



# ZWTF

Zapping You Whenever Thoughts Flow

Volume 7, Issue 22

## ROMANS Part 153

Chapter 16:21-22

### Paul's scribe commandeers Romans.



**Greeting you is Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my relatives. I, Tertius, the writer of the epistle, am greeting you in the Lord.**

I've always admired and even loved Paul's scribe, Tertius. He's a humble, behind-the-scenes guy taking care of business for the Apostle to the Nations. How important is his work? He's the guy actually putting Paul's dictation to paper (papyrus, rather). Paul is dictating and Tertius is writing—as fast as he can.

How did Paul write Romans? I'm talking practically now. Did he sit with Tertius for weeks on end, putting together draft after draft in the way that an author writes a novel today? I don't think so. No one can know for sure, but I posit the following:

I believe that Paul dictated Romans in a day; maybe in two or three sittings. The man was on fire to communicate his truths. Having already meditated on this evangel for years, Paul knew it inside and out. He could recite it in his sleep. The words sat always on the tip of his tongue, like so many parachutists lined up to exit an airplane. So one day he called Tertius to him and said, "Put on the coffee, brother. Let's do this."

I liken it to the Beatles' debut album, *Please Please Me*. The Beatles recorded the entire album in a single day, from 10:00 a.m. to 10:45 p.m. No one does that today. No one. The date was February 11, 1963. The place: EMI Studios at Abbey Road, London. The Beatles knew their songs inside and out, having already performed them for a year throughout England. They'd honed their respective instrumental crafts in Hamburg, Germany between 1960 and 1962, playing double and triple shifts, hours upon end. By the time of the now-famous EMI session, the Beatles knew their stuff—to say the least.

I began studying Paul's evangel in the summer of 1986. I did not write or speak a word publicly on it until the summer of 1994. After eight years of reading and meditating, the material coursed through me, thicker than my own blood. Today, I could do an all-day conference on this very book, talking for sixteen hours straight with short breaks for whiskey shots.

I believe that's how Paul dictated Romans. One day. Short breaks. "Let's do this, brother." Coffee instead of whiskey—or maybe not.

In order to keep up with the torrent that was Paul, Tertius must have taken the original dictation with some sort of shorthand. The original scribbling would have been illegible to anyone but Tertius. Only later did the scribe sit down with the author to write it formally, copying from the original dictation. Paul would have been at his side, much as a director today sits down with the film editor to cut a movie. It was then that Paul would have said, "Let's put, 'Sin, getting an incentive through the precept *deludes* me' there, instead of '*confounds* me.' It's stronger, I think. You?" And Tertius would have said, "Yes, I agree. Good call."

This final draft (*their* final draft, not ours), is what might have taken days, or even weeks. Keep in mind that every single word came from the holy spirit of God. Only sixty-six letters in the annals of human writing have ever come like this. They knew it was happening, and yet they relaxed in it, trusting it. They felt no pressure to force it.

They sat at a lamp-lit table together at midnight on a cool April night in 56 A.D. (the third night of formalizing the draft) at the home of Gaius in Corinth. Gaius went to bed at 10:00 p.m. and, as he had done the two nights previous, said "Good luck" before retiring. They didn't need luck.

Editing finished and the final draft completed, they rolled it up like the Declaration of Independence, tied and sealed it. Tertius said, "Who's going to take it?" and Paul answered "Phoebe. She's going to Rome anyway in early May to visit her aunt." Phoebe bought a ticket to Italy, tucked the scroll into her dress, and now, nearly two-thousand years later, *Paul to the Romans* is the most famous, least-understood piece of literature ever written.

### TERTIUS INSERTS HIMSELF

Tertius couldn't resist. Three sentences from the end of the final draft, Paul's scribe wrote the following:

I, Tertius, the writer of the epistle, am greeting you in the Lord.

Thirteen words that were just as inspired as Paul's. The holy spirit of God wrote them, just as it wrote, "We are reckoning a man to be justified by grace, apart from works of law." Were it not for this brief line, we would

never have known this man's name or what he had done. But because of it, the whole world knows the name of the human being who penned Romans.

Tertius took pride in his small role in God's eonian purpose. And why not? His was not the pride of self-aggrandizement, but of accomplishment. It was the pride of participating in a grand *thing*—the grandness of which Tertius could then only dimly grasp. For all he knew, this would be the one and only copy of Paul's letter. It didn't matter to him. What mattered was that he believed in it, just as Paul believed in it. What mattered was that, though he had probably never met a single saint in the distant city to which this letter was bound, he loved them like family. He *felt* as though he knew them. The spirit of unity—the spirit of Christ—united them all. They were of one body, having one Lord. Tertius might never meet them, no, not before the resurrection of the body. Desperate to somehow touch these saints personally, Tertius inserts himself at the end of this doctrinal masterpiece. It is debatable whether he even told Paul of it.

Alexander Maclaren writes in his *Expositions of Holy Scripture*—

Tertius' salutation may suggest to us the best thing by which to be remembered. All his life before and after the hours spent at Paul's side has sunk in oblivion. He wished to be known only as having written the Epistle. Christian souls ought to desire to live chiefly in the remembrance of those to whom they have been known as having done some little bit of work for Jesus Christ. We may well ask ourselves whether there is anything in our lives by which we should thus wish to be remembered. All our many activities will sink into silence; but if the stream of our life, which has borne along down its course so much mud and sand, has brought some grains of gold in the form of faithful and loving service to Christ and men—these will not be lost in the ocean, but treasured by Him. What we do for Jesus and to spread the knowledge of His name is the immortal part of our mortal lives, and abides in His memory and in blessed results in our own characters, when all the rest that made our busy and often stormy days has passed into oblivion. All that we know of Tertius who wrote this Epistle is that he wrote it. Well will it be for us if the summary of our lives be something like that of his! — *Alexander Maclaren*

(*To be continued.*)

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