

**Not Ashamed**  
**(Conclusion: Week 39)**  
**Romans 16:17-27**  
**“Words To Live By”**

**Introduction**

***The report of your obedience has reached everyone. Therefore, I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise about what is good, and yet innocent about what is evil.***

**Romans 16:19**

In Paul's final words to the church at Rome, he sends them greetings from the ministry delegation that was to accompany him to Jerusalem. In **Chapter Sixteen of Romans**, we see thirty five names listed; twenty-six who had served with Paul previously and were now serving in Rome, and nine who were assembled with Paul at Corinth. The distinguishing characteristic of a good leader can be seen in the company who chooses to follow them. By this long list of exemplary servants, we see that Paul was indeed a good leader.

It is interesting to note, that in the midst of Paul's final words to the Romans, there is a short note from Tertius, Paul's personal assistant, who actually transcribed this letter for Paul. By this time in his life, Paul's eyesight was very poor, and he had to have help when writing to the churches. But even his disabilities could not diminish his zeal for ministry. People offer up all manner of excuses as to why they cannot serve in Christ's kingdom, but Paul was certainly not one to make such excuses. He was a man who served faithfully right up until his final breath. His faithfulness is an example for all of us to follow. No matter what, as long as we have breath in us, we can serve our LORD in some manner. There are things that may slow us down, but nothing can stop us, for God is WITH US. The Corinthian Church was all too familiar with Paul's physical impairments. They had seen them first hand, when he was with them, and later, they would be reminded of them once again when he wrote 2 Corinthians.

***...Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so that I would not exalt myself. Concerning this, I pleaded with The LORD three times that it would leave me. But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.”***

**2 Corinthians 12:7b-9**

As we read the Apostle's final word to the church in Rome, we get a sense that the old missionary was reluctant for his letter to come to a conclusion. It's a pretty tough thing for any preacher, to wrap up his sermon. One always feels like there is so much more to be said. But some things have to be left for another day. Before his final doxology, Paul offers one last word of warning to the young church in Rome. Beware of false teachers and false doctrine. For these are the very things that Satan uses to tear down the work that grace has begun.

Paul admonished the church to stay with the truths that they had been taught and not to let anyone pull them off course. He was all too familiar with those who seemed to exist for the sole purpose of undoing all that he had done, and he certainly did not want these wicked men to tarnish what was happening in Rome. It is a warning that we would all do well to heed, even in these modern times. There are so many out there, who love to twist the Scriptures in order to serve their own ends. We are not to tolerate them for a moment.

As we have studied this wonderful epistle together over the last several weeks, I too, like Paul, am a bit remiss to see it coming to a conclusion. The book of *Romans* is a treasure of doctrine that every Believer should cherish. But all good things must end, so in this final message I would like to share with you now three last points from **Romans 16:17-27**: *Reject False Doctrine, Remain in Faithful Devotion, and Rise for The Doxology*. These final thoughts, I Believe, are wonderful words for The Church to live by. Please allow me to explain.

**Reject False Doctrine (vs. 17-18)**

**Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who create divisions and obstacles contrary to the teaching that you learned. Avoid them, because such people do not serve our LORD Christ but their own appetites. They deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting with smooth talk and flattering words. Romans 16:17-18**

Paul was all too familiar with false prophets. He was forced to endure them throughout the whole of his ministry. From the “Judaizers”, who taught that Gentiles must first convert to Judaism in order to be saved, to the Gnostics, who preached that indulgence in all manners of immorality was actually good for a person’s soul, Paul had seen it all. I once heard an old pastor say, “For every preacher that God calls, the devil calls ten false prophets.” I do not know if this is a true statistic, but it does quite often seem to be the case. False doctrine is just as rampant in our generation as it was in Paul’s. Maybe even more so.

Paul warned the church at Rome to be on guard for false teachers and false teaching. The words that he uses are quite telling. First he says that these intruders created “*division*”. The word in the Greek is “*dichostasia*” (pronounced *dee-khos-tas-ee'-ah*) and means *dissension or sedition*. In other words, the message of a false prophet is designed to “pull people away” from the flock; to lead them astray, as it were. It is interesting to note that many of the cults that operate in our society today are much like predators (ie. lions and wolves), that look for the weakest members of a herd to separate it from the rest in order to devour it. Their target audiences are members of the church, who do not really have a firm grasp upon what they believe.

Many times, I have had members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses cult show up at my doorstep only to leave as quickly as they possibly can when they find out that I am a pastor. Let’s just say that if you have a firm grasp on the Scriptures, then you’re not the type that they are looking to seduce with their false teaching. This is why it is imperative that every believer know what they believe, and it is likewise imperative for The Church to instruct its members in sound doctrine. If you are not getting sound Biblical teaching from the pulpit in your church, then mark my words, your pastor will have to answer for it when he stands before The Judgment Seat of Christ. I for one take this charge very seriously, and therefore, will do my very best to see to it that The Word of God is taught here with clarity and without compromise. For people’s lives depend on it.

The second word that Paul uses, translated “*obstacles*” is very interesting. The word is “*skandalon*” (pronounced *skan'-dal-on*), and it is the word from which we derive our English word *scandal*. In the Greek, this word is used to describe a “*trap-stick*” that was used to bait an animal into a trap. The bait was placed on a stick, and when the animal tried to get to it, the trap would spring, and the animal would become ensnared. False teachers promise us wonderful things that appeal to our sensuality. To “bait” us, as it were, and when we try and seize the bait, we are deceived and become ensnared by false doctrine. Many will readily accept that which is false in order to gratify their own fleshly desires. It is the same concept that Paul warned his young protege Timothy about.

**Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own DESIRES, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR. They will turn away from truth and will turn aside to myths.**

**2 Timothy 4:2-4 (emphasis added)**

The false prophet does not operate in the spiritual, but rather, the sensual. They teach what they teach, not for the glory of God, but for personal gain. This is why Paul says they “serve their own appetites (literally “bellies”). You can always spot a false teacher by his motives. They will pretend to advance the kingdom, when in reality they are merely advancing themselves. This is why so many

televangelists live in multimillion dollar homes, while those who are sending them money are living on a pension. Beware, the silver-tongued preacher who lives like a king off the widows mite. One day they will be exposed for exactly who, or should I say, what they are. Wolves in (very expensive) sheep's clothing.

**Remain in Faithful Devotion (vs. 19-20)**

***The report of your obedience has reached everyone. Therefore I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise about what is good, and yet innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our LORD Jesus be with you.*** **Romans 16:19-20**

Paul wanted the church at Rome to know that they were becoming known throughout the churches for their faithful obedience to The LORD'S commands. But he also knew the full measure of corruption in the city in which they lived. He wanted them to stay the course and not to be pulled aside by the immorality of Rome. The city was wicked beyond the wildest imagination in as many ways as could be counted. Sexual deviance was commonplace, much like in America today. The culture in Rome embraced pretty much everything that would be considered evil in the eyes of The LORD. Paul wanted the church to be on its guard, to be committed to its faithful devotion to Christ, that had caused them to be commended and exemplary among the Gentile churches.

Sin in *The Bible* has often been compared to yeast. For just as a touch of leaven can affect a large amount of dough, a touch of sin can corrupt a congregation. For sin, like yeast, doesn't stay small and isolated for long, it spreads until every part has been affected by it. Paul admonished the Romans to be "wise about what is good", meaning they should keep themselves in the study of the righteousness that is found in God's Word. And he also instructed them to be "innocent about what is evil", which meant that they were to keep themselves from sin. One does not become more holy by studying and exploring that which is evil, one is made holy by avoiding sin altogether. The Gnostics taught that by embracing all types of sin in your flesh, one could achieve a better understanding of the purity of one's "spiritual side". This is a ridiculous teaching and should be exposed for the fraudulent tool of the devil that it is.

Though we don't have many practicing "gnostics" in our world today, we do have many within the church that seem to have little issue with compromising themselves by opening up their minds to the sinfulness of this world. Just this week, I was shocked to learn of the lyrics to a particular song that is currently popular in our culture. The words were so vile that I was embarrassed even as I read them alone in private. I cannot begin to imagine what kind of mind would enjoy listening to this song in mixed company! And yet, sadly it seems that many who claim to know Christ have no problem whatsoever with this type of filth. And we wonder why America is in decline. The devil is everywhere friends. And we would be wise to always be aware of his schemes.

***Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world. The God of grace, Who called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while.*** **1 Peter 5:8-10**

Simply put, trials and temptations may come, but stand firm in your faithful devotion to Christ, and God will see to it that you finish well. Or as Paul says:

***The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.*** **Romans 16:20a**

**Rise for The Doxology (vs. 25-27)**

One of the few things I miss, from my (brief) tenure as a Methodist, is the way that we used to close out every service with “The Doxology”.

“Praise God from Whom all blessings flow  
Praise Him all creatures here below  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host  
Praise Father, Son and holy Ghost. Amen”

A doxology, simply put, is a statement (or song) of faith and praise to God for what He has done. Paul closes out his letter to the Romans with his own “doxology”, praising God for His wonderful redemptive plan to save the Gentiles from sin. Paul refers to the foreordained plan of God in many of his writing as “the great mystery”, that God had always intended to send The Redeemer not only for His chosen people the Jews, but to the Gentiles as well. The end result of which was to unite us all as one in the Body of Christ. The prophets had spoken of this many times, but somehow the reality of it had been overlooked by the Jewish religious elite. God, in His mercy and grace, reached out to save a people that many thought to be beyond hope of redemption. And it is for this grace that He is worthy of our praise. So, we should always be mindful to give thanks to God from Whom all blessings flow!

I love how Paul closes with the statement that God is “able to strengthen you”. The word he uses for strengthen is “*Sterizo*” (pronounced *stay-rid’-zo*) and *The KJV* translates it as “*stablish*”. The word basically means *to stand firm or to set fast*. Paul uses this term to begin his letter, as well as, to close it out. In the *First Chapter*, he tells them:

***For I want very much to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen (sterizo) you...*** ***Romans 1:11***

Now, here at the close of his letter, he reminds them that the God Who called them to faith is also perfectly capable of keeping them steadfast in that faith. And he would do so whether Paul ever made it to Rome or not. You see, it is God Who saves us, and it is also God Who keeps us! What a wondrous truth for which we should be ever mindful to give Him the praise that He deserves. The God Who saved me is the same God Who will keep me saved. This beautiful doxology should be often repeated in the church! It is a reminder of what He has done, and is **doing**, for us.

I cannot help but think that when this letter was read aloud to the church in Rome (as was the custom in those days), when they came to this closing doxology, all the people stood together and gave praise to the One and Only wise God from Whom all blessings flow. We were lost and beyond hope. No one thought we were worth saving, and yet, while we were still sinners... Christ died for US!! (***Romans 5:8***). So, as we close out the service today and conclude our study of *Romans*, I would like for everyone to please stand together with me as we read aloud Paul’s doxology:

***Now to Him Who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation about Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept silent for long ages but now revealed and made known through the prophetic Scriptures, according to the command of the eternal God to advance the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles — to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ — to Him be the glory forever.*** ***Romans 16:25-27***

And let all His chosen ones say... AMEN!!!