

Avoid, Embrace, and Give God the Glory

6.7.26

Romans Series

Message 54

Romans 16:17–27 (CSB)

¹⁷ Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who create divisions and obstacles contrary to the teaching that you learned. Avoid them, ¹⁸ because such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites. They deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting with smooth talk and flattering words.

¹⁹ The report of your obedience has reached everyone. Therefore I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise about what is good, and yet innocent about what is evil. ²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

²¹ Timothy, my coworker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my fellow countrymen, greet you.

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

²³ Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus greet you.

²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation about Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept silent for long ages ²⁶ but now revealed and made known through the prophetic Scriptures, according to the command of the eternal God to advance the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles—²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ—to him be the glory forever! Amen.

Introduction

A. Sometimes, we don't know how great something is until it's over.

1. I wonder if the Apostle Paul knew that this letter, written to Roman Christians, would become the single greatest book of Scripture.

- a. We've all heard stories of artists who didn't become famous until after they were dead.
- b. Or ball players going into the Hall of Fame after their death.
- c. I wonder if, as Paul and Tertius, were putting the finishing touches of the Letter to the Romans, and sealing it for Phoebe to carry for hundreds of miles, if they knew what God had in store for this letter?

2. Did they know it was inspired by God?

- a. Could they have guessed that a monk like Augustine, or a priest named Martin Luther, would have their lives and the lives of millions changed because of these words?
- b. Surely they never imagined that a preacher in Licking, MO, would do a 55-week sermon series on the book.
- c. But at some point, the letter had to end, the message had to be delivered, so Paul closes with final thoughts, greetings, and instructions.

B. We could summarize these last words under three commands.

1. Avoid, Embrace, Give.
 - a. Avoid Evil People,
 - b. Embrace the Faithful
 - c. Give God the Glory.
2. This morning, we are going to look at these three.

Avoid Evil People

A. Watch out for those who divide and trip you up.

1. Notice, these aren't people outside the church.
2. This isn't the news media, a political party, or a false religion.
3. This warning is against those who claim to follow Christ but are teaching a false doctrine.
4. These are those people who, no matter what church they are in, there always seems to be conflict, dissension, confusion, and disorder.

B. Paul doesn't tell us to tolerate these people, but to avoid them.

1. This is not unusual advice from Paul.

a. He told the pastor Titus to do the same thing:

b. Titus 3:9–11 (CSB)

⁹But avoid foolish debates, genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and worthless. ¹⁰Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning. ¹¹For you know that such a person has gone astray and is sinning; he is self-condemned.

c. Avoid and reject those who have gone astray and creating divisions and obstacles to the Gospel.

d. That's hard advice!

2. But that doesn't sound Christian or loving?

a. How often is Christianity presented as a religion that is supposed to accept everyone, everything, and everybody?

b. But that isn't what Paul presents.

c. Why?

d. Real love protects the vulnerable,

e. Real love points people to Jesus and not to individual agendas.

3. Many protectors may be accused of not being very loving.

a. But the protective instinct is an expression of love.

b. We protect who and what we love.

c. Faithful Christians do what they can to protect growing or vulnerable believers from deception and words that sound meaningful but are actually empty.

d. One of the best ways you can protect those you love is by taking an active part in the discipleship of your family.

e. Don't leave it up to a preacher, a church, a channel, or Chat GPT.

C. Peace is positive.

Romans 16:20 (CSB) ²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

1. We often define peace as the absence of conflict.

a. In Greek and English, peace is negative, the absence of something.

b. In Hebrew, peace is a positive; the presence

c. In Hebrew, Shalom is “the prosperity of the whole life, a positive and not a negative idea.”¹

2. The God of Peace (the God full of life and prosperity and everything good) will crush the one who is full of death, destruction, suffering, and chaos.

a. The God of Peace will soon crush the god of chaos.

b. And He involves us.

3. He will soon crush Satan “under our feet!”

1. I have lots of questions about this, but first, a statement.

2. First, “this is a prophecy, not a prayer.”²

3. In other words, Paul isn’t praying and hoping this will happen; he knows it will happen.

4. This crushing of Satan is assured and guaranteed.

5. Paul says it is happening “soon.”

4. But I have honest questions

a. What does this look like?

b. What does this feel like?

c. When?

5. It won’t be long before Paul will be executed in Rome.

¹ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 541.

² Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 541.

- a. The very worst Christian persecution awaits the Church in Rome.
- b. None of this sounds promising.
- c. Yet, victory is assured.

D. Here's what I know about our spiritual conflict.

1. The battle is raging, but the war is won.
2. The situation you are involved in isn't hopeless, and it isn't forever.
3. Because of Jesus, we will experience on earth and in Heaven.
4. And, we get to put the enemy under our feet.
 - a. This is a picture of the Romans, who when defeating an enemy, would step on their enemies as a sign of humiliation.
 - b. Paul says that God will soon crush Satan, not under His feet but ours.
 - c. He wins the victory, we get the celebration.
5. Yes, there is still struggle.
 - a. But because of the grace of our Lord Jesus, we don't have to worry about who wins.
 - b. So be bold, avoid those who seek to destroy and divide.
 - c. Point 2:

Embrace the Faithful

Rom. 16:21-23

²¹ Timothy, my coworker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sospater, my fellow countrymen, greet you.

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

²³ Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus greet you.

A. Romans 16 mentions over 30 names (I count 36).

1. Men and Women, Jews, Romans, wealthy and poor.
2. Paul is thankful for each one.

3. The people in this chapter are more than clients, customers, or hired staff.
4. They are coworkers, fellow countrymen, and trusted friends.
5. In fact, we are told that Tertius is the man who transcribed the letter for Paul, doing much of the hard work.

B. Finishing the book of Romans, I am reminded that none of us are called to this life alone.

1. We aren't saved on our own, we aren't disciplined on our own, we aren't alone.
2. Yes, it is tempting to run away from everyone and everybody.
3. Yes, there will be people we have to avoid because they cause more harm than good.
4. Yes, people require endurance, encouragement, and patience.
5. But the Gospel, this message that Jesus is King and He saves sinners, is a message for the people.

C. Therefore, we embrace the faithful people of God.

1. One of the benefits of a church our size is that there are plenty of people to connect with.
2. You can live anonymously if you want: sneaking in and out and not getting to know very many.
3. But I suggest that **if you have been here for any time at all, then God has also put other people here that are meant to be in your life.**
 - a. You can't be everyone's best friend.
 - b. But you can be someone's friend.
 - c. We need everyone in the room, and we also need one or two people from the room.

D. Can I suggest you be bold, pray about it, and then say hi to someone in church?

1. Get their name, and next week, use it.
2. Then ask if next week they want to join you after church at Mexican (or somewhere).
3. You may never do it again, BUT your relationship moving forward will be different.
4. You will have shared a moment that leads to further moments.

5. And, just maybe, one day when you need prayer, or they need prayer, you will find yourself with that person praying for them, by name, mutually encouraging each other.

Give God the Glory

²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation about Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept silent for long ages ²⁶ but now revealed and made known through the prophetic Scriptures, according to the command of the eternal God to advance the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles—²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ—to him be the glory forever! Amen.

A. Now to him who is able...

1. There's something about that line that encourages me.
2. Because it isn't about my strength or for my glory.
3. The gospel, the revelation of the mystery, none of this is dependent upon me.
4. I have a part in it. I have a role and an assignment.
5. But it isn't my gospel, my church, my kingdom, or my glory.

B. The Good News is that God isn't keeping it all a secret.

1. It was a mystery, kept silent, but now the answer is revealed.
2. How was God going to bless and reach the world through Abraham and the Jews?
3. How was He going to redeem humanity from the Fall and reverse the curse?
4. This mystery is now clear: It was through Jesus.

C. One of the things Jesus is able to do is to strengthen us.

1. To strengthen us for the journey we are still walking, the mountain we are climbing, the race we are running.
2. He strengthens us to not only put up with people, but to love them and encourage them.
3. He strengthens us, he stiffens our backs, for us to protect ourselves and those we love from dangerous people.
4. He strengthens us and causes us to grasp the Revelation and mystery that is being revealed.

5. He strengthens us to be obedient and to advance the faith.

D. To the One who is able...To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

End of Romans

A. One commentary called Paul the “Richest Man in Rome.”

1. In the wealthiest city in the Empire, how could a traveling preacher like Paul be considered the richest man in Rome?

2. Because of all the people Paul loved and who loved Paul.

3. There’s an episode of The Waltons where John Walton has a class reunion.

In comes all of these people who appear to have wealth, status, and education.

All of the things John Walton didn’t have.

He was considered poor, even during the Great Depression.

His old truck was old even then. His clothes and house were functional, but nothing more.

He’s nervous about seeing his more successful classmates after all of these years.

Yet at the end of the show, one of the “successful” classmates looks at John Walton, surrounded by a family who loves him and a community that respects him, and declares him the most successful man they have ever known.

4. When this life is finished, if we love Jesus and love people, we have won.

5. At the end of the day, if we can say we loved Jesus and loved people, we have won the day.

6. At the end of an assignment, we can we say we loved Jesus and loved people, we can with pride declare, AMEN.

B. This morning is a special morning for us.

1. In just a few minutes, we are going to celebrate Delanie and Jarad, Isaac, Kylie, Kaelynn, and Zeke Rinne.

a. I also want to say that the Rinnes did not want us to celebrate them.

b. But it is good for us to show honor where honor is due.

c. It is good for us, in a small way, say thank you for investing in our lives these past few years.

2. We still get to see them for a bit more, but officially, as of today, their assignment as our children's ministry leaders is fulfilled.

a. We finish the letter, so to speak, and we give our greetings to the people they will bless in Forsyth and whichever church they bless.

b. Their impact on my life and the lives of the children and teens here at Licking AG will not be measured here.

c. Much like Paul's letter to Rome, the results of their work will carry from now until eternity.

C. I feel a bit like the Apostle Paul must have felt, also sending out friends and co-workers to invest in other fields, places, and people.

1. He loved to see his co-workers go, but he missed them in the process.

2. I'm sure many of us feel the same.

Appreciation

This morning, we have a few several special things we wanted to do. None of which Delanie and Jarad wanted, but it's good for us to give them.

First, Holly, who has served in the KidMin, wanted to share.

Second, Abigail and Laney interviewed some of the kids on Wednesday night, and here is a short video.

Third, on behalf of Deacons and the Church Membership, we have a check to help with gas and moving expenses.

We have a meal prepared to celebrate and Fellowship.