

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Meet The Team

By Dan Trygg

“Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. ²² I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord. ²³ Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother. ²⁴ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” Romans 16:21-24

Again, we have a list of names. This time, however, Paul was not greeting others, he was sending along greetings from those who were with him, as he wrote, ...or at least as he prepared to finish his letter and send it to Rome. **Paul rarely worked alone. He almost always was accompanied by a team,** and/or he would assign certain team members to do certain tasks in the ministry. **Here in Romans 16:21-24, there are eight names,** but I just skimmed my way through from Romans through the letters to the Thessalonians, and **I found another nineteen names that Paul referred to as “co-workers”, or were involved in the ministry work.** Here, these eight individuals mentioned by name in Romans 16 were with Paul as he wrote, and many of them were involved elsewhere with Paul. **There are some interesting details which God has given to us which add a deeper dimension to Paul’s team of ministers.**

Timothy – Paul met this young man on his first missionary journey, and seems to have led him to Christ (He calls him “my true child in the faith” - I Tim. 1:2). When he came through the same area again on his second missionary journey, Timothy had distinguished himself by “being well spoken of by the brothers” from two towns ten miles apart. That meant that he was significantly involved in the ministry in both communities, somehow. Upon hearing this, Paul wanted him to accompany him in his missionary work. He had grown up under the influence of his believing grandmother and mother, who had taught him the scriptures from an early age (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). As a result, he was an effective teacher and, though he was a young man, Paul often left him in charge of following up a group of new believers when he himself had to move on, because of persecution. Timothy had an unusually pure heart. Paul said that he had no one like him, who had the same heart that he himself had for those he worked with. Timothy was genuinely concerned for their welfare, not his own interests (Phil 2:19,20). Of all those Paul worked with, Timothy enjoyed the most consistent and longest interaction with and for the apostle. He is listed as a co-author with Paul of four NT books. He is mentioned more than any other co-worker of Paul. His name occurs 24 times (Act 16:1; 17:14,15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; Rom. 16:21; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor. 1:1, 19; Phil. 1:1; 2:19; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 3:2,6; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:2,18; 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:2; Philem. 1:1; Heb. 13:23).

Lucius – This man goes back a long way in Paul’s life history. He first appears by name in Acts 13:1, “Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” The “Saul” in this passage is none other than Saul of Tarsus, who became known as Paul after this missionary journey that was initiated at this prayer and worship meeting. So, Lucius was one those at the initiation of Paul’s apostolic ministry. Note that Lucius is referred to as someone from Cyrene. Cyrene was in northern Africa, where the country of Libya is today. If you look back to Acts 11:20, we see that the church in Antioch was *founded* by a number of people from Cyprus and Cyrene. It is significant that when the apostles wanted to check on the health of this church that they originally sent Barnabas there. He was a man from Cyprus (Acts 4:36). Undoubtedly, the man known as Simeon in Acts 13 would have been from Cyrene, not Cyprus, for he was known as “Black” (Niger = black). He is probably the same Simon of Cyrene we read about in the gospels (Matt. 27:32; Mk. 15:21; Lk. 23:26 [“Simon” Peter is also called “Simeon” – Acts 15:14; 2 Pet. 1:1]). This connection probably explains Paul’s familiarity with Rufus and his mother (vs. 13). Paul spent over a year in Antioch in Syria before being sent out by the Holy Spirit. He would have known, and worked closely with, Simon of Cyrene, and, since churches met in homes, he would have known the family, as well.

Jason – This could be the same man mentioned in Acts 17:5-9. “But the Jews [in Thessalonica], becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. When they did not find Paul and Silas, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, ‘These men who have upset the world have come here also; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.’ They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.” Jason was the host to Paul and the church in Thessalonica. These events happened about seven years earlier than the writing of the Roman letter. It

could be that Jason was with Paul in Corinth preparing for gathering the collection for the saints in Jerusalem, that Paul mentioned in 15:25-27.

Sosipater – Sopater is a shortened form of the same name, mentioned in Acts 20:4. He was a representative from the church in Berea of Macedonia who was accompanying Paul with the offering for the poor in Jerusalem.

Tertius – Only mentioned here. He was likely an “amanuensis” who wrote the letter at Paul’s dictation.

Gaius – Described here as “the host to me and the church” in Corinth, Gaius was one of the few people baptized by Paul in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14). As such, he probably was one of the initial converts there. To host Paul and the church probably indicates that he was a man of means. In Acts 19:29, he is also listed as a traveling companion of Paul from Macedonia. He and Aristarchus were seized by a mob at Ephesus, incensed about the threat of the Christian preaching to the Diana cult in Ephesus. He would seem to be the same Gaius in Acts 20:4, one of those gathered to bring the offering of the churches to Jerusalem. There, he is called “Gaius of Derbe”. It could be that Derbe was his birthplace, but his business had brought him to Corinth, one of the busiest seaports in the ancient world. Interestingly, the apostle John writes his third epistle to “the beloved Gaius”. John had become the elder at Ephesus toward the end of his life. Possibly Gaius came back and settled there for a time, and John developed a close friendship with him.

Erastus – Here is another interesting fellow, whose name occurs several times in the NT. Acts 19:21,22 says “Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, ‘After I have been there, I must also see Rome.’ And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.” Possibly he sent them to help prepare for the offering that was to go to the poor in Jerusalem. Note that he intended to go through *both* Macedonia *and* Achaia. Here, in Romans 16:23, possibly written from Corinth, Erastus is called “the city treasurer” or “steward”. Corinth is in *Achaia*, and if Erastus was able to “minister to” Paul it could mean that he also was a person of wealth. The last reference to him in the NT is in 2 Timothy 4:20, where Paul indicates that “Erastus remained at Corinth”. In 1929, a very large inscription (Over six feet in length, with large letters about nine inches high!) mentioning the name “Erastus” was uncovered near a paved area NE of the theater of Corinth. It has been dated to the middle of the first century, and reads, “Erastus on return for his aedileship (a Latin title for an office roughly equivalent to “Director of Public Works” or “city administrator”) laid this pavement at his own expense.” Many scholars believe this is the same Erastus. It would make him a member of the upper, ruling class. This would explain his ability to travel, and would verify his position of wealth and privilege.

Quartus – “the brother”. That is not much to go on. The only other information we can glean is that his name means “fourth”, so he probably was a fourth son in the family he came from. Similarly, the name “Tertius” (vs. 22) means “third”. Are they brothers? We don’t know. To be called the “third” or “fourth” was not uncommon. To name children by their birth order was common. There were many men named “Primus” or “Secundus” and so on. The birth name of the Emperor Augustus was Octavian (“eighth”).

Other team members and co-workers – Here are some of the other co-workers of Paul listed in the NT, in addition to those listed in Romans: Sosthenes, Silvanus (Silas), Titus, Barnabus, Tychichus, Epaphroditus, Euodia, Syntyche, Clement, Epaphras, Epaphras, Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus Justus, Luke, and Demas.

What observations can we make about Paul’s ministry connections?

Paul, and others, often did their ministry work in teams. This was in accordance with Jesus’ own example. From the beginning of His ministry, He was looking for promising, teachable people to train. Even though He ultimately chose twelve to focus His attention on, there were many others who were also significantly involved with Him, listening to Him, following Him, and being sent out by Him on ministry projects (e.g., the 70, the 120, the 500, the fact that there were others who had accompanied Jesus and the twelve, from the time of the baptism of John until the day He went up to heaven – Lk. 10:1; Act 1:13-15; 1 Cor. 15:6; Acts 1:21.) **Furthermore, Jesus sent His trainees out in teams** (Lk. 10:1). We saw in Acts 13:1,2 that **the Holy Spirit set apart Barnabus and Saul for the work of ministry.**

There were many advantages to this strategy. In accordance with Ecclesiastes 4:9,10, there is often strength, encouragement, assistance and protection when we work together. **This arrangement offered a perfect situation for discipleship and ministry training.**

Often, Paul used his fellow workers to do the follow-up work, to teach the new believers. This had the advantage of helping these workers get more deeply established in their own mastery of the basic teachings, and it freed up Paul to deal with more difficult cases, or to preach to larger crowds. Another benefit of this arrangement was that **a secondary team member could often continue working behind the scenes, even after the more visible and vocal apostle was driven out by persecution.** As Paul developed more established, mature ministry workers, he could send them on assignments or to do problem solving. **With more trained ministry workers, the ministry expanded and multiplied.** Using a team-ministry approach helped to develop more people, **set them to work and give them the skills to successfully do ministry on their own.**