

The Christian Manual: Study 21, Romans 16:17-27

Romans Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: What is the ultimate purpose for everything we do?

Closing Words

Section 1: Romans 16:17-20 Watch Out!

¹⁷I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. ¹⁸For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. ¹⁹Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

²⁰The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

There are two types of people who can hurt the church: 1) people who cause divisions and 2) people who put obstacles in the way contrary to the faith.

Those who cause division are those who make anything more important than our unity in Christ. Maybe they want to divide the church along racial or gender lines. Or they will put down others because of their culture or the way they look. Whenever a person fosters an us-versus-them mentality in the church, they are causing divisions.

The Greek word for obstacle is the word used to spring a trap, or tripping someone up, making them stumble. There are people who have not accepted the truth and come into the church to undermine the teaching of the church. These people are not serving Christ. If they were they would sew unity and support proper teaching. They talk a good game and are very persuasive. These people had infiltrated churches like Philippi (see Philippians 3) and had caused much damage. Paul doesn't want to see that damage spread to Rome.

Our response is to keep away from these people. They will only bring us down and hurt us. These people only make an impact on

people who are weak in their faith, who are easily persuaded by flattery. We need to be mature and focused on the truth and now susceptible to empty flattery.

Paul is not saying that the Romans are like this. In fact, they are obedient. They are wise in the good and innocent in the evil (compare with Matthew 10:16 and 1 Corinthians 14:20).

Paul tells them that the God of peace (the One who brings unity) will soon crush Satan under their feet. This is the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 when God promised Adam that his seed would crush the serpent's head. Whenever Satan loses territory, his head is being crushed. The Romans had the potential to create a beautiful community of Christ, becoming the body and having Christ revealed in them. This would crush Satan.

Section 1: Romans 16:21-24 Those with Paul

²¹ Timothy, my co-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my fellow Jews.

²² I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.

²³ Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings.

Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.

Paul sends greetings from some of those with him in Corinth.

Timothy is the same Timothy who was disciplined by Paul and given authority over the church of Ephesus (Acts 16:1-3, Philippians 2:20-22). Lucius is most likely Luke, who penned the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. Tertius wrote the letter to the Romans while Paul dictated it. Gaius was Paul's host and hosted the whole church. It's possible that the church met in his home (Acts 18:7). In the beginning the church met in homes and functioned like an extended family.

Erastus is someone for whom we have some evidence from history.



This stone says that Erastus paid for the pavement out of his own pocket. It was discovered in Corinth in 1929. It most likely refers to the Erastus Paul mentions here.

We know nothing about the man Quartus.

We can see by the names that Paul's oikos included both Jews and Gentiles. He modeled what he was teaching the Romans.

Section 3: Romans 16:25-27 Closing Blessing

²⁵ Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, ²⁶ but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith—
²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

God is able to help us stand. The word for 'establish' here is a word that means to support. Think of a tomato plant that you help by giving it a support stand. God provides the support stands we need. In this situation, Paul is saying that God will provide the supports that the Roman church will need to create a community where Gentiles and Jews could come together in Jesus. This was the mystery of God, revealed in Paul's day, that God would extend

salvation to the Gentiles and that the church would bring these very different people together as one (see Colossians 1:26f and Ephesians 3:3f). The purpose was for the Gentiles to come to obedience—obviously obedience to God—which comes by faith. This is what God wants from all His children. We have not been saved to have the freedom to do our own thing—this is what the heretics were saying in the churches (see Romans 6:1-2 and Philippians 3:19).

Paul ends with a doxology (dox—glory, and logos—speaking). It was a hymn of praise. Possibly this was something that was sung in the early church. Here we have encapsulated the purpose of all. Everything is to bring glory to God, to make Him known and appreciated. This is the supreme goal of everything we do. It is the only proper focal point in life, where everything we do must lead to.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism says that the man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. We glorify God when we give Him the honor and place in our lives that He deserves. This is why worship is so vital to the Christian life. In worship, we stop all our activity and lift up God as He deserves. When we do this, God meets us with His presence.

We also glorify God when we show His character, when Jesus is seen in us by the Holy Spirit.



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Church unity is a priority with God. When we can bring together diverse people—people with different cultures, different races, different ages—and celebrate our life in Christ together, we are witnessing to the world the power of the gospel.

To do this we have to adopt the view of Paul that what God has accepted, we must also accept (this is what Jesus cautioned Peter about in Acts 10). If we are to be Christ's church we must also embrace all people He sends to us.

We need to be on our guard to protect the purity of the church. There are people who would try to destroy our fellowship. This happens far more than any would want to admit. Many churches have split because a powerful person came in and tried to take over the church. These people often are leaders who bring in their own people, their power base, and push their way into leadership. I know of one instance where a church actually split then continued to meet as two separate churches in the same building because neither church would leave and give up the ownership of the building to the other. I have always felt it was God's judgment on this church that the city came in and took the building away in a redevelopment drive and turned it into a parking lot.

Paul tells us that all is to glorify God. Our unity should reflect the unity of the trinity. Then we will truly be like our God.



CONNECT

This is our last Bible Study in Romans. After we break for the summer, it will be very easy to lose track of some of the people in this group that we have grown close to. It is in these times of distance that we may become vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy.

Tonight you're going to brainstorm ways to keep close to the other students in this group. You can exchange phone numbers, friend each other on Facebook, make plans to go camping together or to go to the beach, or whatever. The key is to not lose contact. Don't allow yourself to drift away from your brothers and sisters in Christ. We really do need each other.



WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Section 1 Romans 16:17-20

Paul cautions the church to watch out for two things: 1) The people who cause division and 2) the people who put stumbling blocks in the way of Christians. The first group were those who put differences between people above the unity we have in Christ. The second group is people who come in with weird doctrines and want to draw Christians away from the truth. Both of these groups can devastate a church.

Section 2 Romans 16:21-24

Paul sends greetings from those with him. This includes:

Timothy—who would later pastor the church in Ephesus and who Paul would write to in First and Second Timothy.

Lucius is Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

Gaius was Paul's host and most likely hosted the church in his home. The early church was made up of house churches that met in homes and acted like extended families.

Paul felt it important to work with others. Ministry is not a solo act. Those who work for God do better with a solid team to work with.

Section 3 Romans 16:25-27

In this final blessing Paul explains that God can provide the supports needed for the church to stand. He reminds them of the importance of unity between Jew and Gentile. God is a God of peace.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Section 1 Read Romans 16:17-20

1. What kinds of things could a person do to try to split up a Christian group like ours? What would be the wedge that would create the division?
2. In the early church there were some teaching that because we are saved it doesn't matter how we act (see Romans 6:1). How would you respond if someone came into our group with that message?

Section 2 Read Romans 16:21-24

1. Paul has built a group of loyal supporters around himself. Have you developed the ability to work in a group for a cause? Can you see why this skill would be important in ministry and kingdom work?
2. Gaius had a church meet in his house. How would you feel if the church split up and began meeting in homes? How do you think this would affect the church and its mission?

Section 3 Read Romans 16:25-27

1. God is able to provide support for us to help us stand. How does He do this?
2. What is the mystery that was hidden?
3. What do you think Paul means by the obedience that comes from faith?
4. Why would Paul refer to God and the only wise God?
5. How can we bring glory to God through Christ?



HOW DOES IT APPLY?

My faith is the most precious thing I have. It's more important than my life because it has ramifications that will endure long after my life has ended. It's more precious than my possessions because long after my possessions are gone, it will remain. It's more precious than my relationships, because I would rather lose every relationship I have on earth than lose the eternal relationship I have with the One in heaven.

We can lose our faith. Remember the sower and the seed? Faith can fall on hard ground, never penetrate deep under the surface of our heart, never become part of us, and get picked off by the birds. It can fall on ground with weeds that choke it out. Paul reminds me that I can grow cold in my faith quite easily. People can come into our fellowship to cause division. They can bring crazy ideas, a mixture of Christianity and whatever is the flavor of the month from pop-psychology or philosophy or other religions. It sounds right because it's the same message we're hearing in our television shows, movies, music, and advertising. If so many people are saying it, it must be true...right?

Christians stand with God and the truth revealed by Him in Jesus and in the Word. They depend on the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth. We don't chase after doctrines and ideas just because they're popular or new or exciting. We aren't always looking to be entertained. We wish for one thing—to glorify our God, to become like Him and His Son and to show His character by virtue of His indwelling Holy Spirit. This is all that matters, and anyone who would try to pry us away from our faith, who would want us to tone it down or pollute it with other ideas, he's to be avoided.