

Watch Out!
Rom 16:17-20

Growing up in mission fields and then going to different countries I found a very interesting phenomenon. Americans have been great about going to the world and spreading the gospel. In fact, since WWII, we have done it better than any other nation in the world. One bad thing we have done, however is take our “issues” with us to those nations. Things we have fought about here on how to do church end up in cultures that would have never even considered those issues on their own. I remember talking to a preacher who insists that all faithful Christians must use the KJV. Somehow, he and people like him mistake the idea that God authorized the Authorized Version, not the king of England. I asked what do they do with the Bible in foreign languages? If you translate the Greek into whatever language, it won't look or sound like the KJV. What shocked me is that he said, they don't translate from the Greek, they translate from the English KJV. So, now there are translations of a translation of Scripture. Sometimes we have done as much damage as good in taking our biases along with the gospel to the world.

Our local churches here fare no better as different people push an agenda on the rest of the church. Everyone insisting that MY way is the only right way. Yet, there are times when people simply disagree on a subject or way to do things in the life of a church.

Is there a difference between disagreeing with each other on doctrinal issues and something more sinister? Let's look at this passage in depth after our prayer.

PRAYER

I. Watch Out!

A. Be alert

1. It seems strange that Paul would throw in this warning in the midst of a passage on greeting.
2. What Paul understood was that there would be some coming to their congregation with un-Christ like motives.
3. Not everyone should be accepted and loved just because they call themselves a Christian.
4. Sadly, there are plenty of people who move from church to church just trying to make themselves look good.
5. I had heard about a church that was small and struggling, but hanging in there until a man came to their church. At first everything seemed fine, but then he started pushing issues that began causing problems within the church. The church didn't have elders and the men were reluctant to confront this man. As time went on he did more and more damage to the morale of the church and by the time he was confronted, several members had left and others were so disillusioned and confused they gave up on God all together. To a great extent, the damage this man caused in that church led to it eventually closing its doors.
6. Paul tells us to watch out for these people.

B. Dangerous people

1. One of the greatest problems the church has had to deal with today is people's disillusionment with organized religion.
2. They see churches that stand for nothing.
3. They see church leaders who practice everything they preach against.
4. They see preachers prey on innocent people for their own personal gain.
5. It's easy to see why so many hate "church"
6. I have to sometimes "unteach" things that have been wrongly taught to someone, before I can begin to teach them the gospel. One man was told

that he would have to divorce his current wife of 10 plus years and leave his family before he could be baptized.

7. Now imagine how hard it is going to be to unteach all that before I can teach them how wonderful the love of Christ is, and the body of Christ is.

8. Jesus recognized the same thing in Matt 7:15-20 Matthew 7:15–20 (ESV) — 15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear

good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

9. We need to be aware of these false teachers and deal with them.

10. Time after time the writers of the New Testament warn Christians not to be swayed by people teaching false doctrines.

C. Divisions and obstacles

1. We don't know exactly who Paul is referring to in the comment about people who cause divisions or obstacles.

2. It could be the Judeazers who pushed following the Jewish law as well as the Christian law.

a) It's interesting to note that none of the Bible writers told Jews that they had to quit their traditions, but that they shouldn't force them on non Jews.

b) We see that today. People who insist you have to dress a certain way, read from only an approved version of the Bible, meet at God's appointed time.

c) If you want to do that, fine, but don't push something that God doesn't require on other people.

3. It could be the false teachers that were out for personal gain that Paul refers to in Eph 1:15-18 and Phil 3:19

a) Some were preaching just to spite Paul!

b) Other's preach for their own glory and pursuit of their own desires.

D. Naive minds

1. Paul then mentions the type of people they target.

2. Most often when these types of people come into a congregation, they don't try to work on well grounded Christians, they look for the new

member, the young member, the growing member and then go to work on that person.

3. The Boston movement targeted the college students who were trying to figure out their faith for the first time on their own.

4. I have seen preachers fire up the widow women of a church for whatever cause they were promoting.

5. They are naïve and innocent and, in their desire to do right, are easily led astray by someone with a smooth argument.

6. I will be honest with you, when I see so few hands raised when I ask how you are doing at reading through the New Testament, it scares me. When you don't know the scripture, you'll believe most anything the preacher or teacher tells you.

7. That lack of Biblical knowledge can make you a naïve mind that Paul is talking about in this passage.

8. Many groups have realized that the best way to change a culture is to change the way the children think.

a) They are impressionable.

b) They don't know the counter arguments.

c) They aren't grounded in a certain way of thinking.

d) You get the kids and 20 years later you have changed a culture.

e) Hitler did that with the Hitler youth, Empires have done it for thousands of years with conquered nations.

f) We see that today in America with those who are liberal socially taking control of our school settings.

g) 2 generations have been taught that sexual immorality is just fine and now we have more people living together than married, a

belief that immoral lifestyles are just a personal choice and no one should judge anyone else's lifestyle.

h) Millions of babies have been murdered in the name of "choice"

E. Practical application

1. Paul tells us to watch out for people who come with flashy teachings.
2. Let me start of this part of the sermon by point out that there is a huge difference between those who teach something falsely and false teachers.
 - a) Modern examples would be like Jim and Tammy Faye Baker from the 80's that bilked millions of dollars from people while claiming to be humble servants of God.
 - b) Cult leaders would be another group that would fit this description.
 - c) There are way too many "Big Names in Christianity" today who have been found to more focused on their agenda than the gospel.
 - d) Yet even in our fellowship we have heard stories of people coming in and destroying churches with teachings that were all about them rather than God.
 - e) In one church where I lived we had a Christian school. We found out that the teacher was convincing the female students AND THEIR MOTHERS, that God wanted them to sleep with him. He had all kinds of strange beliefs that set him up to be a spiritual

leader that was personally God ordained and it almost destroyed that congregation. It did destroy several people's lives.

3. The NAS and KJV use the word "mark" in vs 17
4. People with self-serving attitudes quickly come to the attention of the church.
5. Paul said, mark them or watch out for them and avoid them!
6. Don't give them the chance to cause divisions, don't let them teach or preach or have influence in the church.
7. One of the greatest responsibilities that elders have to is make sure people like that are dealt with in a godly way.
8. They have an obligation to protect the souls of the church from such type of people.
9. 2 Jn:10 tells us we shouldn't even welcome false teachers into our homes.
10. Strong words and actions, but they were for a reason.
11. We don't knowingly invite a thief into our home to steal our belongings; neither should we invite a false teacher into our homes to steal our souls.

F. Protect yourself

1. Personal protection is a topic of debate in our world today.
2. Even as we speak, we are working on ways to protect ourselves as a congregation from intruders that would do us harm physically.
3. Let me ask this, are we making the same efforts to protect us from those who would harm us spiritually?
4. Paul give us 3 ways to protect our congregation from those who would harm us spiritually,
 - a) Vs. 17 as I mentioned was to watch out for them.
 - b) He also tells us to avoid them.
 - c) Vs 19 encourages us to be obedient to the teaching of God.
 - d) Vs 19 also tells us to be wise as to what is good and innocent.
 - e) You get wisdom from knowledge and experience.

f) You get knowledge and experience from being students of the scripture.

G. Conclusion

1. In the midst of this passage of greetings, we have this strange side note.
2. I believe as Paul dictated this letter about greeting brothers and sisters he wanted to make sure we understood that not everyone who called himself God's servant really was.
3. We need to greet and accept fellow Christians, but not be blind to wolves in sheep's clothing.
4. Know your Bible, don't be led astray pretty talk, be wise about what is Good.
5. Do that, and you will be safe from false teachers.