



ZWTF

Zapping You Whenever Thoughts Flow

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ROMANS Part 154

Chapter 16:21-22

Timothy, Lucius, Jason, Sosipater.



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.

SOSIPATER

I don't know about you, but I'm glad that my parents didn't name me "Sosipater." I admire this man because he's probably the same guy who is called "Sopater" in Acts 20:1-4, a man who greeted Paul when he came to Macedonia. Anyone who greets Paul is okay

by me. This was never an easy thing to do, that is, to greet Paul. One generally took one's life in one's own hand whenever one so much as stood next to the apostle whom the majority of Jews wanted dead—

Now after the tumult ceased, Paul, sending after the disciples and consoling and saluting them, came away to go into Macedonia. Now, passing through those parts and entreating them with many a word, he came into Greece.

Besides, spending three months, at there coming to be a plot against him by the Jews, being about to set out for Syria, he came to be of the opinion that he would return through Macedonia. Now it was arranged for him to be met, as far away as the province of Asia, by Sopater Pyrrhus, a Berean.

Why the slight difference in name? It could be that Sosipater's parents realized the error of their ways and removed a syllable from their poor son, cutting "Sosi-pater" to the more manageable "Sopater." I like to think that, by the time Sopater reached middle-age, people took to simply calling him, "Soap." That's what I will call him from this day forward, including at the resurrection when I formally meet him.

This is the only guy I know of in Scripture whose last name is mentioned: "Sopater Pyrrhus." The name "pyrrhus" is from the Greek root *purros*, meaning "fiery." The name "Sosipater" means "save-father." Seeing as all Bible names suggest the nature of the person so nominated, I conclude that Sosipater Pyrrhus adamantly defended ("fiery") the salvation come down to him through the patriarchs ("save-father")—that is, until Paul introduced him to a new revelation.

Either that, or he pulled his dad from a burning building.

I didn't even know that Bible people had last names. It's always "Moses"; "Abraham"; "David." Where are the surnames? No one ever hears of "Moses Jones,"

“Abraham Modestowicz,” or “David Clark.” At least we have “Peter bar Jonas,” meaning “Peter, son of Jonas.” Paul’s last name was apparently “Of Tarsus.” Contrary to popular belief, Jesus’ last name was not “Christ.” One might assume it to have been “Jesus ben Joseph,” but I like to think that it was more along the lines of “Jesus Smith” (the consummate “everyman”), but I have no Scriptural support for this.

As I said, I admire anyone daring to meet Paul at any port. Paul was a wanted man (wanted by the Jews for wrecking their monopoly on Christ), and so anyone actually physically greeting him risked his or her own skin and would generally don sunglasses and a pulled-down baseball cap en route to the apostolic rendezvous.

It must be mentioned here that Sosipater was a Berean, and we all know that “[the Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, who receive the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures day by day, to see if these have it thus” (Acts 17:11). Sosipater was therefore a student of the Scriptures, researching the more astounding points of Paul’s message.



Four curs greet Paul at the Macedonian port.

LUCIUS

Lucius is the Cyrenian mentioned in Acts 13:1-2—

Now there were in Antioch, to accord with the ecclesia which is there, prophets and teachers, both Barnabas and Simeon, called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, besides Manaen, the tetrarch, Herod’s foster brother, and Saul. Now, at their ministering to the Lord and fasting, the holy spirit said, “Sever, by all means, to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

Lucius the Cyrenian attended one of the most notable apostolic convocations in all of Scripture. The aforementioned men were ministering to the Lord (whatever that means), when the holy spirit interrupted them and said, “Separate unto me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” This was the formal beginning of Paul’s ministry to the nations.

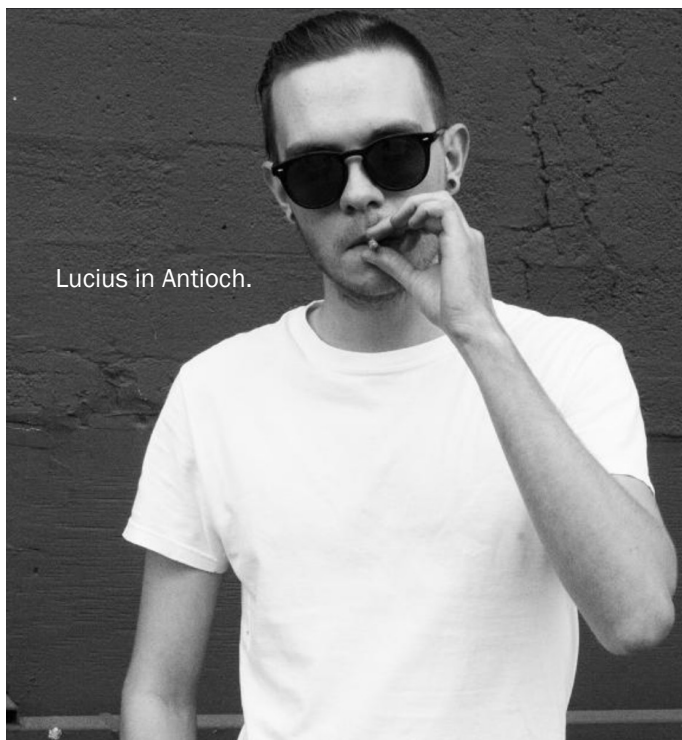
Before this, Paul heralded to Jews that Jesus was the Christ. Paul also no doubt spoke often of his own evangel, but slipped it in on the side. Soon after this convocation, however, Paul and Barnabas headed off to Cyprus to launch their work to the nations in earnest. There, Paul converted the first gentile (that we know of) into the body of Christ, namely, Sergius Paulus—the proconsul of Cyprus—while at the same time cursing and blinding an antagonistic Jew, namely, the magician Elymas, aka, Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:6-12).

Here was the template, in microcosm, of Paul’s entire career: He would be saving Gentiles and cussing out Jews. Paul literally blinded the cantankerous Jew (sorry for the redundancy), who became a type of Israel’s epochal blindness in the current era (Romans 11:25), during which time Paul lavished (and lavishes) the nations with celestial treats. It was also at this time, in Cyprus (Acts 13:9), that Saul began to be known as Paul. Also, for the first time (at least it’s the first time that it’s recorded), Paul publicly taught justification by faith (Acts 13:39). If you want to know when the official heralding of the message to the body of Christ began, you can do no better than looking to these events described in Acts chapter 13, when the holy spirit pushed over the first domino, saying, “Sever, by all means, to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

THE HOLY SPIRIT (LUCIUS?) SPEAKS

Acts 13:2 (“Separate unto Me...”) records an historic pronouncement. At this gathering, “prophets and teachers” were present. Thus, Lucius was more than likely either a prophet or a teacher. Let’s say that he was a prophet. This is an assumption, but bear with me. I’m going to springboard from this into a point concerning the holy spirit.

The holy spirit is the power of God. The holy spirit is not a separate being of a supposed trinity or “godhead,” but rather the manifested energy of the Deity. When the holy spirit is said to “say” something, it generally comes in the form of a human being speaking via the influence of God, by His direct authority, by means of Divine (not human) energy. This is spirit. This was a gift given to



Lucius in Antioch.

certain humans in the days before the Word of God was completed. In 1 Corinthians 12:8, Paul calls it “the word of knowledge.” It was a “manifestation of the spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:7).

This kind of thing doesn’t happen today. *Knowledge* happens, but the divine gift that fills up what Scripture lacks is obsolete, for God has completed the Scriptures. If someone claims to have a “word of knowledge” for you today, kindly explain to them that if God had any sort of special information for you, He would tell you Himself.

At the very least, under no circumstances should you let anyone claiming to possess “a word of knowledge” send you off to Cyprus.

My point is that this “ministering to the Lord” business got interrupted when one of the men (possibly Lucius; we’ll find out someday) suddenly stood up tall, cleared his throat and said, “Sever, by all means, to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” The other men, being spiritually attuned, would have recognized it as a word from the Lord. Something about it would have been noticeable different. It would have come out differently than when Lucius merely said, “Let’s go out for a beer.” To confirm it, the assemblage would have inquired of the speaker, “Was that a capital ‘m’ or a small ‘m’ that you just used there, as in ‘sever unto *me*?’” “It was a capital ‘m.’” “So, um, that wasn’t you just then?” “Hell no.” Then the others would have said, “Then it’s a word of the Lord.” And the speaker would have said, “Let’s go out for a beer.”

After the beer, Barnabas and Saul would have set off to Cyprus to change the course of history.

JASON

Acts 17:1-10—

Now, traversing Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Now, as was Paul’s custom, he entered to them, and on three sabbaths he argues with them from the scriptures, opening up and placing before them that the Christ must suffer and rise from among the dead, and that “This One is the Christ—the Jesus Whom I am announcing to you.” And some of them are persuaded, and were allotted to Paul and Silas, both a vast multitude of the reverent Greeks, and of the foremost women not a few.

Now the Jews, being jealous and taking to themselves some wicked men of the loafers and making up a mob, made a tumult in the city, and, standing by the house of Jason, they sought to lead them before the populace.

Now, not finding them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the city magistrates, imploring that “Those who raise the inhabited earth to insurrection, these are present in this place also, whom Jason has entertained. And all these are committing things contravening the decrees of Caesar, saying there is a different king, Jesus.”

Now they disturb the throng and the city magistrates on hearing these things. And obtaining bail from Jason and the rest, they release them.

Now the brethren immediately send out both Paul and Silas by night into Berea, who are away, coming along into the synagogue of the Jews.



Jason and his girlfriend in Thessalonica.

Jason did the port-greeters one better: he took Paul into his home. He lodged him. See what it got him. A mob came to his house looking for Paul and Silas. Not finding them, they settled for Jason and some of the other brethren and dragged them before the magistrates.

Jason and Company were lucky to arrive at the courthouse in one piece. Fortunately for the brethren, most of the mob consisted of wicked men who were also loafers. It's the loafer aspect of this cabal that saved the believers. The majority of the antagonists were certainly dangerous, though too disinterested to be fatal. Naturally, it was the Jews who roused them up.

This is what Jews of the Bible do when truth threatens their worldview: they seek and destroy the bringers of truth. Jews suffer the jealousy virus. No single nation has shot itself in the foot more often (with the double-barreled doom of jealousy and pride) than Israel. It's a wonder it has any feet left. The Jews of Thessalonica hated that the alleged heretic (Paul) drew more people to the synagogue than their everyday, lackluster "stop-eating-shellfish" type speakers. Rather than ask Paul, "What's your secret? How can we build our church attendance? Who can upgrade our web page?" they tried to kill him. *Bang!* Another shot through the sandals for the sons of Jacob.

I do envy, however, the charge of the mob against Jason and friends: "Those who raise the inhabited earth to insurrection, these are present in this place also, whom Jason has entertained."

If ever I am charged with a crime, I hope it to be: "He raised the inhabited earth to insurrection." What a noble charge. Failing that, I'll console myself with blasting a few hundred people out of church via my YouTube channel. Jason's crime? He entertained the insurrectionists. He gave Paul a bed and perhaps made him a regular lunch.

Not a bad credential at the dais: "I lodged Paul. I made him lunch." How many will be able to say, at the dais of Christ, that they housed the great Apostle to the Nations? That they invited into their home the man who wrote the better portion of the Greek Scriptures—and that they even crafted him a ham sandwich or two in order to satisfy the apostle's latent Jewish lust for pork? Precious few. Maybe a dozen? Twenty? What a badge of honor it will be. Happy times are coming at the dais of Christ for the hosts and hostesses of our apostle.

Jason and the others bailed themselves out. Fascinating how money fixes so many things. It's a timeless truth. All the magistrates wanted was a payoff; it's not much different today.

I like what happened next: "Now the brethren immediately send out both Paul and Silas by night into Berea, who are away, coming along into the synagogue of the Jews."

When it's time to skip town, wax the tracks. Skedaddle while you're still alive. With militant Jews on your tail, dilly-dally not. Give someone else a chance to make you a ham sandwich.

TIMOTHY

Timothy deserves his own biography. I either have to stop here and write that book or jot down my abbreviated thoughts. I'll keep it short.

Timothy was Paul's "fellow worker." If Paul had a favorite, this was him. It was Timothy upon whom Paul called (in his second letter to him) to carry on the work. The incarcerated apostle, ready to die, could think of only one man he trusted enough to preserve and promote the gospel of God's grace. But Timothy was on the brink.

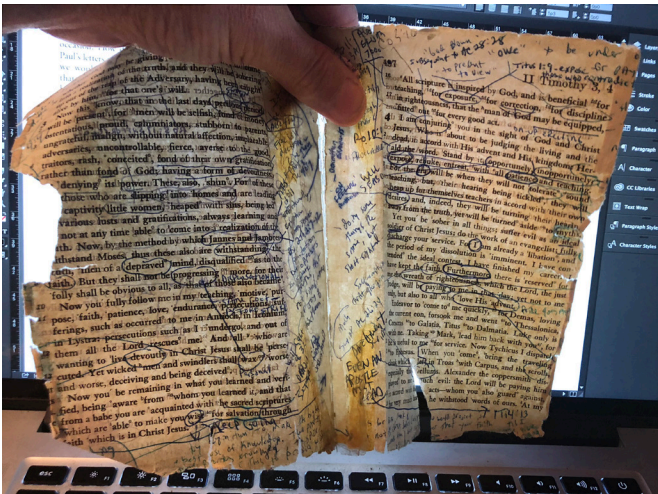


Read Paul's letter to him. Can you sense it? Paul writes things like, "keep the faith," "don't give up," "rekindle your calling," "be a soldier," "what would your momma and grandmother do?" and so forth. I conclude, therefore, that Timothy was tottering on the edge. Of what? Of quitting. Of finding a new job. Of making money. Of maybe marrying and helping his father-in-law in the insurance business. Or whatever. Hundreds of possibilities out-sparkled the ignoble, sometimes thankless work of suffering evil with the evangel. And yet what does Paul tell Timothy in this last letter? "Suffer evil with the evangel" (2 Timothy 1:8).

Gee, thanks Paul. And yet Timothy rose to the occasion. How do we know? Because we're reading Paul's letters today. That's Timothy. Without Timothy, we wouldn't *have* Paul's letters. I'm convinced of that. Timothy was the back-stop. Timothy was Paul's last-ditch attempt to save the ship. Everyone else had abandoned him. The entire enter-

prise sat on the brink of collapse. Paul was no fatalist. He took nothing for granted. This is how Paul saw it: *I need a faithful man to carry it on. Otherwise, it stops.* Paul hadn't the luxury of our hindsight. In Paul's mind, the only thing between the gospel to the nations and oblivion was this young soldier. Paul's final letter from prison smacks of a quiet desperation. It's also throbbing with passion.

This letter set fire to my own soul in 1992, as it certainly did to Timothy's in '65. It was as though Paul were writing to *me*. That's how I took it. I read this letter over and over until I literally wore it out in my Bible. It was



as though Paul were reaching out through the centuries, calling upon me to pick up the baton and finish the race. But think of this: Paul died not even knowing if his letter reached Timothy. *Oh, yes, Paul. It reached Timothy all right. It reached all of us. And now, two millennia later, you're the bestselling author in the world, although very few understand you. But there are some who do. Just as in your day, Paul, there are some who grasp the message and hold it fast as though it were life itself. In a way, it is. The message has never died. Thanks to your faithfulness and your diligence in committing the work to faithful men who, themselves, committed it to like-minded champions, the gospel to the nations continues to change lives 1,948 years after your death.*

You may say that we have this message today because of Paul. Yes, of course. You're right. But I like to say that we have it because of Timothy. Because that's right, too.

“MY RELATIVES”

“...Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my relatives”
(Romans 16:22).

In what sense were Lucius and Jason and Sosipater the relatives of Paul? They were Jews. Like Paul, the first gospel

they ever heard was that of the Circumcision.

Paul's gospel is for both Jews and Greeks. Greeks come by it naturally (they don't know any different), but Jews have to “jump ship,” that is, surrender their own calling in order to cling to a new evangel, much of which clashes with their own. This would be much harder for a Jew, obviously. Talk about baggage. A Jew would have to unhand circumcision, baptism, and the Mosaic law. He's got to convince himself that ham sandwiches are now clean and that the Sabbath means nothing. Do you think that would have been easy? The Greeks just said, “Yeah, we get it. We're complete in Christ. Awesome.” So simple for a Greek. The Jews would have a hundred mental wrestling matches simply to consider Paul's gospel, let alone embrace it. You've got to hand it, then, to Lucius, Jason and Soap.

And yet, in Paul, these fellow Israelites witnessed the freedom of Christ. Paul was a living letter of the glory—and of the sheer fun—of following a God Who justifies the irreverent. Oh, they would have clinked wine glasses aplenty over that and laughed bubbly over this astounding gospel. It would have sounded too good to be true to them, at first, but again—Paul was a hell of a salesman. No one could convince you of anything more than Paul (formally Saul the Pharisee). The man could talk a zebra out of its stripes. Paul would have guided his friends through the Scriptures, showing them that Jesus was the Christ. He would have recounted his meeting with that very Christ on the road to Damascus. The fire of truth and the flame of conviction jumped from Paul's eyes into any eyes he looked at. Lucius, Jason and Soap would have said, “Yes, Paul! We believe it!” Hells bells, even King Agrippa said to Paul, “Briefly are you persuading me, to make me a Christian!” (Acts 26:28).

Of course, the many miracles that Christ performed through Paul certainly helped these other Jews to cross over. Raising a guy from the dead (Eutychus; Acts 20:9-10) and making the lame walk (Acts 14:8-10) didn't hurt Paul's testimony one bit.

Paul is still raising people from the dead—not literally but figuratively. For as he writes in Romans 6:4—

We, then, were entombed together with Him through baptism into death, that, even as Christ was roused from among the dead through the glory of the Father, thus we also should be walking in newness of life.

Can't hold a ham sandwich to *that*. —MZ