Sermon Highlights

Standing Firm: Avoiding False Teachers, Embracing Unity in Christ, and the Coming Defeat of Satan

Summary:

In this closing message through the book of Romans, Pastor Bruce Gordon works through Romans 16:17-27, drawing out practical and theological truths for the modern church. He addresses the responsibility of believers to identify and avoid those who cause divisions and teach false doctrine, warning against the soft tolerance that has crept into the American church. He contrasts this firmness with the unity believers share in Christ, regardless of social standing or background. He highlights the remarkable promise that Satan will be crushed under the feet of believers in union with Christ, drawing on the Genesis 3 prophecy and its fulfillment in Jesus. He closes by examining the benediction of Romans 16, emphasizing that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the foundation of any true church, and that Old Testament prophecy grounds and validates the Christian faith.

Key Points:

- Believers are commanded to identify and avoid those who cause divisions and teach doctrine contrary to what the church has received, not merely tolerate them

- False teachers characteristically use smooth, flattering speech to deceive sincere but less discerning believers, and should be named and called out rather than left anonymous

- The American church has become overly tolerant of false teaching, and the church needs the backbone to confront error directly

- The God of peace will crush Satan under the feet of believers, placing them in such deep union with Christ that His victory is described as theirs as well

- The promise of Satan's defeat, first given in Genesis 3, is 2,000 years closer to fulfillment than when Paul wrote Romans, and Pastor Bruce Gordon expressed his belief that the end may be very near

- The names Tertius and Quartus in the closing greetings likely reflect the naming practice of Roman slave households, where children were given numbers rather than names, illustrating that the gospel sets all people free regardless of their origin or station in life

- All believers stand equal before God in Christ, with no distinction of ethnicity, gender, or social class in terms of standing before Him

- Any church that does not consistently preach Jesus Christ as its center has lost its foundation

- Old Testament prophecy is essential to the church because it establishes the reliability of God's Word and gives confidence in the fulfillment of future promises

Scripture Reference:

- Romans 16:17-27 serves as the primary passage, covering warnings against false teachers, the promise of Satan's defeat, greetings from Paul's companions including Tertius and Quartus, and the closing benediction

Stories:

- Pastor Bruce Gordon described the Roman practice of a conquering general placing his foot on the head of a defeated enemy commander as a sign of total victory, using this to illuminate the meaning of Satan being crushed under the feet of Christ and believers

- Pastor Bruce Gordon reflected on the identity of Tertius, suggesting he may have been a freed Roman slave who was permitted by the Holy Spirit to insert his own greeting into the epistle, imagining the joy his former master or family in Rome would have felt upon hearing his name read aloud from the letter

- Pastor Bruce Gordon briefly recounted the end of Nero's reign, noting that the Praetorian Guard and Senate moved against him, using this historical context to frame the peace Paul offered to a church living under an unstable and dangerous imperial government