

A Gallery of Grace
Romans 16:21-24
ABC 1/14/18

I'm not a huge art fan, but have been privileged to have been at the Louvre & have seen the Mona Lisa & other famous pieces of art. A few years ago, Muriel talked me into going to an art museum in Boston, which was nautical in theme & wasn't bad. Usually my art taste falls more with dogs playing poker or a copy of piece of art I bought for one of my kids for Christmas. How much art is worth amazes me. The Mona Lisa was valued at \$100 million in 1962.¹ It's estimated it's worth more than \$800 million today, & would probably sell at auction for over a billion. But the most ever paid for a painting happened just last November. It was bought at auction in 2005 for \$10k. It was thought to be a copy of a Leonardo da Vinci painting. As it turns out, it was the real thing & sold 2 months ago for \$450 million! When you go to some of these museums, you see priceless works of artists who long ago made their mark. There may be famous etchings & carvings & sculpted works of bronze & marble along with famous paintings that people will pay anything to own. Yet it's fascinating that God considers His greatest masterpieces to be made of flesh & blood. His greatest works are clothed in skin; you & I are His living, breathing works of art. To the Ephesians, Paul wrote that **we are God's workmanship** (2:10). **Workmanship** is from the Greek word from which we get *poem*. We are literally the poem of God, His work of art. If you want to visit the greatest gallery of masterpieces, look around right now. Take a look at the pieces of art sitting near you, masterpieces of God's grace. Truly, the most priceless works of art are the redeemed in Christ, created with the masterstrokes of God's grace; people who belong to the Master Artist, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Rom 16 is nothing less than a gallery of grace, where we're introduced to ordinary people who were a part of the church at Corinth where Paul was writing this letter from. The greetings we see this morning show the practical love of one group of Christians to another group of Christians. The Roman Christians would have been thrilled that these Corinthian Christians were anxious to greet them. These greetings also let us know that the Corinthian Christians were in agreement with the contents of the letter being sent to the

¹ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mona_Lisa

Roman Christians. & the Roman Christians would have realized this wasn't just Paul's opinion, but that the whole Corinthian church agreed with the teachings Paul was giving here. There was a unity & a common sense of fellowship but it was heightened by the embrace of the truth of this letter by the Corinthian Christians & their willingness to attach their names & greeting at the end so the Roman Christians would have known they believed this too. This is truth that was held in common by Christians at each end. The unity of the church was fostered not only in the expression of love in these Christian greetings but also in the Roman church's realization that the Corinthian church was aware of the content of the letter & in agreement with it. So this morning we have more greetings & some brief comments made about the people who are sending the greetings & then a similar benediction to the one we saw in vs 20. But here we see something of the glory of Christian community. There's a distinctive fellowship of all true believers & that comes through in these greetings. Whereas the previous greetings in vss 3-17 had been focused on people in the Roman church who were receiving greetings, these greetings list the names of people in the Corinthian church who are sending greetings & who are part of the Corinthian gallery of grace. **21-27** PRAY

1. Timothy Paul writes in vs 21, **Timothy my fellow worker greets you.** Timothy was like a son to Paul (Acts 16:1-3; Phil 2:22). Paul poured his life into disciplining this young man who'd go on to lead several of the churches Paul helped plant, including the church at Ephesus where Paul had spent 3 years. Timothy was the son of a racially mixed marriage. His father was probably an unbelieving Greek & his mother was Jewish. In Paul's 2 letters to Timothy we're never told when Timothy became a believer. However, putting some of the clues together, we discover that Timothy's mom & grandma, Eunice & Lois, were probably led to Christ during Paul's 1st missionary journey to their hometown of Lystra. Along with Timothy, Eunice & Lois were already faithful Jews, grounded in the hope of Israel found in the OT Scriptures; they believed the Messiah would come. When they heard Paul deliver the news that Jesus had perfectly fulfilled the Messianic prophecies, they gave their lives to following Jesus Christ as their Messiah. They also probably saw the miracles of Paul with the healing of a crippled man. The book of Acts records

that Paul looked at the man, crippled from birth, & said, *Stand upright on your feet.* & he leaped up & began to walk (14:10). The citizens of Lystra assumed that gods had come to earth & began to worship Paul & Barnabas, until Paul convinced them they were simply men empowered by the true & living God. Timothy, Eunice, & Lois may have witnessed the mad rush to worship Paul & Barnabas. Perhaps they listened as Jews arrived from Antioch & convinced the people to pick up stones to kill Paul & then dragged him out of the city, presumed to be dead. Acts records that the disciples stood around Paul & witnessed what many believe to be his return to life. He literally stood up & reentered the city (14:19-20). Sometime later, Acts 16 records that Paul returned to Lystra & was introduced to Timothy, who began to accompany him on his journeys (1-3). Paul calls Timothy his **fellow-worker** here which pictures getting into a yoke together to pull in the same direction with the companionship & added strength of working together. One way Timothy did this was by representing Paul just as Paul had represented Christ, not only in example but also in what he taught. Paul included Timothy along with Silas as co-authors in writing his 2nd letter to the Corinthians & referring to the preaching they received from all 3 of them. Timothy is also mentioned along with Silas as coauthors to Paul's two NT letters to the Thessalonians. You can read 1st Thes 3:1-6 to see that the timing & reason for writing that letter was because Paul was concerned about that new church & sent Timothy to check on them. When Timothy returned to Paul with a good report about the Thessalonians, Paul sat down to write with delight. It will be Timothy whom Paul sends to the Corinthians to **remind them of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church** (1 Cor 4:17). That's the kind of responsibility Timothy grew into having & the kind of trust Paul had in Timothy. Timothy is also mentioned as a co-author by Paul in his letters to the Philippians & Colossians & to Philemon. So it's no wonder Paul gave the glowing words about Timothy that we can read in Philippians 2:19-23,

But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father. Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me.

Let me say something about this masterpiece of grace, a son born to a believing mother & an unbelieving father. The absence of a godly father doesn't hinder the work of God the Father. The work of God's grace in our lives isn't genetic, it's supernatural. It can be fostered & nurtured by a godly parent, as Timothy testifies, but it isn't dependent on a godly heritage. If you have a godly heritage, be grateful & don't take it for granted. Instead, benefit from it, learn from it, go further because of it. If you don't have a godly heritage, don't be discouraged. God's plan for your life isn't shortchanged because you weren't raised in the faith. Now that you've come to know & believe the truth of the gospel, begin the heritage. Start with your home, your children, your life. Be sure you know that godly parents do not guarantee godly children. In the same way, unbelieving parents do not guarantee unbelief in their children. Timothy is the 1st masterpiece in this gallery of grace.

2. Lucius Paul goes on to write & **so do Lucius & Jason & Sosipater, my kinsmen**. This may be the Lucius who shows up in the book of Acts when the leaders of the church in Antioch are mentioned & who sent out Paul & Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3). Most believe Lucius was a friend of Simon, the man who carried the cross beam of Christ (Mt 27:32) because they were both from Cyrene. Lucius was one of the faithful teachers of the early church in Antioch. It was a church led by 5 men: a Jew from Cyprus named Barnabas, an aristocrat Gentile named Manaen who was raised in the same household as Herod Antipas, an African man named Lucius, & a converted rabbi named Paul. These leaders include a Gentile, a Jew, a black man, a white man, a poor man, a rich man. The church at Antioch became an example of unity in the face of diversity. In fact, the church in Antioch proved at the very outset that the problem of prejudice isn't a problem of class or color, but a problem of character. Convert the character to Christ & solve the problem of class & color. Another interesting thing about the ministry of Lucius is that he served in a culture of great animosity toward Christianity. Acts 11:26 tells us that the disciples were 1st called *Christians* in Antioch. There are many names in the NT for believers: steward, disciple, brother or sister, witness, saint, child of God, beloved, priest, pilgrim, elect, sons of God, bride of Christ, etc. However, the name *Christian* was a name the unbelievers came up with, not believers. In fact,

the name *Christian* is only used 2 other times in the NT (Acts 26:28; 1 Pt 4:16). It seems to have been originally used as a derogatory name: *little-Christ*s or *Christians*. Maybe this is the reason Peter associated the name with persecution when he wrote, **but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name** (1 Pt 4:16). What does the name *Christian* mean to you? Is it merely a synonym for *American*? *Of course I'm a Christian, I was born in America!* Is it just an adjective for nice people? *That man is such a nice Christian man.* Is it a nametag to put on your Sunday clothes that's good for a couple of hours & then forgotten? A Christian on Sunday & a heathen Monday through Saturday? *Christian* means *little Christ* or one who imitates & follows the teachings of Christ. Paul wrote that **to live is Christ** (Phil 1:21). A Christian is one whose life & living is all about Christ. Everyone who has moved to Oregon is now an Oregonian. Why? Because by moving to & living in Oregon you become an Oregonian. In the same way, you're a Christian because you've moved into & now live in Christ Jesus. Paul writes, **Lucius sends greetings**. Lucius is one of the faithful ones who endured persecution for living up to & wearing the name of Christ!

3. Jason Paul mentions Jason next (21b). It seems likely that we can identify him as one of the 1st converts of Paul's ministry in Thessalonica. We can't know for certain, but a Christian named Jason is mentioned in Acts 17:5-9 as hosting Paul & being persecuted for it. Jason appears in this dramatic event. This is when Paul & Silas are preaching the gospel in Thessalonica. Luke records, **the Jews ... formed a mob & set the city in an uproar; & attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people** (17:5). Evidently, Paul & Silas had hidden in Jason's home & then, slipped away. It continues, vss 6-7a, **When the mob did not find them, they began dragging Jason & some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, *These men who have upset the whole world have come here also; & Jason has welcomed them.*** Can you imagine this scene & this testimony? Luke continues, **& they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another King, Jesus.** They stirred up the crowd & the city authorities who heard these things. **& when they had received a pledge (literally *bail*) from Jason & the others, they released them** (7b-9). The courage of Jason doesn't need much commentary. He evidently lived to tell the story.

Jason was a man who put his life on the line for Paul & the gospel of Jesus Christ. He became known as a man who was associated with others who were upsetting the whole world. That's an interesting description: they had **upset the whole world**. What kind of Christianity do we have today? We live in an era in America in which we don't want to upset others with the gospel. Tolerance is king. Therefore, many have tried to make Christianity a pleasant thing. They advertise it as an easy thing to switch to for people who want to try it. It's all positive & wonderful & blessing filled. What does the Bible say? When you put your faith in Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness & salvation, you invite trouble. You can no longer go with the flow, floating downstream with all the other dead fish. Instead we swim upstream & that is hard. Has it ever occurred to you that wherever Paul went a riot broke out? Can you imagine this in a SS class? *Do you really want to put your faith in Jesus? Do you want to join the church? Great, here's your riot gear! Here's how to post bail! Just down the hall, they'll teach you how to bandage open wounds. We're teaching a new series tonight entitled, 'Persecution & How to Persevere'.* Not great marketing, is it? Have we so watered down the truth of Jesus Christ that during every election season, politicians claim to be among us because it helps their approval ratings? Ask Jason what it was like. After all, he's one of the masterpieces in the gallery of grace.

4. Sosipater Paul says next, **Sosipater, my kinsmen**. We can't be sure who Sosipater is, though we have a clue. Sosipater is a longer version of Sopater & a Berean named Sopater is mentioned in Acts 20:4 as accompanying Paul in his travels. So he may have been with Paul as he wrote from Corinth. He was one of the Bereans who came to faith in Christ in Acts 17. He was among those who listened to Paul preach & then, searched the Scriptures to see if Paul had told the truth. Sosipater was evidently one of the many who believed it was true & entered the Kingdom of God & this gallery of grace.

5. Tertius Now we read in vs 22, **I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord**. Wait a minute! What's up with this? *I thought Paul wrote this letter!* He did. Tertius was the voice-activated scribe of Paul for this letter. He was the one who put on paper what Paul prepared in his mind & proclaimed to be written down. Tertius was Paul's amanuensis (a man u ensis). It

means Tertius's hand did the writing, but the content came from Paul. Tertius was the hand that wrote it but Paul's was the mind that formulated the words used. & God,, by the Holy Spirit was the power & source of the words & the thoughts & the truths that formulated in Paul's mind to be written. So God wrote it by His Spirit through the Apostle Paul who used the hands of Tertius to write it down. Tertius, possibly of the household of Gaius, was writing whatever Paul said to write. Many believe that Paul had problems with his eyes. Some believe he had ophthalmia, contracted in the lowlands of Pamphylia on his 1st missionary journey. It was a disease that could bring on near blindness.² To the Corinthians, Paul wrote, **This greeting is in my own hand** (1 Cor 16:21). This meant he wrote the last greetings of his 1st letter to the Corinthians & someone else had written the rest of it as he dictated it to them. Near the end of the letter to the Galatians, Paul wrote, **See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand** (6:11). Because of apparent physical difficulty, possibly with his eyesight, Paul dictated the letter of Romans to Tertius. & Paul evidently allowed Tertius to pen his own greeting: **I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord**. This is the only time we find Paul allowing the personal touch of his scribe. We might imagine the scene like this: Tertius was writing down what Paul said & he was offering greetings from his companions in Corinth. & as he went to mention greetings from Tertius along with Gaius & others, Paul allowed Tertius to extend his own greetings. Perhaps Phoebe was there & affirmed that when she delivered the letter to the Romans. Tertius may have even intended to emphasize that the writing was in service of the Lord or in the power of the Lord. His phrase **in the Lord** can modify his writing or his greeting, but either way he was viewing his life in relation to the Lord. It's even more significant that Tertius isn't really a name, it's a number. The Roman masters identified their leading servants by numbers. In the Roman culture, the name *Primus* was the title of distinction, meaning *first man*; the 1st servant above the others. It was his job to run everything in connection with the master's household. The #1 man hired the other servants, supervised the household & the grounds of the estate. After him, there were other servants who also had responsibilities of descending importance. After *Primus* was *Secundus*, the 2nd man.

² John Phillips, *Exploring Romans*, p 280

After him, was Tertius, the 3rd man. Paul is dictating the letter of Romans to the 3rd servant, a masterpiece of God's grace.

6. Gaius Most believe that Tertius was one of the servants of the man mentioned by Paul in the next vs, **Gaius, host to me & to the whole church, greets you** (23). This wealthy man's estate was large enough to host not only Paul & these friends, but the whole church in Corinth. His hospitality is highlighted by Paul as this letter is sent to Rome & it shows the sense of community in the early church. Why is hospitality mentioned here? Because Christian community & fellowship is vital to our spiritual health. Christians love one another & care about each other because of the communion we have which flows from our union with Christ. & the greetings at the end of this letter actually help foster that unity in at least two ways. 1st of all, all these greetings show the practical love of one group of Christians to another group of Christians. I'm sure it would have been very flattering for the Roman Christians to see all of these Corinthians so anxious to greet them. Secondly, as I said earlier, these greetings also let us know that the Corinthian Christians were in agreement with the contents of the letter being sent to the Roman Christians. The unity wasn't only fostered by a common sense of fellowship but it was also fostered by the embrace of the truth of this letter by the Corinthian Christians & their willingness to attach their names & greeting at the end of it. & so the unity of the church was foster not only in the expression of love in these Christian greetings but also in the Roman church's realization that the Corinthian church was aware of the content of the letter & in agreement with it.

7. Erastus Paul mentions next, **Erastus, the city treasurer greets you**. What a blessing to see & hear of a political leader who genuinely aligned himself with the church of Jesus Christ. It's possible this is the same Erastus who's described as one **who ministered unto Paul** in Acts 19:22. This indicated a habitual service meaning he served Paul any way he could & as often as he could. & in doing this, he served the cause of Jesus Himself.³ 2 Tim 4:20 mentions an Erastus who stayed in Corinth but we can't be sure if it's the same man as the one in Rom 16:23. But what we do know is that he was a man with a significant responsibility in Corinth. & it's even possible he

³ D. Edmond Hiebert, *Personalities Around Paul*, p 161

held another government position that's marked in history by an inscription in a marble paving block that was found in Corinth in 1929. That inscription dates to the 1st century & mentions an Erastus with a different title that could have been by this same man in a different job. It reads, *Erastus, in return for his commissioner for public works, laid (this pavement) at his own expense.*⁴ Again, not enough evidence exists to be dogmatic in connecting the 2, but we do know that Gaius & Erastus were 2 believers in Corinth who had a measure of wealth or occupational standing in the city. There's no evidence that Erastus resigned his post when Paul wrote to the Romans. The context rather indicates he held the office at the time of the writing & served both Christ & the city of Corinth.⁵ He remains today, an example of every businessman or woman; of every level of political leader who not only laid the pavement for the city of Corinth, but helped lay the foundation for the church of Jesus Christ in that city. It's possible, then & now, to do both!

8. Quartus Finally, we find, most likely, another of Gaius' servants, **Quartus, the brother**. He's the #4 man. Quartus means 4th. However, in case we think that servants occupied a lesser status in the church, Paul added the descriptive phrase, **the brother**. Imagine in the gallery of grace there's a politician, a wealthy master & landowner with 2 servants, who are 3rd & 4th in line, & all are welcomed by the apostle Paul, & more importantly, all are honored as members of the family of God. Can you imagine the church meeting in the home of Gaius? His servants have prepared the home, setting out the chairs & fixing the meal. The church body is gathered & a loaf of bread & cup of wine were shared among them, in honor of the body & blood of their Savior given for them. There is Gaius, taking a piece of bread & then handing it to the servant who had earlier baked it, who now also breaks off a piece & eats. Erastus sips from the cup & passes it to servant #4 who sips from the same cup. Something astonishing is happening which allows all classes of people to worship as equals at the foot of the cross. People who are rich can be saved & people who are poor can be saved & they can come together in one family in Christ. & so can people of high political office & servants & those with big homes & money or with no homes & no money. That's the beauty of the body of Christ & it's the wonder of what the gospel produces in our lives.

⁴ <https://ferrelljenkins.wordpress.com/2013/10/23/the-erastus-inscription-at-corinth/>

⁵ Ibid, p 162

That kind of transformation from all backgrounds is testimony of the power of the Word of God. The Word of God can sink into the hearts of people from all cultures & incomes & ethnicities & eccentricities. The Word of God is the tool the Spirit of God uses to awaken eternal life in the souls of people. Speaking of the Word of God, look at vs 24.

This is in brackets in most modern translations or it's only a footnote or it's included but footnoted as questionable. That raises questions about the preservation of the Bible through the ages & how we know we still have what was originally written. We all must be informed with why we can trust the Bible & how we got it & how it's been guarded & passed down. In most ancient manuscripts, those that are the oldest & written closest in time to the original, vs 24 doesn't appear. The copies of this letter that date back closest to Paul's giving it to Phoebe to deliver to Rome don't contain the words of what we call vs 24. & thus it is questionable whether they were in the original. Vs 24 does appear in western manuscripts, meaning those of the Roman branch of the church in history. & that's the branch that made the most copies in Greek & in other languages. But copies that are farther in time from the original aren't as significant as older copies that are closer in time to the original. Does that make sense? It's like this: If you missed last week's sermon, would you rather hear about it from someone who heard it or from someone who heard from someone else who heard from someone else who heard it? It's like the game of telephone or gossip where you sit in a circle & start by whispering a message to the person next to you & that person passes the message to the next person & on it goes around. Would the whispered message be more trustworthy from the 1st person who heard it or from the person half-way around the circle? Probably the 1st, right? & that's why ancient manuscripts of Scripture are so valuable. & it's also why vs 24 isn't considered to be part of the original letter Paul wrote. Also, some manuscripts have it after vs 27 so the fact that it moved around shows some confusion over it. Here's what this teaches us: We know what's in ancient manuscripts & we have a lot of them. & we can compare them & ancient translations to gather a very clear picture of exactly what was in the original letter. We don't have to guess & we don't have to listen to people who attack the Bible with ignorant claims that they can't trust it or that it was changed by

people through time. Those attacks are simply not true; they have no basis in fact. Just the opposite is true. We have so many copies & translations of the NT that can be carefully compared so that 99.9% of what we have we know is original. The other miniscule percentage are tiny things that don't make any doctrinal difference so they shouldn't create any doubt either. God has protected & preserved His Word for His people down through generations & centuries so we can know Him. That's why we don't need to be bothered by vs 24 likely not being original to Romans. It's not a big deal because we have the many copies & careful science of comparing those copies & we can be sure of what we have. But even if vs 24 wasn't in the original, it's still true, right? It's a virtual repeat of vs 20b.

This passage is a gallery of grace, where servants & masters, statesman & simple men are turned into brothers. This is the masterpiece of God, where men & women are redeemed by Christ & drawn together by grace. There is no color, no class, no personal agenda, no turf to protect. There's just grace & a love for Jesus & for each other. Whenever the world stops & takes a close look at the church, they see something more priceless than a painting that can be hung on a wall. They see the treasure of a transformed life & the demonstration of love between classes & races & ages. It's the unmistakable work of a Master Artist in this collection of masterpieces called the church that He's still in the process of painting & displaying. This is the gallery of true masterpieces – displayed to the world & to the hosts of heaven. We are the gallery of grace. **24** PRAY