

Parson to Person

ROMANS 16 PART 2

“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. 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. 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. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” (Romans 16:17–20 NKJV).

Romans 16 is fundamentally a wonderful recognition of many people who had been a blessing to Paul—and the churches he served. His lengthy list of men and women reveals that he cared about people as individuals as well as the work they accomplished.

Some suggest that personal comments of thanks will encourage those seeking attention. Others suggest that the giving of thanks is both good practice and essential to the furthering of ministry. Both can be true. Personally I like to offer gestures and comments of thanks—that is my goal.

Inasmuch as the Church is a family, and inasmuch as family life must be nurtured, both good and bad can

manifest from within—and/or from without. Therefore, Paul’s list of thanks and praise is interrupted by the text we will examine today.

Particular to the context was *“those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned.”* Therefore, we must ask what “doctrine” Paul was referring to and how the Scriptures address “divisions and offenses.”

First off we should address the literal context.

One might immediately suggest that the “doctrine learned” was the teachings contained in the Roman epistle—and they would be right. However, a simpler answer would be the truth about Jesus as Messiah—the Savior of the world. Herein this is a most accurate assessment.

Denial of Jesus as Messiah was and is a serious matter. John wrote of this in his first and second epistles. The author to the Hebrews spent considerable energy and emphasis on Jesus’ deity, prophecy of His coming, His work, the nature of the New Covenant, and the now essential nature of trusting Him for salvation. Those who reject Jesus are “antichrist,” and those who assault, sow discord, or seek to otherwise harm believers in Jesus must be marked and avoided.

John wrote, *“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds”* (2 John 9–11 NKJV).

Peter wrote, *“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. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed”* (2 Peter 2:1–2 NKJV).

Secondly, I should mention the importance of marking *“note”* and *“avoiding”* those who have perverted the Gospel of grace with legalistic Jewish traditions or commands. Some teach that one must keep the law, be circumcised, etc., in order to be saved. Paul addressed this in his epistle to the Galatians.

Paul wrote, *“...there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 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. 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” (Galatians 1:7b–9 NKJV)

Thirdly, I will mention the command to withdraw from those who otherwise aggressively push a false Gospel—thus “false teachers” and “false prophets” who intend to convince or convert true believers to accept another Jesus, another gospel, etc.

Paul wrote, “Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!” (2 Corinthians 11:1–4 NKJV).

I like to think that I, as pastor at Candlelight, might agree with Paul in saying, “I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20–27 NKJV). This I would say with reason; for we also attend to Paul’s exhortation when he said, *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God*

which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears” (Acts 20:27–31 NKJV).

Finally, Peter himself wrote that some of the doctrines Paul explained were at times difficult to fully comprehend. *“Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:14–16 NKJV).* Therefore, “avoiding” those who are “divisive” may be in view, but absolute agreement about all doctrines may nonetheless be a poor reason for offense or avoidance—especially as we grow and learn.

We are called to be patient with those who are growing. However, those who are rebellious and unteachable must be handled with definitive care.

Paul wrote, “*if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed*” (2 Thessalonians 3:14 NKJV).

Moreover, to Titus he wrote, “*Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.*” (Titus 3:10–11 NKJV).

Jesus gave instruction about how to process these and others in error. Matthew 18 describes the process.

In the Proverbs we read, “*These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren*” (Proverbs 6:16–19 NKJV).

May the Lord give us grace as we practice these instructions.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul