

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Love for the Saints, Part 2

Scripture: Romans 16:16-24

Code: 45-120

Let's open our Bibles together to Romans chapter 16 and we're fast coming to the end of I think it must be three years now of studying Romans on Sunday night. And any of you who know more specifically can relate that to me at the conclusion, I'm kind of curious, I can't really remember. But it's been a wonderful wonderful time in my life and in the life of our church as well.

And as we come back to the closing chapter of this great doctrinal epistle, we find that the Apostle Paul is continuing to open his heart so that the Roman readers may share in his personal attitudes, as well as his inspired theology. He has given to them through chapter 15 verse 13 his theology, really the theology of the Spirit of God through him by the inspired Word.

Having given that great treatise on theology, on justification by grace through faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and drawing it to a conclusion in chapter 15 verse 13, from then on through the remainder of chapter 15 and inclusive of chapter 16, he shares his heart so that they might know him as an apostle as well as that which he taught. The intent of that is that not only they might trust his teaching because of the genuineness of his heart, but that they might get to know him a little bit because he wants to come to Rome and he wants them to assist him in a great dream that he has to reach Spain with the gospel. And in order to establish a meaningful relationship with them, he unbares his heart. In the process in chapter 15 he explains something of that dream to go to Spain, he explains something of his commitment to do the will of God, he lets them see how totally committed he is to his apostleship and that which God has placed upon his heart.

Then in chapter 16 still revealing his heart to them he gives a long list of commendation and cordial greetings to people who were in Rome at that time who were significant, important folks in his life and ministry. This way he identifies himself with a great number of the congregation of the church at Rome though he himself had never been there. And in so doing provides a sort of base of relationship and friendship upon which he can build so that when he does come if in the will of God it be so they will be able to assist him on his way to Spain. It's our belief that he never did make it to Spain, but nonetheless this was his intent if in the will of God.

And as we've been looking at chapter 16, we started last Sunday night, we've been kind of looking at his great love for the saints. Here we have this catalogue of names, people who had a very important part in his life and ministry. And we have reminded ourselves that Paul was not an isolationist. He didn't see himself as above everyone else because of his many visions, because of his many

revelations, because of the unique nature of his apostle and in his calling. He was not so consumed either with the monumental nature of his task, that people had really no part in his life, they were merely helpers and folks to be used to get to the great ends of his intended mission...he didn't see it that way. People were more than just elements of success. They were more than just someone to help. They were more than a faceless mass supporting one who had a great task, he really cared.

He saw them as friends. He saw them as beloved. He saw them as coworkers. And we remember, too, that he never traveled alone, he always took some people with him and the only time really you find him alone is in the seventeenth chapter of Acts when he was hussled out of Macedonia because there was so much trouble brewing because of the riot that started in Thessalonica over his preaching. He went down to Berea and there, you remember, he found those who were so noble because they searched the Scriptures daily to see whether the things that were said were so. And even while he was there the Thessalonians who were enraged by his teaching followed him there and his friends, Silas and Timothy, feeling that for his own protection he ought to be taken out of town sent him to Athens. And he was in Athens alone. And that's a very rare thing in the life of the Apostle Paul and it didn't last very long. He went there for a little R&R, a little rest, a little time to recuperate, a little relief from the persecution, but when in Athens was so moved when he saw the city given to idolatry that he went to the place in the city where you would be heard, to Mars Hill among the Athenian philosophers and there he told them who the true God was and the result was chapter 17 verse 34 that many believed and joined him. Two of them were named Dionysius and Damaris and he was no longer alone.

He was much more comfortable with accountability. He was much more comfortable in a relationship situation. He was much more comfortable when there was someone into whom he could pour his life, when there was someone with whom he could pray, when there was someone who could strengthen his hand. And so we find in the life of this man that he was ever and always surrounded by people who supported and cared and ministered alongside and who received in great proportion the love of this man and who gave back in equally great proportion their love to him.

Now this affection that Paul has for people oozes out of his epistles. And I don't want to belabor the point by reading all of the things that we could possibly read to prove that, but to suggest to you some reminders of it. In Philippians 1:7 he says, "Even as it is right for me to think this of you all," that is of the fact that the Lord would perfect in them what He began, "because...I love this phrase...I have you in my heart." And that was really true. He carried a long line of people in his heart, people for whom he unceasingly prayed. In Philippians chapter 4 verse 1 he says, "Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown." People were everything to Paul. They were everything in terms of this world.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, one of my favorite passages expressing the heart of one who really serves in the Lord's work, "We were gentle among you even as a nursing mother cherishes her

children," and there is nothing more tender, more gentle, more gracious than a nursing mother, nursing that little infant life. "And that's how we were with you being affectionately desirous of you we were willing to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only but our own souls because you were dear unto us." And he goes on to talk about the labor and the travail and laboring night and day because we wouldn't be chargeable to you, we preached to you the gospel of God. This goes on all the way down to verse 20 where he says, "You are our glory and our joy." People...an essential part in the life of this marvelous Apostle.

In Titus 3:15 he says, "All that are with me greet thee," and then this phrase, "greet them that love us in the faith." He had created a network of loving relationships.

Now the book of Acts gives us many of the names of these people who were a part of that intimate fellowship of laborers for Christ that surrounded the Apostle Paul. And had we time we could begin with the beginning of his ministry in chapter 13 in the four co-teachers and prophets who labored with him in Antioch. And we could march right on through to chapter 28 and just begin a cataloging of those people who were part of the love bond of the Apostle Paul who shared his life and ministry.

We could look at the end of 1 Corinthians, chapter 16, and we could find a list of them there. We could look at the last chapter of Colossians, chapter 4 verses 7 to 18, and find them there. We could look at the end of 2 Timothy chapter 4 verses 19 to 22 and hear again the heart of Paul expressed in love toward those for whom he had great affection. But nowhere, frankly, nowhere in all of the writings of the New Testament is there as rich and comprehensive and insightful a list of those who were part of his life as in the sixteenth chapter of Romans.

Now I'm certain that some names were left out. There were, no doubt, other folks who labored alongside Paul who were also now in Rome. But in spite of the fact that he might have left someone out, he nonetheless was compelled in his spirit by the Spirit of God and, no doubt, by his own affection to express personal cordiality and commendation to these who are named in this great sixteenth chapter. And he knows by identifying himself with them he is, in a sense, identifying with this church to which he has never gone and thus establishing a relationship which may serve him in the future.

So the chapter reveals his heart for those who served with him. And as I said to you last week, I think it really is the mark of someone effective in the service of God that they are not only beloved of the people who serve with them but that they love those people as well. And if I can be so bold as to press that home into my own heart and my own ministry, I would say to you that the richest and sweetest and highest joy and privilege in ministry that I've had in 17 years of ministry in this church is without question the relationships of those who labor alongside of me. They have enriched my life in ways that are inestimable to me. And I can only hope and pray that in some small way the love that they have bestowed upon me unceasingly has been given back to them.

Now Paul shares his affection by expressing...what we can do is just kind of draw them into four different categories: accommodation, cordiality, a caution and then a list of companions at the end. And this is not an easy chapter to outline with any great theological alacrity. It just sort of has to be divided up in a way that you can kind of hang your thoughts on some hooks.

So let's remember then that back in verses 1 and 2 he began with a commendation and he commended Phoebe, and he commended her basically for being a sister, a servant and a helper or patron or benefactor of the church. This dear woman was perhaps to the church something like Lydia was to the Philippian church, she had expressed a marvelous ministry to the church of patronage, perhaps in some great way supporting. She, I believe, was the bearer of the Roman epistle to Rome. She is given a very unique responsibility and they are instructed to receive her, assist her in the business she's involved in because that would be consistent since she is a sister in Christ, since she is such a faithful diakonos of the church at Cenchreae which would have been a daughter church of the Corinthian assembly and since she has been so much a helper of many, he says at the end of verse 2, and of myself also.

So we started with a commendation. Then there was his cordiality. And remember last week verse 3 through 16, or actually 15, is a long list of greeting. And we went through that list and we just had a marvelous time endeavoring to identify the wonderful truths that sort of appear in that list, an open display of loving affection for individual friends who stood alongside the Apostle Paul. It is an intimate thing, it is very transparent, it is warm hearted, it is affectionate, it is rich and it is so very human. It brings Paul down right to where we are as he pours out his affection to these who mean so very much to him.

Now that cordiality section comes to a conclusion in verse 16. Let's pick it up there where we left off. In summing up all of his love to these friends now residing in Rome, he calls on them for a very familiar duty to be expressed. He says in verse 16, "Greet one another with an holy kiss, the churches of Christ greet you." Greet one another with an holy kiss. This calls for a demonstration of physical affection and is an old custom in the east.

You can go all the way back into the New Testament...pardon me, you can go all the way back into the Old Testament period and you will find the commonness of this kind of kiss. It was common for people to kiss, it could be just an embrace, it could be a kiss on the cheek, it could be a kiss on the forehead. We find illustrations of a kiss on the hand. It was even common to kiss the beard. And even on a rare occasion to kiss the mouth. This as a sign of affection. There's nothing erotic in this kind of kiss, this was rather a sign of warm affection.

Now such kisses we find also were for relatives. They were also for people who were highly respected and honored. They were for friends and they were for rulers as well. Commonly also this

kind of kiss would be given at a greeting when people came together and also at a parting when they separated. And usually the exchange was between those of the same sex, though there is no reason to believe that it did not occasionally occur between those of the opposite sex. The New Testament church obviously picked up this form of salutation, this form of affection and used it. And that is why Paul encourages them to do it. He isn't inventing something new, he's just saying do it on my behalf, greet everybody with a holy kiss.

Its commonness is indicated by other texts. In 1 Corinthians 16:20 he says essentially the same thing. At the end of the Corinthian letter, "All the brethren greet you, greet you one another with an holy kiss." At the end of the second letter to the Corinthians, verse 12 of chapter 13, he says, "Greet one another with an holy kiss." First Thessalonians 5:26, "Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss on my behalf."

Now all of those passages, note that, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, and 1 Thessalonians, all feature the idea that the kiss is to be a holy kiss. That is to say again there's nothing erotic about it, there's nothing sexually stimulating about it. It is not that kind of kiss. That kind of kiss would be a perversion of the intent of this which is to be a holy kiss.

Peter adds for us another dimension that I think is important. In 1 Peter 5:14 Peter writes, "Greet you one another with a kiss of love...a kiss of love," agape. And so we have it as not only a holy kiss but we have it as a kiss of love.

In Acts chapter 20, I would draw your attention to a very beautiful passage where we find the use of such an expression, Acts chapter 20 verse 1, and we remember the story in chapter 19 at Ephesus, and after the uproar at Ephesus has ended in verse 1, Paul called to himself the disciples and embraced them. And here is an illustration of a holy kiss. He threw his arms around them in an affectionate physical gesture.

We find it again at the end of the same chapter as he is gathering the elders from Ephesus who have come a ways from the city to the coast at Miletus where he is stopped on his trip back to Jerusalem. And as he meets with them and instructs them in the wonderful truths of chapter 20, he tells them he is going to leave and he kneels down in verse 36 and they have a little time of prayer. And everybody cried a lot. They wept much and they fell on Paul's neck and kept on kissing him. And again we find in chapter 20 that the kiss that is a holy kiss in the first four Scriptures, that is a kiss of love in the one I gave you from Peter is now used in greeting, in greeting and parting. We find that it opens and closes this chapter as he expresses affection to the disciples as he parts and says goodbye to them.

In Luke chapter 7, just to fill up our thought, we find it explicitly used in the terms of greeting and also in the matter of respect and honor. Chapter 7 of Luke and maybe we ought to sort of look at verse 37, "Behold a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus was eating in the

Pharisee's house brought an alabaster box of ointments, stood at His feet behind Him weeping, began to wash His feet with tears and did wipe them with the hair of her head and kept on kissing his feet and anointed them with the ointment." Now here is a kiss of respect. Here we find that this kiss is used in terms of respect and honor to one who is deserving and in this case a kiss on the feet.

Now verse 39, "When the Pharisee who had bidden Him, who had invited Him to come, saw it, he spoke within himself, saying, This man if He were a prophet would have known who and what matter of woman this is that touches Him, for she's a sinner." He sure wouldn't let this sinful wicked woman do that. "And Jesus answering said to him, Simon," isn't it interesting how he answered his thoughts he didn't even speak? "I have somewhat to say to you," and he didn't know what He was going to say, and in a typical rather self-righteous manner, he said, "Master, say on. There was a certain creditor who had two debtors, the one owed him five hundred denarii, the other 50, and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him the most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said to him, Thou hast rightly judged. And He turned to the woman and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman, I entered into your house and you gave me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with tears and wiped them with the hair of her head, you gave me no kiss."

Now that's interesting. Simon in the normal course of his own hospitality should have given a kiss to Jesus. He said, "You didn't even do that, that is common courtesy, you didn't even wash My feet, that is common courtesy." And the thing that I want to draw out of this is this kiss of love, this holy kiss, this kiss that is used in Acts 20 of parting is a kiss that would be expected in a greeting situation as well as demonstrated by the woman and the tears, a kiss given in honor of someone who is being shown a great amount of love and respect. And so we learn from this look at a few texts that it is a common thing in the New Testament era. And apparently it continued in the early years of the church until fear of erotic perversion and fear of a misguided reputation and a misunderstood testimony pushed it aside through the centuries and eventually it was replaced in the formal church with a liturgical kiss. And it's sad, in a way, that this wonderful warm mark of affection has been lost, particularly to our culture.

It's very encouraging...I will never forget, and I've shared this with you in years past...coming back from my sabbatical and seeing one of our staff members in the patio, and I hadn't seen any of the staff members, he was the first one I saw, one of the pastors, and I went up to him and hadn't been here in three months and I put my arms around him and just hugged him and shared my love and the warmth of my heart in seeing him again. And later on it came back to me that he had told someone in all the years of ministry together that single gesture conveyed more to him than anything and everything composite that I had ever taught. It's amazing. It's sad that we have lost that. It's stimulating to genuine love, but it's been lost to much of the Christian church. And maybe we ought to sort of begin again. We could start with a warm handshake and maybe a time of touching someone with a holy affection. And so Paul says do that, let your love be demonstrated in a visible physical

tangible way. That means so much.

I remember...I remember a man who was in our church when I first came. And...to be very honest with you, he irritated me the first Sunday I was here because he introduced me to a group of people as this young guy who was going to come in here and try to tell us what to do. And it was a very offhanded...and I mean, I don't have very much dignity now, I had none then, and I needed all I could get. I even bought a dark suit for my first Sunday here, you know, so I could look the part. And when I was introduced in that way rather offhandedly, I felt...I felt a little badly about that...I confess. And the Lord had to deal with me about it. He was a very large man. He was a very large man, what can I say? One of those kind of men when you're wife hugs you, you've got to make chalk marks, you know, to work your way around kind of thing. So he was a large man. But anyway, I remember on one occasion...I remember on one occasion that he had gone through some distress. And I don't know what prompted me, I...maybe it was the Spirit of God, I'd like to believe that, but I went up to him and I felt a great amount of love in my heart for him, and I put my arm part way around him and I just embraced him gently. It literally turned things around. Later on he invited me to go to lunch with him and he shared his heart with me and...simple thing. And I don't mean to be dramatic and I don't mean to be mushy and sentimental, but I do believe there is an intent in what the Apostle Paul says that the kind of affection that is in some way communicated by a touch tends to break down barriers.

So Paul says do that. And that sort of draws all of his cordiality to a conclusion. And then he says the churches of Christ greet you. They all convey to you their affection. I mean, wouldn't it have been wonderful to be alive when there were no denominations? I mean, when you could say...all the churches greet you? There were no factions. There was just this great fellowship of love. Why? Well they had all basically been taught by the same person. I remember being with Jack Werkson(?) one time down in the...I think it was in St. Thomas in the Caribbean, Patricia was with me, and I said, "Well what are we doing tonight?"

He said, "Well we're going to have a city-wide rally out in the open air in the park." And he said, "We're going to have a great time."

And I said, "Wonderful, that's great." He was ready to preach and there was going to be music and...I was standing around while all these people were coming from everywhere. And I said to the man who was organizing it, I said, "Who are these people?"

He said, "Well, they're coming from 25 different denominations."

I said, "Twenty-five denominations...and they'll all come together in one place to hear Jack preach?"

He said, "Oh yeah."

I said, "Well what kind of denominations?"

"Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist..." I remember he talked about the Nazarene church and he went on and on with all these different groups.

And I said, "Well how in the world can all of these groups come together like this?"

He said, "Simple, Dr. McGee has been on the air for 25 years and they all believe the same thing."

In other words, they had all been sitting under the same teacher. Well, in a way, I guess, that was what it was like when the Apostle Paul was dispensing the revelation of God and there was a commonness and they had all been taught the same truth and they were all called to live the same holy standards and they all had the same emphasis and so you could actually say all the churches greet you. What a happy thought.

What a beautiful section it is to look at those first 16 verses and know that the unknown as well as the well-known and beloved saints that we look at in that chapter have a rich and intimate and resourceful fellowship with the Apostle Paul in his ministry. And I would venture to say without fear of contradiction that they enjoyed a friendship and a partnership and a camaraderie and an esprit de corps that could not possibly exist in the world apart from Jesus Christ. It is a bond that the world knows nothing about.

And surely we see in those 16 verses a little of what our Lord had in mind in John 13:34 and 35 when He said, "When you love one another, all men are going to know you're My disciples." Surely this is what Paul was calling for all the way back in chapter 12 of Romans in verses 9 and 10. You remember that. "Let love be without hypocrisy, be kindly affection to one another with brotherly love." Surely this is the fruit of the Spirit that Paul writes about in Galatians. It must be what was exemplified in the church at Ephesus in Ephesians 1:15 and the church of Colossae in Colossians 1:4 and 8. It must be what was exemplified by the Thessalonians who knew how to love so well they didn't need to be taught to love, 1 Thessalonians 4:9.

No, Paul and his friends in the terms of Colossians 2:2 knew what it was to be knit together in love. So the chapter is far from stone-cold dead history. It's a warm look at a living loving first-century church and a man in the middle who is a model for us all.

And love does come to commendation. Love commends and love does come to cordiality. Love is cordial and affectionate. But may I draw you to the third point in verse 17? Love is also drawn to caution. And in the middle of this expression of love it comes to the heart of the Apostle Paul to speak a word of caution because it is the nature of love to warn...it is the nature of love to warn. Love

at its very heart has zeal for the safety, prosperity, joy, and blessedness of its object.

That's not hard to understand, is it? All you have to do is translate that into your attitude toward your children, or toward your wife, or your husband or anyone you love. If you really love that person your greatest concern is for the safety of that person, the blessedness of that person, the prosperity of that person. And you will never see the love of Paul more clearly demonstrated, not even in his commendation, not even in his cordiality, then you will see it demonstrated in his caution. Why in Acts 20 does he say to the Ephesian elders that..."For the space of three years, night and day with tears I have warned you because I know that after my departure grievous wolves shall enter in, not sparing the flock, and of your own selves perverse men will arise..." why would he with tears for three years night and day warn them? That's the act of love. Love has a zeal that warns and cautions because its deepest affection is for the object.

And there's little doubt in my mind that he took his cue from his own Lord who repeatedly warned against false prophets, who repeatedly warned against false shepherds who had come in not sparing the flock...false Christs saying in the end time there will be those who say, "Here is Christ...and there is Christ..." and there will be a deception. Our Lord warns. And as you read the epistles of Paul there is warning all through those epistles.

I'm reminded of a great portion of 2 Corinthians but markedly chapter 11 verses 13 to 15 where he says, "Be aware of Satan coming in disguised as an angel of light and his ministers as angels of light." I'm reminded of Galatians 1 where Paul cries out to the Galatians with such extreme emotion that he skips the amenities at the beginning of the book and just cries out against those who are preaching a false gospel and curses them. And Paul calls on Timothy in 1 Timothy to set things in order in the church and correct the heresy that is leading people astray and damning their souls with an untrue message. In 2 Timothy he warns about the false teachers and false prophets in their lying teaching.

And so it is the nature of love to do that. Paul even writing to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 4 says, "Because you are my beloved children, I warn you...I warn you." And let's look at his warning in verse 17. "Now I beg you, I urge you, I beseech you, I plead with you out of my heart, brethren,..." this is a pleading, this is something he feels very deeply. The same heart attitude we saw in chapter 12 as he pleaded for commitment to the will of God, for separation from the world, for total dedication. And here the same pleading comes and his pleading here is to mark them who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you've learned and avoid them. To be aware of those who cause division and offenses contrary to the doctrine you have learned.

He identifies false teachers as those who teach false doctrine and create division. And that's what a false teacher does. He teaches something different than the truth and creates a division...brings schism, division, discord, conflict, stumbling blocks into the church. The divisions, the schisms, the

offenses would be the stumbling block, the skandalizo, the trap. And this is because they bring in another gospel. John Calvin said, quote: "Men are distracted from the unity of the truth when the truth of God is destroyed by doctrines of human invention." And false teachers inevitably come with human teaching, doctrines of human invention...sometimes very close to the truth, sometimes taking part of the truth and thus being very subtle. But they bring division and they bring offense, trapping people, causing them to stumble, and fracturing the purity of the church.

Love as proposed in the contemporary ecumenical movements of today is a far different kind of love than this kind of love. This kind of love warns against error. The kind of love we hear about today, which is sort of a sickly sentimentalism, wants to set doctrine aside in the name of so-called love. Any love that is destructive of truth, any love so-called that ignores truth, any love that is tolerant of error or propagates error has to be shunned, because that's not the essence of real love. All the talk about love and all the talk about unity among people that want to set truth aside is the work of false teachers, false prophets. They just want to cause division. They want to break up the church, and they're very successful at that. And we've talked a great deal about that so I don't want to belabor the point. You can go back to our message in Matthew 7:15 to 20 and listen to that again if you will and find there the character and the content and the effect of the false teachers, as our Lord outlined it.

But notice what he says, what do you do when you come across false teaching, what do you do when you come across heresy, divisive teaching? Do you debate with it? Do you discuss it? Do you dialogue? I have been in the last couple of years interestingly enough sort of besieged to go on the Phil Donahue program. Now personally I refuse to do that and I will continue to refuse to do that. They don't understand that. The lady says, "You don't understand, this is the Phil Donahue Show calling." And I say, "Yes, I understand that, this is the Phil Donahue Show calling and this is John MacArthur saying no." Basically. I mean, I don't dialogue with that. That's not a discussion for me to enter in. That's not my format. I would be happy to take his hour and preach if they would like to give me that opportunity. But I'm not in to dialogue with heresy and error. And I would not...I would not go on that kind of thing because I don't want to debate with that.

Now particularly in the church the Apostle Paul says, "Look, here's what you do when you come across it, you mark it and you avoid it." Pretty clear. "To mark it," simply skopeo, identify it, look through the scope, take a good look at it, observe it, scrutinize it, identify it, pick it out, see what it is. And if you know sound doctrine you'll be able to do that. Identify it as heresy, identify it as false teaching and then avoid it, or really in this case avoid them because false teaching always has a source a propagator. That means to come away from it, to shun it.

Now I want to remind you it doesn't say kill the false prophets. That was the disciples mentality in Matthew 13, wasn't it? Do you want us to go out and rip up the tares? Shall we go all in the world and do that? I mean, the Roman Catholic Church got into doing that, killing everybody that wasn't a Christian by their definition. No, we're not to kill and torture the people who don't believe, just avoid

them, move away. Nowhere are we told to stay around and argue with them. That's fruitless. We're told to shun them, go away from them.

Beloved, that's why I believe there's a very fine line in the study of the Word of God at advance levels...between a helpful understanding of error and an exposure to error that sucks the life blood out of a well-meaning person. And I have seen it happen to many well-intentioned theological students who find themselves so engulfed in dialogue with error that it destroys their usefulness. They come out of that with so many questions and so few answers that they really render themselves useless...to say nothing of their own anxiety.

What Paul is saying is stick with what you've learned and reinforce that. And listen, if education ought to be anything it ought to be the reinforcement of what you believe. I think it's silly to take a young person who believes in Christ with all their heart, send them off to a school that's going to attack that. What's the point? What have you gained? Stick with what you know to be true and increase it and enhance it. Love sounds this warning.

Especially is this true when we think about the fact that all of us are susceptible to being tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, as Ephesians 4:14 says, until we are built up and edified to a perfect man, to the fullness of the stature of Christ. So Paul says, "Look, scrutinize it, see it for what it is and get away from it...get away from it and stick with what you know is true, the doctrine which you have learned, stay with it."

I would hate to go down the chronicle of people I know in my own life who didn't stick with what they learned. They went off and over-exposed themselves to error and the story is really tragic.

And then he gives two reasons why these lying teachers are not worthy of your ears in verse 18. "For they that are such, who bring in divisions and who cause people to stumble and be offended with their lies, they that are such...number one...serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own body." Now I want you to understand that this is something that's repeated frequently in the Scripture. They are in it for self-gratification.

The other night someone was telling me, last night that there was a false teacher on the television and then someone interviewing him said, "What do you think of the people who criticize you for what you teach?" His response was, "Blaph!" That was his response. And this person said to me, "Why would he say that?" I said, "He's got what he wants, what does he care? He's got his money in the bank. He's got his satisfaction, self-gratification, fame, success, money, power, lust." All of those things mark the false teacher. They don't serve Christ, they don't serve you.

I mean, just take a look at their life style. Can I give you a quick look at it? Look at Philippians chapter 3 verse 18...Philippians 3:18, he talks about the enemies of Christ. And again it's very

similar, verse 17 he says, "Mark those out who don't walk the way they ought to walk, mark them out," just as we saw in our text. And then he says, "They're enemies of the cross," verse 18, then verse 19 he gives you a real insight into their motive, their intention, "Their end is destruction but their God is their belly." In other words, their God is their appetite. And they're all in to earthly things...gratification on the human level. That's what they're in to, money, fame, ego, success.

In fact, in 2 Timothy chapter 3, do you remember this? There are those who come in the end time who have a form of godliness but deny the power of it, here are more false teachers, he says turn away from them. Same instruction exactly. Don't hang around, get away...get away from these people. "For this sort are they who creep into the houses and lead captives silly women laden with sins, led away with various lusts." The intent of that, beloved, is that they have sexual desires on people. And if you were to do a little bit of searching in among false teachers you would find the perversion rampant. I mean, we have all just been exposed to just a person in that Rosh Nish(?) guy who is deviated beyond description and appears to be some mystical guru providing tranquility for those who follow his precepts when the truth of the matter is he's a whoremonger and someone who seeks nothing more than gratification and money. And that's typical.

Look at 2 Peter chapter 2. I want to just give you a feel for the fact that this is a rather sweeping denunciation of such that says in 2 Peter 2:1, "There were false prophets among the people and there shall be false teachers among you who secretly shall bring in destructive heresy, denying the Lord that bought them, bring upon themselves swift destruction. And then he'll follow their pernicious ways by reason of the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." Then verse 3, "Through covetousness." Now there you are, they're in there for covetousness. "And with feigned words, hypocrisy, they make merchandise of you." They just want to use you, that's all. You're just something to get, something to gain, something to possess. Verse 10, "They walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, they despise authority, they are presumptuous, self-willed. They're not even afraid to speak evil of dignities."

In other words, they speak against the supernatural power. They're ego-maniacal. Verse 14, "Their eyes are filled with adultery that cannot cease from sin." You want to know why? Listen, because only God in Christ dwelling in the heart of a believer can subdue lust and subdue greed. And they don't have that subduing power. And so their eyes are full of adultery. They can't cease from sin. They beguile unstable souls. They take their money. They take their purity. They have covetous practices. They're cursed children. In verse 19 they promise liberty but they're servants of corruption and they are overcome by that corruption in which they are bound in a bondage.

And Jude speaks basically to the same thing. "Woe unto them," verse 11, "they have gone the way of Cain, they ran greedily after the error of Balaam," that is they're in it for the money. "Perished in the gainsayings of Korah." And he calls them spots in the love feasts, clouds without water, trees whose fruit withered without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots, raging waves of the sea

foaming out their own shame, wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

I'll sum it up by saying this...no language in all of holy Scripture comes close to the judgment language God pronounces on false teachers. And just remember this, they may appear on the surface to be well meaning, they are not concerned at all with anything except their own gratification. They serve not the Lord Jesus Christ but their own body. They're not worthy of your attention.

You say, "But that's an interesting philosophy." Forget it. It doesn't even have that merit that should demand your attention.

I remember wanting to finish up my degree in a doctoral program and going to this particular graduate school and they told me I could finish in about a year or so...that I would need to read 200 books. I looked over the book list, I couldn't find one book that would have been biblically consistent...this was a liberal school. And I said to the registrar, I said, "You know, I already know what the truth is, I can't see spending the next two years learning error." And he said...I said, "I'm not going to come." And I just cancelled that. I really didn't want to expose myself to those who serve not the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Word of God to us.

Notice also, will you please, the second reason why we ought not to give them our ears in verse 18, you first of all must know that their motive is wrong, secondly, you must know that their effect is wrong. "They use good words and fair speeches and they will deceive the hearts...they will deceive the hearts of the innocent."

Good words, phrase means smooth speech. Oh they can talk...glib, clever. Well you know that, right? I mean, let's face it, the devil wouldn't put error in the mouth of a klutz if he wanted to get his point across, right? It's going to be smooth speech and fair speeches. That implies the word praise, eulogia, like eulogy. It's the idea of false eloquency, flattery, well chosen lies that sound good and appealing and they deceive the hearts of the innocent. So the false prophet comes clever, eloquent, polished, smooth-talking, praising, flattering. He gains the ear and deceives the heart...deceives the heart. And, beloved, that's why we have to test everything by what? By the book.

Innocent is the word akakos. Kakosis sort of a basic generic word for evil, aat the front negates that. They deceive the without evil, the as yet uncorrupted. They corrupt the uncorrupted. They're selfish and sensual and sexual and they deceive with cleverness those who aren't corrupt. And as Peter said they are in bondage to corruption and they lead their hearers into that corruption. They did it in Corinth. That church became entangled in that. They'll try it in Rome. And they're at it today.

So those are two negative reasons for avoiding them. They don't serve the Lord, they serve their own body. And secondly, with their fair speeches and their flattery they'll deceive the heart. Now those

are negative reasons.

There's a positive reason in verse 19. "For your obedience has come abroad unto all men. I'm glad, therefore, on your behalf." I'm so happy that your testimony is all over the world. Everybody knows about your faith. Everybody knows you've come to Christ. Everybody knows about you. "But yet I would have you wise unto that which is good and simple concerning evil."

Do you catch the intent of that? This is what he's saying. Your testimony is far reaching, your testimony for the grace of Christ has reached to all men. Your spiritual reputation is well known among the believers. That reminds me of chapter 1 verse 8, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." Everybody knows about you. Everybody knows what God's doing in your midst. And underlying that he's saying this to himself...if you fall...right?...it will be a severe tragedy because of your reputation. I'm glad. He says, I'm glad...I'm glad for your reputation. Godly obedience causes the heart of Paul to rejoice as it does to me or anyone. "But because of this I want you to be wise about what is good and simple about what is evil." And he's reiterating the same thing. Don't become an expert on lies and deceit and heresy, stay away from it. Don't get involved in it. Run from it. Be very wise.

The word sophos means intelligent, all wise, spiritually enlightened, divinely instructed, learned. And the greatest security we have against lies is to be wise, isn't it? To have the wisdom of the truth of God. That's why we want to do what Philippians 4:8 says, "Find what's true and lovely and pure and right and just and good and do...what?...think on it." Let that occupy our minds. That's why we want to let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly, Colossians 3:16. And that's why we want to set our affections on things above and not on things on the earth, as it says in the same chapter.

So Paul urges them, he says be very familiar with what is wisdom. Be very familiar with and knowledgeable regarding what is good...innately good. That beautiful word from which we get the name Agatha, innately good. Be good and be wise about what is good and know what is good. That's why we continually teach the Word of God. And be simple regarding what is evil. Be unlearned, be ignorant, be unsophisticated, be uninitiated.

There's no need for a personal knowledge of evil. There's no need for a personal knowledge of heresy. People say, "Well I want to understand how the other part of the world lives. I want to be informed." I hear people say, "Oh, I go to the movies because I have to sort of analyze culture." Oh man. You may go to the movies with a great intent to analyze culture, but you're going to lose your analyzing power when all the garbage comes running across the screen. It would be a little hard for you to be coldly analytical. Somebody said, "Practicing sin only makes you better at it." And if you apply yourself to it long enough it can find its way into your life, it dulls the acute sense of hatred of evil and cripple spiritual usefulness. Don't study false doctrine, don't study sin, don't study error, stick with the truth and godly obedience. It's the old story of the counterfeit, if you want to know a

counterfeit, just know what a true bill looks like and you'll know what a counterfeit is. Toser's old story, he said, "If you had 400 pianos, how do you tune them all equally?" He said if you try to tune every piano to another piano you're going to have a problem. If you get one tuning fork, tune them all to the one tuning fork, you've got it all made. And that's the way it is in life. If we know what the standard of truth is, everything else can come in to line with that truth.

And so he says, "Look, mark the ones that bring the divisions, scrutinize them based on your knowledge of the Word of God and get away from them." There are other passages that say if they're in your church...do what?...throw them out. After you've admonished them a couple of times, two or three, and they're heretics, get rid of them. And do that because you have to understand that...one, they don't serve the Lord Jesus Christ, but their ownelves and they'll just like wolves dressed up like prophets come to do nothing but devour you. And realize, two, that the intent of their hearts is to deceive the innocent. And realize also that if you fall prey to that kind of false teaching the tragedy of your reputation is...of your loss of reputation is going to speak evil against the Lord and His work.

And the last little part of this caution, he says, "And finally, hold on." Verse 20, just hang in there, folks, I know there's a constant onslaught of false teachers. Have you noticed that? I mean, they just come in waves, don't they? I can't even keep up with all of them. And he says hold on, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan who is behind all of them under your feet suddenly..." hold on, folks, because the moment of sudden speedy swift quick devastation of Satan is coming. And we can look forward to the day when the spiritual warfare is over. Are you ready for that? Oh, I'm ready for that. I'm going to go to heaven and rest. I'm not going to fight the false teachers, I'm not going to fight trying to hold the purity of the church, it's all going to be over. And all the false teachers spawned by Satan are going to be gone because the God of peace...here He is seen as the God of peace because He makes war against Satan and wins, and then there's eternal peace. He is called the God of peace at the end of chapter 15 also. But there is a little different intent, he's talking more there about the peace that we enjoy because of His provision. Here he's talking about the peace that he enjoys because of His victory and we enter into that peace. But the God of peace is going to end the war by bruising Satan...and there's an allusion to Genesis 3:15, by bruising the serpent's head. And at that time all division and discord and all lies and all sins that threaten the church as the work of Satan are going to be done away with and the battle waged will be over.

And I like the fact that it says "under your feet," and we're going to reign too, we're going to be in on the victory, I love that. In fact, when Jesus comes out of heaven, you know, in Revelation 19 and He's riding on a white horse, it says that all these armies in heaven are riding on white horses with Him, and that's us, folks. And we come down and He devastates and destroys in final judgment to set up His Kingdom and bind Satan. And so in a sense we reign with Him and Satan under His feet is Satan under our feet and that's really where he belongs and what a happy occasion it will be when that comes to pass, when all things are subdued, as 1 Corinthians 15:25 and 28 says, all things are subdued to Him.

But until then, the battle goes on. And we are engaged in a very acute spiritual warfare that demands all the best we have to offer. But isn't it wonderful that even in this warfare, 1 John 4:4 is true, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world?" So he says, "Look, my caution out of love is this, find those people who cause division in the church by their heresies and their lies and their deception. Mark them out and stay away from them. If they're in the church," he said to the Thessalonians, "throw them out, for they do not serve the Lord Jesus Christ but their own body and they will deceive you with their smooth talk. And the sad result will be that your wonderful reputation will be lost and Christ will be dishonored. Just hold on to the truth until the God of peace wins the ultimate victory, bruises Satan, puts him under His feet and under your feet and it will come fast." The word "shortly" doesn't mean in a little bit of time, it means suddenly. When it happens it will happen fast. And I believe he has in mind there the final full destruction of Satanic work and effort that comes in the setting up of the eternal state.

And then he gives a benediction. He's really in to benedictions. He gets a few of these in. He got one in at the end of chapter 15. He throws one in here. He'll give you another one in verse 24, and then a big one in verses 25 to 27, so there are three benedictions in a row here. And this one is a simple one, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." That's a prayer, that's a wish.

I know you need empowering grace. I know you need empowering grace to recognize false teaching. I know you need empowering grace to stay away from it. I know you need empowering grace to hold on in the battle until Christ defeats the enemy. And may that grace be with you. And "amen" means "so let it be...may it be...may it be."

So we see a commendation, cordiality and the caution of love. And then lastly, and just briefly, we see Paul's companions. Here's a little final wrap up of love. And I'm not going to take time with this. Here's his little group of people who are with him in Corinth as he writes this letter and he sends their love. This is on the other end of the line...personal greetings.

"Timothy, my fellow worker," my beloved child he calls him in writing to him, and he is his protege, his son in the faith, his number one disciple, his dear friend. He says I have no man who is like minded but Timothy, when he wrote to the Philippians in chapter 2 verses 19 to 22 which is the greatest commendation of Timothy in Scripture. Timothy loved Paul. Timothy stood by him. And you can read all through Paul's epistles about his affection for Timothy. First Corinthians 4:17, 1 Corinthians 16:10 and 11, as I said, Philippians 2:19 to 22, 1 Timothy 6, 2 Timothy 1, 2 Timothy 2, 2 Timothy 4, also I think 1 Thessalonians 3:2. Many places he shares his love for Timothy. Timothy was his fellow worker.

Then he says, "And another sends you love, Lucius." We can't be sure who it is. Let me give you two options. When Paul first started out his ministry in Antioch in Acts 13, one of the five men who

was leading the church at Antioch was Lucius of Cyrene. Maybe it's Lucius of Cyrene who is with him in Corinth who came to join him, a long time friend and fellow teacher from Antioch. That's possible. There's another option, that is it could be Luke, since Luke was with Paul at this time, chapter 20 where Luke writes, he uses the word "we" so he is including himself with Paul, so he's with Paul as he writes this letter to Rome. And maybe Lucius has to do with Luke, it's not far-fetched at all because in three places where Paul specifically names Luke, he always uses the word "Lucas" which is simply an equivalent to Lucius. Maybe it's Luke, the beloved physician and companion of Paul, and he sends his love as well.

And then there are...and that by the way, probably if...of course, Luke it would be a Gentile, and Lucius of Cyrene also a Gentile, if some other Lucius, could be Jew. But then he adds, "And Jason and Sosipater," and if Lucius is a Gentile then these two would be Jews because he says "Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen, greet you." Now we don't know who these men are specifically, other than just brief reference. In Acts 17 verses 5 to 9 Jason was Paul's host on his first visit to Thessalonica. Here was a man who gave hospitality to him and he was saved at that time. So no doubt because he was a convert of Paul there was a love bond there, and here was Jason with Paul...companion in his travel and ministry. Sosipater, also called Sopater, just shortening his name a bit, was from the town of Berea and was probably one of those noble Old Testament students who studied the Scripture. He was in Paul's group at this time as well and is mentioned in Acts chapter 20 verse 4.

Now the ministry of Timothy is clear. He served Paul in a wonderful way. The ministry of Jason was one of support, providing a home for him. The ministry of Sosipater, we don't know anything about. But they were his friends and they were part of his life and they demonstrate again that loving relationship he had with people. Verse 22, "I Tertius," and now Paul isn't speaking but this guy picks up the pen, in a sense, and speaks for himself, "who wrote this epistle," it doesn't mean he was the author, he was the secretary. Paul often used a secretary. You can note that in 1 Corinthians 16:21, Galatians 6:, Paul used a secretary to write. And here he's using a man named Tertius who throws in his one verse. "I Tertius, who write this epistle greet you in the Lord." He was Paul's amanuensis, or secretary. We don't know anything about him.

But everybody had a place. Timothy co-labored with him, Jason was there maybe for support, maybe he had money. Sosipater was there for whatever purpose God had for him. And here was this very special pen man who could write this wonderful Roman epistle. Wouldn't that be a thrill and a privilege to write the inspired Word of God? We don't know anything about him. But I love that fact that he greeted them in the Lord and it tells me he was not a hired gun, he was a believer.

Verse 23 wraps up the greeting, "Gaius, my host." In Acts 7...Acts 18:7 he is called Titus Justus, and was a noble free man, first seen in Corinth. It was said of him then that he worshiped God, he was a true seeker after the true God and...get this...he lived next door to the synagogue. And you remember, of course, that Paul reached him, he responded to Paul's preaching as a Gentile, he was

baptized by the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 1:14, he says I baptize Gaius, and so he was dear to him. He had led him to Christ. This man had provided again for Paul's ministry and now is with Paul supporting him. He is not only Paul's host, would you notice this, he's the host of the whole church. What do you think that means? The church met...where? Probably in his house. And he sends his love, too. This is a wonderful group, isn't it?

I always ask myself the question in a situation like this, is how did Paul get anything done because these people were probably asking him questions all the time. I know I go through that, but he must have had a way to sneak off when he needed time alone.

"Erastus, the treasurer of the city," now that's a coup, to have the treasurer of the city. And here was a man of prominence, the treasurer of the city. His name was a common one so we don't know what Erastus he was, probably not the same one mentioned in Acts 19:22 or 2 Timothy 4:20, but a city treasurer, a somewhat noble person who had come to Christ. There aren't many noble and there aren't many mighty, 1 Corinthians says, but here was one of some nobility. And we find some interesting things. By the way, the American School of Classical Studies in Athens discovered in 1929 on the sight of Corinth a marble paving block, and this is what it said on the block, "Erastus, commissioner for public works, laid this pavement at his own expense." Now the commissioner for public works is called Erastus and here the city treasurer or chamberlain is called Erastus. It may not be the same Erastus or it might be that he got a promotion or a demotion, I don't know which was the higher job. But it is a possibility, though perhaps remote. We really don't know who he is.

And then finally, "Quartus," all we know about him is he was...what?...he's a brother, unknown...unknown. And so he's surrounded with a beloved group of people, a camaraderie of men who share his life and serve...what a fellowship of love.

And then the benediction comes again in verse 24, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all...his heart is so filled with love. People, I believe this is just coming out of his emotion. He said it just two verses...four verses back in verse 20, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." He just has a heart of compassion for these people. What a loving loving man he was.

In conclusion let me say this. As I went through that chapter finishing my study, I then went back through it several times and I tried to draw out of that chapter the characteristics of the early church. And I'm going to give those to you as an introduction next week. They come through the lines of this chapter and they are a beautiful description of the nature of the early church. We'll look at that next time and then we'll sign off the book of Romans. That's next Sunday night. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we've had a wonderful evening. I thank You for the graciousness of Your Spirit, the wonder of Your Word, and I thank You for the goodness of this people who allow me the privilege of taking the time to teach the Word of God. I thank You for their open and eager hearts, for the joyous reception the Word receives and I thank you for their faithfulness. And, Lord, I pray that You'll reward their faithful diligent study, their openness to Your truth. And, Lord, we live in such a fast world that sometimes to come apart for an hour and hear the Word of God seems a task beyond our ability. Lord, help us...help us who are distracted hour upon hour to know what it is to give whole-hearted attention and the commitment of obedience to what we learn in the times of study. And I thank You, God, that through the years You have given us people with that commitment to Your praise. And thank You for the love of the Apostle which we have seen again tonight and for what an example he is to us of how it is that we too should labor in Your Kingdom alongside others in the faith, expressing and sharing the fullness of love that ministry might be joyous and productive. And we praise You in Christ's name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).