

Pt 56 Romans 16:17-20 Mark Them Which Cause Divisions

Rooting Through Romans, a sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Porchlight Baptist Church www.pbcknox.com

Romans 16:17-20

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

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.

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.

20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

We pick back up in this last chapter of Romans right in the middle of Paul's greetings/salutations. It's as if he suddenly thinks of this and throws it in at the last minute. We know that the Bible says in **2 Timothy 3:15a** All scripture is given by inspiration of God... and in **2 Peter 1:21** For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. So it was the Lord who inspired Paul to write this, regardless of whether it was last minute or not.

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

That word "beseech" simply means "Let me bring to your attention." Paul wants to make sure they are paying attention, so they fully understand what he's about to say. It is very likely the church at Rome had not yet experienced these "dividers" and "offenders" yet so they needed to be warned of them.

These men he is warning them about are not misguided Christians or Christians who got off the right path, these men are not Christians at all, they are only pretending to be, and they have an agenda.

Paul says for them to "mark them," that means to observe them, point them out, identify them and warn others about them.

They way they can find them is by paying attention to who is causing divisions in the church and offending with their teaching which is contrary to the doctrine in which they have been taught. In other words, these false teachers will be preaching and teaching things different than what they are familiar with and know to be the truth.

These kinds of people have been around since the church began. The devil couldn't defeat Christ even in death so he's going to do everything in his power to try and destroy the truth of the Gospel. We all know that he isn't able to do that; however, he sure will make a mess of things if he can get his foot in the door. And, this is how he does it, by working through these false teachers.

There are probably more false teachers today than anytime in the history of the church. It is much easier now to get an audience. It doesn't have to just be in the church building. Nowadays they make heavy use of the internet and social media accounts.

You have to be incredibly careful to whom you listen. Some of these men start out looking like the real deal but then suddenly they start moving in a different direction. Paul says we are to "avoid them."

Then he goes on to say why these men are to be avoided (other than they cause divisions and offences).

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.

They are not in it for the Lord, they are only using him to get their foot in the door. They don't serve the Lord Jesus Christ, they serve themselves. All they want to do is satisfy their own lusts of power, prestige, fame, and fortune. They are driven to fulfill their self-desires and gratification.

This is why you see these false teachers on television wearing their thousand dollar suits, flashing their thousand dollar smiles, and flying on their million dollar jets. These men live extravagant lifestyles and away from the cameras live immoral lives.

Paul warned the church at Corinth about these false teachers as well. Listen to what he wrote in **2 Corinthians 11:13-15** For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Peter also warned the church of these false teachers. Listen to what he wrote in **2 Peter 2:1-3** But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. 3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

These are the same false teachers that Jesus warns about in his Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 7:15-23

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Again, these false teachers are not Christians. They are not saved. They have never trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. They want to spread their poison in the Church and manipulate everyone they can. It's like dipping rat poison in chocolate and then offering it to children.

Paul says in the last part of **Romans 16:18b...and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.**

They know how to put it on. All the right words to say and the right way to say them. They sound so sincere and truthful. They flatter their listeners and give them special attention to make them feel special. They especially prey upon the naïve, those who themselves would never dream of deceiving anyone and think that others are the same way.

Why do you think a lot of older women get fleeced by the TV preachers? Because that is who they are singling out.

This is also how the Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, and Muslims recruit members from the Baptist Church. They know just the right words to say, the right buttons to push, just which heart string to tug on and if someone isn't strong in the faith or doctrine then they can easily be manipulated to follow them.

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.

Paul knows the believers in Rome have been taught the truth and have lived in the truth and he commends them for it; however, their obedience is known all over, and this may actually provoke these false teachers and cause them to try even harder. So the believers in Rome need to hold fast to the truth and be on the look out for those who desire to do evil to the church.

This is the reason Paul told the Church at Ephesus that they needed to put on the whole armour of God:

Ephesians 6:10-18

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

We need to always remember that Satan is real, and he is constantly working against us. We are battling all the forces of darkness. They may be invisible to our eye, but they are very real, and we must guard against them.

20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Paul also wants them to remember that they aren't in it alone. God has a master plan,

and that plan includes defeating Satan. He references Genesis Chapter 3 where Satan enters into the Garden, tempts Eve and she takes of the forbidden fruit and then convinces Adam to do so as well, thus ushering sin and death into the world. God starts laying out the rules for them after that and when he gets to Satan, he says this: **Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.** That was God foretelling how Satan would bruise the heel of Jesus, but Jesus would bruise Satan's head and defeat him.

We, the Church, are still in this battle with evil. There are still those who want to worm their way in and cause divisions and offences that are contrary to the truth of the Gospel. They won't look like a devil as most people think, with a red suit, pointed tail and carrying a pitchfork. No, these creeps will look like they belong. They will wear a suit and tie, carry a King James Bible, and look like the real deal. That's how they deceive people.

There's an extremely popular Tennessee preacher that lives about an hour down the road from here. When he started out, I thought he was one of the greatest I had heard. He has memorized most of the Bible and can stand and quote entire books of the Bible. He used to preach hot and heavy and always wore a suit, even when he went to the beach, he wore a suit. I used to wait every week for his latest sermon to be published so I could listen to it. Then, something changed. I was warned by a few people that he wasn't what he appeared to be. One man that used to attend his church told me that he was only in it for the fame. The only thing he was interested in was getting his name out there. I did not believe him and adamantly defended this preacher.

It wasn't very long after that I started seeing this preacher frequently on the news. He started out doing a bunch of stunts that drew media attention (all in the name of spreading the Gospel). Then he changed the name of his Church and began dressing differently, T-shirts, skinny jeans, etc. The music at the church changed. Not long after that he allegedly abused his wife, sent her away, divorced her and married his secretary.

He is still going strong today. He's got thousands of followers on social media. He just held a "National Deliverance Conference" where thousands of people attended. You would not believe the things that went on there in the name of the Gospel. Just go online and do a search for "Greg Locke National Deliverance Conference," and you will be absolutely shocked at what you see.

1 John 4:1-6

1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.