



# ZWTF

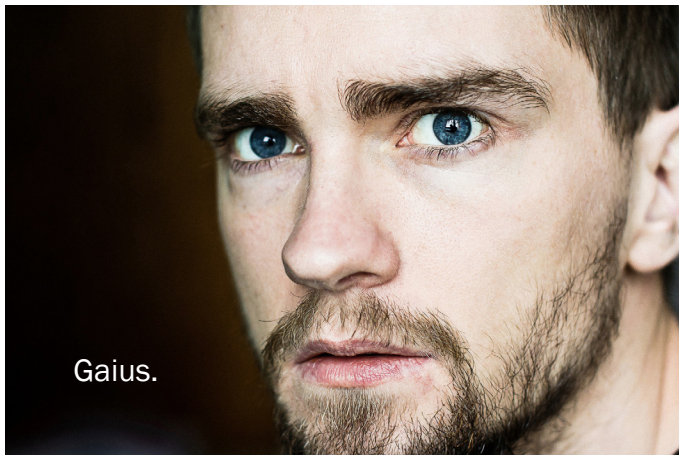
Zapping You Whenever Thoughts Flow

Volume 7, Issue 24

## ROMANS Part 155

Chapter 16:23

### Gaius, Erastus, Quartus.



**Greeting you is Gaius, my host, and of the whole ecclesia. Greeting you is Erastus, the administrator of the city, and Quartus, the brother.**

#### GAIUS

**G**aius was one of the guys Paul baptized, and Paul later thanked God that he was one of the *only* guys he baptized, because Paul was not commissioned to baptize, but to teach pure faith in Christ, apart from ceremony. It was one of those concessions Paul made for the sake of some in the body of Christ in the interval between minority and maturity in Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:14-17—

I am thanking God that I baptize not one of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone may be saying that you are baptized into my name. Yet I baptize the household of Stephanas also. Furthermore, I am not aware if I baptize any other. For Christ does not commission me to be baptizing, but to be bringing the evangel, not in wisdom of word, lest the cross of Christ may be made void.

Poor Paul. He starts reviewing in his mind the people he ceremonially poured water on, and all he can think of is Crispus and Gaius. Then he thinks a little further and he says, perhaps to Tertius: “Oh, crap. I also baptized the whole household of Stephanas. I forgot about them. *Shoot.* Well, it is what it is. I’m not going to think about this any further, lest I remember anyone else. I know one thing: I don’t want to be remembered for baptizing *anyone*. You know how these things go, Tert. The next thing you know, my enemies will be accusing me of baptizing people into my name. There are jerks like this born every minute, who think that I’m an egomaniac trying to start a fan club or, worse, a cult. So thank God that I fairly well laid off the baptism thing. If I ever baptize anyone else, Tertius, check me for a fever.”

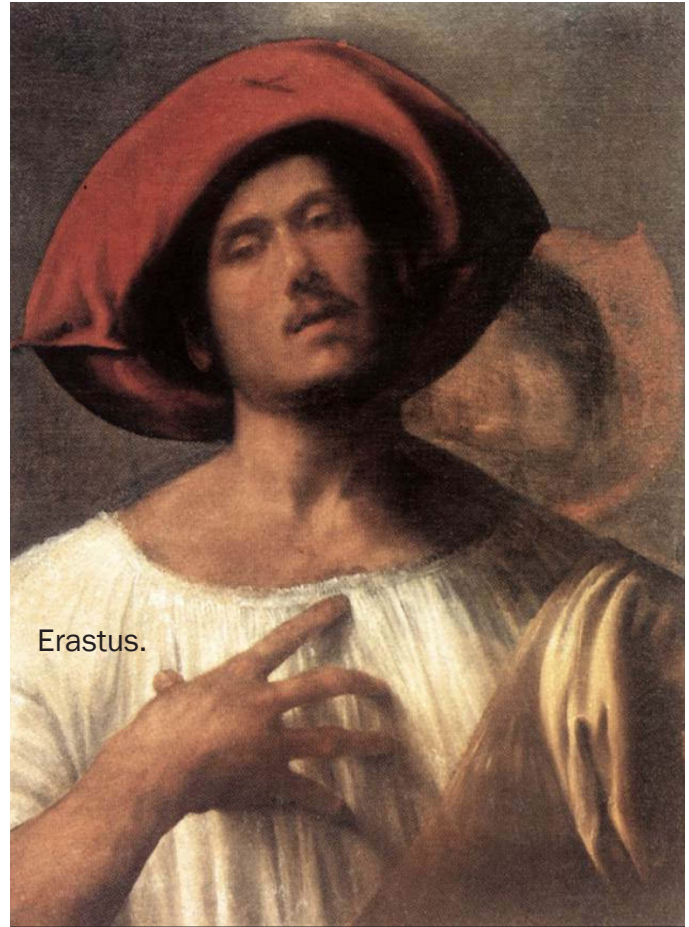
Corinth was good to Paul. There is no place in this world that I want to travel to; I’m tired of this planet; I’m sick to death of living in the same system (*kosmos*) that crucified Christ and hates God so much—but if I were to be pressed to go *somewhere* farther away than the Publix grocery store a half-mile up the road from here, then I would go to Corinth. I would walk through the ruins there and think, *Somewhere on this small piece of real estate, Paul dictated Romans to Tertius.* The city was so manageably sized (six square miles) that an afternoon’s walk around the ruins would assure me that, at some point, I would have walked over the very spot where Paul’s table sat. And where his bed was. In other words, I’d be walking over the spot where the home of Gaius once stood.

Good old Gaius. He joins the Hall of Fame—with Aquila and Justus—of those who, at various times, hosted Paul in Corinth. Their grace toward Paul will follow them to the dais of Christ.

Paul was not averse to renting his own lodging, but the word “host” tells us that Gaius offered up his home freely to Paul. Who in the world would want to charge the apostle Paul for anything? I wouldn’t be caught dead along that line. Neither would Gaius. Paul had given Gaius the words of eonian life free of charge. The least that Gaius could do for the man heralding Christ’s celestial wonders would be to reciprocate with a bed and a table.

## ERASTUS

When in Corinth, I would seek out the inscription of Erastus. The name of Erastus is, today, etched upon a stone plaque set right in the open at the head of some original pavement. Tourists can touch the thing. Archeologists uncovered it in 1929, northeast of the famous Corinthian theater. They’ve dated it to the mid-first century, making it contemporary to Paul. The inscription reads “Erastus, in return for his aedileship, paved it at his own expense.”



An aedile was an officer of the Roman Republic who was responsible for maintenance of public buildings and the regulation of public festivals. They were also policemen of sorts, these aediles. What does Paul say of Erastus as he passes along his greetings to the saints at Rome? He says Erastus is “the administrator of the city.”

Paul knew some bigshots. Remember, Paul was no respecter of persons. This works all ways. We tend to think of Paul only as lifting up the lowly, overlooking the high political circles in which Paul traveled, albeit sometimes involuntarily. Paul never disparaged the unwise, weak, ignoble and stupid (for God calls such), but neither did he reflexively reject the powerful and influential, as though these would necessarily despise the cross. After all, didn’t Paul herald his particular gospel in Caesar’s very household? (Philippians 4:22).

I am recalling now how King Herod used to visit John the Baptist’s dungeon to discuss things of consequence with his esteemed prisoner—with a man in whom the spirit of God was so obviously present that not even Herod could resist it. According to Mark’s account (6:20), Herod “heard [John] with relish.”



Did not Paul, in Caesarea, nearly persuade King Agrippa II—also known as Julius Marcus Agrippa and a relative of Herod’s—to believe the evangel?

What would I do if, say, Donald Trump emailed me next week and said, “Mr. Zender, one of my aide’s found a copy of *The First Idiot in Heaven* in one of the lavatory stalls at the Smithsonian Museum of American History, and I have to say—I will tell you this—your take on Scripture makes more sense than anything I’ve ever heard—and I’ve heard a lot, believe me. I mean, what’s not to like? Paul’s gospel is *huge*.” You may wish to know how I’d react to such an email. I would respond as I would to any such letter: “This is so good to hear, Mr. President! You should check out my videos, too.” And I would link him to a few of my greatest hits. Then I would call my friend Marian Travis and say, “You’re not going to believe this, Marian, but I think Donald Trump may be the last member of the body of Christ. Cancel my antichrist predictions.”

Of course, Trump would want to do something nice for me in exchange for me bringing him the words of eonian life. I would probably decline an ambassadorship to Greece, but would accept an invitation to lunch at Mar-a-Lago. After all, it’s only an hour up the road—a lot closer than Corinth.



We are all equals in Christ. In Christ Jesus, there are no distinctions. Honor to whom honor is due and tribute to whom tribute, yes, but when it comes down to such basics as “as in Adam all are dying, thus also in Christ shall all be vivified (1 Corinthians 15:22), we are all human beings longing for God. The President of the United States is no exception.

And neither is Quartus.

## QUARTUS

Quartus is called “the brother” here by Paul in the sense of being a fellow believer. This is the only reference to him in Scripture. He’s not a bigshot like Erastus. He’s probably not wealthy, as some commentators contend that Gaius was. He’s simply, “Quartus, the brother.” And yet here he is, immortalized in the Bible, and soon to be immortalized in person as soon as God calls Donald Trump.

Alexander Maclaren (11 February 1826 – 5 May 1910) the freethinking Scottish minister writes of Quartus—

And before this simple word of greeting could have been sent, and the unknown man in Corinth felt love [for] a company of unknown men in Rome, some profound new impulse must have been given to the world; something altogether unlike any of the forces hitherto in existence. What was that? What should it be but the story of One who gave Himself for the whole world, who binds men into a unity because of His common relation to them all, and through whom the great proclamation can be made: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Brother Quartus’ message, like some tiny flower above-ground which tells of a spreading root beneath, is a modest witness to that mighty revolution, and presupposes the preaching of a Saviour in whom he and his unseen friends in Rome are one.

—MZ