

August 18th – Avoid the Doctrinally Divisive

“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”(Rom. 16:17)

As Paul was closing out his epistle to the Roman believers, he provided some final practical instructions designed to spur God’s people toward holiness. In today’s verse, Paul mentioned the approach that believers should take in regard those who spread divisive doctrines. First, Paul said we need to “note those who cause divisions and offenses.” Just like taking notes of noteworthy items in class, we should make a mental note of those who refuse to be peacemakers in the Body of Christ.

Divisions and offenses could be any number of things. Sometimes people cause divisions simply because they have a combative, argumentative personality. In Proverbs, Solomon says that those “who sow discord among brethren” are an abomination to the Lord (6:19). Christ has called us to make peace with one another by resolving our differences. He has not called us to keep things stirred up just because we didn’t get our way. And clearly He’s not pleased with those who divide brothers with false doctrine.

So then, Paul says we need to note those who divide the flock, and especially those who raven the fold with heresy. Not only should we make note of them, but Paul says we are to “avoid them.” Understand that avoiding someone is only a last resort, after all attempts at reconciliation have been exhausted. But, if the divisive person will not listen to you or godly friends or the church, then it is your Christian duty to avoid them. Otherwise, they can begin to tear down your faith and cause you to sin.