

# Romans (16:21-27)

*It is Finished*

Part 101 – April 8, 2007

## PAUL'S PALS

Paul is in Corinth, making final preparations for his trip to Jerusalem with the Gentile offering for poverty-stricken Jews. As he finalizes this letter, delegates from various churches (who'll accompany him to Jerusalem), have begun to arrive. And they send their greetings through Paul, to Rome.

Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives. I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings. - *Romans 16:21-23 NIV*

"Timothy" was like a son to Paul. "First Timothy" and "Second Timothy" are both NT books taken from letters Paul sent him. Timothy, "Lucius", "Jason", and "Sosipater" are all fellow-Jews, that's why Paul calls them: "my relatives".

This is most-likely the "Jason" whose house was mobbed, and he was attacked for letting Paul stay with him in Thessalonica.

[The mob] rushed to *Jason's* house in search of Paul and Silas ... But when they did not find them, they dragged *Jason* and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and *Jason* has welcomed them into his house. They are all ... saying that there is another king, one called Jesus. - *Acts 17:5-7 NIV*

Paul probably had poor eyesight, so he dictates to a scribe:

I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord

Very gracious of Paul, and uncharacteristic of the time, to let the secretary say hello; he was most likely a fellow believer. Paper was expensive; so, a good steward would hire penman, who was trained to write small and neat. One of the few times Paul writes in his own hand, he draws attention to his penmanship.

See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand! - *Galatians 6:11 NIV*

Two slave names (though they may have been freed): "Tertius" and "Quartus". Often, slaves weren't *named* - they were *numbered*. "Tertius" means "third"; and "Quartus" means "fourth".

Paul is lodging in Corinth, with: "Gaius whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy". Gaius must have been very wealthy to have a house big enough for "the whole church" to enjoy. Tertius may have been Gaius' scribe, on loan to Paul.



But, my favorite greeter has to be: "Erastus, who is the city's director of public works"



Take a look. These are the ruins of the Corinth Paul was writing from. On a paved street near a theater, a large inscription was uncovered. It's Latin, from about 50 A.D., and translates to: Erastus, in return for his aedileship (*office of public works*) laid [the pavement] at his own expense.

## A MYSTERY REVEALED

Let's read the *final* paragraph of Romans ... Paul's benediction:

Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him – to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen. - *Romans 16:25-27 NIV*

Paul proclaims: "Now to him who is able to establish you".

And he tells us who "him" is: "the only wise God"

Q: Are there other gods?

A: Yes; deaf and dumb ones; worthless substitutes of our creation.

Q: Can God *learn*?

A: No. His wisdom is so deep and expansive that it *can't* increase.

We can trust and rest in two incredible truths:



He *always* knows the *greatest* goal and the *perfect* way to achieve it.

There is no wisdom in the universe He doesn't possess; *every* conceivable increase is *already* His. He *is* wisdom.

And His greatest goal is: "to establish you", and the perfect way to achieve it, Paul says, is: "by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ".

"*The proclamation of Jesus*" refers to the *teachings* of Christ. "*My gospel*" refers to the personal revelation Paul received (on the road to Damascus) about Jesus *from Jesus* ... a *risen* Jesus! It was about Jesus' willing sacrifice for *every* sinner! It was about Jesus' triumphant resurrection from death! There's nothing we can do to earn it or add to it. That's why, on the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished!"

This, Paul says, is:

The revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God



Imagine Paul, with all of his exhaustive knowledge of the Old Testament, persecuting Christians with passion and zeal for God; and Jesus appears to him and reveals Himself *through* all of these prophetic writings that Paul knew so well. You see ...

- We can know the words and miss the meaning

But for Paul, all of the pieces just fell into place. God's greatest goal wasn't *just* to save Israel; Jesus came ...

So that *all* nations might believe and obey him

He wanted to establish Jews *and* Gentiles, and public-works-directors, and wealthy home-owners, and scribes, and slaves!

Q: But what exactly does it *mean* to be: "established" by the Lord?

Look what Paul says at the end of this letter:

To the only wise God be glory

Q: What does he mean when he says, "to ... God be glory"  
God's glory is the infinite beauty of His goodness and truth.

Q: If we can't add to His wisdom, how can we add to His glory?!

A: We can't. "To God be glory" means that glory *belongs* to God!



We were created to behold His glory, acknowledge His glory, treasure His glory, and to reflect His glory! My sin un-glorifies God. This is why it's absurd to think we can earn our righteousness ... there's no way to go back and re-glorify that which we robbed from God.

God knew we would need a Redeemer, to take the wrath and restore our righteousness.

Whenever we choose to sin: The glory of God is not honored. The holiness of God is not revered. The greatness of God is not admired. The power of God is not praised. The truth of God is not sought. The wisdom of God is not esteemed. The beauty of God is not treasured. The goodness of God is not savored. The faithfulness of God is not trusted. The promises of God are not relied upon. The commandments of God are not obeyed. The justice of God is not respected. The wrath of God is not feared. The grace of God is not cherished. The presence of God is not prized. The person of God is not loved.

Un-glorifying God is the *ultimate outrage* of creation! Our sin has detached and disconnected us from the glory of our Creator. And when Jesus, on the cross, said, "It is finished!" He was talking about reattachment and reconnection! We can't earn it, or add to it, but we can receive it and rejoice over it forevermore!

To ... God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Christ came to *establish* you in an intimate relationship with the One who is the definition of beauty and goodness and wisdom. This is what was revealed to Paul from Christ Himself. And this is the message of the book of Romans.



Paul is finally finished, and he puts down the pen ... or, rather Tertius does. According to tradition, about ten years later Paul was beheaded by Nero, and buried in a tomb that lies under this basilica, called: St. Paul Outside the Walls.

Supposedly, in 390 A.D. Paul's body was placed in a stone coffin with a hole bored in the lid, so visitors can push pieces of cloth in to touch Paul's remains ... 390 people were weird that way. And supposedly, in 433 A.D. the coffin was covered under a marble slab that read: "Paul Apostle Martyr". The slab had holes, so people could touch their cloth strips to the coffin ... 433 people were *slightly* less weird!



However, in 2002, archeologists were given permission to excavate under this altar to see if it was fact or fiction. And they dug for over three years. And just four months ago (Dec. 2006), they announced two major discoveries: A marble slab from 433 A.D. reading: Paulo Apostolo Mart (i.e. Paul Apostle Martyr). And a stone coffin that dates back to at least 390 A.D. and has a 4" hole in the lid that's plugged with mortar. They're waiting for permission to examine its contents.



There's something incredible about the possibility of touching the body of a man who came face to face with the risen Christ!



The man who gave his life for his conviction, and said:

... if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead ... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. - 1 Corinthians 15:12-17 NIV

Paul could go to his grave with confidence, because he knew first hand, that Jesus didn't stay in his. And he had been told by God Himself, that:

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved - Romans 10:13 NIV