



The Epistle to the Romans is considered to be the most profound Scriptural treatment of God's plan of salvation. It highlights not just the academic brilliance of the Apostle Paul but the unfathomable depths of God's gracious redemption through Jesus Christ. But none of this would have been possible without the skill of *Tertius*.

1. Why is this so based on Romans 16:22?
-

He was Paul's *amanuensis* for his epistle to the Romans. An amanuensis was a dictation scribe. It appears that Paul used several amanuenses to write his epistles. Each one not only wrote what Paul dictated, but it also seems that they were occasionally at liberty to put what the Apostle dictated into their own words - and at times, add to what was dictated. Knowing this helps us to understand why some liberal scholars have rejected Paul as the author of some the epistles ascribed to him, such as Colossians.

...Trusted scribes were given great freedom to shape the form, style, and even the content of the author's letter. This broad role for an amanuensis must be kept in mind when scholars compare the vocabulary and stylistic differences among Paul's letters to determine questions of authorship. Sometimes a minor word choice belonged to Paul. Sometimes it may have belonged to someone like Tertius.

GARY BURGE, The Real Writer of Romans, Christianity Today, 1995, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-47/real-writer-of-romans.html>

2. Since Paul used amanuenses, should we still have confidence that the New Testament was inspired by God? (Note Second Timothy 3:16-17?)

3. Paul was not the only apostle to use a literary secretary to help write his epistles. Refer to First Peter 5:12 and note who the Apostle Peter also used.

4. Some scholars believe that the Apostle Paul had a physical problem. Note Galatians 4:15. What might this have been, and how might this explain Paul's need for an amanuensis? (Refer also to Galatians 6:11.)

'Tertius' is a Greek name. This doesn't necessarily mean that Tertius was Greek, but it almost certainly means that he wasn't Jewish.

5. How does Romans 16:21 indicate that Tertius was not Jewish?

There is good reason to believe that Tertius would have been *Roman*. While Paul may have had other dictation secretaries he could have used to write his epistle to the Romans, since we know he had used Sosthenes to pen First Corinthians (1Cor. 1:1), Timothy to pen Second Corinthians (2Cor. 1:1), Silvanus to pen First and Second Thessalonians (1Thess. 1:1; 2Thess. 2:1), and he was travelling with Timothy, Lucius, Jason and Sosipater (each of whom he could have used), he chose to use *Tertius*.

6. If indeed Tertius was a Roman, why might it have been strategic for Paul to use a Roman to write to Romans? Discuss.

Language is not merely about *words*. The Dutch have an idiom that when translated word-for-word into English sounds most odd - yet it is a high compliment to use it when praising someone for their cooking -

Alsofer een engeltje over je tong piest.

Which translates directly into English as - "*It's like an angel is peeing on my tongue!*" Which apparently, is high praise for how delicious the food is!

While all the known world spoke Koine (pronounced, *coin-ay*) Greek at the time of the New Testament's writing, there were still regional expressions that may have sounded odd or confusing to other ears. Consider that even though Brits, Americans, and Australians all speak English, we each have regional expressions which we understand yet may not be understood by someone outside of that region. For example, what would an American think an Englishman meant when they say, "*Tea time*"? Or what would an Englishman think if an American told them, "*You really hit that out of the park!*" What would an American think if an Australian said to them, "*Stone the crows!*"? Even though we each speak English we don't always speak the same language. This is why Paul's use of Tertius may have been so apt.

7. Have you ever encountered a regional expression that was confusing? Smile and share...

Tertius would have had to have been resourceful and a man of means. It would have been his responsibility to supply the materials for writing down what Paul was dictating.



Ancient authors wrote to fit volumes, and like Luke, sometimes produced two-volume works (the Gospel and Acts). Obviously, length was a problem. Callimachus, a famous cataloguer at the great library of Alexandria, liked to say “A big book is a big nuisance.”

When Tertius began working on Romans, he had in hand a fresh scroll and a pen with brown or black ink. Scribes wrote on the side of the papyrus where the fibers ran horizontally, the fiber lines serving as a guide. Tertius would then organize the roll into three-inch wide columns for text.

As he worked, he likely wrote entirely in capital letters, giving the text a splendid dignity. And, remarkably, he never left spaces between words, letting one word spill into the next. The final effect gave a block text with straight margins on both right and left sides.

...Trusted scribes were given great freedom to shape the form, style, and even the content of the author’s letter. This broad role for an amanuensis must be kept in mind when scholars compare the vocabulary and stylistic differences among Paul’s letters to determine questions of authorship. Sometimes a minor word choice belonged to Paul. Sometimes it may have belonged to someone like Tertius.

GARY BURGE, *The Real Writer of Romans*, Christianity Today, 1995, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-47/real-writer-of-romans.html>

8. How did Paul let his readers know that what they were reading was genuinely from him and why would this have mattered? (See Col. 4:18 and Second Thessalonians 3:17)

Thank God for Tertius! He helped to shape the New Testament’s grandest explanation of the New Covenant. All his years of learning, training, and even socialising were used by God to enable the salvation of millions of people from all

over the globe. You may not appreciate the experiences you are currently going through maybe being ordained by God so that He can use you one day to bring others to know Him. If you are a student, you can glorify God by being the best student you can be. If you are an employee being trained in job, you can glorify God by being the best employee you can be. If you are a stranger who has just arrived in a strange neighbourhood, you can glorify God by making connections with locals and learning their language. And if, after having studied the lives of these five obscure Biblical characters you still feel left out, unrecognised, ignored, and of little use to God, then you haven't been paying attention. ;)

What now? Simply this- *Bloom where YOU are planted*. Don't make fame your goal in life. Rather, live with an awareness that your praise should not come from men, but from God (Rom. 2:29). In the famous faith chapter in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the anonymous writer refers to thousands of faithful servants of God as "others" without *naming* them (Heb. 11:36). While *we* will never know the names of these *others*, God does! Remarkably Hebrews 11 concludes (vs. 40) by reminding us of something the ancient Church creed referred to as *the communion of saints*. This interconnection between believers in Christ transcends time, language, skin colour, culture, and customs. Just as well God has given us each *eternal* life because in heaven we may well need eternity to get to know each other so that ultimately, no one, including you, will ever be obscure again.

Andrew Corbett
Legana, Tasmania

For more Bible studies for small groups, visit-

www.andrewcorbett.net

findingtruthmatters.org

legana.org