

- I. Introduction (1:1-17)
- II. Credenda: "The Righteous by Faith" Shall Live (1:18-11:36)
- III. Agenda: The Righteous "Shall Live by Faith" (12-15:13)
- IV. Conclusion (15:14-16:27)
 - A. Paul's priestly labor as a Minister of Christ (15:14-21)
 - B. Paul's desire and plans to visit Rome (15:22-33)
 - C. Commendations and Greetings (16:1-16)
 - D. Avoid those who cause divisions (16:17-20)
 - E. Soli Deo Gloria (16:21-27)

Dealing with Deceivers

Romans, Part LXIX

Romans 16:17-20

Stuart W. Bryan

I. Savage Wolves Will Come In (Acts 20:29-31)

Paul persistently faced the problem of false teachers. On his way to Jerusalem, during the same trip he wrote Romans, he warned the elders in Ephesus:

²⁹For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

³¹Therefore watch... (Acts 20:29-31a)

Hence, we must be alert and aware. As Paul warns the Romans in our text today:

Romans 16:17-20 (NKJV)

¹⁷Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. ¹⁸For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. ¹⁹For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. ²⁰And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

II. A Final Warning

A. Warning (17-18)

Paul warns the entire body of believers to identify and avoid "those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you learned." These false teachers cause _____ – drawing disciples away from sound doctrine (*orthodoxy*) – and _____ – leading them away from sound living (*orthopraxy*). They use "smooth words and flattering speech" – words that seem warm and inviting – to lead the naïve astray.

B. Rationale (19)

Paul warns the Romans to be on their guard because false teachers have no greater desire than to cause problems within flourishing churches.

C. Promise (20 cf. Gen 3:14-15; Jn 12:31-33)

And Paul wants them to do this confident of God's ultimate victory. Who is Satan? He is the great _____ who deceived our first mother, Eve, in the garden.

¹⁴So the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life.

¹⁵And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel." (Genesis 3:14-15)

The deceiver would be *crushed by the seed of the woman* – a promise that reached its fulfillment in Jesus' victory over Satan through His death and resurrection (cf. Jn 12:31f). Jesus crushed the head of the serpent, bound him in chains, and has begun spreading the fragrance of the Gospel throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel.

III. Dealing with Deceivers

A. Don't be naïve, deceivers exist!

First, Paul warns us not to be naïve – deceivers exist! Jesus said to the Pharisees, a brand of false teachers:

42... "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. 43Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 44You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. 45But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me." (John 8:42–45)

The _____ is a liar and the father of lies – and there are many who walk in his path, who hate the truth of God and want to destroy the work of God. So be alert!

B. So note them and avoid them!

False teachers endeavor to deceive us in one of two directions – either into doctrinal or moral error. Some false teachers lead people astray from sound doctrine (*orthodoxy*) and some from sound living (*orthopraxy*); they direct us either toward *heterodoxy* or *moral turpitude*. First, _____. There are teachers who claim the name of Jesus but who do not really serve Him (16:18 cf. Mk 8:27, 29). Such teachers deny central elements of “*mere Christianity*” as C.S. Lewis called it. While they often use orthodox terminology, they redefine it to cloak their error. Hence, we do not recognize their sacramental actions.

Second, _____ *turpitude!* *False teachers deceive the hearts of the simple* (18). The *doctrine that we have learned* is not only theological but ethical. Consider Paul’s warnings in other letters:

- *1 Corinthians 6:9–11 - 9Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*
- *Ephesians 5:5–7 - 5For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7Therefore do not be partakers with them.*

C. For God will crush their father and them under your feet!

John Wyclif the great English Reformer declared, “*Magna est veritas, et praevalabit!*” Great is the _____, and it shall prevail! As Solomon said in Proverbs, “*The truthful lip shall be established forever, But a lying tongue is but for moment*” (12:19).

IV. Conclusion

Our elders forbid those from partaking of the Supper who have been disciplined by their local congregation for their doctrinal error or moral turpitude. Why? Because Paul commands us not even to eat with any “*so-called brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner*” (1 Cor 5:11 cf. 2 Thes 3:6). This is the sober duty of church discipline.