"BEWARE OF FALSE TEACHERS"

Romans 16:17-20
1-31-2021

INTRODUCTION:

***Beware of false teachers!**
Four questions for you to answer:

I. <u>WHO</u> is a False Teacher? (v. 17)

He is one who causes:
A. <u>Division</u> contrary to sound doctrine

B. <u>Offenses</u> contrary to sound doctrine

II. <u>WHY</u> must I Separate from False Teachers? (v. 18)

A. He has a deceitful <u>motive</u> (v. 18a)

B. He uses a deceitful <u>method</u> (v. 18b)

C. He will deceive the <u>immature</u> (v. 18c)

III. <u>HOW</u> can I Discern False Teachers? (v. 19)

A. Be wise concerning good

B. Be simple concerning evil

IV. <u>WHAT</u> is the result of Having Spiritual Discernment? (v. 20)

[Satan is crushed and conquered.]

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Paul concludes this great Epistle with an important warning.

Last words are important words.

V. 17

"I beseech" = I urge, I encourage.

Paul's appeal shows the extreme <u>importance</u> or <u>seriousness</u> of the forthcoming admonition.

"Brethren" - Primarily aimed at the leadership, but also including the laity of the church at Rome.

Cp. Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:28-31).

"Mark them" = "Skopeo" - to watch out for; to keep your eye on; to scrutinize.

The appeal is to vigilance, watchfulness, to be on guard against.

JesussternlywarnedaboutthefateofthosewhocauseHischildrentostumble (SEE: Mt.18:6-7).

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I. <u>WHO</u> is a False Teacher? (v. 17)

He is one who causes:

A. <u>Division</u> contrary to sound doctrine

"Cause divisions" - the people warned against are instigators of divisiveness.

The word "divisions (dichostasia) literally refers to a "standing apart."

"Diche" = division, apart, asunder
"Stasis" = to stand

This word occurs two other times in Scripture:

1) The word is used of those who divide themselves from others and form clique-ish, sectarian groups (Ex: TheCarnalCorinthians-SEE: I Cor. 3:3-4)

The Corinthians, being characterized by "envying, strife and divisions" (envy and strife being related to divisiveness), were separating from each other wrongly, and rallying around personalities--such as Paul, Apollos, and Peter--rather than around Christ (cp. I Cor. 1:10-13).

The Romans evidently had legalists slip in (hence the appeal in Roman 14 - 15:13) who were disrupting the unity so encouraged by Paul (Rom. 12:3ff).

2) The word "divisions" (translated "seditions") occurs in Gal. 5:20 in a context describing the works of the flesh.

Unbiblical divisiveness is opposite the fruits of the Spirit, and is a work of the old sinful nature. The word in Gal. 5:20 is surrounded by its "kissing cousins" -- "hatred, variance, emulations, jealousy, wrath, strife/rivalries, heresies and envyings."

B. Offenses contrary to sound doctrine

"Offenses" = (skandala) - obstacles, hindrances, stumbling blocks.

The word occurs in Rom. 14:21 (as a verb), and 9:33, 11:9, 14:13, and 16:17 (in its noun form). In all cases, it refers to that which would cause someone to fall.

In Rom. 14, a context describing why Christians should avoid doing anything (EX: eating meat) that would be a temptation for a weaker brother, God exhorts that "no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (14:13).

Whereas the word "divisions" often characterizes the behavior of a legalist, the word "offenses" often depicts the unloving actions of a libertine.

Two Extremes:

Divisions - the legalistic Judaizers
(Legalists - those who add to Scriptures)

Offenses - the antinomian libertines
(Liberals - those who delete from Scriptures)

"Contrary to the doctrine" = opposite the teaching

What is contrary to the doctrine?

1) Their message (false teaching - cp. v. 18 - "fair speeches deceive")

2) Their behavior (ungodly lifestyle - v. 17 - characterized by divisiveness and offensiveness)

Such behavior of divisiveness and throwing stumbling blocks in the way of Christians is contrary to the doctrine (teaching) of this Epistle (Rom. 12:3ff; 14-15:7) and the Word of God from cover to cover.

God calls the divisive person an abomination - "He that soweth discord among the brethren" (Prov. 6:19).

And God commands to separate from those who--like Balaam--cast stumbling blocks in front of His people (Rev. 2:14, 20) and solicit them to evil.

"Avoid them" - turn away from them; keep away from them; separate yourself from them.

"Avoid" - As Chrysostum noted, the Apostle does not advise any debate with these men, but separation (cited in Thomas, p. 430).

Nor does Paul encourage dialogue. We can debate and dialogue with God's people, but not with apostates.

*Separation from false teachers is a constant command of the New Testament.

--Do not receive them (II Jn 10, 11 - "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.")

--Withdraw from them (I Tim. 6:5 - "Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.")

--Have nothing to do with them (II Pet. 2:1 - "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction.")

--Reject them (Titus 3:10 - "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition, reject")

--Be separate from them (II Cor. 6:14-18)

Any doctrine that causes [teaches] divisiveness (factions) and offenses (stumbling blocks) cannot be from God!

SEE: A parallel warning in Phil. 3:17-19 - NOTE: Whereas, Paul warned to "mark" those who were to be avoided in Rom. 16:17, in Phil. 3:17, he says to "mark" those whose examples are to be followed.

Who are these false teachers?

They knock at your door with magazines and books; they come into your living room via TV with great appeals for money; they enter your car via radio with persuasive charisma; they are found in your mail box with appealing advertisements and colorful illustrative material.

II. WHY must I Separate from False Teachers? (v. 18)

A. He has a deceitful motive (v. 18a)

"Serve" (douleo) = to serve as a slave; it describes devotion.

The point: These false teachers are not devoted to Christ, but to their stomachs (cp. Phil. 3:19; Tit. 1:10-11).

Such a statement clearly identifies these false teachers as unbelievers.

They "minister" for "gain" (selfish advantage) (I Tim. 6:3-5).

B. He uses a deceitful method (v. 18b)

"Good words" (Gk. chrastor & logia) = kind words, "smooth words"

"Fair speeches" (Gk. ev & logia) = praise words; to say something good about someone so as to "butter them up," to flatter

The two phrases point to someone with persuasiveness; a false teacher who knows the right words [the most deceitful of cults are those who know how to talk and deceive those who don't have a firm grasp on Scripture]

Col. 2:3-4 - "In Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words."

SEE: II Peter 2:1-3

"Good words and fair speeches" - They appear "good" but they are tools of Satan, who through eloquence, charm, charisma, and personality etc., deceives the hearts of the unsuspecting.

--They are "wolves in sheep's clothing" (Mt. 7:15 - "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

--They appear as "ministers of righteousness" (II Cor. 11:13-15)

C. He will deceive the immature (v. 18c)

"Deceive" = to trick or lead astray

"The simple" = those who are unaware of evil; those who are without a knowledge of evil tactics; they are naive, innocent and immature. They don't suspect such religious tricksters.

(EX: Someone who is not "street-wise" in NYC is easily tricked by the liars, connivers, and deceivers that lurk in the city streets)

III. HOW can I Discern False Teachers? (v. 19)

In contrast to the "simple" (v. 18) who succomb to false teachers, the Romans had a testimony of faithful obedience.

The report of their obedience had reached out to all men (cp. Ro. 1:8).

*News travels fast!

May our lives echo out obedience to God.

"I am glad" - Paul says, "Because of your obedience, I am rejoicing over you!"

Your obedience causes others to rejoice. Your disobedience causes God's people to be ashamed.

A. Be wise concerning good

"I would have you" = I desire, I want, I wish you to be wise. . ."

"Wise toward good" - Wisdom being practical hands on knowledge that relates to real life.

The best way to be wise unto that which is good is to know the standard of goodness -- The Word of God.

By knowing true goodness, you can easily detect error. By being an expert at the genuine, you will have the insight to detect the counterfeit.

I Cor. 14:20 = "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."

Matthew 10:16 - "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

B. Be simple concerning evil

"Simple concerning evil" =

"Simple" = <u>not</u> the same word as in V. 18. This word means "<u>unmixed</u>"; God wants His children to be <u>unmixed</u> with evil, pure (again an appeal for separation).

The word is translated "harmless" in Mt. 10:16 and Phil. 2:15 (Phil. 2:15 - "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

The world has its opposite - "They were not to be wise with regard to evil and simple with regard to good. This is the maxim of the world, but there is no need to practice evil in order to become wise in it" (Thomas, p. 332).

The positive relationship toward doctrinal "good," and the negative relationship toward doctrinal "evil" is repeated in I Thes. 5:21 & 22 - "Prove all things; hold fast that which is <u>good</u>. ABstain (lit. hold yourself away) from all appearance of <u>evil</u>."

Again God says: "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Rom. 12:9).

IV. WHAT is the result of Having Spiritual Discernment? (v. 20)

[Satan is crushed and conquered.]

"The God of peace" = the God who vies peace.

False teachers disrupt peace. God restores it! How? By crushing Satan.

"Will bruise Satan" = will crush, trample on; lit. will "rub (the serpent's head) together" with the dust of the ground.

What is the secret to victory over Satan and his lies? ANSWER: To be wise concerning good and unmixed with evil."

In other words, to know the Scripture and to remain separate from false teaching.

EX: Christ's conquering of Satan
(Mt. 4:4, 7, 10 = The Word of God)

"Shortly" = swiftly; in a brief amount of time; quickly.

"When the believer fights with the armor of God, the conflict is never long" (Godet, cited by Thomas, p. 433).

Christ is the only source of grace. Without His grace our ability to conquer Satan's attacks is null and void.

CONCLUSION: