***Warning about False Teachers, No. 1
Romans 16:17-20a
RO198-01***

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Please open your Bibles once more to Romans 16. We are looking this morning at the section verses 16 through the first part of verse 21. Our subject is Warning About False Teachers, Segment Number One.

The apostle Paul, with chapter 16, is concluding his letter to the Christians in Rome. In this final chapter, we have seen that he has greeted several Christians that he has known and others that he has heard about who now reside in Rome. Some of the people, the Greeks, have local churches meeting in their homes and he sends greetings to the members of those congregations as well. Actually, he names 24 specific people. He refers to 2 unnamed relatives, as well as the members of these house churches. Again, you must remember that for the first 250 years of Christianity, there was no such thing as a church building. There are only houses and groups of people that gathered in these houses, each of them with one elder pastor-teacher instructing in the Word of God. Paul indicates that he has a great esteem for these Christians in Rome and these that he has named particularly by name. The reason he esteems them is for their consistent Christian living and for their obvious hard work in the service of Jesus Christ: true soldiers of the living God in the angelic warfare.

**Christian Greetings**

So, he concludes this series of greetings to these individuals with the final admonition in verse 16, where he says, "Greet one another with a holy kiss." This word "greet" is the one we've had repeatedly. Again, I want to remind you that in the Greek language, it is a command; God is commanding that this should be done. The word "greet" here means a welcome which connotes cordiality and spiritual fellowship. Greeting one another refers to the fact that this is to be done person to person, individual; and that it is to include everyone. That greeting is to be with a "holy," the Greek word looks like this. It's a Greek word "hagios," h a g i o s. This word in the Greek language means "separated." It is a special kind of kiss and that is in the Greek language "philema," p h i l e m a. You may notice that the first part of this word for Kiss "philema," is from the Greek word "philos" which is the word for love. So, a kiss is something that's supposed to convey an affection. Here, it is a separate kind of kiss in that it is a "holy kiss." This, of course, was a form of greeting in the ancient world. When people met each other, this is the way they greeted one another.

In Luke 7 in the passage verse 36-50, you can read about Jesus visiting the home of a Pharisee named Simon and a woman who came in and bathed Jesus' feet with her tears and kissed them repeatedly. And Simon, the superior smug Pharisee, did not condescend to treat Jesus in this way. Jesus said to him, 'Simon, when I came in, you didn't even greet me with a kiss.' Now, what Jesus was saying is that this was ordinary cordiality. This was the ordinary amenities when you meet somebody. But this woman, because she has sunk so low in life and because God has done so much for her, cannot kiss my feet enough to express her gratitude for what has been done for her by the grace of God. Whereas you, a man of esteem and of a man of significance and of notoriety in the community, did not have even the good manners to greet me with a kiss.

This custom, of course, is still followed in certain cultures today. There are certain areas of the world where people greet each other with a kiss. I saw recently on TV a reenactment of the 69th Army Division meeting at the River Elbe, the Ukrainian army of Russia during World War Two. When finally the force is coming, the allies coming from the West and the Russians coming from the East, had finally crushed Germany between them and they met at the Elbe River. And there were these scenes of the joyous greetings of the Russians with the American soldiers. The American soldiers reached out their hands to shake the hands of the Russians and the Russians put their arms around the Americans and kissed them on the cheek. It was a very moving moment. And in fact, those men have regathered year after year for 45 years now. They've had reunions that they call the Spirit of the Elba River, the cordiality that was expressed in the way of each culture's way of expressing cordiality.

This idea of a holy kiss between believers is something the Paul refers to on other occasions. For example, in 1 Corinthians 16:20, he makes a reference to this as he closes the letter of 1 Corinthians. Paul says, "All the members greet you, greet one another with a holy kiss." 2 Corinthians 13:12, he closes this letter with the same admonition: "Greet one another with a holy kiss." So, it is obvious that this is a commonplace way of greeting people within the culture of the New Testament church. It is an expression of love. 1 Peter 5:14, Peter calls it exactly that. Peter says, "Greet one another with a kiss of love."

The word "holy" meant that it was a godly expression of affection toward those who are united with you in Christ. It is not the kiss such as exchanged between lovers that has an erotic quality to it. It is a holy kiss because it involves 3 things: it involves the giver, it involves the recipient, and it involves God. Therefore, it is one that is done as in the presence and in the dignity and in the holiness of God Himself: one another person to person, nobody in the family is to be excluded. It's an expression of Christian love, of an attitude, of forgiveness for that's necessary and certainly of an attitude of unity.

In the early centuries of the church, this became associated within the Christian community with the Lord's Supper. So that it became commonplace in churches that at the end of the Lord's Supper, people would close by exchanging this holy kiss on the cheek with one another.

It is interesting that this, which is a very affectionate expression and one that expresses cordiality and goodwill, should be used by Judas to betray Jesus. And when you understand what the significance was of placing the kiss on the person's cheek, you see how gross was this act on the part of Satan and the part of Judas to execute Satan's plan of betraying the Lord. In Luke 22, we read about that beginning in verse 47, "While He was still speaking, [That is Jesus.] behold, a multitude came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was preceding them; and he approached Jesus to kiss Him." It was like walking up and saying 'Hello Lord,' and extending your hand to shake His hand. If you were to do this today. Judas says to the soldiers, 'I'll take you to where I know Jesus is meeting with His disciples. And I'll walk up and I'll identify Him by greeting Him.' They knew how he was going to greet Him. He didn't have to tell them 'I'll walk up and place a kiss on His cheek.' They knew that that was the form of greeting. Jesus, however, saw the irony of that and in verse 48 we read, "But Jesus said to him, 'Judas, Are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?'" 'Surely there must be some other way you could have identified Me than to have perverted such a lovely and precious act between 2 people who are in the family of God.'

In American culture, we greet Christians with a loving handshake. The actual mode of expressing this Christian cordiality and greeting, this fellowship, this unity, the mode is not the issue. There is nothing wrong if you want to greet Christians with a kiss on the cheek and some Christians do that. Anybody who does that to me, I do right back to them so that you may expect that that cordiality will be returned. There's nothing wrong if that is the custom you wish to follow. It is not the point here. The point is Christians greeting Christians in a very genuine way. So, the apostle Paul says after having mentioned all these terrific people in the church of Rome, I want you to extend (and he makes the command), and 'I want you to greet one another with a holy kiss and expression of your affection and unity in the Lord.'

**The Local Church**

Then he says, "All the churches of Christ greet you." Here Paul is referring to the various local churches in the Roman Empire to whom he ministered in his travels. These churches all belong to Jesus Christ, who is the head of the church. Please remember that in the Bible, in the New Testament, there is no such thing as a super church organization over a group of individual local congregations. Today we speak about the Church of England. There's no such thing. There's no such concept in the Bible. Today we speak about the Roman Catholic Church. There is no such concept in the Bible of a super church organization over groups of believers. These organizations are denominational structures which have been prepared by man for specific purposes, but they carry no authority as spokesmen of the living God.

**No World Church Authority**

When the Pope in Rome stands up and says, "I am the vicar of Christ on earth, and when I speak officially from my throne, you are hearing the voice of God, he's wrong. There is no such authority given to anybody, to any church organization, nor to any priestly hierarchy on the face of the earth. It is very important that you understand that every believer is equal in the Age of Grace. In the Old Testament, you had a priesthood; you couldn't go to God yourself. You had to go through the priest who wore his robes and stood in front of his altar. And if you wanted to get to God, you went through him. If you wanted to approach God with your sacrifice, you couldn't sacrifice yourself, you had to go through the priest.

This is one of the great doctrines recovered in the Reformation. When the reformers started reading the Bible, they said, 'Do you realize what 1 Peter tells us? He calls all of us who are believers in Christ a royal priesthood. Do you know what that means? That means that there is no individual who represents you before God except you yourself. You are your own priest.' So, the apostle Paul is talking about all these churches made up of all these individual priests. He's not talking about some super ecclesiastical structure with some kind of special authority over the lives of people.

**Apostolic Authority**

The apostles in the New Testament church carried a great deal of authority: that is true. They were very special kinds of authority; but when they died, that authority left. We don't have anybody who carries apostolic authority today. There are churches today who claim apostolic authority: the Catholic Church does, the Methodist church does, several other churches. What they mean is that an apostle laid his hands on the head of another person, he conferred to him apostolic authority, therefore, he can stand and he can speak for God and you must obey him. See, when an apostle spoke, you didn't talk back. He was a spiritual dictator, because he had a special authority gift from God until the Scriptures were written? Now the Bible is our source of information and authority and therefore there are no apostolic people.

That is obviously self-evident because you remember that when the disciples, rightly or wrongly, after Judas' death, decided 'we have to have someone to fill out the 12.' They sat down and said, 'we must appoint someone else to take Judas' place.' I'm not sure they should have done that. In any case, they did understand that it had to be somebody who was qualified by the fact that they had seen Jesus alive after His crucifixion. If you didn't personally see Jesus alive after His crucifixion, you couldn't be given the apostolic gift. Which is why the apostle Paul (who probably was the 12th apostle, why the apostle Paul,) was qualified, because he saw Christ in Heaven on the Damascus road. Therefore, he knew that He was indeed raised from the dead.

So, when we speak about Paul talking about the churches here sending greetings, he is not talking about super ecclesiastical organization. He's just talking about simple groups of house churches and believers all over the empire to whom he has ministered. And that in those churches, the highest authority was the pastor-teacher elder. He was the one who was the instructor. He was the one who is responsible for feeding the sheep with the Word of God and caring for their spiritual well-being. If he fails in instructing them in the word, those Christians are going to be sitting ducks for every evil that Satan throws against them.

So, Paul was sort of a messenger, a contact point, between these local churches in the empire. And he kept them in touch with one another, with their circumstances, and he passed the greetings along between them.

**Paul's Warning Against False Teachers**

In verse 17, the apostle Paul begins. But before he finishes, his mind is thinking over 'what else should I say before I close down this letter?' And one of the things that the Spirit of God lays on his mind is that he should warn them about false teachers. The church at Rome at this time, from all indications, was a church that was operating on true pure doctrine. There was no false teaching in the church of Rome. The apostle Paul knew that the false teachers were never far off. And the apostle Paul knew that the con artists were always on hand.

So, he gives a caution in verse 17 about these false teachers. He says, "Now I urge you, brethren." The word urge looks like this in the Greek Bible: "parakaleo," p a r a k a l e o. "Parakaleo" means I "appeal to you," in fact, this word means I "beg you."

And he speaks to them as Christians: I beg you brethren, referring to those who are born again, he says, 'I want you to keep an eye on a certain type of individual.' The Greek word "keep an eye on" is "skopeo," s k o p e o, which means "to watch out carefully for something." I urge you, brethren, my fellow believers in Rome, keep your eye out for something. Keep an eye peeled for a certain danger. It is my purpose that you be careful to be alert to a certain type of individual who causes 2 things when he comes into a local church congregation.

**False Teachers Bring Dissensions**

One is dissensions. This is the Greek word "dichostasia," d i c h o s t a s i a. "Dichostasia" means "standing apart," it means "to chop up." So, he says, there's a certain type of person who comes in as a religious leader and he might come in and identify himself in some way. He'll act very holy, maybe the way he holds his hands, or maybe he'll dangle a crucifix around his neck. He might even turn his collar around backward so that you know that he's above humanity: you know that if you could take his robe off, you'd find a set of wings folded underneath and back there. This is one of the real 'Holy Joes.' He comes in, Paul says, he's got a mouthful of teeth, a smile, and you just love him right off the bat. The guy's a con artist. Paul says, you will notice this because he comes in and very suddenly he starts dropping ideas that constitute false doctrine.

And pretty soon Christians are wondering, have I got this straight? And pretty soon Christians think that this man is right and they begin taking issue with other believers. And within a congregation that's working together for the Lord, you begin to find there are factions on doctrinal issues and that part of that faction has been led off into false teachings. These people bring false teaching in to break up the fellowship.

What should you do about them? What should I do about this if I find someone comes into this congregation and is teaching something that is contrary to Scripture? And that has happened. That has happened on more than one occasion. I have stood at that door and told people who had come in here, and had been here for a while and were teaching people false doctrine, I told them not to come back. This is not open territory. This is not open range. These sheep of God are not for you to roam among at your freedom to contaminate and to confuse. This is serious business. The apostle Paul says watch out for those who come in, they bring in false concepts and they separate Christians one against another.

**False Teachers Bring Hindrances**

Furthermore, he said, they do another thing. They create "hindrances." The Greek word looks like this: s k a n d a l o n, "skandalon." From that we get our English word scandal. "Skandalon" is a word that was used in the Greek world for a trap in which to catch animals, and that trap resulted in the animal's death. So, this "skandalon" is a "death trap." They're teaching you things that are going to prove to be a death trap to you as a Christian. They not only divide Christian from Christian, but they put these death trap or sometimes this can be translated as a stumbling block over which Christians fall and then they are spiritually injured.

False doctrine of salvation, for example, can be an eternal death trap. What if you want to know how to go to Heaven and somebody comes along and says, 'well, first of all, man, when you're a little kid, as soon as you can get somebody to baptize you so you can become the child of God.' 'Oh, OK.' How many people are sitting in Hell this morning who were baptized into the supposed family of God, and that's what they counted on to take them in? Like the Jew who said, 'I've got my circumcision, I'm home free with God,' Jesus says, 'You've got nothing, you performed a symbol of the removal of the authority of the flesh, the Sin Nature over you, but you have not trusted in Christ. So you're not anywhere near going to Heaven.'

But how easy it is to set people off on the wrong path. What if somebody comes along, you say, 'well, you want to be a Christian; I want to tell you what you want to do. I want you to stop having this bad attitude toward your mother-in-law. I want you to smile more and I want you to go to church and I want you to give more money and all these good work things.' What if you believe that? There are millions of people who believe that if they perform certain religious customs, practices, they will go into Heaven? What have they been led into? They have been led into a "skandalon," a death trap. If your trust is not in Christ because He covered your sins on the cross and in Him alone, you will never see the shores of Heaven and you will never see the Marines guarding those streets of gold as the Marine Hymn says. It is trust in Christ, and that alone is what carries us in.

So, this is no small warning. Paul says, 'I want you to watch out.' He's already seen the religious con artists, these people who are claiming to have revelations from God and they are bringing in false teachings. Have you ever noticed on TV how many of the TV con artists, the religious con artists, claim to have revelations from God: 'God told me, sent me to tell you this.'? And you say 'He did? I want to know about that.' You say 'Oh, I wouldn't do that. That's too dumb.' Those men would not be on television and as prosperous as they are, if there weren't thousands of Christians writing checks out to them because they really believe that these men have a direct line of communication with God.

**Brethren Keep Your Eye Peeled!**

The apostle says 'I urge you, I beg of you, I plead with you, my brothers in Rome keep an eye peeled on a certain type of religious leader who is inevitably going to come in to your assembly, to your churches. He's going to teach false things that will cause Christians to divide. Furthermore, he's going to create death traps. These are going to be death traps because they are contrary to something. They're contrary, he says, "To the teaching." One of our favorite Greek words: "didache," d i d a c h e, and this is the word for "doctrine." We speak about Bible doctrine; this is a key word. This is your life! Doctrine is your life as a Christian: when you know the doctrines of Scripture. Not the stories, I don't want these stories, those we need as historical background. But it isn't the stories of Christmas, and the stories of David and Goliath, and all these stories in the Bible. It is understanding the kind of insight that we're trying to give you this morning into what is behind the text that you read in Scripture, what God the Holy Spirit is really saying to you, that's doctrine. The person who has doctrine is the recipient of the grace of God in this age. It is the doctrines of Scripture that give you grace for living.

I'll tell you that what we refer to is Dying Grace, when you know you're on the line checking out, it is only the doctrines of Scripture that will carry you through with confidence and not with fear because the other side is not an unknown quantity to you. You know, as Paul says, "absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, which is," Paul says, "far better." In time we all shall indeed discover that to be true. But it is doctrine that carries us through. When Jesus Christ was on the cross, one of the Psalms tells us what was going on in His mind; and in that great agony of His death, He was reviewing the doctrines of Scripture and what His death was going to accomplish and the result of the great kingdom that eventually He would bring to cover this earth. It carried Him through. It will carry you through.

So Paul says, 'these people are causing these divisions, are causing these stumbling blocks because they are teaching you contrary to the doctrine which you have learned: that is what Paul has taught them from Scripture. The apostle Paul had direct revelation from God. The Book of Galatians tells us that after he was born again on the Damascus Road, he spent 3 years out in the Arabian Desert: direct communication being taught Church Age doctrines by God. What a classroom! What a teacher! What a student! So that, when Paul came on the scene, God used him to write most of the New Testament. That which was revealed to Paul is what we have recorded as Church Age truth. That's why we can know what we're talking about when we understand the principles of doctrine.

So, the apostle Paul said, I've taught you people. Now, he hadn't taught the Romans directly. Some of them he had. He had never been to this church yet, but there were many people that he had taught who had gone to Rome. And they had carried the instructions that he had given. So, in effect, they had been taught by Paul.

Now, we don't have any more revelations from God. When Oral Roberts stands up and says, 'God told me, if you people don't fork over 8 million bucks, he's going to kill me next week,' you know, he's lying. If anybody told him that, it was Satan! Maybe he did hear somebody saying that, but it was not God. God does not speak to us in direct communication; He speaks to us through the Scriptures; which is why the pastor-teacher who goes through Hocus-Pocus and does not spend the service in explaining the Bible, has robbed the people of God, of their spiritual Christian heritage. And you'll be a puny Christian all your life.

The inroads of false doctrine in our society, as in the New Testament church, were enormous. Paul, in his travels, very quickly saw how easily false doctrine can creep into a church congregation.

There was, on the one hand, the Judaizers, those who had been born again into Christianity from their Jewish background under the Mosaic Law. When they came into Christianity, Paul says 'no more sacrifices. Christ is their sacrifice once and for all. No more animal sacrifices!' No more animal sacrifices, no more altars, no more rituals. All we have to do now is approach God on the basis of the authority of His Son. No more priests in robes to get to God; we can walk into what the Bible calls the throne of grace. I don't have to speak to God through an intermediary; I can speak to Him directly. What a tremendous change. What a difference: all of Judaism thrown out, put aside. Christianity, the freedoms of grace, now is our lifestyle. Judaizers came along as soon as Paul left town. They came and say 'Paul is a nice man. He loves the Lord and he does tell a true gospel. But he didn't tell you something.' 'What was that?' 'You want your male children to go to Heaven?' They're speaking to gentiles. 'Yes, Paul has told us how to go to Heaven.' 'You will not go to heaven unless you perform the rituals of the Mosaic Law and your males are circumcised.' They said 'Is that true? Oh, I'm so glad you told me that.' And then they said, 'and furthermore, there's something else.' They started injecting holy days. 'There are certain days when you must be holy, there are holy days. Furthermore, you go to church on Saturday, not Sunday, Sabbath Day,' and they kept interjecting these things.

That's why Paul got fed up with this and wrote the letter to the Galatian churches in the Roman province of Galatia. They had gotten so far carried away, Paul says, 'now, let's face it folks, what brought you into the Kingdom of God? Was it your works or the grace of God?' The answer was, of course, the grace of God. Well, he says, "how far you have fallen from grace, how far you have fallen from your heritage of walking in the freedoms and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit because you're back to the Mosaic Law system.'

Paul knew that there were people who came along and said, 'ahhh, grace, you know what grace means - freedom.' They were the Antinomians, those who were without law. They said, 'we can do anything. Sure we can sin, we'll confess it. It will be wiped clean. Our salvation is secure. It's not dependent on what we do, it's what God does.' And the antinomians came in and they were wreaking havoc among Christians who are not well taught, who thought they could live sinful lives and all would be well. Well, they weren't going to lose their salvation for their sinful lives, but God was going to take them to Heaven ahead of their time. He was going to take their lives.

And in 1 Corinthians, you remember Paul says in the eleventh chapter, 'you're finding something interesting in the congregation, aren't you? People are dropping like flies around you.' The Corinthian churches were extremely sinful churches. They were into paganism. They were into speaking in tongues like the Charismatics today. It was a horrible church. They knew that there was a case of incest, it was public knowledge in the congregation, and nobody did anything about it. Paul says, 'Enough is enough. You people need to get on track with the standards of godliness that are characteristic and are expected of you as a child of God in the family of the Church Age.' Paul came down on them very hard. It was just unbelievable the way these people were living, because the antinomians had come in and said, 'you can do all these things, it's OK.'

But you see, grace and freedom of the Church Age does not mean freedom to do what is evil, it does not mean freedom to indulge the Sin Nature, it means freedom to do what is right. It means freedom to be free from all the diseases of immorality. It means freedom to be psychologically stable and not torn up in your soul because of things that you're doing that are wrong. It means to have freedom before God because you walk in His presence without fear.

The apostle Paul knew that Free grace salvation was not a welcome message. So, it was a constant battle for church believers to maintain their lifestyle against those who wanted to impose the Mosaic system on them all over again.

**False Doctrine - Satan's Deception**

False Doctrine is not merely some innocent mistake. It is a misrepresentation of what God thinks. It is a misrepresentation of reality, and it has both temporal consequences and eternal consequences. The big doctrinal lie that is being promoted today was the one that Satan offered Eve in Genesis 3:5. Do you remember what he said to her? He said, 'if you eat of that tree, you're going to discover you're a God. Isn't that going to be nice?' Eve says, 'I'm a God.' Satan said 'of course, God hasn't told you that because He doesn't want you to know that He wants you to be subject to Him. But you should understand you're a God.' That's what Hinduism teaches. That's what the whole New Age movement teaches today: 'we are all gods, all you have to do is discover your own deity. Therefore, you make your own rules. You are your own god.'

The Christians in Rome, we're going to be approached by false teachers. Paul says, 'watch out for these people. They're going to be traveling preachers; you must judge them, what they tell you, by the standard of doctrine that I have taught you. So, you see, if you don't have a frame of doctrine to go by, you've got nothing. Any con artist can come along. Any smooth talking TV evangelists can tell you anything and you'll eat it up. The only thing that saves you is that you have a standard of doctrine by which you can judge and immediately you will spot the false teachers.

**Separate Yourself from False Doctrine**

What should we do about these people? Paul says he urges these who come in creating dissentions and hindrances contrary to true doctrine that he has taught them that you "turn away from them." He uses the Greek word "ekklaino," e k k l a i n o. I give you these Greek words so that you know I'm not making up this. This is what God the Spirit has said. This word I can tell you means "to avoid." In fact, in the Greek Bible, it is associated with this word "apo," a p o, which is a preposition that means "separation." It means put a distance between yourself and the false teacher. Put a barrier up between you and them. Put a distance between you and the teacher of false doctrine. What this word is telling you to do is to avoid associating with these false teachers. Guess what this is in the Greek Bible. It is a command. It's not just a suggestion. It is a command of almighty God through His apostle Paul, when you find a person who is teaching you false doctrine, put distance between yourself and that individual, avoid his death trap that he's building for you. He has a false code of morals.

It is that false code of morals that people have accepted today that are suffering from AIDS. I heard a statistic on TV the other day that most people dying of AIDS now are teenagers, young people who are picking it up in their high school days because they have been told that all these moral practices that the Bible condemns are OK to do in our enlightened, sophisticated age. Because they have no standard of the Word of God by which to compare that kind of talk, they have believed it, and their bodies are slowly dying with the infestation of this disease.

Paul, in his travels, found how easy it is for people to be deceived. He doesn't tell us here to have a debate with these false teachers. Isn't that interesting? He says to steer clear of them. He says to remove these false teachers in the local ministry. If you find them, don't tolerate them, don't sit around and be nice.

You know how it is when you watch Candid Camera: people will tolerate the most outrageous treatment because they don't want to make a scene. This is how Christians are. Somebody will come in and they will teach some horribly false things and you'll say 'gee, that isn't right,' but you don't want to create a scene. The apostle Paul says, 'create a scene.'

Titus 3:10 says "Reject a factious man after a first and second warning." A factious man is one who is riding a hobbyhorse and Paul says give him a warning or 2 to knock it off. If he won't do that, then you get rid of him. You don't let him stand around hurting the people of God.

In Matthew 18, we have this caution, Matthew 18:15. Here, Jesus gives this instruction, "And if your brother sins [And he could sin by teaching false doctrine.], go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother." You see, in the age of grace, everything is done privately with sin.

None of this Jimmy Swaggart and Jimmy Baker getting up on public television and degrading the person of the Lord Jesus Christ by making public confession of their sins. They showed how shallow and ignorant men they were of doctrine where the Word of God says always do things privately when it deals with sin. Deal within the circle that it needs to be dealt with.

And when you have stepped out of line, it is nobody else's business but your Father in Heaven and you tell Him. You go to him privately, if he listens to you, you have won your brother. [continuing in Matthew 18:16] "But if he does not listen to you, [then you have to expand on the church level.] take one or two more with you, [for believers] so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED." A couple of other mature Christians say 'yes, what you're doing is wrong. You really should not do that.' Verse 17, "And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax gatherer," which means you cut off contact with him.

This week, as I rode along in the car listening to the radio, I heard a preacher who has apparently got a powerful organization in Dallas Metroplex area. I forget the name of it, but they are devoted to one objective, and that is of tearing down walls which separate the followers of Jesus Christ. He was carrying on very powerfully about these walls that Christians build that separates them from one another. He asked the listeners to call in with suggestions as to how to tear down these walls that separate Christians from one another. Various people called in with not too much incisive to give.

Then a Roman Catholic lady came in. She says, "I've been a Roman Catholic all my life and recently I was born again. And it really irritates me that these Protestant friends of mine now are asking me that 'now that I'm a born again believer, when am I going to come out of the Catholic Church.' And I'm not going to come out of the Catholic Church? The Catholic church has been my home." Well of course, if she's just recently been born again, she's got a thimble full of knowledge, if that, of doctrine. She has no way of judging anything. Therefore, this man had a great opportunity to say, 'well, now you've got a serious problem.' It was obvious that she did not know what was at stake here. This man says, "Maam, I'm not a Protestant. A Protestant is someone who protest against the Catholic Church and I don't protest against the Catholic Church."

Now it's obvious that he was not concerned about the false doctrine that this lady was going to be taught that would hinder this woman from developing her spiritual life, and worst of all, would hinder her from being able to serve God to produce the kind of divine good works that Jesus says 'when you stand before my judgment seat, I'm going to give you a reward for.' Do you realize how many poor Christians are going to be in Heaven, how many Christians are going to have a low level (They're going to be saved.) but not the enrichment of those who have known the doctrines of Scripture so that they lived lives that were truly productive of Christian service? I wondered whether this man thought about the salvation by works that this woman was going to be hearing about in the Catholic Church, that her progress toward spiritual development would be through rituals and through sacraments, that if she didn't go to the mass to eat the body and drink the blood of Christ, she would not have her sins cleansed away from her.

I watched a dying relative, Catholics, the husband and the daughter, as this woman was dying of cancer, kneeling by her side and saying, "We're going to say 5 Hail Marys and 3 Our Fathers for you now." And they sat down there and they rattled them through. Why? Because they had been taught as Catholics that if you repeat these prayers, (like I used to see in China, where there were prayer wheels at the Buddhist priests would spin that had prayers attached to them, and every time it came around that went up to the gods and was in your favor,) they were going to say, we're going to pray so that God would help cleanse your sins a little more, a little more and a little by our prayers.

And if you don't make it, I wondered if this man understood that this woman is going to be taught that there was a purgatory where they'd have a second chance to get the dry cleaning completed, to get them into Heaven, to get their sins removed. Did he realize that she's going to be told to pray to the Virgin Mary because Jesus was a wrathful God and maybe the mother could appease His wrath and get them into Heaven? Did he understand that Jesus was now the co-redemptrix, the co-redeemer with Jesus Christ, and that this woman is going to be taught that? Does he understand that she would be told to confess her sins to a priest in order to get absolution before God, that she could not understand herself as a priest before God?

Finally, I had all I could stand. So, I said to him, ... speaking to the radio, "What about what Jesus said on that occasion in the Book of Luke." Luke 12, beginning at verse 51, Luke 12:51-53, Jesus said, "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; [Oh how awful. That's even the very word this man used! "There's too many divisions among those Christians, too many morals!] for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two, and two against three. They will be divided, father against son, son against father, mother against daughter, and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." Why the divisions? As you follow the context, you'll see that Jesus said they're going to be divided over true and false doctrine. Those who listen to me are going to be with me. Those in the family that don't listen to me are going to be separated from me and separated from the family members who obey the Word of God.

And when I got through explaining that to him, I said, "What about 2 Corinthians 6 beginning at verse 14, where the apostle Paul said, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? [What is that but failures and divisions?] Or what harmony has Christ with Belial [a name for Satan] or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the Temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said 'I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. [Your body is now the Temple of the Holy Spirit.] 'Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,' says the Lord. 'AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,' Says the Lord God Almighty." On what basis? You're going to be my true children when you separate yourself from the false teachers, when you put a division between yourself and those who are teaching false doctrines.

I listened to Bob Larson on the radio this week as I was driving. He was talking to a man who was attacking Christians who worship God. He blasphemed the Lord Jesus Christ by referring to Him as "that Jew who died on a stick." He said, "Wouldn't it be better if all of us followed a rational pattern and worshipped Mother Earth and Father Sun?" which is exactly what all the pagans which surrounded Israel of old did worship. That's Babylonian paganism which became joined with New Testament Christianity under the Emperor Constantine and eventuated in the amalgam of the Roman Catholic Church, as we know it today. The teachings do not come out of Scripture, they come out of that ancient background. This guy was saying 'ancient Babylonian paganism, the Baal worship cults, the sex worship cults. That's what we need to come back to.' Why should we Christians tear down our walls of separation of fellowship from such a nice, neo-pagan as that, blaspheming Christ in that way? Should we have no walls to divide us?

How many ways are there to go into Heaven? The Word of God says there's only one way, one way and only one, one door and only one. Yet its size are true, inside and outside. On which side are you? 1 Timothy 4:1-8, Paul describes what we are hearing and seeing today. "But the Spirit explicitly says that in the latter times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons [The greatest doctrine of demons is that people are gods themselves. That's what the Mormon church is teaching, that you are a god and you will someday be a god in your own right.], by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the Word of God and prayer. In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith [doctrine] and of sound doctrine which you have been following. But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." So, Paul very clearly says, "People are coming. They're going to be hypocrites. They're going to parade themselves as religious leaders who are in contact with God. And what they teach you will take you away from God's greatest blessings upon your life and you will be affected for now and for all eternity.

Should we have a barrier between ourselves and Mormonism? Mormonism has very quietly changed five major points of its temple ceremonies. When they take an oath, the same oath which Masons take, when they take an oath to keep a certain secret, they're no longer going to take their thumb like this and run it across their throat, which all Mormons have done in the temple ceremony, as a sign that they will have their throats cut if they reveal the secrets. When they come through that curtain into their celestial heaven in their temple ceremonies, this is humiliating to women at five points of their body. They must come in contact with the man on the other side of the curtain who pulls them through. They're no longer going to have that five points of fellowship that they were referred to. The Masons know the same thing, that's where it came from. There is no more vowing, taking a vow, on the part of women to be obedient to their husbands. There is no more in the ceremony that they perform in the temple where they have Satan coming up and hiring a Bible believing Christian minister to do Satan's work for him. There's no more, they finally got the message on the code that they used to say, "pallay allay," an ancient expression of praise to Satan. Finally, the Mormons have to admit that they have a satanic prayer praise there. They're pulling it out. They didn't tell anybody. Our friends in Mormonism on the inside are finding out inside the temple what's going on. They come out and told us they've just quietly dropped this because they don't want to tell people how wrong they have been and how deceived they have been so long.

Should we not look upon Mormonism as something from which we must be separated as believers of Jesus Christ, a group of people who are teaching the most gross false kind of doctrine? What they have removed isn't any worse than what they still have in.

**Separate From False Teaching!**

So, what does the apostle tell us? He tells us we don't have to tolerate as Christians those who teach false doctrine. We should not tolerate them. They divide Christians from Christians. They throw stumbling blocks in our way morally. Christians are to keep the unity of true doctrine, not the unity of some local church organization. Satan, after all, separated Adam and Eve from God by teaching them the false doctrine that they could also be gods. When they believed that, in spite of God's warning, they lost it all. Satan has created a spiritual death trap with false doctrines. Adam and Eve should have fled from them. Paul says, when you see a person who's not teaching the truth, don't just take it 'well, this is what we've always believed,' but distance yourself from that teacher. If you don't, it will cause you problems now, and your greatest grief will be when you stand to be evaluated by Christ at His Judgment Seat for rewards for your service and you will have great disappointments. Is it worth it? I think not.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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