

Romans: A Study on Reformation
Lesson 50 “Mark Those Who Cause Divisions”

I. Introduction and Review - Paul wrote the letter to the church in Rome to reform it by resolving strife between the Jewish and Gentile home churches.

A. Paul’s goal was reconciliation of the two groups, however, today we are going to look at what happens when that isn’t possible. When I say isn’t possible, I’m not talking about two groups of people who have different doctrinal differences but can be agreeable, I’m talking about when there is an intentionally divisive person within one of the two groups.

1. We’re going to see God says to mark (identify) this person and avoid them.
2. **Proverbs 6:16-19** God hates six things, but one who sows discord among the brethren is an abomination to Him. An abomination means contrary to God’s nature and the word is often tied in with idolary. Ex: Abominatin of desolation.
3. Why is this? Division is antithetical (opposite) of God’s nature. Jesus is a uniter not a divider. He sent His spirit to be the spirit of unity (**Ephesians 4:3**). **Psalm 133** says *where brethren dwell together in unity God commands the blessing!* **Unity is a major key in seeing revival released and sustained.**

II. Mark Those Who Cause Divisions

A. **Romans 16:8-15** Before we talk about how to deal with those who cause division, we are going to continue with the list of folks the Apostle Paul identified and greeted as he closed out this letter. These were all people who Paul had disciplined or worked closely with in the ministry. This is what gave him the open door to write to this church.

1. The Bible nor church does not provide as much detail about most the folks listed in these verses as it does in **Romans 16:1-7** so I won’t be able to go into as much detail here as I did last week, but I do want to point out some things.
2. **Verse 8** Amplias was Paul’s beloved in the Lord. Suggests a close personal relationship. People matter.
3. **Verse 9** Urbanus was a fellow worker of Paul and Stachys is referred to as beloved (suggests a close relationship).
4. **Verse 10** Paul knew Apelles well enough to say he was approved in Christ.
5. **Verse 11** The Greek for countryman means kinsmen/relative. Herodion was Paul’s relative. This opened the door for Paul to write and visit Rome.
 - a. Narcissus was an unbeliever who served under Claudius as postmaster. He controlled the correspondence that came to Caesar so people paid him large bribes to insure their letters got to him, which made him wealthy.
 - b. Narcissus had a church in his house, which Paul greeted even though he was an unbeliever. This demonstrates the gospel can flourish in ungodly settings. Ex: Secular offices where the gospel takes root.

6. **Verse 12** Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis all labored in the Lord.
7. **Verse 13** Rufus and Paul most likely had the same spiritual mother.
8. **Verses 14-15** Paul mentions several other folks the scripture doesn't give detail on, but based on the prior verses we can assume Paul had worked with them in ministry or disciplined them in some capacity.
9. **Verse 16** Greeting with a holy kiss was a cultural greeting.
10. Before we talk about marking the divisive person, it is important to recognize all of these people Paul acknowledged. People matter. Jesus died for people!

B. *Romans 16:17-20*

1. **Verse 17** Paul says to note **skopéō**, *take aim at (spy)*, i.e. (figuratively) regard: —consider, take heed, look at (on), mark - **Focus on those who are divisive**. Ex: Basketball story - this isn't a passive awareness.
 - a. This doesn't mean we have to all agree on everything to go to church together. You can disagree and be agreeable.
 - b. Some are divisive about doctrine. Ex: Some think people who believe the gifts of the spirit are for today are heretical. If a person says that and starts gossiping about someone, we need to mark and avoid them. **Avoid - ekklínō, to deviate or turn aside. Not a passive word.**
2. **Verse 18** Explains divisive people gain power in the church. They use smooth words and flattery (they are deceptive which can make them hard to mark).
 - a. Characteristics of divisive people - **Jude 1:4** Creep in unnoticed, **8-11** are rebellious and self-serving in nature, **12-13** spots in church services who serve only themselves (they have no fruit, twice dead, unstable like waves, and wandering/church-hop), **16** use great swelling words and flattery to gain advantage, **19** Cause divisions not having the spirit.
 - b. This doesn't mean we need to be suspicious of everyone. We just need to be aware of this and if we notice people with these characteristics we need to keep our eyes on them.
 - c. Jesus gave us instructions in **Matthew 18:15-17** about how to deal with conflict in the church. We are to go to people and not behind their back. Ex: How I deal with people who come to me complaining about someone else. I tell them to go to the person. 90% of the time they do and the situation resolves. Occasionally they won't and quit the church. While I'm sad for them, another part of me celebrates because we just got healthier.
3. **Verses 19-20** Paul commends this church for their obedience to deal with division and tells them to be wise in that which is good and simple in evil. Stay focused on the gospel and don't be an expert on evil because one day Jesus will crush Satan under His feet!

III. Conclusion - If God commands the blessing when brethren dwell together in unity, what happens when we so discord and dwell in strife? A lack of a commanded blessing.

A. Prayer for Unity and Prayer for hearts to understand one another.

B. Transition to Craig