

## “THE NEED FOR DILIGENCE”

### Romans 16:17-23

Message 1901

Diligence is the characteristic of being watchful. Keep watch! If you live in the city it is important to be watchful during the heavy traffic hours. If you live in the country it is important to watch for various difficulties and be on guard for destructive things like storms or snakes.

In the Christian life we must also be watchful. There are dangers around us. Satan has many traps and deceptions to harm and destroy us. We are never free to totally relax. No, diligence is required.

THE NEED FOR DILIGENCE is the theme of Paul’s writing in Romans 16:17:23.

*17. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*

*18. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*

*19. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.*

*20. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

*21. Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.*

*22. I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.*

*23. Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.*

Paul expresses the need for diligence because of certain apparent CONDITIONS that he was aware of.

THE SEIGE OF CONTRARY DOCTRINES calls for diligence. We might think that as near as the Apostle Paul was to the time of Jesus there would not be any contrary doctrine. But contrary doctrines were already present.

Now by careful calculation we conclude that Paul was writing this letter perhaps 25 years after the death of Jesus. The Apostles and believers had been active in spreading the Gospel, planting churches across the Roman Empire. But already there were those who caused division and who taught error, twisting and avoiding the truth. Truth often stirs up falsehood. If there were nothing true there could be nothing false, you see. So there was contrary doctrine invading, and besieging the church and the Apostle warns them about this.

It is interesting to see where the opposition actually lay. In verse 18 he said, “For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly.” Some were not interested in serving the Lord. They were interested in serving themselves. They exalted themselves instead of exalting Jesus. Their fair speeches and good words deceived people. They had every intention to deceive and cause divisions and in that way they led away the innocent.

Now friend, what the Apostle Paul is urging upon the Roman believers I urge upon us: let us be watchful and diligent so as not to be overcome by contrary doctrines. We must measure every teaching

by the Word of God.

THE SECURITY OF CONFIDENT ASSURANCE speaks of diligence. Diligence is required in resisting evil. It is also expressed in promoting the good. Now Paul comes in verse 19 with another condition. He describes a positive action in verse 19: “For your obedience is come abroad unto all men.”

When we began the book of Romans, we found in the first chapter that the Apostle Paul spoke about their obedience being spread abroad. Also in chapter one, verse 5, “For the obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name.” And in verse 8, “That your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”

Now here in the last chapter he speaks about obedience. It is an important truth, my friend, that to know is not enough. You may have head knowledge, you may know what I am talking about but unless you, like them, obey what you know the knowledge will be of little value to you. What you know must issue in obedience.

An obedient life is open to the good. Paul counseled them to be wise about that which is good. To pursue the good. He taught them to be closed to the evil. He said here, “simple concerning evil.” That means they would not be open to evil. Knowledge would block that out. But they would be open to the good.

In verse 20, there is a wonderful promise: “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” Oh, I must emphasize who is going to bruise Satan. God will do it. We are no match for him. We cannot overcome him by ourselves but God will one day triumph over Satan.

Now, friend, we must claim our assurance by obedience. The security of confident assurance will be ours when we obey what we know. Praise God!

THE SUPPORT OF COMPANIONS IN SERVICE urges diligence. Some commentaries consider the last part of this chapter as an after thought with Paul. But I don’t think it is. No, because here were the fellow laborers, the ones who were with Paul when he was writing the epistle.

Now notice that he mentions Timothy, first. He calls him “my workfellow.” There are other places where Paul has especially warm tribute for Timothy. Timothy was just a young man but he worked very closely with the Apostle Paul and Paul had a profound and deep appreciation for him. He was a supporter and companion to the Apostle Paul, a special helper.

Then he mentions three others: Lucius, Jason and Sosipater. He calls them my kinsmen, very close they are to him. Not necessarily a relative of his, but close in the Gospel.

Paul’s secretary, Tertius, writes in to say that he also greets them in the Lord.

Paul and his team were the guests of Gaius there in Corinth. The whole church in Corinth joined with the host, Gaius, to greet them.

I thought it was very interesting that the steward of the city, the chamberlain of the city, Erastus, who apparently was also a Christian and Quartus a brother sent greetings.

We treasure the support of our companions in service. What a joy it is to know that we can serve the Lord together and serve with diligence. I must urge you to be diligent, that is to be watchful. This is no time to grow weary because we too can only stand when we understand.

We can only be secure when we have the assurance based on God’s Holy Word. We must understand

the siege of contrary doctrine and be aware of this and be warned against it. We can enjoy the security of confident assurance when our obedience to the Lord is clear. We know that we have the support of companions in service for diligent watchfulness. Yes, praise God!