
“Glory Forevermore”

ROMANS 16:17-27

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AT A GLANCE

In a world rife with division and deception, Paul’s final words to the Romans call us to be vigilant, discerning, and steadfast in truth. Though the enemy may scheme to sow discord, we are not left defenseless—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ sustains and strengthens us. And as we stand firm on the solid rock of His Word, we share in the promise that *“the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet”*—a victory assured and a glory everlasting.

INTRODUCTION

Today we read the closing words of Paul’s letter to the Romans, a passage that both warns and encourages us. It may come as a surprise that, after spending so much time urging unity and peace, Paul now calls us to be watchful—for those who seek to divide, to deceive, and to place obstacles in the way of God’s truth.

We live in a world where division is everywhere—whether in our communities, our families, or even our church. The enemy thrives on discord, using deception and smooth words to lure people away from truth.

The good news is that we do not fight this battle alone. The grace of our Lord Jesus sustains us, strengthens us, and keeps us from falling. When we stand on His truth, no scheme of the enemy can prevail against us.

Through His Word, God equips us to stand firm. Through His Spirit, He gives us wisdom and discernment. And through His Son, He assures us of ultimate victory. Amen!

ROMANS 16:17-27

¹⁷ I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. ¹⁸ For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. ¹⁹ For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. ²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. ²¹ Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. ²² I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. ²³ Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you. ²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— ²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

AVOID THEM

Paul says, in **verse 17 I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.**

Paul lived in the real world, not a warm-fuzzy fairytale. He had enough experience in church work to understand that some relationships are futile. Some people simply will not be pursued. Some people will not be at peace. Paul's guidance: **watch out for** them and **avoid them.**

Avoid seems like a harsh term. Unity in the body is important, but there are some people who simply will not be united with the rest. They must have their own way. They sow seeds of dissension. They start rumors and spread gossip. They have an opinion and they will not be swayed.

Paul has elsewhere taught us how to approach divisive people and we should examine that today beginning with what he has already told the Romans. *"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."* Romans 12:18

This should be our heart. We should be eager and ready to live peaceably with anyone and everyone. However, Paul put a double qualifier in that short sentence knowing it's not always possible and it doesn't always depend on you.

There are times when we need to heed his instructions to Titus, *"As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,"* Titus 3:10

Let's talk about the warnings. He told the Galatians, *"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted."* Galatians 6:1

AIM AT RECONCILIATION

Why gentleness and not sternness? Paul told Timothy, through gentleness, *"God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,"* 1 Timothy 2:25b

The hope must always be restoration of relationship. It's wonderful when this happens. We should always want reconciliation and be ready to grant forgiveness quickly. Still, some people will not be corrected. Some people will not listen to reason or accept loving rebuke. Romans 16:17 releases us from an endless and futile pursuit.

Daniel Doriani issues this encouraging release, "the command to avoid them releases leaders, family members, friends, and coworkers from the perceived obligation and burden of staying in demonstrably futile relationships. It lets tender people break with so-called friends who use and abuse them. It lets managers dismiss chronic malcontents and allows businesses to stop placating implacable clients. The same holds for pastors and their angriest members." Doriani concludes, "There is a time to say I tried to bring peace and failed. Now I will heed Paul and avoid them."

As hard as it may be, there are some people you just need to **avoid** for your own good. Why? When you hang out with divisive people, they influence you, and then they use you to further their division. You become an unwitting pawn in their scheme.

Whether the perceived issue is a matter of preference, or control, or influence, or a power-trip, each of these, among other things, create bitterness in their hearts. And Hebrews warns us that bitterness is like a cancer, it begins in the heart of one person and *"by it many become defiled."* Hebrews 12:15

We all need to be careful who we allow to influence us. Some people you must simply avoid or else you'll get sucked in and become defiled.

UNSETTLED HEARTS

I want to acknowledge that there may be some here or watching today who have been alleged as being divisive and this verse has been used against you. You may be wondering if there's any truth to it. That can be unsettling. I believe what Paul says in **verse 18** will help you settle this in your mind.

Paul says **For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naïve.** The word **appetites** refers to fleshly, carnal impulses. Think self-indulgence. Paul says divisive people live to serve themselves.

Whether that craving is to build up their own following, or a preservation of their carefully crafted eco-systems, or their traditions, or control and influence, divisive people do not care about the Kingdom of God and **they do not serve our Lord Christ.**

Superficially they appear to be righteous people. But when you get below the surface you see clearly that their priority is not the glory of Christ and the expanse of His kingdom, but the preservation of their own.

So if you've been called a divisive person and you're worried about whether that may be true, the fact that you're concerned about hurting the cause of Christ is an indicator that you're not. It's those who find a self-righteous joy in hurting Christ's church that Paul warns us about.

Paul says they go after the **naïve**. They pursue the people who are unable to discern truth from error. The **naïve** are not necessarily dumb, they're just often blinded by benevolence. They're nice. They assume the best about everyone and can't imagine their friends ever doing wrong or leading them astray.

Once a person is poisoned by their **smooth talk and flattery**, the result is almost inevitable. I have known of cases of people who have come back from the well of toxicity, but they are the exception rather than the rule.

These people use whatever manipulative tools they can to sway the naïve. They figure out what will evoke an emotional reaction so their victims can be controlled.

SEEK WISDOM AND DISCERNMENT

Since they prey on the naïve, doesn't this suggest we should strive to be wise and discerning? That's why he exhorts us in **verse 19**, saying, **For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.**

We should strive to be attuned to the Holy Spirit, seeking His wisdom, His voice, and His guidance. Let this serve as a warning to those who are spiritually lazy. Predators come after the naïve.

This is why I am committed, along with every other elder, to preaching the Word of Truth. It exposes divisive people and scatters them. Nothing dispels divisive people and false teachers like a strong and steady proclamation of the Word of God. This is a protective measure. In the Army we called it a "show of force."

Soldiers put on their gear and mount up in intimidating combat vehicles and present an imposing presence in the community. It's not inviting. It's not warm-fuzzy. It doesn't say come up and give me a hug.

There's a place for that as we strive to win hearts and minds in theaters of operation. But we recognized that to protect innocent people from predators, the predators have to know we're there and able to inflict violence.

Clear and consistent preaching of the Word of God is violence against spiritual predators. This is why the primary task of elders is to teach the Bible. It protects the flock against predators and it helps the flock grow in wisdom.

But you cannot rely solely on bold preaching to grow in wisdom. You grow in wisdom as you consume the Word, corporately here, in Connect Groups, and Bible studies, but also in your personal time with the Lord each day. We really need to pay attention and be alert because the enemy is always looking for a way to divide Christ's church.

VICTORY IS OURS!

Thankfully, **verse 20** reminds us the enemy is defeated! Paul says, **The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.** Satan is the source of division and divisive people are his human agents who do his bidding.

"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds." 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

See? We need not fret! Their end will correspond to their deeds. They will be held accountable for their divisiveness.

What does it mean when Paul says **the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet**? To crush one's enemies under your feet describes your complete and utter victory, and their complete and utter defeat. This is what Satan has in store and there's nothing he can do about it. All he can do is try to disrupt and divide Christ's church, but he cannot prevail against it.

This is the only place in scripture in which it is said that Satan will be crushed under our feet! The church will share in the glorious victory of Christ over Satan! It's only a matter of time.

We just need to trust in Jesus and rely on His grace. The **grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**, which was sufficient to sustain Paul in his weakness and it is enough to sustain us.

Paul returns to greetings, this time sending greetings of those with him in **verses 21-23. Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. I, Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.**

TERTIUS WROTE ROMANS?

Do not let this trip you up that **verse 22** says **I, Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord.** Tertius was an amanuensis, a scribe who wrote what Paul dictated. He is the only amanuensis we know by name and apparently he was a Christian, as he greeted them **in the Lord.**

And now we've come to the final words of his letter, Paul's benediction, a word of blessing over the church. **Verse 25 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ.**

Strengthen is also translated *established* and it is a construction term. Using similar language in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned that those who refused to listen to His words would be like a foolish man who built a house on the sand; losing it all when the floods came.

But those who heed Jesus' words are like a wise man who built on a solid foundation; enduring the winds and floods because their home was *founded*, also translated *established*, on the rock.

Paul is telling us what establishes, what strengthens us, what causes us to weather the storm is his **gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ.** This is why we preach Jesus Christ and His gospel every week!

There is nothing that will strengthen you, establish you, cause you to be more secure, or equip you to endure everyday trials more than the gospel. It is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes.

I am unashamed of the Gospel! I will never stop preaching the Gospel of Christ, the power of God and strength for His people. Paul's gospel, *the* gospel, is not a new innovation, but an old mystery newly revealed.

ONCE EAGERLY AWAITED, NOW TAKEN FORGRANTED

Paul continues in **verses 25b-26**, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—

The Apostles repeatedly referred to the **prophetic writings** in their preaching because Jesus is the promised and prophesied Jewish messiah.

All of this was at the **command of the eternal God to bring about the obedience of faith**. Paul takes us back to the beginning, where he said, *“through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,”* Romans 1:5

Paul received his apostleship from Jesus, and this by command of the eternal God. We have what the eternal God wants us to have. We have His revelation. And the right response to this is glory!

With **Verse 27** Paul concludes his letter, **to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen**. We glorify Him because in His divine wisdom, He has commanded that the mystery of Christ kept secret for ages has been revealed to us. Generations of people anxiously awaited what you and I too often take for granted, the revelation of how to have a personal relationship with God.

And further, this gospel that reveals Christ provides all we need to stand in the face of life's storms. It is sufficient to stabilize you personally and us corporately. It will be those who built their house on the rock of Christ that will endure to the end.

And if you have built your house on the rock and this church has been built on the rock of Christ, we will withstand the onslaught of attack from the enemy, not because we're so strong, but by God's grace He has established us by the preaching of Jesus Christ.

Christ's sinless life, His substitutionary death, dying for your sin and not His own, His resurrection from the dead, and His unconditional forgiveness to all who believe...this is the gospel and it deserves our grateful response, **glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen**.

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