



ZWTF

Zapping You Whenever Thoughts Flow

Volume 7, Issue 12

ROMANS Part 146

Chapter 16:14-15

Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas,
Philologos, Julia, Nereus,
Olympas, Sophie.



Greet Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brethren with them. 15 Greet Philologos and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas.

I approached the rural intersection near Blissfield, Michigan where U.S. 223 and Country Road 6 intersected, halfway between Toledo and Ann Arbor. I couldn't believe that they were all in their togas—all eight of them. It was Saturday, November 8, 2014, 10:00 a.m.—the scheduled meeting time. The snow was falling, but the wind drove it horizontally in a near whiteout. It was violent winter weather for this time of year, even for

Michigan. There was strangely little traffic; well—none. The group was huddled together and, in their togas, were nearly indistinguishable from the snow.

I pulled off the road.

Talk about *déjà vu*. As soon as I stopped the car, one of the men tried to open the door. He had no idea how to do that, of course, so I reached over, unlatched the door myself and pushed it open. The door hit the man in the knee and he said, “Och!”—(Greek for “ouch”) which is exactly how it happened in my dream.

“Martin Zender?”

“I am.”

“Thank God. Listen, we're about to freeze to death. How is this going to work?”

I hadn't even thought that far. *How would everyone fit?* I jumped out and the first thing I wanted to do was hug everyone, but no one was in the mood for it just then; they were all shivering; I literally heard teeth chattering. “Hug later,” moaned one of the two women. I wondered if it was Julia. Her voice sounded so real to me. These were not spirits. It was the *physicalness* of them that stunned me. So was this Julia? Either that, or it was Nereus' sister. I had no idea, of course, which one was Nereus. Paul never mentioned Nereus' sister's name in the text. It was simply, “Nereus and his sister.”

Just then, one of the men grasped my hand and said, “Nereus. Nice to meet you, sir. This is nuts, yes? *Trelós!*” He looked at my car. “But seriously, Martin Zender. How are we all going to get in this thing?”

I had assumed that, since the entire enterprise was already a miracle, that everything would somehow work itself out. Nereus was apparently reading my thoughts.

“The miracle has already occurred,” he said, “So I guess it's good old human ingenuity from this point forward.” Then to his friends: “Pile in!”

I opened the doors and it was like a circus clown car, only in reverse. The inaugural mission was to stuff eight first-century Greeks into my 1999 Ford Contour and hope that it would still roll. I got four abreast in the back

seat—barely—but then of course six had to double up.

“I want Sophie,” said one of the men. “Sophie, up here, up here.”

“Why me?” said the woman who was apparently Sophie. (Since the name “Sophie” never appears in Romans, chapter 16, this had to have been Nereus’ sister, which made the other woman Julia, who I assumed was Philologos’ wife; but I still didn’t know which one was Philologos).

“Because I can’t bear to think of Hermas here.”

“Where?” asked Sophie. “On your lap?”

“As if I *want* to be on Olympas’ lap,” said the man whose name was apparently Hermes.

Sophie said, “Oh, why not?” And she climbed onto the lap of Olympas. “Put your arms around me, Olympas. Don’t tell Mary.”

“How is it so *warm* in here?” said another of the Greek men.

“If you tell me your name,” I said, “then I’ll tell you where the heat is coming from.”

He extended his hand from the back seat. “Patrobas. Nice to meet you.”



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“Same here. You have no idea how much. Who’s the guy you’re sitting on?”

“Oh, that’s just Hermas.”

“What do you mean, ‘that’s *just* Hermas?’ said Hermas. “You need to lose weight.”

“Would you prefer *Hermes*?”

Hermes was the only guy in the back seat with no one on his lap. I gauged that he weighed around 300 pounds; he had no discernible lap. I reached back to shake his hand. “Hermes. I’m Martin Zender. Nice to meet you. What a classic Greek name. Are you related to Hermas?”

“Only in the spirit,” he said. “I don’t think I could handle being related to him in the flesh.”

“That makes two of us,” said Hermes.

“Anyway,” continued Patrobas, “That’s Sophronia, but we call her Sophie; she’s on the lap of Olympas. Her name means, ‘self-controlled,’ but that’s a misnomer of the highest order.”

“Stop telling Martin Zender lies!” said Sophie. “I just met the man!”

“And that’s Julia and Philologos; they’re married, so watch out—” (laughter all around), “and let’s see; you just met Hermes and Hermas—not related except in the spirit—and Nereus is the lucky guy sitting up there with you. He’s Sophie’s brother. Thanks for doing this, Martin Zender. We’re all a little freaked out right now.”

“Understandable. Listen, I live for stuff like this. You people are doing great. I thought this would be a lot worse.”

“So about the warmth,” said Patrobas. “Is there a fire somewhere?”

“Sort of. Hot coolant passing through the heater core gives off heat before returning to the engine cooling circuit. A small battery-driven fan connected to the vehicle’s ventilation system forces air through the heater core to transfer heat from the coolant to the cabin air, which is directed into the vehicle through vents at various points.”

“It makes perfect sense to *me*,” said Sophie.

“Well, there’s a first time for everything,” joked Patrobas.

“Shut *up*, Patrobas! You’re *sabotaging* me!”

“See this vent here?” I said. “That’s where the heat comes out. You have one back there as well. Put your hand up to it.”

“I’ll be danged,” said Patrobas.

“What year is this?” asked Julia.

“Twenty fourteen.”

“You mean, *fourteen*? Have we gone back in time?”

Hermes said, “No. He said *twenty* fourteen. What do you mean by, ‘*twenty* fourteen,’ Martin Zender? I don’t understand.”

I wasn't sure how to break it to him—to them. Should I keep it to myself? I'm not sure they needed to know. But how could I not tell them? Part of me wanted to blow their minds. "Do you guys know where you even are?"

"No," said Patrobas.

"What did God tell you?"

Nereus spoke up then and said, "God gave *me* the dream. Everyone else is here because of me. They're the only ones who believed me; the only ones crazy enough—like Peter, the great apostle of our Lord, who stepped out of the boat onto the stormy sea of Galilee—the only ones crazy enough to 'step out of the boat'—although I announced it to everyone. It's probably why Paul named us last in a letter that he wrote to our ecclesia last month. 'The last shall be first.' Honestly, Martin Zender? We don't know *where* we are. If you were to ask me for a guess, we're somewhere in the Apennines. That's the only place it snows like this in our country. But I am having my doubts. I am not feeling that this is the Apennines. Is it?"

"How long were you here before I showed up?"

"Not long, thank God. We felt strange things. Even the roadbed is different to us. We had to trust God. I told everyone to keep their eyes down and trust God. We met at the intersection of the Appian and Ostian Ways. That

was the designated place. There was strangely no traffic. We huddled there and prayed. Next we knew, we were engulfed in this snow. It felt as though we could die. I couldn't account for it. I said to all, 'We should stay huddled here, for warmth and security. If we huddle, he will come,' and that's when you found us. It seemed barely a moment."

"How did you know my name?"

"Your name was in the dream, my friend, as clear as I am saying it to you now. God told me that we were going to meet other believers. 'Other believers of another era,' He said. Those were His exact words. But that we

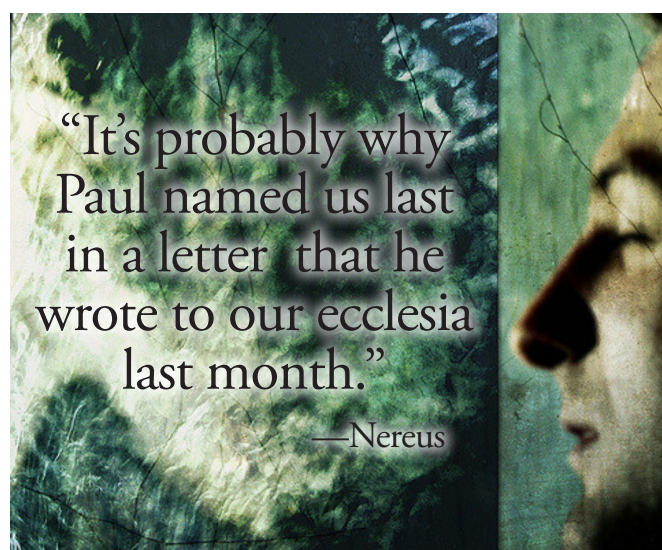


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would have a conductor. He said that you, above all, were keeping our names before the saints. 'Unto the ages,' He said. This is why Julia is shocked that this could be fourteen—that we could have *time*-traveled. Is this even possible? Paul had a similar experience. But Paul went to the future. How could you keep our names alive in the past? It makes no sense."

"He said *twenty* fourteen," corrected Hermas again.

"What year was it when you left?" I asked.

Nereus said, "Fifty-six."

The only "fourteen" they could possibly imagine was one void of any preceding digits. I knew that '56 was the year that Paul wrote Romans. It hit me just then that I was looking into the eyes of a man who could have looked into the eyes of Paul. "Tell me this. Have you ever met Paul?"

Nereus turned toward the back seat. "Only Hermas and me. We met him in '53, in Antioch. Barnabas was with him. The only others from our ecclesia who met

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him were Priscilla and Aquila—and Phoebe, of course. Phoebe brought his letter to us from Corinth...You have tears in your eyes. Why?”

“I can’t help it. I love Paul. You actually *met* the man. You *spoke* with him. He *talked* to you.”

“How do you know Paul? You believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ, but through Paul? How did you hear about him? Are you of the diaspora?”

“I have his letters.”

“*Letters?* More than one? *We* have a letter from him. He wrote to you as well?”

“Sort of,” I said.

* * * * *

“Stop!”

“What the *heck?*”

“Slow down!”

“Martin Zender is trying to *kill* us!”

“God!”

“Jesus!”

I had pulled out from the shoulder and was driving fifteen miles per hour.

“I don’t know why He selected you for this, but there must be a need. It’s possible even that Paul needs to hear it. Hell, it might be for *me*.”

“Does this thing fly?” asked Julia.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Hermes said.

“I don’t think we’re in Italy any more,” said Olympas.

“Where are we going?”

I felt that they were now ready for more. “We’re going to a Bible study in a place called Almont, Michigan,” I said. “Not much different than your meetings in Rome, actually. There are other believers there. You are going to meet people who believe exactly as you do. This is what God promised you, and it’s going to happen. I don’t know



“Are you *nuts?*” said Sophie. “I hope so! I *like* crazy people!”

“What’s happening?” It was Patrobas. “Are we in danger? Martin Zender, could we die? How is it that we are traveling at this outrageous velocity? What is pulling us?”

(I had punched it to 35 miles per hour.)

“The speed has to do with pistons, spark plugs and a crankshaft. Thousands of little explosions are occurring right now under the hood. Never mind. As for your other question, yes, we could definitely die.”

“Oh my God, this is fun,” said Hermas.

I was now on 23 North. I eased it up to the 55 mile-per-hour limit and none of them could take their eyes from out the windows. I wondered what would happen at I-75.

why He selected you for this, but there must be a need. Maybe the others in Rome need to hear it, through you. I don’t know. It’s possible even that Paul needs to hear it. Hell, it might be for *me*.”

“What’s ‘hell?’” asked Sophie.

“I’ll explain that to you later. I will. You won’t believe what has happened to the evangel. But then again, you probably will. But I can’t wait for you to meet Dean and Gisela Hough, and Tony Nungesser, and Jim Best, and John Krauss, and Jean Douglas, and Damon Klinger, and Gertrude Venlet—and others. I will tell you *why* these people believe like you, but it is going to strain your faith. It will be hard for you to understand *how* they believe this way, but I’m going to explain it to you. These are your brothers and sisters. I *am* keeping your names alive, but your

names are already alive in a way that will strain your faith even more. Paul has been successful beyond your wildest dreams. But in other ways, it's all a vast failure. But the success is greater. Don't be confused by that; I'll explain everything. No, you're not in Italy any more. You're in a country that did not exist when you left Rome twenty minutes ago. Right now, you're five-thousand miles *west* of Rome."

Nereus said, "Right *now*? Five thousand miles *west* of Rome? How many cubits is that?"

"I don't know. A lot. You've crossed an ocean."

I looked in the rear-view mirror and Patrobas was pushing his fingers compulsively through his hair. "Screw it," he said. "Tell us the time."

"Are you ready?"

"I doubt it. I'm still processing twenty fourteen. It can't mean what I now think that it might mean, but I have a feeling that it does."

"It does. You're 1,958 years removed from '56 A.D. Welcome to the future, Pat."

Sophie swooned and passed out. I pulled over and we revived her with a couple of my Subway napkins soaked in water, and by fanning her with a brochure from the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland. I held her hand. Hermas sang hymns to her. Her first words when coming to were, "Can't we go any faster? God, I love this. Is this the snatching away?"

* * * * *

The time element was slowly sinking in—or maybe it wasn't at all; it was hard to tell. They had all become light-headed, but only Sophie lost it. No one talked anymore. The road hummed beneath us and the snow came unabated. Nereus became hypnotized watching the windshield wipers slap back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, against the precipitation.

I felt that it was time to unveil the Greek Scriptures. I couldn't hold it in anymore. We had come to the I-75 on-ramp at Flat Rock. To distract them from the trauma of entering the highway, I reached under my seat and pulled out my Bible.

"You all need to see something," I said.

I realized that none of them had ever even seen a book. Nereus was the first to turn it over in his hands. What is this?"

"The Scriptures. You know them as the scrolls."

The others peered over the front seat. They all wanted to hold it.

"Page through it," I said.

"You have made notes on almost every page of this,"

Nereus said.

"It's important to me."

"Look! Here's Matthew's letter about Jesus." Nereus held it up for the others to see. "Paul told us about this. How is it that you have it?"

"Keep going."

I watched him flip through the gospels—he repeated the names of the writers as he went—"Matthew; Mark; Luke; John"—and then he arrived at Acts. He could not hide his amazement that the early activities of the apostles and Paul had been recorded so thoroughly. "This is so helpful, Martin Zender. This is amazing. How did you get this? Who wrote it?"

"Luke wrote it."

"Paul's friend? The same 'Luke' who wrote the Lord's account?"

Hermas said, "I actually met Luke when he visited Sardis. I was there on business. I shook his hand."

"Yes," I said. "The same Luke. Keep going. It's going to get even better."

Nereus turned one page past "Acts" and read, "Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, severed for the evangel of God...to all who are in Rome, beloved by God, called saints: Grace to you and peace..." Holy Christ! This is the letter Paul wrote to us!" He was now turning the pages furiously. "It's the whole thing!"

"See if my name is in there!" said Sophie. "See if Paul added it."

Nereus said, "This is incredible. We're all here. We are all in this...this...*'book'*."

"Not only you, but look," I said. "Paul wrote twelve other letters to other ecclesias. Keep flipping through. I'm sure you're familiar with the other ecclesias, but you may not realize that Paul wrote letters to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, to the saints in Philippi, and to the saints in Ephesus. Some of his personal letters have also been collected, like to Timothy, Titus and Philemon."

"But wait a minute," said Olympas. "You have us almost convinced that we are two-thousand years in the future—even though I am still trying to wrap my head around that—but how is it that these letters still exist? And how is it that you have a copy of them? Who did this?"

Just then, Julia shouted, "Oh, my God! Look! It's New Jerusalem!"

The curtain had parted, and the great city of Detroit had appeared through the thick gauze of snow. —MZ

(*To be continued.*)