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet...”*

Hebrews 2:8b-9

*...Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

Hebrews 10:35-37

*Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For,  
“Yet a little while,  
and the coming one will come and  
will not delay.”*

Revelation 12:10

*And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.”*

But until the final overthrow which God has appointed, there remains the 'slow death' of Satan by the feet of the saints. We get a glimpse of how this happens by way of the story of the seventy-two disciples whom Jesus sent out on mission. They return with joy, seeing God's Kingdom advance and the people being freed from Satanic bondage. Even the demons are subject to the Name of the Lord.

Luke 10:17-20

*The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”*

The picture preview: 'Trample on them because you can!' Trample on them, not by incantations or by fancy ministries, but by 'obedience' and 'discernment'. 'LIVE CHRIST!' Shame evil and darkness by 'living in Christ'. Shame evil and darkness by 'living by Christ'. This is the victory; the Church crushing Satan, not by tanks, warheads or other powerful weapons, but by the Majesty of God's Military Strategy, by 'vigilance'

and 'discernment', and 'obedience'. Death to Satan was declared in The Garden. It was achieved at the Cross by Christ Jesus, and is worked out through time by God's people, demonstrated by their 'obedience' and their 'living for Him'. This is God's victory over Satan, and the trampling of Satan underfoot. But while Satan is defeated and disarmed, and will be overthrown, he has not yet conceded. Satan's continued aim is to destroy you, and to destroy your confidence in Christ's finished Work.

Romans 16:20

*The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet, The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

And so, how do we push on? We push on by 'grace', the very 'grace' in us and with us, by and through Christ. This is how we wait for Satan's overthrow, by 'Christ's Grace', by the Gospel which is 'guarded' by His 'grace'. Paul continually reminds his readers of the 'grace' promised to us. Satan and darkness will be 'crushed' under the foot of 'light', under the foot of 'grace', under 'Christ's grace'. Cling to this 'promise' of truth.

#### **IV. THE PEOPLE: (vv. 21-23)**

Romans 16:21-23

*Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.*

And so, Paul passes on more greetings again. By name, we learn of the eight 'gospel workers', people who currently stand with Paul, who presently work beside him, 'to guard the Gospel'.

We meet Timothy, Paul's young co-worker, a son in the faith, and Paul's trusted companion. We learn from Acts that Timothy was from Lystra, that his mother was Jewish and his father Greek. We learn that Timothy traveled with Paul and co-authored with him.

Acts 16:1-3

*Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.*

2 Corinthians 1:1

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, "To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia..."*

Timothy was Paul's trusted envoy and ambassador and spiritual son. Paul speaks of him in his writings to the various churches:

1 Corinthians 4:17

*That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.*

Philippians 2:19-20

*I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.*

1 Thessalonians 3:2, 6

*...and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith... But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you..."*

Timothy is so trusted by Paul that he left behind at one point to 'Guard the Gospel', warning against false teachers.

1 Timothy 1:1-3

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope.*

*To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine...*

Timothy worked alongside Paul through much of Paul's ministry, traveling to Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, and was even with Paul during Paul's jail time. We learn that Timothy himself was also imprisoned, presumably for the Gospel.

Hebrews 13:23

*You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon.*

The Gospel was not defended by 'a person', save by Christ Himself, but now is defended by 'people', by constant and faithful 'people', like Timothy. And Paul goes on to mention three more people, Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, who he describes as his kinsmen, meaning they were fellow Jews.

Lucius may, or may not, be the Lucius from Cyrene. Lucius may have traveled with Paul. He may have been among those who layed hands on Paul and Barnabas, sending them off on their missionary journey.

Acts 13:1, 3

*Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ... Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.*

Jason is likely the one who gave shelter to Paul and Silas, suffering at the hands of a civic mob, and having to eventually post a bond.

Acts 17:1-9

*Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.*

Sosipater (having variant spellings on the name), was likely the Berean from Acts 20.

Acts 20:4

*Sopater the Berean; son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him (Paul); and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus.*

And so we note that 'people' are appearing together, and are traveling together, and they are doing so for 'Gospel' purposes.

Acts 1:15

*In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120)...*

Acts 2:41

*So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*

Acts 2:46

*And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

Acts 6:7

*And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*

Verse 22 of the text presents Tertius as yet another of Paul's workers. Perhaps Tertius was known in Rome, and thus the reason that Tertius identifies himself as the one who is

actually writing down the text. He is the scribe, the one who writes down the words dictated by another. He is a modern day secretary; he is Paul's secretary. This was common practice for the time. Paul was known, however, for adding his own hand written greeting to his letters.

Romans 16:22

*I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord.*

1 Corinthians 16:21

*I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.*

Galatians 6:11

*See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.*

Colossians 4:18

*I Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.*

2 Thessalonians 3:17

*I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine; it is the way I write.*

And then we meet Gaius, Erastus, and Quartus.

Romans 16:23

*Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.*

Gaius, we learn, was baptized by Paul. Paul states:

1 Corinthians 1:14

*I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name.*

This reference may also refer to the same Gaius, during a riot at Ephesus.

Acts 19:29

*So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel.*

The reference in 3 John may not be referring to the same Gaius.

3 John 1

*The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.*

Erastus, the city treasurer, we discover, was also a helper to Paul, along with Timothy. Paul makes two references to him.

Acts 19:22

*And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.*

2 Timothy 4:20

*Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus.*

And lastly, we meet Brother Quartus, who sends his greeting. And that is all we know of him. Quartus is but one of many workers we will know nothing about. Yet he is our brother too. That is how the 'Gospel is Guarded'. We too are also the 'people of the Gospel'. Together, we are 'Gospel' 'people' who are to 'Guard the Gospel' and 'guard' one another. May we never let our 'guard' down.