

Romans 16:1~20

Paul closes out by giving a list of several names of people he had formed relationships with over the course of his ministry to the Gentiles. People who had been a tremendous help and blessing to him. People he'll never forget, people who truly love the Lord, devoted to the cause and work of the gospel.

- Always willing to help...
- Always wanting to serve...
- Doing what ever needs to be done...
- Always encouraging, supporting in the work of the gospel...

People you would describe with the word... **BLESSING**...

Looking back over the past 16 years of my service to the Lord, I too can name several such people. People that have made a tremendous impact on my life, by their love and devotion to the Lord. People that have been a great source of inspiration to me...

³*I thank my God upon every remembrance of you...* (Ph. 1) It has only been in the recent years that I have really come to understand what Paul meant by that. The thoughts of such people are the only thing that keeps you going at times. There's been times of great discouragement, when the only thing to keep me going, is to "think" about such people. ³*I thank my God upon every remembrance of you...*

Well here in this section, Paul writes to the church in Rome, giving them a list of people in and the surrounding regions of Rome that the church should welcome with open arms! People, who have proven themselves true and faithful, people worthy of all acceptance. In verse 16, Paul says to receive these folks with a "holy kiss." The "holy kiss" was very common in the early church; it was **a mark of full acceptance**. It is an expression of great affection, a full embracing of the other. What a beautiful scene this must have been in the church between Jew and Gentile, who before Christ were enemies, but in Christ, are brothers.

After naming those worthy of "**All Acceptance**," Paul names those who they need to "**Avoid**."

¹⁷*Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark them** which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; **and avoid them**.* ¹⁸*For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*

Here Paul warns us, there are some you need to "**Avoid**," there are those you need to "**stay away**" from...
...**mark them**... ΣΚΟΠΕΟ | carries the idea of being a "skeptical", be *skeptical* of them...

The word carries the idea of *concealment*; a watch (to scout) ΣΚΟΠΕΟ / (**keep your eye on**) it carries the idea of looking at with intensity. ΣΚΟΠΕΟ / is from the noun form of that word that we get the *scope* in telescope and microscope. It means more than simply to look at, but to examine and scrutinize carefully.

The way verse 18 is written, suggest that the ones Paul is speaking of, profess to be followers of Christ. But as Paul points out, they reveal they are not, in that "*their ways*" bring about animosity and division between the brethren. The teaching of Christ is that of grace, acceptance of one another, love to one another. Paul says, "*Keep your eye on them, and watch out for them... Not everyone who professes to be a child of God... IS!*"

Paul warns, "*Watch out! These guys are troublemakers... And don't be fooled by their smooth talking...*"
(Vs 18b) Paul says, ...**by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple**...

They talk a good talk...they speak good things, speaking of righteousness, godliness and such...but they are far from godly. These men have the appearance of great sincerity, and regard for and the love of

truth...but their actions reveal, they are *self-righteous, prideful men*, who know not the Lord Jesus Christ and his ways.

(Vs 18b) Paul says, ...*by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*...

“Simple” carries the meaning of “innocent,” the “unsuspecting.” In other words, if you’re the type that thinks everyone is good, if you have the idea that everyone who carries a bible and attends church, and confesses the name of Jesus is a born again child of God...than you easy prey for these men!

(Vs 19) So “*wise up...*” ¹⁹*For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.*

Paul’s warning was the same warning that Jesus gave to his disciples in Matthew 10, when he was preparing to send them out to preach his message.

¹⁶*Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

Be wise to deception! Be smarter than them; don’t let their schemes fool you. Those guys are slick (*serpent*), but you need to be slicker, in the sense of being able to see right through their deception. But at the same time, not deceptive! You must remain innocent and true...harmless as doves.

Paul says...Be wise to this...and don’t be fooled by these men! Mark them and avoid them! Do not give them place in the church! These guys are dangerous! They profess to be followers of Christ...but they are not! They walk not after the “*will of God*”...but “*their own will.*”

(Vs 18a) ¹⁸*For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly...*

They walk not after the “*will of God*”...but “*their own will.*” They are “*earthly, carnal minded people*” who think they are very “*spiritual!*” I guess in one sense, they are full of the spirit; it’s just not the spirit of Christ, but the “*spirit of self!*”

Paul uses the “*belly*” as a metaphor referring to the “*desires of the flesh,*” speaking of “*their own desires.*” They walk not in the “*Spirit of Christ,*” (the “*Spirit of love*) but rather they walk in the “*flesh.*” They are “*carnal,*” *self-righteous* men who walk not in the ways of Christ, that of showing love, mercy and acceptance, but rather, they walk in a “*spirit of condemnation, and judgment.*”

To fully understand what Paul is talking about here, we must go back to the beginning in chapter 12... The Church is to walk in LOVE...

12:1~2... Show love for God, by living your life for Him...

12:3~16... Show love for one another...the “*body of Christ.*”

12:17~21...Love your enemy...

13:1~7... Show love and respect to those in authority “*over you.*”

13:8~10... Love is the fulfilling of the Law... (Love is the obedience God desires...)

Not obedience to the Law...Paul refers that as “*works of darkness...*”

13:11~14...Cast off the “*Works of darkness...*” (*Reference to righteousness by the deeds of the Law*)

¹⁴But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.

Paul exhorts them to turn from the “works of the Law,” to walk in love towards one another! No longer walking in the power of self, but in the power of Christ!

Chapter 14~15... Paul describes the “works of the flesh”... condemnation and judgment of brother...

Contrasted with the “works of the spirit of Christ,” (**Chirstlikeness**)...manifested in the acceptance of one another, loving one another, bearing the infirmities of one another just as Christ bore out infirmities.

(Ch. 15) ¹We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ²Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. ³For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. ⁴For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. ⁵Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus; ⁶That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

Christ himself has shown us what God is really like, what godliness is... It is the way of love... Christ loved sinners...he reached out to them in love, not in judgment and condemnation! He came not to destroy, but to save! Every one of us, fall miserably short of being righteous. If God were to judge us, and condemn us... *who would stand?* But Christ in is great love, loves us and accepts us, even with our infirmities. None of us have the right to judge another, none of us have the right to condemn another...we're all just a bunch of sinners, who have found grace and love in the sight of God, through His son.

¹⁷Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark them** which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; **and avoid them.** ¹⁸For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but **their own belly;** and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

Beware of those who walk in a “spirit of condemnation and judgment...for they reveal they are not walking in the ways of our Lord Jesus Christ...but rather walk in the flesh, they live to the carnal desires of the flesh. They walk with the mindset that they are righteous before God by their so-called “goodness.” Manifesting they are blind and yet *dead in their sin!*

The “truly spiritual man” is the man who understands his sinful condition, his depravity, and the grace of God, and is humbled by it. He realizes he is in no position to judge or condemn, for he to is as guilty before God as any man! But he is grateful for God’s acceptance and mercy towards him, and manifest that gratitude, by showing that same grace towards others as Christ has shown to them!