

Sermon Notes

Romans 16:17-19
 "Dissension & Obedience"
 A Sermon Series on Romans
 June 9, 2019

Introduction

- 1) Does Romans 16:17-19 sound strange to you?
- 2) This talk about keeping an eye on dissenters and false teachers?
 And that the church should shun heretics?
 - a) Do you find this troubling? Inconsistent with what the Apostle Paul taught in Romans?
 - b) Didn't Paul write . . .
 - i) *"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* – Rom 8:1
 - ii) *"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor . . . Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."*
 – Rom 12:10,14-18
- 3) If you find Rom 16:17-19 contradictory with the rest of Romans you are gravely mistaken.
 - a) We are not freed by the blood of Christ, and enjoy the sweet fellowship of His church, to believe and do anything we want.
 - b) Our redemption in Christ regenerates and sanctifies the whole being, especially the mind.

Luke 10:27; 1Cor 14:19; Eph 4:23
 Phil 4:7; Heb 8:10; 10:16; 1Pet 1:13

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." – Rom 12:2
- 4) There is no contradiction whatsoever between Rom 16:17-19 and those Gospel/charity verses.
 - a) If fact, they fundamentally go together.
 - b) If there is no Rom 16:17-19 then there is no Rom 8:1 & 12:10-18!
- 5) Let us look at these verses carefully.

Romans 16:17-18

- 1) The people a church should be wary of are two groups:
 - a) Those who cause "dissensions" and those who cause "hindrances."
 - b) He is **not** talking about those who are wrestling with the faith, have honest questions (even Peter admits some of Paul's teaching is hard to understand), or have a simplistic/weak/new faith.

Is 42:3; 2Pet 3:15-16;
 Matt 17:20; 18:10;
 Acts 8:30-31; 17:11
 - c) Those who intentionally causing dissensions and factions are never tolerated by any organization or group.

Gal 5:20
 - d) Likewise, those who causing "hindrances" (literally, a "*skándalon*", the trigger on a trap on which the bait is place)

- i) The Bible usually translates this as “stumbling block” or “snare.”
 - ii) See: Lev 19:14.; Josh 23:13; 1Sam 18:21; Matt 13:41; 16:23; 18:7; Luke 17:1; Rom 9:33; 11:9; 14:13; 16:7; 1Cor 1:23; Gal 5:11; 1Pet 2:8; 1John 2:10; Rev 2:14
 - e) So these people we are to watch out for are those trying to cause dissension and division in the body and/or stumbling blocks to those trying to believe and follow in Christ.
- 2) But how do we know the difference between a godly stumbling block and being a sinful schismatic (causing division for evil reasons) or heretic (false teacher)?
- a) To bring dissension and stumbling blocks to the wicked is a good thing!
 - i) To bring dissension by bringing to light that a popular pastor is stealing from the church is a good thing.
 - ii) The Gospel itself is called a “stumbling block!” 1Cor 1:23; Gal 5:11
 - b) The answer certainly isn't based on desire for comfort, ease, or to avoid conflict!
 - i) Nor is it based on our ego, because we like to be the center of attention or to cause trouble.
 - ii) The focus has to be on God: His agenda and by His standards.
 - c) Paul teaches this directly in v.17b – “*contrary to the teaching which you learned*”.
 - i) We are not "just following Jesus", by which is commonly meant "a minimal set of feelings and social actions I choose based on my opinion and current cultural trends that I mask with a few misquotes of the words of Jesus I personally like."
 - ii) This is submitting to all of Scripture teaches while rightly understanding the relation of the Old and New Covenant and the Law and the Gospel.
- 3) So the standard is biblical doctrine.
- a) Those against the clear, core, teaching of Scripture should be noted by the church.
 - i) This includes those who publically and grossly violate the fundamental laws of God. (Such as the first nine of the Ten Commandments.¹)
 - ii) Or those who overtly reject the core teachings of Scripture and especially proclaim/teach their heresies (i.e. false teachings).
 - b) But what is core and what is not?
 - i) Again, to ask questions and to wrestle with the faith should be encouraged!
 - ii) We are talking about causing dissensions and hindrances to the faith.
 - iii) Core issues revolve around three core parts of doctrine:
 - The historic doctrines about God. (Trinity, Hypostatic Union – Christ is fully God, fully man, without sin, etc.)
 - The authority of Scripture
 - The Gospel

¹ Why nine and not ten? The first nine are policeable (Ex 20:3-17; Deut 5:7-21). For example, the Sixth Commandment doesn't state "you shall not be angry" but "you shall not murder." Murder is quite policeable, and while anger is still a sin and brings God's judgment, it would be impossible to arrest/excommunicate everyone who has gotten very angry. The Tenth Commandment ("You shall not covet") is the only "internal" command because coveting is the foundation of all the other sins, such as coveting another man's life, wife, money or good name; thus murder, adultery, stealing and slander are forbidden. So coveting is a deadly sin, but it is expressed in rebelling against the first nine Commandments, which are policed by society and the church.

- iv) Our Statement of Faith does an okay job briefly listing these core doctrines.
- v) That last one (the Gospel) is why Rom 16:17-18 fundamentally goes with such wonderful texts as Rom 8:1 & 12:10-18.
- vi) If one rejects such core doctrines as sin (Rom 1:18-3:20), justification by faith alone (Rom 3:21-4:25), Gospel based sanctification, (Rom 5:1-8:39) then there is only condemnation for us (Rom 8:1) and no brotherly love (Rom 12:10-18). We are not brothers and sisters because we have no heavenly Father, since Christ's blood doesn't cover us.

4) Note what type of evil men and women these are.

Rom 16:18

- a) They are "slaves" to their "own appetites".
 - i) It's about their agenda based on their opinions, emotions and experiences.
 - ii) Ex: If you reject the biblical teaching that there should be church discipline for lawlessness and heresy (false teaching), you are a slave to your appetites.
 - iii) Because you are following after the world and that core (false) teaching of secularism & theological liberalism: The final authority is the autonomous self.
 - iv) These people hate the idea that there are standards, especially in two areas the modern world wants us to ignore: sexual sin & false teaching.
 - v) Of course this is crass hypocrisy.
 - If the pastor stole money from them they would be the first to complain. (As they should!)
 - Or if the church acted in a racist fashion (which our world knows is a sin), they would demand discipline. (As they should!)
 - However, if your complaints are based on your agenda and not God's, you are a slave to your own appetite.
- b) Fundamentally, these people have rejected the lordship of Christ, as Paul writes, "*For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ*" – Rom 16:18a
- c) But be careful, such false teachers and prophets can look and sound so nice.
 - i) "*By their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.*" – Rom 16:18b
 - ii) "*For even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*" – 2Cor 11:14b
 - iii) So a pastor who is a really, really nice guy, who is very sweet and kind to you, and is very handsome and smart, but doesn't teach you the core doctrines as found in Romans, is a servant of Satan and should be defrocked and excommunicated.

James 3:1
1John 4:1-3
- d) Such people, unless they repent, should be shunned by the church.

5) If the Gospel is the power of God and the very heart of the Christian faith, then false teaching about the Gospel is one of the most dangerous things!

Rom 1:15-17

- a) Notice how Paul is so patient with the Corinthians and all their moral shortcomings, but in Galatia he has zero tolerance for those twisting the doctrine of justification.

- b) Notice that concern about false teaching is a major theme found throughout the Bible.²
- c) The person who is the harshest about false teaching is the Lord Jesus Himself.
- i) *"For false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders (i.e. Biblical doctrine trumps false miracles!), in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance."* – Mark 13:22-23
 - ii) *"Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks ("skándalon") come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes! If your hand or your foot (i.e. our worldly habits & ideas) causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell. See that you do not despise one of these little ones (i.e. the faithful), for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven."* – Mt 18:7-10
 - iii) *"He said to His disciples, 'It is inevitable that stumbling blocks ("skándalon") come, but woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble. Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents (There is always repentance! But the wicked hate such an idea.), forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him.' (Oh the mercy of the Gospel!) The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!' (The law should cause all to repent and constantly turn to Christ, which is Paul's main point in Romans!)"* – Luke 17:1-5

Conclusion – Romans 16:19

- 1) The "harsh" Rom 16:16-18 fundamentally goes with such Gospel and charitable passages as Rom 8:1 & 12:10-18. Don't just read Rom 12:10, but also read Rom 12:9!
- 2) It's encouraging, however, that Paul has praise for the church in Rome.
 - a) They are known for being obedient. Rom 16:19
 - b) They are one of those "Bible believing churches!"
 - c) Let us pray that we here at SCC be known also.
- 3) We do this by being "wise in what is good", i.e. to know the Scriptures and by rightly understanding the relationship between God's Law and Christ's Gospel and applying it.
- 4) We are also called to be "innocent in what is evil."
 - a) "Innocent" (*akéraiōs*) is to be "without mixture" and/or to "have undefiled material."
 - b) This goes for our actions, our thinking and the doctrines we believe in.
- 5) But what a blessing it is that the battle is the Lord's, and that we are called to simply remain faithful, and this too is solely by God's grace.
- 6) As Paul declares to the Romans, to us, and to all the churches, *"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."* – Rom 16:20

² To cite a few verses: Lev 4:13; Ps 5:6; 52:3; 62:4; 119:163; Deut 13:1-3; Is 9:17; 29:13; 32:6; Jer 5:31; 14:14; 23:25-32; 18:5-10; 27:9,16-22; 28:1-9; 29:8; Ezek 13:1-23; 22:28; Hab 2:18; Zech 10:2; Matt 7:15; 12:34; 22:29; 24:11,24; Mark 7:8-13; 13:22; Luke 6:26; John 20:9; Acts 13:6; 15:24; 20:29-30; 2Cor 11:13,26; Gal 1:6-7; 2:4; 5:10-12; 6:12-17; Eph 4:13; Phil 1:15; 3:2-4:1; Col 2:8,23; 1Tim 1:3-13; 4:1-3,6; 6:3,20-21; 2Tim 3:13-4:5; Titus 1:9-2:2; 2Pet 2:1; 1John 2:18; 4:1-6; Rev 2:2,6,20; 13:14; 16:13; 19:20; 20:10.