



World Christian Fellowship

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Romans 132 Caution to the Church. Romans 16:17-23

Romans 16:17-23, *Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. ¹⁸ For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. ¹⁹ For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. ²⁰ And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

Greetings from Paul's Friends

²¹ *Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you.*

²² *I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord.*

²³ *Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother. ²⁴ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

Now in this closing chapter Paul continues what he really began in in **15:14** was to reveal his heart. To give them a personal insight into himself, and ministry. Paul's gifts and callings within the will of God.

Paul finished his theological statements by **Romans 15:13** and now he wants the Romans and us to know him as much as possible, as well as his theology.

In chapter 16 Paul focuses on his relationship with people.

- **Chapter 15**, his relationship to the Lord in ministry,
- **Chapter 16** his relationship to people in ministry.

This chapter has a myriad of names are given, specifically identifying people who were a part of his life and ministry.

The emphasis of the chapter is to show his love, his mutual accountability, and his dependence on people within the loving community of the redeemed.

Paul before signs off this great epistle with a final benediction that comes from verse 25 to 27.

Paul's love for his fellow brother and sister believers.
As we focus on that we will see his love revealed in three ways

**Commendation,
Affection,
Caution.**

1. Commendation.

Paul's love and the networking of loving relationships that make ministry possible.

This chapter provides for us one of the clearest insights into the community of believing people in the early church and how that community functioned together.

Romans was taken to Rome by a very special Christian lady by the name of **Phoebe**. That is why Paul commends her to them.

Phebe is the one carrying the Roman epistle to the church at Rome.

2. Affection.

From verse 3-23, and 17-20.

Starting in verse 3 we begin a list of names that runs down to verse 16 and then stops where there's a greeting.

Then we pick up more names in verse 21 to 23.

All these names extend to us insight into Paul's love, because it's a whole lot of affection and loving greeting to everybody. It is a real display of open love. He greets the saints.

Paul knows who they are. They are not a lot of nameless people. This is not a man who is so isolated from reality, who is so into his own thing.

3. Caution.

V 17, Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

Love is also drawn to caution.

From heart of the apostle Paul to speak a word of caution because it is the nature of love to warn.

Love at its very heart has zeal for the safety, prosperity, joy, and blessedness of its object.

All you must do is translate that into your attitude toward your children, or wife, or husband or anyone you love.

If you really love that person your greatest concern is for the safety and the prosperity of that person.

We will never see the love of Paul more clearly demonstrated, not even in his commendation, affection but in his caution.

Acts 20:29-31, *For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.³¹ Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.*

Why was Paul with tears for 3 years night and day warn them?

Love.

Love has a zeal that warns and cautions because its deepest affection is for the object.

Our Lord, who repeatedly warned against false prophets and shepherds who would come in not sparing the flock.

Matthew 24:5, *For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.*

Paul warns about this all through the epistles.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15, *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.¹⁴ And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel*

of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Galatians 1:8-9, *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*

In **1 Timothy**, to set things in order in the church and correct the heresy that is leading people astray and damning their souls with corrupt message.

In **2 Timothy** he warns about the false teachers and false prophets in their lying teaching.

Pleading comes is to mark them who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned and avoid them.

To be aware of those who cause division and offenses contrary to the doctrine you have learned.

Paul identifies false teachers as those who teach false doctrine and create division.

Paul teaches the truth and creates a division in the church. The divisions would be the stumbling block. Because they bring in another gospel.

False teachers inevitably come with human teaching, human invention, sometimes very close to the truth or part of the truth and thus being very subtle.

But they bring division.

They bring offense, trapping people, causing them to stumble, and fracturing the purity of the church.

All the talk about love and unity among people that want to set truth aside is the work of false teachers, false prophets.

They just want to cause division.

They want to break up the church.

They are very successful at that.

Matthew 7:15-20, *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and*

thrown into the fire. ²⁰Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

What do we do when we come across false teaching?

Do we debate with it?

Do we discuss it?

I would be happy to preach the bible.

I would not go on that kind of thing because I don't want to debate with that.

Paul informs us what you do when you come across it.

You mark it and you avoid it.

"To mark it," simply identify it.

Look through the scope, take a good look at it, observe it, scrutinize it, identify it, pick it out, see what it is.

If you know sound doctrine you will be able to do that.

Identify it as heresy, identify it as false teaching and then avoid it.

Because false teaching always has a source, a propagator. That means to come away from it.

It doesn't say kill the false prophets. That was the disciples' mentality in Matthew 13.

**Do you want us to go out and rip up the tares?
Shall we go all in the world and do that?**

We are not to kill and torture the people who don't believe, just avoid them and move away. Nowhere are we told to stay around and argue with them. That's fruitless.

We are told to shun them, go away from them.

I believe there is a very fine line in the study of the Word of God at advanced levels, between a helpful understanding of error and an exposure to error that sucks the life blood out of a well-meaning person.

We have seen it happen to many well-intentioned theological pastors who find themselves so engulfed in dialogue with error that it destroys their usefulness.

What Paul is saying is stick with what you have learned and reinforce that.

If education ought to be anything it ought to be the reinforcement of what you believe.

It is not wise to take a young person who believes in Christ with all their heart, send them off to a school that's going to attack that.

Stick with what you know to be true and increase it and enhance it. Love sounds this warning.

Ephesians 4:14-16, *that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,* ¹⁵ *but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—* ¹⁶ *from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

Scrutinize it, see it for what it is and get away from it.
Get away from it and stick with what you know is true.
The doctrine which you have learned, stay with it.

Paul gives two reasons why these lying teachers are not worthy.

V 18, *For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.*

This is repeated frequently in the Scripture. They are in it for self-gratification.

- They don't serve Christ,

- They don't serve people.
- Look at their lifestyle.

Philippians 3:17-19, *Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.*

Their god is their appetite.

They are all into earthly things, gratification on the human level.

They are into, money, fame, success etc.

2 Timothy 3:1-7, *But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ⁶ For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷ always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

They have sexual desires on people. If you were to do a little bit of searching in among false teachers, you would find the perversion rampant.

2 Peter 2:1-3, *But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ²And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.*

They just want to use you. That's all.

You are just something to get, something to gain, something to possess.

2 Peter 2:10, *and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries,*

2 Peter 2:14, *having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.*

Do you want to know why?

Because only God in Christ, dwelling in the heart of a believer, can subdue lust and subdue greed.

- They don't have that subduing power.
- Their eyes are full of adultery.
- They can't cease from sin.
- They charm unstable souls.
- They take their money.
- They take their purity.
- They have covetous practices.
- They are accursed children.

2 Peter 2:19, *While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.*

Jude speaks basically to the same thing.

Jude 1:11, *Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.*

They are in ministry for the money.

Jude 1:12-13, *These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They*

are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; ¹³raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

No language in all Scripture comes close to the judgment language God pronounces on false teachers.

They may be well meaning on surface, but they are not concerned at all with anything except their own gratification.

They serve not the Lord Jesus Christ but their own body. They are not worthy of your attention.

The second reason why we ought not to give them in verse 18.

- First, must know that their motive is wrong.
- Secondly, you must know that their effect is wrong.

V 18, *For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.*

The devil wouldn't put error in the mouth of a bad guy if he wanted to get his point across.

Going to be with someone who can speak smooth and fair speeches.

Chosen lies that sound good and appealing and deceive the hearts of the innocent.

The false prophet comes clever, eloquent, polished, smooth-talking, praising, and flattering. He gains the ear and deceives the heart.

This is the reason why we must test everything by the scripture.

They corrupt the uncorrupted.

They are selfish, sensual, sexual and they deceive with cleverness those who aren't corrupt.

As Peter said, they are in bondage to corruption, and they lead their hearers into that corruption.

They did it in Corinth. That church became entangled in that. They will try it in Rome.

They are at it today.

Those are two negative reasons for avoiding them.

- They don't serve the Lord, but they serve their own body.
- They with their fair speeches and their flattery they will deceive the heart.

Now those are negative reasons.

There is a positive reason.

V 19, *For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.*

I am so happy that your testimony is all over the world.

Everybody knows about your faith.

Everybody knows you have come to Christ.

Your testimony for the grace of Christ has reached to all men.

Your spiritual reputation is well known among the believers.

Everybody knows what God's doing in your midst.

If you fall, then it will be a severe tragedy because of your reputation.

I am glad for your reputation.

Godly obedience causes the heart of Paul to rejoice as it does to me or anyone.

Don't become an expert on lies and deceit and heresy, stay away from it. Don't get involved in it. Run from it. Be very wise.

The greatest security we have against lies is to be wise.

To have the wisdom of the truth of God.

Philippians 4:8, *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.*

Let that occupy our minds.

We want to let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly.

Colossians 3:16, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

We want to set our affections on things above and not on things on the earth.

Paul urges them to be very familiar with what is innately good. Be good and be wise about what is good and know what is good.

This is the reason we continually teach the Word of God.

Be simple regarding what is evil.

- There is no need for a personal knowledge of evil.
- There is no need for a personal knowledge of heresy.
- Don't study false doctrine.
- Don't study sin.
- Don't study error.

Stick with the truth and godly obedience. It is the old story of the counterfeit. If you want to know a counterfeit, just know what a true bill looks like, and you will know what a counterfeit is.

If you had 400 pianos, how do you tune them all equally?

If you try to tune every piano to another piano, you are going to have a problem.

If you get one tuning fork, tune them all to the one tuning fork, you have got it all made.

If we know what the standard of truth is, everything else can come into line with that truth.

Mark the ones that bring the divisions, scrutinize them based on your knowledge of the Word of God and get away from them.

There are other passages that say if they are in your church then you throw them out.

Girst go correct one on one.

- If they don't respond, then take two or three witness.
- If they fail to respond, then tell the whole church.
- If they don't, Osten to the whole church then throw them out.

They don't serve the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own selves and they will just like wolves dressed up like prophets come to do nothing but devour you.

The intent of their hearts is to deceive the innocent. If you fall prey to that kind of false teaching the loss of reputation is going to speak evil against the Lord and His work.

V 20, *And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

The sudden, speedy, swift, quick devastation of Satan is coming. We can look forward to the day when the spiritual warfare is over.

We are going to go to heaven and rest.

We are not going to fight the false teachers.

We are not going to fight trying to hold the purity of the church.

It's all going to be over.

All the false teachers generated by Satan are going to be gone because the God of peace makes war against Satan and wins.

Then there is eternal peace.

He is called the God of peace at the end of chapter 15 also.

But there is a little different intent.

Paul is talking more there about the peace that we enjoy because of His provision. Here he is talking about the peace that He enjoys because of His victory, and we enter into that peace.

But the God of peace is going to end the war by bruising Satan, and there is an allusion to Genesis.

Genesis 3:15, *And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."*

At that time all division, discord, lies, and all sins that threaten the church, as the work of Satan, are going to be done away with and the battle waged will be over.

When Jesus comes out of heaven in **Revelation 19**, and He will be riding on a white horse. All these armies in heaven are riding on white horses with Him, and that will be us.

We come down with Him. He devastates and destroys in final judgment to set up His kingdom and bind Satan.

We reign with Him and Satan under His and our feet.

What a happy occasion it will be when that comes to pass?

1 Corinthians 15:25-28, *For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.²⁶ The last enemy that will be*

destroyed is death.²⁷ For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.²⁸ Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

But until then, the battle goes on.

We are engaged in a very acute spiritual warfare that demands all the best we have to offer.

Even in this warfare, **1 John 4:4** "*Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world?*"

Paul cautions the church out of love is this, find those people who cause division in the church by their heresies and their lies and their deception.

Mark them out and stay away from them.

If they are in the church throw them out, for they do not serve the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own body and they will deceive you with their smooth talk.

The sad result will be that your wonderful reputation will be lost, and Christ will be dishonoured.

Just hold on to the truth until the God of peace wins the ultimate victory, bruises Satan, puts him under His feet and under your feet, and it will come fast.

When it happens, it will happen fast.

Then Paul gives a benediction.

Paul gets a few of these in.

He got one in at the end of chapter 15.

He throws one in here.

He will give you another one in verse 24.

Finally, a big one in verses 25 to 27.

So, there are three benedictions in a row here.

V 20, "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*"

A prayer.

A wish.

- We need empowering grace.
- We need empowering grace to recognize false teaching.
- We need empowering grace to stay away from it.
- We need empowering grace to hold on in the battle until Christ defeats the enemy.

May that grace be with you.

"Amen" means "so let it be, may it be."

So, we see a commendation, affection and the caution of love.

Lastly, and just briefly, we see Paul's companions.

Here's a little final wrap up of love.

Little group of people who are with him in Corinth as he writes this letter, and he sends their love. This is on the other end of the line, personal greetings.

V 21, *Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you.*

"Timothy, my fellow worker," my beloved child he calls him in writing to him, and his son in the faith, his number one disciple, his dear friend.

Philippians 2:19-22, *But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. ²⁰For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. ²¹For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. ²²But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.*

Timothy loved Paul. Timothy stood by him.

We can read all through Paul's epistles about his affection for Timothy.

1 Corinthians 4:17, 1 Corinthians 16:10- 11, Philippians 2:19-22, 1 Timothy 6, 2 Timothy 1, 2 Timothy 2, 2 Timothy 4, and 1 Thessalonians 3:2.

Many places he shares his love for Timothy. Timothy was his fellow worker.

and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you.

When Paul first started out his ministry in Antioch in **Acts 13**, one of the five men who was leading the church at Antioch was **Lucius of Cyrene**.

Maybe it's Lucius of Cyrene who is with him in Corinth who came to join him, a long-time friend and fellow teacher from Antioch. That's possible.

There's another option. That is it could be Luke, since Luke was with Paul at this time. Chapter 20 where Luke writes, he uses the word "we" so he is including himself with Paul, so he is with Paul as he writes this letter to Rome.

Maybe Lucius has to do with Luke.

It's not far-fetched at all because in three places where Paul specifically names Luke, he always uses the word "Lucas," which is simply an equivalent to Lucius.

Maybe it's Luke, the beloved physician and companion of Paul, and he sends his love as well.

Luke a Gentile, and Lucius of Cyrene also a Gentile, if some other Lucius, could be Jew.

But then he adds, "*And Jason and Sosipater,*" and if Lucius is a Gentile, then these two would be Jews because he says, "*Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen, greet you.*"

Now we don't know who these men are specifically, other than just brief reference.

In **Acts 17:5-9** Jason was Paul's host on his first visit to Thessalonica. He was a man who gave hospitality to him, and he was saved at that time.

So, no doubt because he was a convert of Paul there was a love bond there, and here was Jason with Paul, companion in his travel and ministry.

Sosipater, also called Sopater, just shortening his name was from the town of Berea. Probably one of those noble Old Testament students who studied the Scripture. He was in Paul's group at this time as well and is mentioned in **Acts 20:4**.

Now the ministry of Timothy is clear.

He served Paul in a wonderful way.

The ministry of Jason was one of support, providing a home for him.

The ministry of Sosipater, we don't know anything about.

But they were his friends.

They were part of his life.

They demonstrate again that loving relationship he had with people.

V 22, I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord.

Paul isn't speaking but this Tertius picks up the pen and speaks for himself.

It doesn't mean he was the author, but he was the secretary.

Paul often used a secretary.

Note in **1 Corinthians 16:21, Galatians 6:11**, Paul used a secretary to write.

Here Paul is using a man named Tertius who throws in his one verse.

He was Paul's amanuensis, or secretary. We don't know anything about him.

But everybody had a place.

Timothy co-laboured with him.

Jason was there maybe for support.

Sosipater was there for whatever purpose God had for him.

Tertius was this very special penman who could write this wonderful Roman epistle.

Wouldn't that be a thrill and a privilege to write the inspired Word of God?

We don't know anything about him.

But I love that fact that he greeted them in the Lord, and it tells me he was not a hired gun, he was a believer.

V 23, Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother.

Acts 18:7 he is called Titus Justus, and was a noble free man, first seen in Corinth. It was said of him then that he worshiped God, he was a true seeker after the true God and, get this, he lived next door to the synagogue.

Paul reached him, he responded to Paul's preaching as a Gentile, he was baptized by the apostle.

1 Corinthians 1:14, he says I baptized Gaius, and so he was dear to him. He had led him to Christ. This man had provided again for Paul's ministry and now is with Paul supporting him.

He is not only Paul's host but the host of the whole church. The church met probably in his house, and he sends his love, too.

How did Paul get anything done because these people were probably asking him questions all the time.

"Erastus, the treasurer of the city,"

Here was a man of prominence, the treasurer of the city.

His name was a common one, so we don't know what Erastus he was. Probably not the same one mentioned in **Acts 19:22 or 2 Timothy 4:20**.

A city treasurer, a somewhat noble person who had come to Christ. There aren't many noble and there aren't many mighty, 1 Corinthians says, but here was one of some nobility.

Finally, "*Quartus*," all we know about him is he was a brother, unknown.

Paul was surrounded with a beloved group of people, a camaraderie of men who share his life and service, what a fellowship of love.

V 24, "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*"

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. His heart is so filled with love.

V 20, *"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."*

He just has a heart of compassion for these people. What a loving man he was.