

# Sam Singleton™

ATHEIST EVANGELIST

## Postcards from Paul

### The Saints

#### General Delivery: Thessalonia

*P\_\_ and Silvanus, and Timotheus,  
unto the church of the Thessalonians in God  
our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ;  
Grace be unto you,  
and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Ah, Macedonia!

A pattern is emerging;

no sooner do I found a congregation than I am compelled  
to exit under cover of night.

Add Troas.

You think you've heard commandments?

Pish!

I've been wandering in the wilderness  
between my ears.

Which reminds me—

comfort the feeble-minded.

You know, praying without ceasing,  
rejoicing evermore?

I wouldn't be much of an apostle if I failed to exhort you  
to abstain from all appearance of evil.

Actual evil? You decide.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good:

*Pluralitus non est ponenda, sine necessitate.*

Greet each other with a holy kiss;

no, seriously,

I'm not kidding. Kissy kissy in Christ Jesus's name.

I'm sticking to my prophesy per the second coming;

moreover,

I bet he'll return like a thief in the night.

Sneaky.

### The Saints

#### General Delivery: Philippi

*P\_\_ and Timotheus the servants of Jesus Christ,  
to all the saints in Christ Jesus*

*which are at Phillippi with the bishops and deacons.*

Lydia, oh Lydia . . .

Where was I?

You should've seen the first draft—  
rife as it was with compound sentences.

I do go on.

All that sex talk in the past?

Let's leave it there.

I don't want to keep reminding you people,  
this is about the payoff of all time.

There's this thing, predestination,  
I believe I'll call it,  
and the only way you'll know you've got it is that if you do,  
you'll naturally comport yourself as befits one of the Elect.

Clue:

those who behave well? Maybe.

Romans?

As a rule,  
no.

The Jews?

Here in stir,  
I've time to ponder the state  
of the church.

Your problem is one of consistency  
or the absence thereof.

We are all over the place.

Consolidation is what's called for,  
a common denominator.

I offer up myself as your example.

Do as I do.

Look how humble.

Salvation is solely for we who have,  
to the letter,  
concluded the very transaction  
the church in Rome still doesn't get.

Ask anyone,

Judaism is a dead end.

True righteousness and the abiding joy that springs  
therefrom are obtainable only through Christ Jesus.

The thing with grace is its singularity,  
exclusivity,

not so much who's in as who's out—  
those whom the Lord deigns spare  
on condition of eternal gratitude

expressed through slavery  
and ceaseless fawning.

Obsequiousness unto holiness.

**The Saints**

## **General Delivery: Galatia**

*P\_\_ an apostle (not of men, neither by man,  
but by Jesus Christ and God the Father,  
who raised him from the dead in Christ Jesus.*

Twelve hundred years from now  
an enactor of fraudulent freedom will cite this very note:  
*Johannes Dei gracia, Rex Anglie,  
Dominus hybernie dux normmannie et auitanne.*

But meanwhile,  
back in Macedonia (or is it Greece?),  
I declare,  
the churches I founded—  
I founded—  
shall have the right  
of free election.

No,  
they are most certainly not synagogues.  
Where was convened your last meeting?  
some guy's shed.  
So stop saying it.  
Again with the Jews.  
I'm leaning ever more toward Dad's side of the family.  
This idea of salvation by grace—  
I think it has legs,  
especially among indolent Gentiles  
for whom achieving everlasting glory  
without lifting a finger  
could provide sufficient incentive  
to come forward and be saved,  
Just as I am.

## **The Saints**

### **General Delivery: Corinth**

*P\_\_ called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ  
through the will of God,  
and Sosthenes our brother.*

I'm here in Ephesus.  
Don't make me come up there.  
Get thee onto the same page.  
Someone from the house of Chloe ratted you out,  
passed me a note.  
These abuses of conduct cannot stand.  
The talk is of rivalries,  
of moral disorders.  
While the Jews wait for a sign,  
and the Greeks seek wisdom,

we are in for such rewards as you wouldn't believe.  
I heard about the fornicating that's been going on.  
Stop it.  
Your body is a temple.  
I personally avoid all sexual contact and suggest  
that you do the same.  
Flee from idolatry.  
Men are better than women.

**The Saints**  
**General Delivery: Corinth**

*P\_\_\_, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,  
and Timothy our brother,  
unto to the church of God which is at Corinth,  
with all the saints which are in all Achaia.*

Let God be our comfort.  
Timothy and I found trouble in Asia,  
barely escaped with our lives.  
I heard from Titus that your church has been doing better,  
but that the Jews persist in claiming a higher authority.  
The nerve of those people.  
I'm abolishing the law of Moses.  
I will be your father and you will be my sons and daughters.  
I know my earlier correspondence made you unhappy.  
Parental prerogative.  
Remember,  
I've met Christ Jesus,  
not metaphorically as you,  
but actually.  
I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a virgin bride.  
Jesus Christ  
is the type to check your sheets in the morning.

***pros 'Rômaious***  
**General Delivery: Rome**

*P\_\_\_, a servant of Jesus Christ,  
called to be an apostle,  
separated unto the gospel of God . . .*

Jesus was—is—the manifest heir of David,  
his resurrection left—leaves—no doubt.  
You can work it out.  
As for me,  
keeping busy in Corinth.  
As for my Acts,  
ask Luke the physician and taker of dictation

from Peter if with Silas I didn't one midnight pray  
an earthquake unto my captivity and rather than take it on the lam  
when the prison walls tumbled stay to convert my jailers.  
I remained until paroled,  
as befits one who walked with Christ Jesus.  
No one believes me,  
but it's true.  
When in the course of human events it becomes necessary  
for one people to take leave of their senses,  
let justification be their constitution.  
And we know that all things work together for the good.  
I love God and have been called according to his purpose,  
off to Jerusalem.  
Phoebe said she was heading your way.  
If she wants to preach,  
tell her I said no.

**Philemon**  
**General Delivery: Colossae**

*P\_\_\_, a prisoner of Jesus Christ,  
and Timothy our brother,  
unto Philemon our dearly beloved and fellow labourer.*

I worry about Tychicus getting this mixed up with the rest of the mail.  
Tell me you don't see some irony here:  
me still, as they say, under house arrest  
(arrest arrest is more like it),  
writing to ask you, faithful Philemon,  
to be kind to sweet Onesimus  
(his very name suggests profitability),  
who having absconded himself to Rome,  
found me and was redeemed.  
I've come to love Onesimus and would be glad to call him my own.  
I imagine him doing for me here,  
and how much more tolerable confinement might be were his ministrations ongoing.  
Did I mention how old I am?  
I am very old.  
Old and feeble and receding and—well,  
old.  
You must not feel pressured to give him over  
just because I'm old and but for me you'd be hell-bound.  
I explained that he trespassed  
against his rightful owner by running away,  
and that Christ Jesus insists  
he give himself up,  
should you decide to exercise your rights of  
property notwithstanding how  
old I am, and what a godsend  
a slave of my own would be—

in which case,  
it would be up to you to reconcile:  
master and slave,  
brothers in Jesus Christ.

Mark, Luke, Demas,  
and the rest of the fellows send love and kisses.  
Prepare the guest room.  
If I don't die from old age in the meantime,  
one day I'll be sprung.  
Then look out Colossae!

**The Saints**  
**General Delivery: Phrygia, Colossae**

*P\_\_ an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God,  
and Timotheus our brother.*

To the church in Colossae,  
city of Phrygia,  
in Asia Minor,  
the same church started by Epaphras,  
a good friend of mine,  
and Archippus.

Home cooking.  
Remember me to Philemon and Onesimus—  
master and slave, true,  
but their relationship is strictly scriptural.  
Resist false teachings—  
anything from anyone other than me or my delegates.  
Be true to Christ Jesus,  
the head; the church is his body.  
Is either headlessness or bodilessness less monstrous  
than the other?  
We are thus all that stands between Jesus  
Christ and monstrosity.  
Once one has died,  
is resurrection yet to be desired,  
whether whole or truncated?  
Live as those who have risen with Christ Jesus,  
pierced high and low,  
but with heads and bodies intact and attached.  
When you call me Saul I don't hear you.

**The Saints**  
**General Delivery: Thessalonia**

*P\_\_ and Silvanus,  
and Timotheus,  
unto the church of the Thessalonians*

*in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*

It's been, what, two months?  
Say what you will of its climate, Therma,  
    rebuilt as Thessalonica, City of Cassander's wife,  
        is indeed favored by geography—  
            Bifurcated by the highway twist here and points north of the Aegean,  
                blessed among the four divisions of Macedonia under Rome.

There,  
    where Silas and I organized a church,  
        beloved but stupid,  
            you seem to have misconstrued  
                what was told you about the advent.

The day of the Lord is at hand.  
Choose your companions carefully,  
    eschewing all who disagree.  
Flaming fire,  
    recompense for those who molest the lovers of Christ Jesus.  
Return tribulation in kind with God's sanction.  
Remember,  
    those you slay are not your enemies,  
        but your brothers.

Don't speak to me of redundancy.  
My sanctity trumps your pedantry.

**The Saints**

**General Delivery: Ephesia**

*P\_\_ an apostle of Jesus Christ,  
    by the will of God,  
        to the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Ephesia,  
            and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.*

The Colossians are a handful.  
We'll see.  
Communing with my jailmates back here in Rome,  
    so many fond remembrances of carousing Ephesia's harbor,  
        my own two years there,  
            visiting the museum,  
                fencing relics in the temple of Artemus,  
                    whose worship will surely see you all to hell,  
                        but for me.

God mentioned a scheme to offer redemption  
    for the entire church.  
I never know if he's joshing.

**Timothy**

**General Delivery: Ephesia**

*P\_\_\_, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God,  
our Saviour,  
and Lord Jesus Christ,  
which is our hope.*

My son in the faith,  
    don't trade in fables.  
The infidels here in Rome released me from prison.  
Laws are made not for the righteous,  
    but for the disobedient.  
In you, I see me.  
My mother, too, was a Jew—  
    my father a gentile.  
My own mother and grandmother schooled me in the scriptures.  
I'm reminded of your conversion,  
    at Lystra,  
        on my first visit.  
And I want you know how much I admired your being circumcised  
    as a grown man,  
        what with the state of cutlery.  
As soon as you're able to get around,  
    I'm putting you in charge of the church at Ephesus. Evangelize Phillippi with Luke and  
Salvanus.  
Visit Berea.  
May God reveal the divine design behind the infection.  
Join me at Athens.  
Bring unguent.

**Timothy**  
**General Delivery: Ephesia**

**P\_\_\_, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,  
according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.**

Why do I persist in the face of arrest?  
The garum,  
    of course.  
Yes,  
    and the circus.  
And, without so saying, the baths,  
    not to mention the oils.  
Always the mission:  
    conversion.  
But always,  
    the harlot of the seven breasts diverts.  
I mean,  
    these people are gentiles,  
        and I a citizen,  
            as much Roman as Jew,  
                whose savior more resembles

Hercules than Jehovah.

Yet again I'm up on charges.

Enough.

Regards to Silas.

No to the file.

My son in the Gospel,

assume the pastoral mantel,

take up the staff.

Do these things in my name and that of Christ Jesus.

By these presents you are an exhorter of the Good News.

Your place is here(Rome, not necessarily jail).

## **Titus**

### **General Delivery: Crete**

*P\_\_\_, a servant of God,*

*and an apostle of Jesus Christ,*

*according to the faith of God's elect,*

*and the acknowledgement of the truth which is  
after godliness.*

You were called of Christ Jesus to be an apostle.

Get to it.

How about when we were at Antioch? and Jerusalem?

We were to meet in Troas but instead met in Macedonia.

Such times we had.

And when I sent you to Corinth with the second note?

You must pick up where I leave off.

Organize churches all over Crete.

Appoint elders.

Establish qualifications for officials and members.

The God-damned nonsense-speaking Jews

and their filthy logic corrupts whole families at a time.

They must be silenced.

Those who would treat you contemptuously,

treat as the spirit moves you.

Keep an eye out for Artemus and Tychicus.

Wintering in Nicopolis,

I'll expect you.

## **In Memoriam**

*P\_\_\_, scion of Tarsus,*

*son of Celicia,*

*Talmudic student of Gamaliel,*

*speaker of Greek and Latin,*

*reader of Greek and Latin poets,*

*citizen of Rome:*

O Pharisee bon vivant,  
O hat check boy at the stoning of Stephen,  
O epiphanic evangelist,  
O peripatetic preacher who retaineth his day job as tent maker,  
O repeat offender,  
    Who is struck blind on the road to Damascus,  
    Who meets up with Jesus fifty years after the crucifixion,  
    Who causes Peter and James to exchange nods and winks,  
We knew Christ Jesus.  
You're no Jesus Christ.  
Whose holy ghostwriter-amanuenses begins thirteen epistles  
    "Paul,"  
Whose name means *little one*,  
    bald-headed,  
        misogynistic fisher of men,  
            beheaded in the bosom of the Holy See,  
Who says that Christianity isn't  
    the invention of a disgruntled secretary who engineers  
        his own immortality?

*Acta est fabula, plaudites!*