

PAUL TO THE ROMANS

A Martin Zender paraphrase

PART II



Tryphena at the Coliseum

My dear friends in Rome, I will tell you now about Antioch, wanting you to see how God severed me to Himself, that I might write what I am about to write to you. “Severed” is a strong word, yes, but no other word will do. It was that extreme, and that unmistakable.

The gang in Antioch

We were in Antioch several years ago not eating; it is called “fasting;” I will get to that in a moment. I was there with Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen. You do not know these men except for Barnabas, whom I have mentioned. Barnabas is a giant of a man with a beard like the bush from which God called Moses. His name means, “Son of Thunder.” He does not mean to *be* thunder; his personality is more like a gentle rain. But the man’s voice booms and he is completely confident of all that he is saying, even when he is wrong.

Barnabas introduced me to Peter and the others in Jerusalem, and without him, the believers there would have never accepted my testimony. The last they knew, I was killing the likes of them, destroying those of the faith, beating and tormenting God’s dear people in the synagogues, putting them to death.

That my conscience is clear in Christ is a credit to the cross, for it has eliminated my sins. And yet still, after all this time, it would take little to bring back to mind

Martin Zender's Clanging Gong News

“If I know all mysteries and all knowledge, but have no love, I am a clanging gong” --1 Cor. 13:1-2



Two out of three isn't bad.

the cries, the tears, and the pangs of death that I, myself, caused. Even the cries and pangs of dear children!

Saved by grace

(I am confessing to you so that you may know the depth of my sin, for only then can you know the depth of my deliverance. In the flesh, I would take back all that I did—I would! I would bring back to life, this moment, those innocent souls that I snatched so cruelly away. But Christ Himself will attend to this grand resurrection!

(And yet *would* I, truly, change a single instant of my life, when all that occurred—every biting detail—brought me

“My ability to go on rests upon believing what God has said of me.”

here? *Everything* brought me to the Damascus Road, and the precise place on that foreknown path where Christ lavished me with His encompassing love. Every incident of my former existence—both good and evil—prepared the way for this present grace. It is knowing that God is operating *all* in accord with the counsel of His will that gives me rest. Many days, it is the only thing.

(I have spoken to some saints who doubt that all could be of God, but I do not see how they survive their daily trials. I do not know where or how they draw the line between what is and what is not of Him. Where does their vaunted freedom end and His loving sway begin? *Alas! There is no line!* The only line is that of ignorance. All is of God, and were it not for this truth, I, myself, would be unable to forget my former existence. How could I ever walk in newness of life?

(Were it not for the cross, I would be the most cursed of God’s creation. But because of the cross, I have been chosen above all men to bring the gospel of grace to you, the nations, and to enlighten all as to the hidden counsels of God’s heart. If you imagine that I have ever recovered from the shock of the grace given me in Christ Jesus, then you would be mistaken. There is not a moment that goes by when I do not genuflect in my heart, soul and spirit, at how God kissed *me*, the chief sinner.

(The long and short of it, dearly beloved in Rome, is that I am a new man in Christ. You will believe me, then—you *must* believe me—when I say that my ability to go on with my life rests upon believing what *God* has said of me, that through Christ, my sins are put away as far as the East is from the West, and that God Himself sees me—even *me*—through the person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. If *I* can do this, then surely it should not be a difficult thing for any among you.)

* * *



A boy I killed.

We were in Antioch with the ecclesia there, holding meetings. Besides Barnabas, as I said, there was Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen. We call Simeon “Niger,” though I do not know why. (So if I slip and say, “Niger,” you know that I mean Simeon.) Lucius, a Cyrenian, is



Manaen and his girlfriend Adrienne.

one of the teachers whose trademark is that he always has a pencil behind his ear—always. I think he sleeps with it there. One of the children whose parents attended our meetings—I cannot think of his name—would put a pencil behind his own little ear, strut around among the adults and say, “Look! I am Lucius!” And so Lucius is quite known for that.

Manaen, when he is not in the Hebrew scriptures, is perfecting the rules of a new game he has invented that has become a welcomed distraction to all of us when our minds begin to take on too much scripture. That genius Manaen has attached small blocks of wood to several staff-sized sticks, and we all try to hit a little ball—which is really a small goatskin bag full of small pebbles, sewn all around—into a hole that is not much larger than the ball. It is harder than it sounds, believe me. We



Manaen’s somewhat fanciful (my opinion) concept of the future.

start some distance away, and see who can get the ball into the hole—hitting it with the stick—in the least amount of strokes. It sounds senseless, I know, but it is a delightful distraction and strangely relaxing. (I find myself wanting to get better at it, I am almost ashamed to say!) But anyway, that is Manaen; when he is not expounding upon the psalms of David, he is thinking up diabolical methods—in the form of obstacles—that make getting the ball into that con-founded hole all the harder.

Fasting

On this particular day, we were fasting. I do not do this so much anymore, and do not recommend it, at present, in any of the ecclesias. You may do it if you wish, for there is benefit to be had, but I am afraid that many have made a religion of it, which is why I, myself, cannot now promote it. The idea is that we live and we look for our next meal, do we not? To sustain ourselves, we must eat, and the animal instinct to do this can overwhelm spiritual impulses. The idea of fasting, then, is to set these animal (though they be natural) instincts aside and concentrate on the spirit. It must be the prompting of the spirit of God to fast, for the want of sustenance easily becomes a distraction of its own. Our Lord fasted for forty days in the wilderness, esteeming fellowship with His Father high above His necessary, physical nourishment. At the end of this trial, in His weakness, the Adversary tempted Him. Even in His weakened condition, however, our Lord overcame the enemy.

Are we not to be like our Lord? As we are able, yes. As the spirit dictates, we are to humble ourselves and tend to spiritual matters, as did He. But He, being the Inaugurator and Perfecter of our faith, has accomplished that which we could never do. Are we to imitate Him by going to our own cross? By no means! His cross was our cross. Are we to fast forty days and forty nights so as to do battle with the Adversary? May it not be coming to that! We have enough

spiritual battles already without willfully and stupidly bringing more upon ourselves. Such a thing is no longer necessary. Christ did it all. If you think that *you* must do what Christ did in the blood-battle against sin, then perhaps you should also head over to Galilee and walk across the sea there. It is not necessary. We are complete *in* Christ, not by imitating Christ.

Imitating Christ is a walk of spirit, not of flesh, and yet God Himself has given us the flesh—an earthen vessel—to carry our spirits. Without this vessel, we cannot share in His humiliation. And so we are to care for and sustain these animated clay pots. If we wish to deny ourselves for His sake, and the spirit moves us to do so, then

we shall do it and gain benefit.

But if we seek, by a work of the flesh, to move *Him*, then we are off track and are in danger of falling, metaphorically, into one of Manaen’s diabolical sand traps.

As for we in Antioch, fasting was the right thing to do at that time, and dictated by the spirit.

It came to us all at once. This is a rare occurrence, but wonderful when it happens. Niger—that is, Simeon—came from his tent one morning and

“We are complete in Christ, not by imitating Christ.”



Simeon’s tent

was the first to say, “I do not think we should eat, gentlemen, but I think that we should listen.” The rest of us said, “That is exactly what we were thinking!” It lasted three days, and then the spirit spoke—and did we ever listen. God does indeed speak in this manner, at present, and all the saints would be wise to listen and act when He does. I only tell you: do not go overboard in the flesh.

How did the spirit speak, and what did it say? That is coming. But first!

How God speaks

There will come a time, beloved, when the Word of God shall be completed. There will come a time when God will have given His latest and highest revelations to our race. After this, He shall speak no more in this primary form.

But wait. When I say, “He shall speak no more,” do I mean that He will never again whisper into our minds and hearts? By no means. For how can He be divorced from *any* circumstance, let alone those dictates of the conscience (I rightly count these “circumstances”), which He Himself gives? He sends the rain, and we repair to our homes. He sends the sun, and we dry our crops. His worldly acts move *us* to act, in ways both seen and invisible. They move us when we are aware of them, and



He sends the sun, and we dry our crops.

when we are not aware. Does not the conscience do the same? And what about voices from without? When someone yells “Fire!” we run; when a word of peace comes, our spirits find ease.

No, but I refer to those Words outlining His counsels for the eons, His plans for humanity, and the depth of the riches of the cross of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. There shall come a time, beloved, when God will have completed His *written* words, and their attending revelations.

For the written Word is, as I have told you, the primary means by which God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself through His Son, that is true, but how do we know of His Son apart from the writings of our esteemed brethren? (I speak of Luke. And Peter. And Matthew.) God Himself tested these words as a man tries silver in a furnace, to purify them. To transfer these words from His mind to ours, He condescends, by His spirit, to inspire Recorders, who transfer to the parchment that which they, themselves, may not understand. It is divine inspiration. This is yet necessary, for the whole of revelation is not yet come. I know when the whole shall come, and I am aware from whom it shall come. The man to whom this great honor shall be granted is blessed and hallowed among mortals, yes, but also humbled and broken—and destined to suffer for it.

The spirit speaks

To continue and close my account for now: as the four of us shared the fire that rare morning near the tent of Simeon (still without food, but cradling coffee mugs to our chests against the morning chill), Manaen suddenly rose to his feet and, with a clear voice, said: “Sever, by all means, to Me Barnabas and Saul, for the work to which I have called them!” As suddenly as he had stood, he returned to the ground, to stare at it.

A long silence ensued, with Barnabas and I exchanging glances. Simeon and Lucius looked at Barnabas, then at me; back and forth between us. It was Barnabas who, breaking the silence, took a huge gulp of air and said, “Then it is me.” I said, “It is you.” Simeon said, “Well? What are we waiting for?”

Off to Cypress

That very afternoon found us packing for Seleucia, knowing only that we would board a ship there and sail for Barnabas’ home island of Cypress.

Manaen, Simeon and Lucius hurried us, and when we stopped to rest, they would each place their hands upon us, praying for us. This happened many times, being not only a prayer for spirit, but a need for physical connection. The hands

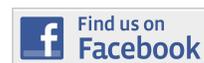
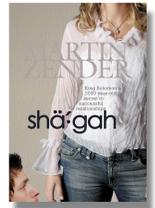
would come to our heads, lingering there, warming us—to be followed by prayer. Next would be embraces and the clapping of backs, for neither of us knew when we would next lay eyes upon the others.

As we boarded the *Thugater Thalassa* (“Daughter of the Sea”), none of us could find Barnabas. I grew agitated, for the ship was pulling anchor. Then up rolled the big man from over a hill, with another, smaller man in tow: his nephew Mark (who is also known as John-Mark.) “We will need a deputy!” thundered the Son of Thunder. “And here he is!” The spirit had said nothing about a deputy. Had I missed something? There was no time to argue. “Whatever,” I said. “But honestly; we must be away.”

And away we went. And I will tell you this: what happened in Cypress became the pattern of the secret of God’s present operations among the whole of humankind. (*To be continued.*) ■



Greetings to all my brothers and sisters in Christ. After a tough year of personal trial (also known as 2009), I have gotten the *Shagah* project back on the front burner, consisting now of three books, two handbooks, and a CD. As long as you are on our mailing list, you will be notified when this package is ready. (I am not going to be so bold this time as to suggest a date.)



Hey, Facebookers! Please help my latest Joel Osteen *Crack O'*

***Dawn Report* go viral. Here is the link:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PndAjWmgcio>.

Please either link to or embed this video in your Facebook entries. If everyone does this, we're rockin'. Thanks!

I appreciate, as always, your continued support. Without it, I could not do what I'm doing. Grace and peace to you,

—Martin

www.starkehartmann.com/donation.htm