

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

ROMANS 15-16

One of the NT's favorite expressions is the two-word phrase, "one another." Excluding the Gospels, the NT mentions at least 58 "one another commands."

For example... "Accept one another" - "Bear one another's burdens" - "Build up one another" - "Care for one another" - "Comfort one another" - "Forgive one another" - "Honor one another" - "Be kind to one another" - "Be hospitable to one another" - "Love one another" - "Pray for one another" - "Submit to one another" - "Serve one another" - and the list goes on...

These commands highlight the character of the relationships that should exist in the body of Christ

All believers have a responsibility to *one another*.

And Romans 15-16 revolve around four more of these "one another commands"... **Chapter 15:5** "be like-minded toward one another" - **15:7** "receive one another" - **15:14** "admonish one another" - and **16:16** "greet one another." The last two chapters of Romans focus on the Christian's duty toward "one another."

Verse 1 picks up where Romans Chapter 14 leaves off... "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves."

Once, two men were in the woods one day when a giant, angry grizzly bear jumped out of the bushes.

Immediately one of the men reached in his backpack, and pulled out his running shoes. His buddy asked, "You're not going to try, and outrun that grizzly, are you? Full grown grizzly bears can run 30-35 mph?"

While still tying his shoes, his buddy answered, "*Don't worry, I know I can't outrun a grizzly bear, but I don't have to! All I have to do is outrun you!*"

And sadly, that's the attitude of many Christians.

Rather than "*bear with*" a weaker brother, we run out ahead of them, and leave them behind to get eaten by the spiritual grizzlies. Our goal should be to *love one another*, put others first - not just save our own skin!

The previous chapter warns us about using our *freedom in Christ* in a way that will cause a brother to stumble... Maybe you can enjoy a glass of wine with your meal. But the brother or sister, who struggles with alcohol, sees you, and assumes *that if it's okay for you, it's okay for him*. Your example causes a brother to sin.

This shouldn't be. We need to *bear with* the weaker brother - *the new Christian*... Like taking a walk in the park with a toddler - you don't expect the child to walk at your pace. The adult slows down to stay in step with the child. And the same is true for mature Christians.

Our goal isn't to *flaunt our freedom*, or *prove our point*. We should love and help other Christians grow.

Verse 2, "Let each of us please *his* neighbor for *his* good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself;

but as it is written, *“The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.”*

Paul quotes Psalm 69:9. It's a prophecy concerning Jesus. Our Lord came to earth to bear our burden!

Do we need to go any further than Jesus, for an example of someone who forfeited His own freedoms, and rights, and privileges for the good of others? We follow Jesus by realizing the impact we have on others.

“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”

And when it comes to examples, Jesus is just the tip of the iceberg. The OT gives numerous instances of folks willing to forego their freedom to comfort others.

Noah... Joseph... Moses... Daniel... all bypassed the easy road and chose to live as an influence for God, and for the good of other people. And their impact was worth their sacrifice. They stand out as models for us.

Here's an encouragement to open up and study the OT. Too many churches camp out in the NT, and the 39 OT books become the Scripture's lost continent.

And realize 77% of your Bible - *77% of inspired Scripture* - is the OT. The stories, pictures, types, and principles are there for your benefit. There's much a NT believer can learn and glean from the OT Scriptures.

Verse 5, “**Now may the God of patience and comfort...**” Remember this name for God the next time you fail Him, and worry He might’ve given up on you.

Apparently, He wants to be known by us as “**the God of patience...**” If you’re a knucklehead like me who’s a slow learner and needs lots of long-suffering this is a great comfort. Our great God is “**the God of patience.**”

And may God “**grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus...**” Here we have one of the NT’s “**one another commands**” - “**be like-minded.**” The idea is to be of the same mind.

In light of Romans 14, and the topic of gray matters, I’m certain Paul isn’t advocating perfect agreement on all the minutia of church life, or even every detail of doctrine... But is it possible for us to be of “**the same mind**” when it comes to the big stuff? *I think so!*

*The Bible is **God’s Word**. Jesus is **God’s Son**. Grace through faith is **God’s only salvation**. The Church is **God’s arms and legs** to spread that salvation.* We should be able to agree on the big stuff!

Remember the old adage... “**In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, and in all things charity.**”

But notice how it begins... “**in essentials unity.**”

There are some non-negotiable ideas and doctrines we need to hammer out and form a unanimity.

And here’s why we should be “**like-minded...**”

“That you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Realize our praise packs a bigger punch when it's offered corporately! It pleases God when He sees His children glorifying Him with **“*one mind and one mouth.*”**

When my kids were little, on rare occasions they would approach their parents with a unified front.

Zach was usually the spokesman, **“Dad, we all want to go to Brusters for ice cream...”** Then I'd hear Natalie and Nick chime in... **“Yea Dad, we do.”** Then little Mack, **“Me too, Dad. Me wants ice cream, too.”**

They didn't know it, but I was usually so weary of their squabbling, *and so excited they could agree*, I was willing to give them whatever they asked.

I think this is behind the offer Jesus makes in Matthew 18:19, **“If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.”** *In praise and in prayer* it delights God when we come to Him with like-minds.

“Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.” Here is another **“one another command”** - **“*receive one another...*”**

When you give your life to Jesus, God receives you with open arms... When the prodigal son returned home the Father don't wait for him to walk up the road to the house, he ran to meet him, and threw his arms around him, and kissed him, and welcomed him home.

The Father didn't hold the boy at arms length until he'd proven his sincerity. The wayward son wasn't placed on probation, or bonded until his court date. He was given full membership immediately. The prodigal didn't have to wait 90 days for his benefits to kick in.

And this is the way we should treat newcomers to the Body of Christ - whether they're new believers... or renewed believers... or just plain newcomers... Let's *“receive one another, just as Christ also received us...”*

It's been said, "The Christian church is the only society in the world in which membership is based on the qualification that the candidate is unworthy of membership." The church is definitely **a grace place**.

We're open to anyone who repents and believes...

The church isn't a sorority you pledge, or a country club to which you apply, or a hospital that checks your insurance. We take in everybody that Jesus brings us.

“Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written (and he quotes Psalm 18:49): “For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name.”

In chapter 11 Paul talked about God's plan for the Jews and the Gentiles. It's God's will for both to be saved. **Jesus is an equal opportunity Savior!**

And he reels off three more OT Scriptures to prove his point: Verse 10, *“And again he says (Deuteronomy 32:49): “Rejoice,*

O Gentiles, with His people!” Gentiles will join the Jews in rejoicing over God’s goodness.

And again (he quotes Psalm 117:1): *“Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!”*

Psalm 117 is the shortest chapter in the Bible. It’s ironic that the shortest chapter covers the most ground. It wraps around the whole world. It predicts the spread of the Gospel to the Gentile nations all over the globe.

This was also my Dad’s favorite psalm. On Wednesday nights when Mom was at choir practice, it was Dad’s job to read us a chapter in our Bibles. And it never failed, every Wednesday he read Psalm 117...

“O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD... Good night boys.” For years I actually assumed that *“Good night boys”* was in the text.

One day dad and I were driving through Snellville, and I complained. *“Dad, you only had one night, and all we ever read us was Psalm 117, “O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD...”*

He said, *“How many of those chapters that your mother read you, have you memorized today?”*

And Paul’s third quote... *“And again, Isaiah says (11:1,10): “There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign*

over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope.” The root of Jesse is prophetic of Jesus.

Our Lord Jesus came from Jesse’s family tree - from Jesse’s stock - through his son, David. Isaiah says a *“root of Jesse”* will reign over both Jews and Gentiles.

Verse 13, *“Now may the God of hope...”* And here’s another great name for God. *You serve “the God of hope!” How can you be out of hope - or call a situation hopeless - if you truly serve “the God of hope.”?*

Recall the old song, *“I’ve got that joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart...”* And we’d sing a second stanza, *“I’ve got the peace that passes understanding down in my heart...”* But there were other verses, *“I’ve got the happy hope that heckles heathens down in my heart...”*

I love *“the happy hope that heckles heathens...”*

This is what today’s world lacks. Our problems seem insurmountable. Folks have no hope. Yet we serve *“the God of hope,”* thus our situation is never hopeless!

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit fills our hearts with hope. He blows fresh wind into sagging sails.

Verse 14, *“Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.”* Here’s a third *“one another command.”* We’ve read, *“be like-minded*

toward one another” and *“receive one another”* - and, *“admonish one another.”*

The word *“admonish”* means *“to remind or caution.”*

When you see a brother start to stray get involved. It’s our business to say something - send a warning!

Verse 15, *“Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you...”* Paul knew the believers in Rome were capable of admonishing one another themselves, but there had been a few points he wanted to explain and clarify.

And aren’t we thankful Paul took seriously his own command *“to admonish one another...”* If he hadn’t most of the NT would've never been written.

Paul cared for the churches and was not afraid to confront them when necessary. When he saw an individual or group going sideways he wasn’t afraid to point it out! Real love is willing to admonish a brother.

Paul finishes his thought in verse 16, *“Because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”*

Paul was known as *“the apostle to the Gentiles.”*

The Gentiles were Paul’s mission field. They were his offering to God. Thus, he wanted them to be godly.

“Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any

of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient..." This was a wise policy. Paul doesn't speak on subjects he had not experienced personally. *His preaching* didn't go beyond *his practice*.

And the same should be true of us... Certainly, truth is truth. But it's definitely hard to speak convincingly of a truth that you've never tasted and known firsthand.

Yet with Paul this wasn't much of a problem; for his spiritual resume was full of supernatural happenings.

He writes, "In mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." Paul preached the Gospel of grace, but His ministry came with miraculous displays of the Holy Spirit - what he called "*signs and wonders*."

Miracles accompanied the message and they should be traveling companions wherever the Gospel goes.

Paul had been called by God to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. And here he files a progress report... He logged from "*Jerusalem... to Illyricum*" or 1400 miles...

From Mount Calvary in Jerusalem, where Jesus was crucified, and the earth quaked, and the veil in the Temple was torn in two - to northern Macedonia where an earthquake rocked a Philippian jail - across the breadth of the Roman empire countless lives had been transformed and redeemed by the Gospel of Jesus!

In his hey-day, Roger Clemens had the most feared fastball among pitchers in the Major Leagues. But because Clemens played most of his career in the American League - where pitchers rarely bat - he never came to the plate to hit, except in the All Star game.

In Clemens' first pro at-bat he faced another fastballer, Dwight Gooden. The first pitch was a sizzler.

Roger stepped back - his eyes as big as saucers. He turned to catcher, Gary Carter, and asked, "Is that what my pitches look like?" The answer was, "Yep!"

Roger Clemens later said that from that day forward he pitched with more boldness and authority. He had forgotten how overpowering a good fastball can be.

In the same way we can forget the power of the Gospel. We can take it for granted, and lose our sense of how overpowering the Gospel continues to be!

Here, Paul reflects on his ministry - all He'd done was preach the Gospel in power and truth - but thousands of lives had been changed as a result! The Gospel had been an overwhelming force, as it is today!

Verse 20, "And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, but as it is written (and here he quotes Isaiah 52:15): *"To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand."* Paul's goal was to reach the unreached. He tilled and sowed in unplowed fields.

Paul was always targeting new areas for ministry. Paul was a pioneer at heart... And we should follow suit. Let's pray that we never lose a pioneering spirit.

Rather than a community center for fun and games, we want to be a rescue mission - a spiritual emergency room for the hurting and wounded. According to a poll I read, only 34% of Americans claim to have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Rather than focusing inward, let's keep reaching out to people who are lost.

Verse 22, “For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. But now no longer having a place in these parts...” Paul wrote his letter to the Church at Rome from the port city of Corinth.

But he was on the move... “And having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your *company* for a while.”

Paul's heart was set on Spain. He hoped his voyage would layover in Rome and he could visit the church.

Whether or not he made it to Spain we don't know. But he did journey to Rome, courtesy of the Roman government - sent from Caesarea by Governor Festus. He met the church before being tried before Nero.

“But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.” Jerusalem was his immediate destination.

“For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in

Jerusalem.” Paul in route to deliver an offering that the churches in Greece had collected for the famine-stricken believers in Jerusalem.

“It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.” Gentile believers in Europe realized they were standing on the shoulders of the Jews. The Jews were chosen by God - made custodians of the Scripture. The Hebrews were heirs of God’s covenants.

This is what struck me on last week’s trip to Israel.

We stayed in a hotel at the base of Mount Zion and Psalm 48 kept running through my brain, **“Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. In the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness...”** God chose the Jews and Jerusalem. It was where He dwelt and bestowed His blessed - and though God is gracious to Gentiles who trust in Jesus, never take His grace for granted.

God gives to whom it pleases Him. God is no man’s debtor. We are a debtor to God and His people, Israel.

And how do you pay a spiritual debt? According to Paul, it’s with your financial resources. A spiritual debt can be paid with a monetary offering. In other words, we should support those who minister to us spiritually.

Whether it’s your church, or your pastor, or a teaching ministry - **if someone invests in you spiritually, then you should bless, and support them financially.**

The Church in Jerusalem funded the missionaries who had taken the Gospel to the Gentiles. Now it was time for the Gentiles to return the favor to the Jews.

Verse 28, “Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me...” Pray for me! Paul requests their prayers. The great apostle needed the prayers of humble Christians.

And pray “that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.” Paul makes three prayer requests... **protection** from his enemies - **completion** of his mission - and **rejuvenation** with his friends!

Romans 15 ends with Paul’s salutation, “Now the God of peace *be with you all. Amen.*”

Now Chapter 16 is Paul’s personal correspondence.

He extends greetings. And the emphasis that follows proves Paul was not only **a soul winner**, but **a friend maker**. In Chapter 16 the apostle mentions 35 different people by name. Remember Paul had never been to Rome, yet he knew many of the church’s members.

It's amazing, while Paul wasn't busy winning the world for Jesus, and writing most of the NT letters, he also spent time keeping up with his friends.

Paul was a people person - *as every Christian should be*. Paul loved the people Jesus died to save. When you get too hurried - or feel too important - for personal relationships your priorities are out of kilter!

And the first person Paul mentions is a gal named Phoebe. He writes of her, "I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea." Cenchrea was the port of the metropolis of Corinth.

The Greek word translated "*servant*" can be rendered "*deacon*." And this is one reason why I believe women served as deacons in the early church.

Remember, deacon was not a position of authority, but of service. The deacons were *the designated doers* in the church - and women served in this capacity.

The Revised Standard Version renders verse 1, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea." Even today, needs often pop up in church life that necessitate a feminine touch. That's why God appointed deaconesses to serve.

And Paul says of this lady named Phoebe, "that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also." Apparently, Phoebe was the letter carrier who delivered Paul's epistle to the Romans.

Imagine, it was the spring of 58 AD. Paul watches Phoebe slip the opus of our faith - this grand document of theology - under her robe. He trusts her to get it to its recipients, and tells the church at Rome to receive her, and respect her, and assist her when she comes!

But his greetings continue in verse 3, **“Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus...”**

Aquila and Priscilla appear seven times in Scripture and always as a team. Paul first met them in Corinth in Acts 18. Like Paul, they were tent-makers by trade.

Everywhere Aquila and Priscilla settled they ended up with a church meeting in their home, *including Rome!* Here was a couple who opened *their hearts* and *their home* to the Lord. Apparently, Aquila and Priscilla were successful at merging *marriage and ministry*.

They offered their *hearts* and *home* to Jesus - but they also put their *heads* on the chopping block.

For Paul says of them, **“Who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.”** We don't know the exact incident Paul is referencing, but Aquila and Priscilla were not fair-weather friends. Somewhere along the line they put themselves in danger to protect Paul.

These were seriously faithful friends.

Verse 5, **“Likewise greet the church that is in their house.”** Remember churches met in halls and homes for the first 300 years of Christianity - *and it was the Gospel's most expansive*

period. We had no single-use buildings or facilities, and yet the Church exploded!

“Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.” Epaenetus was Paul’s first convert in the region of Achaia, or southern Greece. Other folks would follow, but Paul always remembered the first.

“Greet Mary, who labored much for us. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.” Here’s an older couple.

Andronicus and Junia were fellow Jews, and in the past had been arrested for Jesus’ sake. They’d been believers even longer than Paul. And although we know little about them, Paul recognizes that they were respected and appreciated by the apostles at the time.

Verse 8 continues to list Paul’s friends in Rome, and notice he addresses them with terms of endearment...

“Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. Greet Apelles, approved in Christ.”

The word *"approved"* means *"tried and tested."* Apelles had been through the fire and found faithful!

Verse 10, “Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.” Herod the Great was the infamous Herod who murdered the infants in Bethlehem, at the time of Jesus’ birth. This Herod had a grandson named, *"Aristobulus."* *History tells Aristobulus lived in Rome.*

What an irony if this was the same Aristobulus!

Imagine, the brutal Herod's own grandson now following the newborn King from Bethlehem - amazing!

On the other hand, the fact Paul addresses Aristobulus' household, and not him per se, could depict an unbelieving husband with a believing wife and kids. This too, could've been the situation. A whole family had been saved, but the husband was dragging his feet. *If you know such a family, pray for Aristobulus!*

Verse 11, "Greet Herodion, my countryman." This man too was probably a fellow Jew. "Greet those who are of the *household* of Narcissus who are in the Lord."

Verse 12, "Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord." And both names are feminine.

"*Tryphena*" means "dainty" and "*Tryphosa*" means "delicate." The Greek word translated "*labored*" means "to toil to the point of exhaustion." Put it all together, and you could say, "Dainty and Delicate rolled up their shirtsleeves and worked hard for the Lord." The ladies with the prissy names were actually rugged laborers.

"Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord." This name is also feminine. The church in Rome sounds like **Calvary Chapel** - *full of ladies who were diligent servants.* They weren't allergic to hard work!

Verse 13, "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine." Mark 15:21 tells us the man who helped Jesus

carry His cross, Simon the Cyrene, had a son, "*Rufus.*" Many folks believe this is the same guy.

Apparently, Simon's *seemingly random selection out of the crowd* that day and *his experience with Jesus* had led to both his and his family's conversion.

Simon returned to his home in Cyrene, led his wife and sons to Christ - who then later moved to Rome...

"Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them."

Here's a group of men, and all that's listed about them is their names. Yet imagine seeing your name in the Bible - in Paul's letter! "*Wow, he remembered me!*"

Whether or not your pastor remembers your name, realize you can trust that Jesus remembers. John 10:3 says of our Good Shepherd, "**He calls His own sheep by name.**" Jesus addresses each one of us by name.

Visit the Old Natural Bridge in Virginia and you'll see hundreds of names carved into the boulders around the bridge. But near the top you'll see the name "*George Washington.*" Even the father of our country couldn't resist resorting to some personal graffiti. We all love to hear our name spoken, and see it written.

I have a friend who worked with old folks, and he told me the secret to relating was to call them by their *first name*. When you're older you now become everyone's elder, and so you're frequently referred to as "*Mr.*" or "*Mrs.*" Thus, you rarely hear your given name.

We all, young and old, love to hear our name.

Remember, Paul is writing the Bible. He's got limited scroll space and strategic subjects to cover - yet it's interesting to me that he leaves room at the end to mention these saints by name. It adds credibility to the old saying, "God loves each one of us as if there were only one of us to love." That statement is really true!

Verse 15, "Greet Philologus..." This name literally means "Lover of the Word." *Future parents, here's a super name for your next baby... "Philologus."*

Reminds me of the little boy who wanted a Bible just like Mom's. He was asked, "Why don't you want a Bible like your Dad's?" "Mom's Bible is more interesting, she is always reading hers. Dad never picks his up." *Ouch!*

I hope we all - both men and women - are deserving of the name "Philologus" - "Lovers of the Word."

"Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.

Greet one another with a holy kiss."

Here's one more one another command - "Greet one another with a holy kiss." And notice the key word: "holy kiss" versus a "lustful or sneaky or Judas kiss."

Actually in Roman culture, a kiss was a common form of greeting. It was like our handshake. Paul is telling them to greet each other with *a holy handshake*.

Verse 16, "The churches of Christ greet you."

Obviously, it delighted all believers, all around the world, to know there was a church at the heart of the empire. All the

churches sent their greetings through Paul to the Church in the strategic city of Rome.

In August 17 we took a team to Austria to ministry at a retreat we did for the CC in Rome. We then traveled to Italy to minister that Sunday at their church. And we felt the same sense of importance in our ministry.

Here're believers at the epicenter of Catholicism, and they need encouragement to take the Gospel to religious folks who don't realize their lostness - who think you are saved due to a relationship with a church. The church at Rome is still a big deal with a big task.

Paul writes in verse 17, "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them."

A Sunday School teacher once asked her kids to define "false doctrine." A little girl replied, "It's when the doctor gives the wrong stuff to people who are sick."

That's *false doctoring*, but the definition also applies to *false doctrine*. We should guard against both.

Realize Paul instructs us to "*note*" those who stir up strife and conflict. And that involves identification.

How can the church avoid divisive and offensive people unless their leaders point such people out? This requires discretion. It's one of the more unpleasant, but important responsibilities of church leadership.

Verse 18, "For 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."

Unfortunately, a deceiver and a divider doesn't wear a sandwich board about his neck identifying himself as a rogue. On the contrary, he's a slick dealer.

A man of God - sincerely pursuing the Lord - speaks only what God wants said. While, a religious leader - out for himself - tells folks what they want to hear.

And it's due to his *flattery* that the troublemaker can develop a *following*. That's why he can't be tolerated, *even a little*. He'll deceive simple minds and manipulate gullible hearts. ID him; then avoided him.

Verse 19, “For 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.”

Be experts in what's good, and naive to what's evil.

Verse 20, “And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.” Paul mentions the ancient promise of Genesis 3:15. It foreshadowed the future.

On the cross the serpent will bruise Messiah's heel, but in the end Jesus will crush his head and stripped him of all his authority... The Bible tells us that at the end of the age, Jesus will return and those who believe in Him will return to earth with Him. And our first order of business will be to crush the Antichrist and his army.

We'll share in Christ's ultimate triumph over Satan.

Verse 20 ends with another salutation, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.”

Verse 21, “Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you.”

These were Paul's colleagues with him in Corinth.

“I, Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, greet you in the Lord.” Now don't get confused. Paul, not Tertius, is the author of Romans. Tertius was Paul's stenographer.

It was Paul's custom to dictate his letters to a scribe; then at the end he would pick up the pen himself, and add his signature. Here, Tertius adds his own greeting.

“Gaius, my host and *the host* of the whole church, greets you.” Apparently, Paul was staying, and the Church in Corinth was meeting, in the house of Gaius.

“Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you...”

The treasurer of the city would've been an important person - a Roman dignitary. In Corinth, a high-ranking public official, had embraced the Gospel of Jesus.

Several years ago we traveled on a Footsteps of Paul tour. In Corinth our guide showed us an inscription in the stones of the main cardo. It referred to an important city official named, “Erastus.” NT scholars believe it's the same Erastus mentioned here by Paul.

“And Quartus, a brother.” The names “*Tertius*” and “*Quartus*” are the Greek numerals “3” and “4.”

In the Roman world oftentimes slaves were never given proper names, just a number. It's possible these two believers, “*Tertius*” and “*Quartus*,” or “Three” and “Four” were former slaves - now considered “*brothers*.”

Never underestimate the revolutionary impact Christianity had on slavery in the ancient world. Overnight, slaves and nobles became equals in Christ.

Paul closes his greetings in verse 24, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with you all. Amen.*”

And he adds a benediction. “Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ...” Jesus is able to establish us in our faith. His Gospel bulldozes sin, buries doubts, and packs a firm footing on which we can stand.

Once, a wino approached DL Moody after a meeting. The man was drunk as a skunk. He shouted, “Mr. Moody, I’m one of your first converts.” Moody replied, “You must be one of my converts, because you sure don’t look like you were converted by the Lord.”

Jesus causes us to *stand strong - not flounder.*

The Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, is “according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began, but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith - to God, alone wise, *be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.*” And with that final flurry Paul concludes his glorious letter to the Romans.