

Paul had already written

- Thessalonians,
- Galatians and
- First and Second Corinthians.
- He'd been a believer for about 23 - 25 years by now
- and he'd had his taste of ministry.

Paul now finds it important to warn the church about

- those that would be divisive and causing division.

Jesus Himself warned of false prophets in:

Matt 7:15-20

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

Col 2:8

8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ

1 John 4:1

4 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Acts 20:28-31

28 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. 29 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.

These were all warnings issued to the church and Paul continues with these warnings in Romans 16 where he uses the words divisions and offenses.

Offenses - Greek - Skándalon, Referring to the trigger of a trap on which the bait is placed, and which, when touched by the animal, springs and causes it to close causing entrapment.

It's a trap intended to cause someone to stumble.

Prov 6:16-19 talks to us about 6 things that the Lord hates.

Prov 6:16-19

16 These six things the Lord hates,
 Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:
 17 A proud look,
 A lying tongue,
 Hands that shed innocent blood,
 18 A heart that devises wicked plans,
 Feet that are swift in running to evil,
 19 A false witness who speaks lies,
 And one who sows discord among brethren.

Where does the divisiveness and hinderances start,
 James 4:1-2:

1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

Paul warns against divisions in verse 17 of Romans.

Paul uses the Greek word *skopéō*,

- it's the idea of keeping your eyes on something
- or observing something with intensity.

We get our English words telescope and microscope from this word.

I mentioned last week that it wasn't uncommon

- for wolves to infiltrate home fellowships or home church.

Scoping doesn't stop at the church,

- it needs to be observed in the home as well.
- Satan would love nothing more
- than to divide households.

And in Phil 2:1-4 Paul begins to deal with the need for church unity.

Phil 2:1-4

1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Paul says in verse 17 that these divisions are contrary to the doctrine which you learned, meaning that it's opposed to God's word.

He went on in Galatians Gal 1:8-9

8 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.

So why do we avoid those that are causing division and offenses?

- Because Paul says not once but twice in verses 8 & 9,
- “let him be accursed”!

Stay clear of what they teach.

Don't be intimidated from telling people the truth.

- People need to hear the truth.

Paul instructed Timothy to remain faithful.

- People were chasing after idolatry,
- Listening to false teachers.

What was he to do? Paul tells him in 2 Tim 4:1-2, to preach the word!

So Paul says, stay clear of those causing division then he gives us ways to identify division.

Usually people master their craft. If you do something long enough you become an expert at it.

Paul says,

Avoid Divisive Persons

17 Now I urge you, brethren, to take note of those (skopéō, spy them out, look towards an object) who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them (to turn them out of the way, turn aside or away).

And what's their motive in all of this?

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.

Paul was a little more straight forward in

Phil 3:19 says that their end is destruction whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame-who set their mind on earthly things.

All enemies of God are fighting a losing battle.

Psa 92:9

9 For behold, Your enemies, O Lord,
For behold, Your enemies shall perish;

All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.

Notice in verses 18 how they attract people to themselves. They use smooth words and flattering speech.

Flattering speech is derived from

- the Greek word “eulogia”
- eulogia is the combination of two Greek words “eu” for “good”
- and “logos” for “word”
- we get our English word eulogy from this word.

Thayer defines eulogia as “praise, or polished language”

Nothing bad is ever mentioned of the deceased.

Here’s the trap that I mentioned earlier.

- People set the bait on the trap,
- others fall for the bait.

Now, when someone else comes in and says,

- “hey, get away from that trap!”

You’ve already been lured to it and it looks good.

Reminds me of the garden when

- Eve said to the serpent,
 - we’re not allowed to eat from that tree.
 - God said if we eat from it, we will surely die.

Then the serpent said, Gen 3:4-5, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Another example of deception is in Joshua 9.

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 (Akearios - the simple are the unmixed, unadulterated, pure and innocent.) concerning evil.

We know the truth and we know a lie when we see it.

The Psalmist says in 119:11, Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.

Read it, learn it and memorize it!

Now at the very end of the letter to the Romans Paul mentions for the first time the name of “Satan.” Notice what he says about him. The God of peace will crush Satan.

20 And the God of peace will crush (only 3 times is this word used in the NT and only here in Romans does it mean to shatter, smash or crush) Satan under your feet shortly. (“soon” instead of “shortly” The idea isn’t that the Lord is coming soon to deal with Satan, but when He decides to do it, it’s going to take place quickly, in a brief space of time) 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.

Timothy is one of Paul’s best friends and

- one of the most faithful in the ministry.
- His name means “To honor God”.
- He surely lived up to his name.

22 I, Tertius (Paul’s scribe, Paul dictated and Tertius wrote), who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord.

23 Gaius (this is probably the same Gaius that Paul baptized and mentions him in 1 Cor 1:14), 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.
Benediction

25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ (you can’t separate the gospel from Jesus Christ, it’s all the same), according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began

Establish - (to make firm) (Everyone of us wants to be established in life. Only God can establish us. Jude 24 tells us that He is able to keep us from stumbling, and to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

26 but now (it’s been) made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith –

27 to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

Romans begins with the gospel chapter 1:16-17

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the

righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Paul opens with the gospel and he closes with the gospel in the last 3 verses.

So it began with Jesus,

- it was of Him,
- it continues thru Jesus because it's thru Him,
- and it will end with Jesus because all glory is unto Him!
- 1 Cor 1:17-31

Final thoughts in Romans:

Rom 3:10-18

- "There is none righteous, no, not one;
- 11 There is none who understands;
- There is none who seeks after God.
- 12 They have all turned aside;
- They have together become unprofitable;
- There is none who does good, no, not one."
- 13 "Their throat is an open tomb;
- With their tongues they have practiced deceit";
- "The poison of asps is under their lips";
- 14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."
- 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;
- 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways;
- 17 And the way of peace they have not known."
- 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

In Romans 6:23 he says that the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

One thing we've earned on this earth, punishment for our sin, and that is punishable by death, not just physical death but eternal.

How do we escape death? In Rom 5:8 God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

And His resurrection proves that God accepted His sacrifice for us as payment for our sins.

Romans 10:9 if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

God promises in Romans 10:13 that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Since we've been justified by faith Rom 5:1, we have peace with God thru our Lord Jesus Christ meaning there is no condemnation for us that have received Him as Lord and Savior Rom 8:1.

This means that we are eternally secure in Jesus since Rom 8:38-39

38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.