

“Unity Through Purity”
Romans 16:17-20

Introduction:

1. Let's Head Back In Our Bibles Together:
 - To Paul's Letter To The Roman Church!
 - Where - In The Last Chapter - Chapter 16:
 - He Has Been Sending:
 - Warm Greetings To:
 - Quite A Few Members:
 - Of The Congregations That Made Up:
 - That Overall Church!
2. And - As We Saw Last Sunday:
 - Through Their Various Names & Descriptions:
 - That Even Though:
 - Those Congregations:
 - Were Made Up A Very Diverse:
 - Group Of People:
 - Including Jews & Gentiles / Masters & Servants / Men & Women / Older & Younger / Families & Individuals!
- Yet - There Was Something Special:
 - That They All Had In Common!
 - They Were United:
 - “In The Lord!”
 - Not Just - As **One** Congregation:
 - But - In **All** The Congregations:
 - There In Rome!
3. But How Have Things Changed:
 - Haven't They!
 - If You Were To Look Up & And Learn About:
 - All The Different Churches:
 - In Just Hancock County Alone:
 - That Unity That Was Enjoyed In Rome:
 - Has Long Gone By The Wayside!
- What Happened:
 - To The Kind Of Union & Communion:
 - That The Roman Church:
 - Seems To Have Enjoyed:
 - Back In The First Century?
- Well - Partly - Its Because:
 - Many Christians & Churches - All Throughout History:
 - Have Forgotten That:
 - The Basis For Unity:
 - Is Purity!
4. And I Think:
 - As We Come 16:17-20:
 - Paul Wanted To Remind Them:
 - Of That Basis - As Well As:
 - To Encourage Them:
 - To Maintain That Special Unity:
 - That They Had & That They Were Known For!
- Now - At First Glance:
 - These Verses Seem To Many Like:
 - An Unnatural Break:
 - In Paul's Lists Of Greetings!
- But - I Don't Think These Verses Are Misplaced At All!
 - They Were Exactly What The Roman Congregations:
 - Needed To Hear:
 - To Maintain Their Unity!

5. So - Lets Read Together:
 - 16:17-20 - “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. / For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. / For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. / And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen!”
 - What We Find In These Verses:
 - Apply Even To Our Churches Today! That:
 - True Christian Unity Can Only Be Maintained Through Purity!
6. And As We Go Through These Verses:
 - We Will See The Reason:
 - Why There *Are* So Many Different Churches & Congregations - And Even:
 - Denominations!
 - Because - Of Both:
 - The Success & Failure:
 - To Heed These Instructions Of The Apostle Paul!
- When Christians Pursue Unity:
 - Based On Purity:
 - It Will Naturally:
 - Cause Division!
 - Though Unity Is Important:
 - “Can Two Walk Together, Except They Be Agreed?” (Amos 3:3)
- But - When Christians Fail To Pursue Unity:
 - Based On Purity:
 - That Too Will:
 - Bring About Division!
 - Because - As James Asks - “From Whence Come Wars And Fightings Among You? Come They Not Hence, Even Of Your Lusts That War In Your Members?”
7. So - We Are Not To Pursue:
 - Unity - No Matter What!
 - Rather - We Are To Maintain True Unity:
 - By Pursuing True Purity:
 - In The Lord!
- And In These Four Verses:
 - We Find Four Ways:
 - That This Can Be Achieved!
 - Through The Right Kind Of:
 - Separation!
 - Service!
 - Submission! And:
 - Support!
- Let’s Look More Closely:
 - At These Ways:
 - To Maintain Christian Unity:
 - Through Christ-Like Purity!
- * First - Through:
 1. ***The Right Kind Of Separation:***
 - Which We Find Again In:
 - 16:17 - “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them!”
 - Now - At First - This Seems Like:
 - The Exact Opposite Way:
 - To Maintain Their Unity:
 - As A Church!
 - Separation?
 - Yes - The Right Kind Of Separation!

- Because - Purity Is Essential:
 - To Christian Unity!
- And This Is Very Important To Paul!
 - This Is Why He Says:
 - "I Beseech You!"
 - This Is Used Only 3 Times In Romans:
 - To Introduce Something Very Serious & Crucial:
 - To His "Brethren" - To His Christian Family!
 - He Calls On Them To Exercise:
- Biblical Discernment!
 - And To "Mark Them Which Cause Divisions And Offences!"
 - To "Mark" Here:
 - Means To Identify:
 - Those Who Might Be A Danger To Both Their Unity & Purity!
 - Not Just Ignore Them!
 - **IE:** Like A Surveyor - Looking For & Identifying Markers Before Digging Or Building Or Whatever - Otherwise - Asking For Trouble!
 - Every Church & Every Christian Has The Responsibility:
 - To Watch Out For:
 - Those Who May:
 - Usurp God's Authority - And:
 - Those Who:
 - Undermine God's Authority!
 - Those Who Usurp God's Authority:
 - Are Those Who "Cause Divisions!"
 - This Doesn't Just Refer To:
 - Disagreements In The Church!
 - But Division:
 - Based On A Desire To Change The Fabric Of Christian Truth & Fellowship:
 - And Is Seen In A Rebellious Spirit Against The Authority Of:
 - God & His Word!
 - Those Who Undermine God's Authority:
 - Are Those Who "Cause . . . Offenses!"
 - "Offenses" Here Refers To:
 - Things That Cause Others:
 - To Stumble Or Fall!
 - This Is Not Always:
 - Out In The Open:
 - But Still Attacks:
 - The Authority Of God And His Word!
 - And - To Maintain True Unity:
 - We Need To Learn To Discern:
 - And "Mark" Those Who:
 - Teach & Live - 16:17:
 - "Contrary To The Doctrine Which Ye Have Learned!"
 - This Means That:
 - Biblical Discernment:
 - Is To Be Based On:
 - Biblical Doctrine!
 - Biblical Teaching!
 - In 1 Timothy 3:15 - The Apostle Paul Calls The Church - "The Pillar And Ground Of The Truth!"
 - So - The Truth:
 - Is To Be The Primary Purpose:
 - Of The Church!
 - In A World That Says:
 - Truth Is Subjective:
 - The Church Must Stand For:
 - Objective Truth!

- The Truth Of God's Word & The Truth Of God & His Son!
- After All - Jesus Himself Said:
 - "I Am The Way, The Truth, And The Life!" - As Well As:
 - "Thy Word Is Truth!"
- If We Get The Truth Wrong:
 - Nothing In The Church:
 - Can Be Right!
- If We Get The Truth Wrong:
 - Our Worship:
 - Will Be Wrong!
 - Our Fellowship:
 - Will Be Wrong!
 - Our Service:
 - Will Be Wrong!
- And So - We Need To Be On The Look-Out:
 - For Those Who Might Try To:
 - Shake Us From Our Moorings:
 - To The Truth!
 - Especially Those Who Try To:
 - Usurp Or Undermine:
 - The Truth & Authority:
 - Of God's Word!
 - This Is Why Jude Wrote:
 - That We "Should Earnestly Contend For The Faith Which Was Once Delivered Unto The Saints!"
- But - What Are We To Do:
 - When We Discover:
 - These Kinds Of People:
 - Trying To Influence Us?
 - Keep A:
- Biblical Distance!
 - 16:17 - "And Avoid Them!"
 - Separate From Them!
 - At This Point - Paul Does Not See These:
 - False Teachers & Leaders:
 - As Within The Church!
 - Otherwise - Church Discipline Would Need To Be Exercised - To Remove Them From The Church!
 - But - He Knew - As Jesus Himself Taught:
 - That - There Will Be "False Prophets, Which Come To You In Sheep's Clothing, But Inwardly They Are Ravening Wolves!" (Matthew 7:15)
 - And - "Ye Shall Know Them By Their Fruits!"
 - This Means That:
 - To Maintain The Unity Of The Church
 - We Must Not Welcome:
 - Those Who Promote Things "Contrary To Sound Doctrine!"
 - Instead - We Must Warn:
 - Against Them!
- The Only Way True Christian Unity:
 - Can Be Maintained:
 - Is By Pursuing Purity!
 - And That Can Only Be Accomplished:
 - With The Right Kind Of:
 - Biblical Separation!

* But There Also Needs To Be:

2. The Right Kind Of Service:

- Which We Find In:
 - 16:18 - "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words

- and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple!”
 - Bac In Matthew 7 - When Jesus Said That:
 - We Can Know False Prophets:
 - “By Their Fruit” - He Meant For Us To:
 - Make Judgments Based On His Word!
 - Perhaps One Of The Best-Known Verses:
 - In The Bible - By The World:
 - Is Matthew 7:1 - “Judge Not, That Ye Be Not Judged!”
 - But - They Forget That:
 - Jesus Calls Us To Make Judgments & Use Discernment:
 - All The Time! But Based On The Right Standards!
 - John 7:24 - “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment!”
 - And This Is What Paul Tells Us To Do:
 - When It Comes To The Unity & Purity Of The Church!
 - We Need To Assess:
 - The Service:
 - Of Those He Mentions In 16:17!
 - So:
 - Instead Of Giving In Their Service:
 - They Are About Getting!
 - For Themselves!
 - They Serve - “Their Own Belly!”
 - This Means That:
 - The Main Reason For Their “Service” Is To:
 - Satisfy Their Own Appetites & Aspirations:
 - In Natural Things, And Not Spiritual!
 - So - Instead Of Living & Serving:
 - For “Things That Are Higher & Things That Are Nobler” - They Serve:
 - To Satisfy Their Most Basic & Fallen Desires!
 - But - Just Like The “Belly” - Those Desires:
 - Will Never Be Satisfied!
 - They Will Always Be Left Wanting More!
 - We Need To Be:
 - On The Look-Out:
 - For This Kind Of Fruit!
 - And Then - Pursue After:
 - The Right Kind Of Service Ourselves!
 - Christ-Like Service!
 - Service That Is Selfless!
 - Giving Instead Of Getting!
 - But - We Also Need To Assess:
 - Whether:
 - Instead Of Developing In Their Service:
 - They Are About Deceiving!
 - To Influence Others - And:
 - 16:18 - “By Good Words And Fair Speeches Deceive The Hearts Of The Simple!”
 - Deception Is One Of The Main Ways:
 - That The Devil Will Try:
 - To Disturb:
 - The Unity & The Purity Of The Church!
 - Its What He Did:
 - In The Garden Of Eden:
 - When There Were Only:
 - Two People!
 - How Much Easier Is It Now:
 - In A Congregation:
 - With Many People!
 - And - This Deception Is A Dangerous Thing!
 - Interesting That Paul Says That:

- They Will “Deceive The Hearts” And:
 - Not Just The Minds!
- In Proverbs 4:23 - We Are Told To:
 - “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life!”
 - When Your “Heart” Is Deceived:
 - It Is A Serious Matter! A Matter Of Life And Death!
- And - The Most Susceptible:
 - To This Deception:
 - Are The “Simple” - Or:
 - Those Who Are Unsuspecting:
 - Even As Young Lambs May Be In A Flock - In Age Or Maturity!
- We Need To Be:
 - On The Look-Out:
 - For This Kind Of Fruit - And For:
 - These Kinds Of Words!
 - And Then - Pursue After:
 - The Right Kind Of Service Ourselves!
 - Christ-Like Service!
 - Service That Is Sincere!
 - Developing Others Instead Of Deceiving!
- Because - 16:18 - “They That Are Such Serve Not Our Lord Jesus Christ!”
 - In Other Words - You Cannot Have Unity:
 - With Those Who Do Not:
 - Submit To Christ:
 - As Their Lord & Master!
 - Surrender To Christ:
 - As Their Savior:
 - The Only Way, Truth, And Life!
 - Exalt Christ:
 - As Christ:
 - Seeking To Glorify Him:
 - In Their Spirit & In Their Bodies - Which Are God’s!
 - The Only Way We Can Maintain:
 - True Christian Unity:
 - Is By Pursuing:
 - Purity - With The Right Kind:
 - Of Service To The Lord!

* But There Also Needs To Be:

3. ***The Right Kind Of Submission:***

- Which We Find In:
 - 16:19 - “For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil!”
 - Here - Paul Commends The Romans:
 - As He Did Back In The First Chapter:
 - 1:8 - “I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world!”
 - Here - Their “Obedience” And Submission:
 - To The Lord:
 - Was A Testimony:
 - To The World-Wide Church:
 - As Well!
 - And This Is One Reason Why:
 - Paul Could Bring Up Such An Important Topic:
 - As Separation - Because He Knew That It Would Come To:
 - Sensitive And Submissive Hearts!
 - And So - He Commends Them For Being:
 - Consistent In Their Reputation!
 - Their Testimony:

- Of Faith In The Lord - As Well As:
 - Their Faithfulness To The Lord:
 - Was Wide-Spread!
- And - Clearly:
 - This Contributed To:
 - Their Purity And Their Unity:
 - As A Whole!
- And - Paul Was “Glad” For It!
 - But - He Knew That:
 - The Devil Would Not Leave Them:
 - In Peace For Long:
 - Even Though - For A Time:
 - It Seemed Like He Had!
- The Roman Congregations:
 - As A Whole - May Have Been:
 - Considered Rather “Simple!”
 - Not In A Derogatory Way:
 - But - In Child-Like Innocence!
- But - That Innocence Will Not Serve Them Well:
 - When It Comes To:
 - The Spiritual Battles They Will Face!
 - And So - He Calls On Them To Remain:
- Committed To Their Responsibility!
 - 16:19b - “But yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil!”
 - They Needed To Be Vigilant:
 - In Purity - In Order To:
 - Maintain Their Unity!
 - To Be “Wise” To The Good:
 - Means That We Need To Be:
 - Rooted & Grounded:
 - In The Truth:
 - And Keep Our Focus:
 - On All That Is Truly Good!
 - To Discern What Is Good:
 - With Their Minds!
 - To Dwell On What Is Good:
 - In Their Hearts!
 - To Desire What Is Good:
 - With Their Wills!
 - Philippians 4:8 - “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things [are] honest, whatsoever things [are] just, whatsoever things [are] pure, whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, think on these things!”
- To Be “Simple” To The Evil:
 - Does Not Mean To Be:
 - “Naive” - But - “Unmixed!”
 - To Learn To Recognize It:
 - To Keep Away From It!
 - **IE:** Counterfeits!
- Sadly - Many Christians Today:
 - Think The Opposite Is Beneficial:
 - To Their Testimony & Witness!
 - That - The More:
 - “Wise” We Are To “Evil” - The More:
 - Effective We Can Be!
 - **IE:** How Can I Help Someone Or Counsel
Someone If I Haven’t Been Where They’ve Been Or Done What They’ve Done?
 - It Is Always Better For Christians & Churches To Be Wise In What Is Good:
 - And Simple In What Is Evil!

- Because - This Is How We Are Called:
 - To Maintain Our Unity:
 - As Christians & As A Church!
 - By Being Consistent In & Committed To:
 - Purity - Through Obedience & Submission To The Lord!
 - This Is Why We Need To:
 - Strive To Be Obedient:
 - To The Lord & His Word!
 - Is This What We Are Known For? Our Faith / Faithfulness?

* There Also Needs To Be:

4. The Right Kind Of Support:

- Which We Find In:
 - 16:20 - “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with you. Amen!”
 - The Truth Is:
 - Neither Unity Or Purity:
 - Can Be Maintained By Any Christian Or Any Church:
 - If We Try To Do It On Our Own!
 - Because Of Our Weakness:
 - We Need Strength & Support:
 - Of The Lord!
 - And In This Verse - Which - At First - Seems Like Another Ending:
 - To Paul’s Letter! The First Was Back In 15:33!
 - Paul Encourages Us With:
 - Both A Promise:
 - And A Prayer!
 - First - A Promise About:
- The Greatness Of The Lord:
 - Who Alone Can Help Us:
 - Maintain Unity Through Purity!
 - He Is The “God Of Peace!”
 - Already Described Him This Way In 1:7, 15:13, & 15:33!
 - And - Peace Is Essential:
 - To True Union & Communion:
 - Within The Body Of Christ!
 - So - God Is The Source:
 - Of The Peace We Need!
 - But - How Will He Bring About:
 - His Peace? Through Conflict!
 - Because - Paul Says - He “Shall Bruise Satan Under Your Feet Shortly!”
 - This Is Clearly A Reference To:
 - God’s Promise Back In Genesis 3:15!
 - But - This Bruising:
 - Is The Only Way:
 - To Bring About:
 - True & Lasting Peace:
 - For The People Of God & For The World At Large!
 - True Peace Cannot Come Any Other Way!
 - Because:
 - Good & Evil:
 - Can Never Be Agreed! And:
 - Because:
 - Light & Darkness:
 - Can Never Be Joined Together!
 - One Must Be Completely Overcome:
 - By The Other!
 - And Only Then:
 - Will There Be Lasting Peace!

- But - There Is A Subtle Difference:
 - In This Promise & The First Promise:
 - Back In Genesis!
 - Here - “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under *your* feet!”
 - Whereas - In Genesis:
 - It Is The “Seed Of The Woman!”
- Remarkably - God Uses:
 - His Unified & Purified People:
 - To Continue - What Christ Himself:
 - Has Accomplished!
 - **IE:** Like A Military Parade - Following Our Victorious Leader - In Lock-Step - Same Direction / Same Cadence / Same Uniforms!
 - God Uses Us To Destroy The Remaining Vestiges Of Satan’s Power & Influence & Work!
 - So - With The Greatness & Power Of God - We Can Pursue Unity Through Purity:
 - To Be This Kid Of Army!
 - But - Along With This Promise:
 - We Find A Prayer For:
- The Grace Of The Lord!
 - 16:20b - “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with you. Amen!”
 - Oh, How We Need:
 - The Continuing Outflow:
 - Of God’s Grace Through Christ:
 - To Help Us In Our Quest For Both Unity & Purity!
 - Need To Go To Him:
 - For That Grace!

Conclusion:

1. Does The Church Need More Unity?
 - Yes! But It Must Never Come:
 - At The Expense Of:
 - Purity!
 - Because - In Truth:
 - There Can Be No Lasting Unity:
 - Without Purity:
 - In Our Faith - As Well As:
 - In Our Fellowship!
2. But In These Ways:
 - We Can Pursue Greater Unity!
 - Through The Right Kind Of:
 - Separation / Service / Submission / Support!
 - And - We Can Do This:
 - With Hope!
 - Because - What We Pursue Now:
 - God Himself Will Ultimately Provide!
 - And He Will Do So - One Day:
 - “Shortly!” - In A Sudden & A Swift Way:
 - When Christ Himself Returns:
 - To Bring Us Both Unity & Purity That Will Last Forever!

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